

**Intent to Plan
Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology**

West Liberty University



Prepared: April 2016

**NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO DEVELOP A NEW
MASTER'S PROGRAM WHEN A MAJOR EXISTS**

UNIVERSITY:

West Liberty University, West Liberty, West Virginia

CONTACT PERSON:

Dr. Tammy McClain; Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts

DEGREE AND PROGRAM UNDER DEVELOPMENT:

Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

DEPARTMENT SUBMITTING PROPOSAL:

Social and Behavioral Sciences

DATE OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION:

Fall 2016

DESIRED IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

Fall 2018

Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology & Mission Alignment

5.2 Request to Develop a Plan

Projected Date of Submission of Full Proposal: September 2016

Projected Date of Implementation: August 2018

5.2.a Institutional Suitability

Educational Objectives: The purpose of the proposed Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology is to provide students who have successfully completed a bachelor's degree in psychology or a related field from a regionally or nationally accredited college or university an opportunity to earn a master's degree from a West Virginia Higher Education institution. For individuals who wish to further their education in the field of psychology, the proposed Master of Arts degree program would provide an advanced degree at a reasonable cost.

Relationship of Objectives to the Mission: West Liberty University's mission is to provide our students the opportunity for high quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional education. The proposed degree will seek to enhance university strategic growth through the advancement of innovative and transformative learning opportunities for both traditional and non-traditional students, including mental health practitioners who are seeking to complete a graduate degree in a manner conducive to their active schedules.

1. Student Success:

- Offering a high-demand psychology graduate degree program at a regional university that will provide greater opportunity for students to further their education locally.
- Providing a viable career path for both traditional and non-traditional students seeking to enter the workforce expeditiously.
- Providing upward career mobility opportunities for current mental health practitioners of the regional, state, and national workforce.

2. University Excellence:

- Offering a much-desired Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology, which will create a strong and educated workforce with community and educational ties to West Liberty University and the Ohio Valley.
- Expanding the visibility and product that West Liberty University has to offer through an increased alumni body and noteworthy program growth.

3. State Service:

- A master's degree program which will meet regional, state, and national workforce development needs by allowing those mental health practitioners currently working the opportunity to enhance both their educational and leadership skills, facilitating further career advancement.

- Offering primarily face-to-face courses at the Main Campus or Highlands Campus which will increase the opportunity to obtain a master's degree, furthering the educated population and improving access to psychological services.

4. Ethical Standards Secured Because:

- Professionals in the field of clinical psychology adhere to a set of educational, practice, research guidelines and ethics and subscribe to the general tenets of science and scholarship set forth by the American Psychological Association. Those engaged in the field of clinical psychology, including graduate study, also recognize that the discovery, creation, transmission and accumulation of knowledge in any scientific discipline involves ethical considerations at every level. These rules guide professors and students in effective research, teaching, management and training. These guidelines create an effective learning environment, which allows students to expand their knowledge in the field of clinical psychology by developing strong conceptual and practice skills from experienced faculty.

5. Enhancing Diversity:

- West Liberty University is committed to enhancing the diversity of its student population. West Liberty University's proposed master's degree program in psychology will provide the opportunity for both a diverse cross-section of traditional and non-traditional students to gain the necessary educational credentials for upward career mobility within their specific occupational fields.

Desirability of the Institution: Because of its proven success and experience in the formation of educational programs focusing on degree completion options for the traditional student and working professional, West Liberty University is distinctively qualified to introduce a degree that is consistent with its mission and directly responsive to the growing demand for human services practitioners in the Ohio Valley. The geographical location of West Liberty University is attractive to students throughout the state of the West Virginia, but most notably the Northern Panhandle. In addition, the unique location allows for students from Western Pennsylvania (less than a 30 minute drive) and Eastern Ohio (less than a 30 minute drive) to experience the opportunities West Liberty University and a master's program can provide.

5.2.b Summary of Proposed Program:

Curriculum: Coursework will consist of:

- Lifespan Development
- Research Methods
- Clinical Assessment of Children
- Biological Bases of Behavior
- Psychopathology and Diagnosis
- Clinical Assessment of Adult
- Multicultural and Rural Psychology
- Individual Psychotherapy and Treatment Planning
- Ethical, Legal, and Professional Issues in Psychology
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Practicum (6 credit hours)
- Internship (18 credit hours)

Targeted Population: The Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology will provide a needed educational opportunity for three distinct groups: 1) traditional and non-traditional students seeking to professionally practice as licensed psychologists in the state of West Virginia, 2) those wishing to prepare to enter a doctoral program in psychology or related fields; and 3) mental health practitioners already working in the field who have previously completed their bachelor's degree and are seeking advancement in their respective occupations. The proposed master's degree program enables those qualified individuals to advance their knowledge and skills while providing a much-needed service to the West Virginia Northern Panhandle as well as the rest of the state.

Intellectual Value: Students in the proposed degree program will complete 30 credits of master's level psychology coursework, plus 6 credit hours of practicum work and 18 credits of supervised internship experience. These are consistent with the licensure requirements of the West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychology and will prepare students to take the Examination for Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP), which is required in West Virginia for graduates to be licensed as Supervised Psychologists.

5.2.c Quality Assurance:

Program goals and written student learning outcomes will be aligned with the departmental goals, the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association, the requirements of the West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists, and the program admissions requirements. The program will adhere to the systematic review process for all university programs every 2.5 to 5 years, providing valuable assessment data for faculty and students. All psychology graduate faculty at West Liberty University will have terminal degrees from accredited institutions of higher learning. Faculty qualifications include professional experience, research experience, licensure, and supervisory status in West Virginia.

5.2.d Other State Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology Programs:

The clinical psychology master's degree would be unique to this region. Currently, there is no public stand-alone Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology program in West Virginia so duplication of degrees offered by other state universities would be avoided. The two programs most closely related to West Liberty University's intended program have immense differences in program focus. West Virginia University offers a Master of Arts in Applied Behavioral Analysis and awards a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology and Counseling Psychology within the context of obtaining a doctoral degree. Marshall University offers a Master of Arts in Counseling.

5.2.e Statement of Need:

Societal: One of the most salient reasons for this growing national demand centers upon the increase in people who seek assistance in managing mental health and behavioral disorders, as well as the effects of an aging population and the impact of coping with the mental and physical effects of aging. "Psychological services are also needed for veterans suffering from war trauma,

for survivors of other trauma, and for individuals with autism”.¹ The proposed program will equip graduates to address societal needs, such as substance abuse, psychological assessment, and psychotherapy.

Occupational: At present, The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that employment of psychologists will grow 19 percent in the area of counseling psychology from 2014 to 2024.² The United States Department of Labor reported that the rate of job growth for clinical, counseling, and school psychologist is projected to grow 20 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations.³ As graduation rates increase, students will need to further their education to compete in a crowded market of individuals who have successfully completed a bachelor’s degree. The proposed program offers this opportunity to those students in the Ohio Valley, West Virginia, and surrounding states.

In addition, West Virginia is the only state in the country which continues to provide opportunities for psychology licensure for those who have master’s degrees in psychology. West Virginia has only 575⁴ active psychology licenses and is experiencing a shortage of providers in rural areas across the state, including several counties in the Northern Panhandle. Hancock County and Tyler County have no psychologists. Brooke County, Marshall County, and Wetzel County have only one licensed psychologist each. Throughout the state, there are 11 counties with no psychologists⁵. Hence, opportunities for promotion and growth within these fields, particularly in West Virginia, will be more accessible for those seeking employment in the field of psychology.

Public Service: The majority of West Liberty’s student body comes from the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia, Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania, and therefore the state and this region needs adequate programs to train, educate and prepare students for success in a growing and highly desired field of psychology. Due to the lack of advanced educational opportunities in the geographic area, many students cannot pursue a master’s degree because of the length of travel required to reach an on-campus program or the expense associated with online degrees, none of which are accredited by the American Psychological Association at this time. The proposed degree will fulfill the need for licensed psychologists in West Virginia in addition to providing high quality psychological service to the community.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Psychologists, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/psychologists.htm> (visited March 29, 2016).

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Psychologists, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/psychologists.htm> (visited March 29, 2016).

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Psychologists, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/psychologists.htm> (visited March 29, 2016).

⁴ The West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Statistics webpage, updated December 30, 2015. http://www.wvpsychbd.org/statistics_page.htm (visited March 29, 2016).

⁵ The West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Map of WV Listing Licensed Psychologists, updated December 30, 2015. http://www.wvpsychbd.org/statistics_page.htm (visited March 29, 2016). <http://www.wvpsychbd.org/Psychologists%20by%20County%20and%20Degree%20Dec%202015.bmp>

Student Demand: A self-report study conducted in March, 2014 by Dr. Tammy McClain of the psychology degree program in the Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences at West Liberty University surveyed 40 individuals who were either students currently enrolled in the undergraduate psychology program at West Liberty University or were recent alumni. Of the 40 students who were surveyed, 78% of students stated that they would very likely want to enroll in a master's program in psychology at West Liberty University. The survey was repeated in 2015. Of the 33 students surveyed, 88% indicated that they would likely enroll in a master's program. In total, seventy-three current students and alumni from the WLU psychology program were surveyed over the last two years regarding their interest in a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology. Ninety-two percent of those surveyed indicated that if such a program were offered, they would be likely or very likely to want to enroll. In addition to the 73 psychology majors as well as other related majors at West Liberty, there are several nearby universities, including; Bethany College, Wheeling Jesuit University, Ohio University Eastern, University of Pittsburgh, California University of Pennsylvania, Washington and Jefferson College, Duquesne University, Waynesburg University, Marietta College, and Franciscan University. Based on the number of graduates in psychology or related majors in the region, a graduate program in Clinical Psychology at West Liberty University would likely attract significant enrollment.

5.2.f Statement of Additional Resources: The Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology will utilize facilities at both the main campus and Highlands Center and faculty currently employed by the university. The program will call for one additional faculty hire to serve primarily as a dual instructor in the graduate and undergraduate program. Initial operating costs are minimal and require no construction costs as space is allocated for the program. Costs will include office supplies, printing, postage, statistics software, some office equipment and one additional full-time faculty member.

West Liberty University will assume all costs related to the physical and human resources required to provide the related courses for the program. The program in the infant stages will require the addition of ONE full-time faculty member who has a terminal degree in psychology. When the program results in positive financial growth for the university, which should be by year 2 or 3, the recruitment and hiring of an additional faculty may be in the best interest of the university. The addition of another faculty member once program success is measured will allow for successful implementation of the new program and continued educational and financial growth.

The additional workload accumulated with the implementation of the graduate program could be circumvented to some degree with the addition of 2 graduate assistantship positions (either full or part time) for the department to aid the faculty and to provide educational opportunities for students. These assistantships would offer either partial or full tuition remission.

Beyond these needs, no additional resources are foreseen. The university currently has adequate computer access in the library, adequate research databases in Ebsco Host and ProQuest (which both must be maintained to support a graduate program in Psychology), adequate space, technology, and additional resources. The program could benefit from a partnership with related West Liberty University master's programs for a classroom with computer access for the research methods and statistics courses.

5.2.g Instructional Delivery

The Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology will consist primarily of on-site classroom instruction using West Liberty University's learning management system as appropriate.

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