

Psychology Option for A.A.S. in Equine Studies and A.A.S. and B.S. in Natural Horsemanship—The University of Montana - Western

Objectives and Needs

1. *Centrality to or enhancement of the institution's approved mission and institutional objectives to be achieved by the addition of this program.*
 - a. The goal of this Proposal is to provide a basis for the addition of a new option area in Psychology for the existing and successful equine programs at University of Montana – Western (UMW). The University's mission statement supports "education through experiential learning that combines theory and practice." This expansion of the existing Equine Studies program remains consistent with the University's priorities. The proposed degree program fits the Board of Regents' goals and objectives, primarily: Goal D ("To be responsive to market, employment, and economic development needs of the State and nation") of the Strategic Plan. Specifically, the proposed program would support Goals D 1, 3 and 4: 1) "To offer programs and services consistent with the changing market and employment needs of the state and nation..."
 - b. The use of horses (or other equids) has been shown to be a powerful and effective alternative treatment modality in the clinical and human development fields. This expanded option area of psychology aids in preparing our equine program students for entry as professionals in this new and rapidly expanding field of equine-assisted therapy (including equine-assisted learning, therapy for the emotionally disturbed, and leadership training for adults).
 - c. The degrees affected by the proposed change include the Bachelor of Science in Natural Horsemanship, the Associate of Applied Science in Natural Horsemanship, and the Associate of Applied Science in Equine Studies.

The proposed course of study for each of the option areas associated with each of the above degrees is as follows: *[Note: all courses included in the proposed Option areas and marked by an asterisk are currently being taught at UMW. No new courses are proposed at this time.]*

New or Revised Catalog Description:

20 credit option for the Associate of Applied Science: Equine Studies degree

*PSY 220-Introduction to research methods	4 credits
*PSY 265 Intro to motivation	4 credits
*PSY 360 Learning and memory	4 credits
*PSY 437 Psychology of personality	4 credits
*PSY 438 Abnormal psychology	<u>4 credits</u>
Total	20 credits

24 credit option for Associate of Applied Science: Natural Horsemanship degree

*PSY 220-Introduction to research methods	4 credits
*PSY 265 Intro to motivation	4 credits
*PSY 360 Learning and memory	4 credits
*PSY 437 Psychology of personality	4 credits
*PSY 438 Abnormal psychology	4 credits
Psychology electives	<u>4 credits</u>

Total 24 credits

28 credit option for the Bachelor of Science: Natural Horsemanship degree

*PSY 220-Introduction to research methods	4 credits
*PSY 265 Intro to motivation	4 credits
*PSY 360 Learning and memory	4 credits
*PSY 437 Psychology of personality	4 credits
*PSY 438 Abnormal psychology	4 credits
Psychology electives	<u>8 credits</u>
Total	28 credits

- d. It is anticipated that the classes will be taught in a traditional classroom setting. No additional telecommunications methods are proposed at this time.

2. *Need for the program.*

- a. An informal in-house survey of equine program students indicates that approximately 20-25% of our students have indicated an interest in some aspect of the new and rapidly expanding field of equine-assisted therapy (including equine-assisted learning, therapy for the emotionally disturbed, and leadership training for adults). This field provides a new and potentially lucrative career option for those students interested in helping people and horses.
- b. This expanded option area of psychology aids in preparing our equine program students for entry as equine professionals into this field. Additionally, the psychology option associated with the Bachelor's degree in Natural Horsemanship prepares a student for graduate school as a clinical therapist (psychologist, social work, etc).
- c. This expanded offering would further UMW's reputation for "cutting edge" equine programs, particularly through the marriage of our unique natural horsemanship degree with training in psychology. Both disciplines rely on the study of behavior, be it equine, human or interactive behavior between the two species, which is the basis for equine-assisted therapy. Already, the natural horsemanship program has attracted a diverse group of highly qualified students from throughout Montana and across the United States, which has had a very positive influence on the UMW student population. It is anticipated that this new option area would further interest in UMW's academic programs.

3. *New courses the program will add to the curriculum and the course requirements for the degree.*

- a. As noted above in the proposed course of study, all of the courses included in the proposed Option areas for the equine degrees listed above (marked by an asterisk) are currently being taught at UMW. No new courses are required for these new Option areas. Furthermore, based on the anticipated number of majors each degree would attract, no additional sections of these existing courses are necessary at this time.

Adequacy, Accreditation and Assessment Issues.

1. *Adequacy of present faculty, facilities, equipment and library holdings in support of the program.*
 - a. The current faculty, facilities, equipment or specific library holdings should prove adequate for the initial stages of the program. On the short-term, spreading the

ever increasing number of equine majors into additional Option areas will take student pressure off required classes in existing Option areas, thereby limiting the need for additional faculty or facilities in the near future. On the longer term, when the need arises, additional student entries drawn to this Option area of the equine program will aid in supporting hiring of additional FTEs. Some minor increases in library holdings may be required to serve the specific area of equine-assisted therapy, but such increases should be easily accommodated by existing budgets for the equine and psychology programs, respectively.

2. *Needs for special accreditation.*

- a. No special accreditation is required for the University System. Currently, the primary organization that certifies equine professionals in the field of equine-assisted psychotherapy is the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EGALA), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization developed to address the need for resources, education and professionalism within this field. It is anticipated that UMW graduates from equine programs with an Option area in psychology would become certified through this nationally recognized organization.

3. *Assessment plan:*

- a. Prior to graduation, students will be assessed based on performance in academic classes, skills learned in applied classes (such as the natural horsemanship, and performance during outside applied internships. Once graduates are at place in the workforce, additional assessments via surveys of employer satisfaction can be pursued.

Impact on Faculty, Facilities, Costs, Students and Other Departments and Campuses.

1. *Additional faculty requirements.*

- a. No additional faculty will be hired at this time.

2. *Impact on facilities.*

- a. Present library and computer resources are adequate for this program. Materials will be added, as needed, to support the psychology options areas for the Equine Studies and Natural Horsemanship degrees as part of the Business Department's long-range resource acquisition plan.
- b. No additional telecommunications courses are anticipated.
- c. Application-based courses and activities for the Natural Horsemanship program will occur at the La Cense facility outside Dillon through the partnership with La Cense Montana. This facility remains adequate to provide, per the partnership agreement, students with the necessary resources for the hands-on or laboratory components of the program including barn, pens and other physical facilities.
- d. The current support personnel within the Business and Technology department are adequate to support the addition of these Option areas within the Natural Horsemanship and Equine Studies programs.

3. *Costs estimated over a five-year period.*

- a. As this proposal is for additional Option Areas only, and not for addition of an entirely new program, the costs directly related to these Options are anticipated to be small. Anticipated costs associated with student needs over the first five years of this program expansion can be accommodated by existing funds and re-

allocation of funds directed to current costs associated with existing Option Areas.

4. *Impact on enrollment.*

- a. Anticipated student enrollment in these Option areas projected over the next ten years is speculative. Many of the students attracted to these options may have chosen UMW primarily for the strength of the equine program, and the availability of the psychology areas merely expands student opportunities for post-graduate employment and graduate school. There will be no special requirements or enrollment limits associated with this Option Area. No critical mass of students enrolled in this Option Area is mandatory for its existence as all classes are currently being taught of psychology majors within other departments.

5. *Relationship to other programs on campus.*

- a. The Psychology Option Area does result in an inter-departmental interaction between the Business and Technology Department, home department of the Equine Studies Program, and the History, Philosophy, and Social Science Department, home of the psychology division. This is considered a positive result of this Option Area.

6. *Relationship to other institutions.*

- a. By virtue of the uniqueness of UMW's Natural Horsemanship program, a psychology Option Area, leading potential graduates into the field of equine-assisted therapy, has no parallel in the State of Montana or within the United States. This Option Area will provide a student a novel combination of utilization of the principles of behavior to "teach" both horses and humans.

Process Leading to Submission of Proposal

1. This proposal has evolved based on a number of factors. First and foremost, the recognition of the increasing interest in the role of the horse in facilitating changes in human behavior and learning activities. Several professionals in the field, both on-campus and off-site, had indicated interest in the development of such an Option area at UMW, particularly associated with the applied discipline of natural horsemanship. A final factor was the strong interest by a number of students in pursuing a potentially lucrative career in some aspect of equine-assisted therapy. Salaries or income will vary depending on the student's final goal; an independent EGALA-certified Horse Professional might earn somewhat less than a clinical therapist (which will require a student go on to get an advanced degree). Given that an inter-departmental association of existing coursework could easily create this Option area, the program seems a "natural" for Western's equine programs.