



# The University of Georgia

University Council  
Athens, Georgia 30602

August 26, 2015

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Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal for a new Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research will be an agenda item for the August 28, 2015, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

William K. Vencill, Chair  
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost Pamela S. Whitten  
Dr. Rahul Shrivastav



# The University of Georgia®

College of Education  
*Office of the Dean*

6 August 2015

To: Pamela S. Whitten, PhD  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

From: Craig H. Kennedy, PhD   
Dean and Professor

Re: Proposed Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research

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Please find attached a proposal for the creation of the Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research (CABER) to be housed in the College of Education. The Center will be a focal point for enhancing autism research, educational opportunities, and service to both the University and state of Georgia. The proposed Center has no projected budgetary costs to central campus.

**Proposal**

**Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research**

**College of Education**

**August 6, 2015**

# **Proposed Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research (CABER)**

As The University of Georgia, has continually emphasized high impact research, quality educational opportunities and service to the state, the College of Education has been responsive to these expectations. To further address these goals of the University, we are proposing a **Center for Autism and Behavioral Education Research (CABER)** to be housed in the UGA College of Education.

## **A. Mission**

The Mission of CABER will be to enhance the skills and knowledge of researchers, practitioners, and parents in their understanding of (a) the variables that may contribute to behavioral and academic difficulties and (b) how to manipulate the environments in order to maximize appropriate behavior and academic achievement across the lifespan. CABER will achieve this mission by bringing together researchers across the University of Georgia to conduct cross-disciplinary research and by facilitating the dissemination and translation of that work into opportunities for direct service and training for graduate students, practitioners and parents.

Autism and autism spectrum disorders have emerged as a focal point for research funding across multiple federal agencies (e.g. Institute of Educational Sciences, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control) as well as private foundations (e.g. Organization for Autism Research, Autism Speaks). While the College of Education and the University of Georgia as a whole have been successful at securing extra mural funding in this area for research and training, many of these efforts have been pursued at the local level, within a singular department or college and have not been multidisciplinary. This narrow focus has a limiting effect on the types of funding opportunities researchers are able to pursue as well as the impact of projects emanating from the funding. Therefore, the purpose of this center is to act as a focal point for autism researchers at the University of Georgia as well as to attract leading researchers in the field of autism to the University of Georgia. Operating under the College of Education, CABER is well positioned to do this and will be able to achieve broad impacts in generating new knowledge via research, transmitting that knowledge to practice through training, and contributing to improved learning outcomes through implementation in clinical practice. These three interwoven components (research, training, and service) each contribute to the growth and expansion of CABER's impact. Advancements in any singular component, enhances outcomes for others.

## **B. Goals and Evaluation of Center Impact**

The measurable outcomes below will help in evaluating CABER's impact and viability. Each outcome measure will be examined annually by the advisory board to shape future plans and activities. Each goal listed includes probable measures or data sources as well as descriptive components.

### **B1 Research**

- a. CABER will maintain a constant flow of research funding.

- i. Number of funded research proposals that capitalize on center resources. This would include all projects directly originating from the center with the focus on autism as well as broader research projects that might have direct/indirect implications to improving the assessment, instructional, or behavioral needs of children with behavioral and academic difficulties.
  - ii. Total dollars per year from research funding as described above.
- b. CABER will build a national and international reputation for research via publication and dissemination of research findings.
  - i. The number of peer reviewed articles published by affiliated faculty.
  - ii. The number of conference presentations by affiliated faculty.
  - iii. The number of invited presentation by affiliated faculty.

## **B2. Training**

- a. The Center will contribute to the training of research and practitioners in the area of autism and behavioral analysis.
  - iv. The number of trainings conducted by center affiliated faculty (outside of coursework) to researchers interested in doing autism or behavioral research.
  - v. The number of trainings conducted by center affiliated faculty (outside of coursework) to in-service or pre-service practitioners.
  - vi. The income generated by trainings.
  - vii. The grant funding generated to hold trainings or expand training opportunities.
  - viii. The grant funding generated by affiliated faculty to support undergraduate and graduate training.
  - ix. The number of graduate students who are successful in earning their Board Certification in Behavioral Analysis.

## **B3. Service**

- a. The Center will directly impact the learning and well-being of individuals with autism, related disabilities, behavioral skills deficits and academic deficits via its affiliated clinic.
  - x. The number of children/families served within and outside of the clinic by affiliated faculty and their graduate students.
  - xi. The satisfaction ratings of the families and children.
  - xii. The income generated by the clinic.

## **C. Vision.**

It is our vision that by 2025 CABER will be known and recognized across the State of Georgia as the center of knowledge associated with autism and behavioral research. The public along with government officials will contact CABER for information regarding evidenced based assessments and interventions related to Autism as well as issues related to effective behavioral management practices within school settings. This reputation will be based upon the quality services provided to individuals, organizations, and school districts across Georgia and the many cross disciplinary grants awarded to affiliated faculty members.

## **D. Justification for CABER**

CABER has many advantages for researchers at the University of Georgia. Primarily, CABER will serve as a focal point with a clear mission that is easily communicated to members of the community, and nation (i.e. funding agencies). Branding a center allows affiliated faculty to draw attention to a resource at the University of Georgia which provides a consistent pool of research participants (i.e. the clinic) as well as collaborators with complementary skills and similar interests. This improves efficiency and allows affiliated faculty to be responsive to funding calls by a range of agencies because they will have greater access to collaborators with interests and expertise in multiple fields. For example, affiliating faculty from Franklin College of Arts and Science in Computer Science, expands the expertise beyond those collaborators traditionally working together in the College of Education. Affiliated faculty from across campus can highlight the achievements of CABER as a whole when applying for funding and thus capitalize on the “brand” success.

Currently there does not exist a center within the University Systems of Georgia that conducts autism research and training or provides autism assessment and intervention services to individuals and community agencies. As CABERs develop a reputation for providing these services, it will become a resource not only for schools and families, but also for state legislatures and others with enquiries regarding evidence based assessment and intervention practices.

**D1 Research.** In terms of research, CABER will be an advantageous entity because it will provide researchers across the University of Georgia with a clear and simple point of contact to connect with researchers who share similar aims. Thus, researchers who are pursuing funding in a related area, can capitalize on expertise shared across CABER affiliated faculty and potentially on existing research pools. Considering that autism is a low incidence disability, recruiting sufficient sample sizes for studies can be challenging. CABER will provide affiliated faculty with a means by which to combine resources to recruit participants and allow individuals with autism to participate in multiple studies during a single visit to the University. CABER will also develop a database of contact information of participants, thus providing researchers with a database from which to recruit. Further, through the recruitment and affiliation of high quality scholars at the University of Georgia, CABER will begin to have a national and international presence that will attract positive attention to the University of Georgia.

**D2 Training.** Future scholars at the undergraduate as well as graduate level will have opportunities to engage in the work of the center. Affiliated faculty will have a central location to seek additional training opportunities, and practica and internship experiences for their students. Likewise, faculty will have a recruitment pool to attract students from multiple disciplines to contribute to their clinics and labs in a way that will not only infuse diverse perspectives but allow the students to expand their knowledge beyond their primary discipline. As CABER’s reputation grows, more graduate students will benefit from being able to link their training to experiences received at CABER. Furthermore, CABER will provide the groundwork from which affiliated faculty can successfully apply for cross disciplinary research and training grants.

**D3 Service.** One of the focal points of CABER is the collaborative services offered through UGA’s Applied Behavior Analysis Support Clinic. As a key component of the clinic, graduate

students receive training opportunities in academic and behavioral interventions while members of the community receive access to high quality services. Unfortunately for families who may benefit from the services provided by this clinic, there are no other clinics within Northeast Georgia that provide similar services. For this reason along with the quality services provided, the clinic has quickly gained a positive reputation within the North East Region of Georgia. Psychologists, school districts, and families regularly contact the clinic seeking its services. CABER will provide opportunities to enhance what the clinic is able to offer to the citizens of North East Georgia by engaging others at the University of Georgia whose expertise overlap with the clinic and who can contribute to the mission of the clinic.

## **E. Services offered by CABER**

**E1 Research.** High quality research that moves a field forward is critical for any center. CABER will contribute to this via multiple means that will be supported by research funding and the collaborative efforts of affiliated faculty. These services include:

- Clinical space for assessments and treatments including video recording, archiving and data collection tools.
- Curriculum and instructional materials for use in research studies.
- Data storage and archiving space.
- Expertise in single case design.
- Expertise in observational data collection systems.
- Existing relationships with local agencies and school systems to recruit participant pools.
- Resource for state officials in need of information regarding evidence based assessment and intervention practices related to autism and other behavioral and academic difficulties.
- Eye-tracking equipment and expertise in measuring eye-gaze as a dependent measure

**E2 Training.** In terms of instruction and training CABER will offer several services to students at the University of Georgia. The foci of this training include both research and service provision.

- Mentored research experiences in schools and clinical settings,
- Instruction and support in learning data collection systems.
- Practica approved for completing field requirements for Board Certification in Applied Behavior Analysis (BCBA).
- Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for BCBA's.

**E3 Service and Outreach.** The primary service and outreach arm of CABER will be the UGA Applied Behavior Analysis Support Clinic. Launched in 2013, this endowed clinic has already gathered support from the local community via the Automatic for Autism campaign that raised funding to help the clinic provide direct services to families of children with autism. The clinic will offer the following services

- Direct service for assessment and treatment of severe problem behavior (aggression and self-injury).
- Direct service for skill acquisition and development (including academic and life skills).
- Parent training in behavior management and language development.
- School consultation for behavior management and increased academic achievement.

## **F. Resources**

**F1 Space.** Affiliated faculty will work from offices assigned by their home department. The UGA Applied Behavior Analysis Support Clinic currently has two spaces within the UGA College of Education in which they conduct assessments and provide intervention services. These locations would be made available to affiliated faculty when conducted their research. Additional space requirements are not needed at this time but as CABER grows it is likely that additional space requirements will be needed for the conducting of research projects on campus and the provision of service to the community.

**F2 Faculty & Administrative Time:** CABER will be directed by a faculty member with 25% service time for the assignment.

**F3 Financial.** CABER will fund itself through a combination of extra-mural sources including federal and private grants, public service contracts, fees for service as well as donations and endowments.

Currently, Drs. Ayres and Ardoin oversee more than 3 million dollars in federal funding related to the goals of the Center. Further, UGA-ABASC, operated within the Center, was the beneficiary of a \$28,000 endowment to support services.

**F4 Affiliated Faculty.** Faculty affiliation is voluntary. Applications for faculty affiliation are reviewed annually and are based on faculty members' active commitment (i.e. scholarly research agenda) in the areas of autism and behavioral research. At launch, the following faculty would seek affiliation:

Dr. Scott Ardoin, Ph.D. Education Psychology

Dr. Kevin M. Ayres, Ph.D., BCBA-D Communication Sciences and Special Education

Dr. Ashley Johnson Harrison, Ph.D., Educational Psychology

Dr. Jennifer Brown, Ph.D., CCC-SLP Communication Sciences and Special Education

Dr. Alicia Davis, Ph.D., BCBA-D Communication Sciences and Special Education

Dr. Joel Ringdahl, Ph.D., BCBA Communication Sciences and Special Education

Dr. Kara Wunderlich, Ph.D., BCBA-D Communication Sciences and Special Education

## **G Operating Policies and Procedures**

**G1 Administrative Unit.** CABER will be located administratively in the UGA College of Education.

**G2 Advisory Board.** CABER will have an advisory board with the following responsibilities: a) develop and oversee policies, b) provide recommendations related to priorities for research, training and service, c) conduct annual evaluation of the CABER's performance as well as that of the director, d) assist with developing and amending the strategic plan, and d) approving membership applications. Members of the Board will initially be appointed by the Director, with later appointments approved by the Board. The Advisory Board will include the Center Director and faculty researchers involved with the Center representing the various units with ~ 8 members inclusive of the Director. Board members will serve 3-year terms and will include some combination of members of the community (e.g. agency or school personnel), parents of children or adults with autism, individuals with autism, as well as external researchers (e.g. faculty from Marcus Autism Center in Atlanta).

**G3 Appointments and Affiliations.** Faculty wanting to affiliate with the center will apply to the CABER's directors with their vita and a cover letter indicating their desire and the reasons they want to affiliate as well as the contributions they can bring to the center. The personnel (graduate students, part-time professionals) appointed to support the service programs of the CABER will be selected and supervised by the Director. Graduate assistants may be advised by any affiliated faculty. Personnel supported on grant or contract resources that will utilize CABERs resources will be determined by the Principal Investigator or Program Director of the given project/program.

**G4 Review Process.** Each spring the Advisory Board will review CABER's relative to the objectives stated earlier in this document. The Director will convene a meeting of the Advisory Board as well as the Department Head of Communication Sciences and Special Education. The Director will present a summary of the Center's accomplishments and challenges for the past academic year. The Advisory Board along with the department chair will provide recommendations for improvement. Every three years, a summary of the preceding three annual evaluations will be summarized and presented to the Dean of the College of Education for review. This review will help to determine if CABER is still viable, progressing toward its goals, and still of use to the University and community.