Proposal for an Undergraduate Certificate
in Applied Positive Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology
College of Education
University of Utah

January 14, 2010
# Table of Contents

**Section I**  
Request for a Certificate Program  

**Section II**  
Description of Program  
Educational Objectives  
Purpose of the Certificate  
Requirements for Admission  
Student Advising  
Number of Credits  
Delivery Methods  
Accreditation  
Projected Yearly Enrollment  
Impact on the Existing Online Series  
Impact on Other Utah Institutions  
New Faculty  
Marriott Library E-Reserve  

**Section III**  
Need for Certificate Program  
Similar Undergraduate Certificate Program at the U of Maryland  
Careers in Positive Psychology  
Student Demand in the Positive Psychology Online Series  
Benefits of an Online Certificate Program  
Advantage of Undergraduate Preparation in Positive Psychology  

**Section IV**  
Assessment of Program Effectiveness  
Standards for Completion  
Continuous Improvement in Curriculum  

**Section V**  
Budget  
Reallocation of Budgetary Resources  
TACC Grants  
Impact on Department Budget  

**Appendix A**  
Courses & Descriptions  

**Appendix B**  
Positive Psychology Online Series Staff  

**Appendix C**  
Graduate Programs in Positive Psychology
SECTION I

Request for a Certificate Program

The Department of Educational Psychology requests the creation of an online undergraduate certificate program in Applied Positive Psychology, an emerging specialty in the field of psychology. Currently, the Department offers an Online Positive Psychology Series open to any undergraduate or graduate student. An undergraduate certificate would acknowledge training in applied positive psychology as a valuable addition to a student’s undergraduate major. Students enrolled in our online courses have been requesting additional training or a program in positive psychology for the past 4 years. Many students offer to become volunteer teaching assistants. Nine volunteer teaching assistants are currently working with our instructors. The Department of Educational Psychology does not plan to offer a degree in applied positive psychology in the near future but is proposing to offer an undergraduate certificate in this emerging field.

SECTION II

Description of Program

Positive Psychology, a new scientific area in psychology, emphasizes the study of human strengths, positive emotions, and well-being. Applied positive psychology is “the application of positive psychology research to the facilitation of optimal functioning” (Linley & Joseph, 2004a, p. 4). In the proposed undergraduate certificate program, a minimum of 12 required credit hours will focus on applying positive psychology to individual behavior and relationships. In addition, students will choose a minimum of 8 credit hours of electives to apply to areas such as education or the workplace.

Educational Objectives

Educational objectives for the undergraduate certificate include the following:
1) Understanding of theories and research methods in positive psychology and
2) Application of evidence-based research in positive psychology to individual behavior, relationships, and institutions.
Specific skills for individuals include practicing realistic optimism, changing addictive thinking, changing behavior, and quality of life self-coaching. Skills for relationships include intimate relationship assessment and development, forgiveness, anger reduction, and reconstruction after divorce. Skills for professionals include assertiveness training, use of flow and visualization to create optimum work performance, use of meditation for stress reduction, and skills to cope with difficult people.

Purpose of the Certificate

This certificate program provides information about cutting-edge research in positive psychology that can be applied to personal, school, or professional work settings. Principles in this field can positively impact social policy, mental health, and organizations. For example, in “controlled
A certificate in applied positive psychology will allow undergraduate students in any major to enhance their effectiveness in the workplace and may be viewed favorably in hiring decisions. Students practice exercises designed to build human strengths in our positive psychology courses. During the past four years, our positive psychology online courses have been extremely popular with students in occupational therapy, nursing, social work, counseling, family and consumer studies, athletic training, and communication. Students in these disciplines report that they will use principles of positive psychology in their professions. For example, after completing ED PS 5060, many students reported significant reductions in anger felt from a minor grudge in their workplace.

Heather Molyneaux, Senior Recruiter for Health Sciences and the University Hospital, responded to the question about whether an undergraduate certificate in positive psychology would be viewed favorably in a hiring decision for a nurse: “A nurse must be a Registered Nurse. Beyond that, certain traits such as compassion, integrity, and responsibility are more valuable in the University’s practice of hiring nurses than additional certificates, degrees, or years of work experience.” Heather said that her organization has identified seven traits leading to a nurse’s ability to provide an exceptional experience for patients. The candidate must have the following characteristics: be trustworthy and responsible; have “compassion, integrity, and diversity” and be “collaborative and innovative.” In her view, it is more important to possess these qualities than to possess 20 years of work experience or a graduate degree. A candidate must be able to demonstrate these qualities in an interview with the manager and then, if selected, meets with a team of peers. If the team of peers isn’t comfortable with a candidate, the individual won’t be hired regardless of his or her qualifications (phone interview, Jan. 12, 2010).

Patrick Miller, Ph.D., Chief of Psychological Services at the Salt Lake VA Health Care System, responded to the question of whether an undergraduate certificate in applied positive psychology would be viewed favorably in a hiring decision: “All things being equal, I would view the certificate in applied positive psychology in a favorable way. It is unique and could strengthen an applicant’s credentials” (phone interview, January 12, 2010).

A certificate would also provide students with a background in the field that may be useful when applying to graduate programs in applied positive psychology. Vanessa Kettering, an advisor at Claremont Graduate University, indicated that an undergraduate certificate in positive psychology would “demonstrate enthusiasm for the content… and would show that the student was committed to the area” (phone interview, November 23, 2009).

Aaron Boczkowski, an advisor at the University of Pennsylvania, mentioned that an undergraduate certificate in positive psychology would be “factored into the equation” but would not “make or break” a candidate for admission to the master’s program in applied positive psychology. He stated that taking undergraduate coursework in positive psychology would help a
student respond to essay questions on the application. Mr. Boczkowski also indicated that students should include a list of courses taken in positive psychology in their applications (phone message, Nov. 24, 2009).

Anthony Grant, Director of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney (Australia) responded to the question about the value of an undergraduate certificate: “We would certainly value an undergraduate certificate in positive psychology if it were held by an applicant to our positive psychology or coaching psychology postgraduate degree programs. However, a key component of our admission criteria is work experience and personal maturity and specifically work experience in coaching and applied positive psychology. So, whist such a qualification would be perceived favourably, a student without the requisite work experience would not be admitted even though they held such an award. However, if two applicants both had the same work experience and one also held your award we would chose the applicant with the award” (email dated December 1, 2009).

Patricia Petty, Manager of the Master of Positive Organizational Development program at Case Western Reserve University, responded to the question of the value of an undergraduate certificate: “We would consider anyone with a background in Positive Psych for acceptance in our MPOD program, certificate or bachelors, but our focus would be on their number of years experience. Because we require five to seven years of working experience, our cohorts usually consist of students whose average age is 38-40 years old. The youngest in the cohort is usually around 27 years old, unless there are extenuating circumstances… if an applicant worked in a managerial role throughout their undergraduate years and showed evidence of what we feel would give them the benefit of a full experience in our program” (email dated January 11, 2010).

Requirements for Admission

Students must have a “C” average in their undergraduate coursework on official transcripts from any accredited college or university and a letter of recommendation from an employer or professor.

Student Advising

Our online program coordinator, J.G. Farr, M.Ed. will serve as the advisor for the undergraduate certificate program. Student advising will be conducted online. Instructors and teaching assistants will assist in the student selection process.

Number of Credits

The number of proposed credits is 20 credit hours, which is the minimum requirement in University Policy 6-116 (Undergraduate Certificates).

Delivery Methods
Students may be enrolled at another college or university while pursuing the certificate at the University of Utah. They may take online courses for university credit through AOCE Distance Education without being admitted to the University of Utah.

Our certificate will be offered in two ways. Students may take courses for 1) University credit through UOnline or 2) University credit through AOCE Distance Education independent study.

Accreditation

No accreditation is necessary for this certificate program. Students will not be certified as coaches or therapists. Students who graduate with an undergraduate certificate in applied positive psychology will not receive formal training as coaches. Students will apply principles to a major or profession, and if desired, they may seek a coaching certificate elsewhere.

Projected Yearly Student Enrollment

Because this is the first general undergraduate certificate program in applied positive psychology, it may attract students from the U.S. and other English-speaking countries. An estimate would be 10 students per year during the first 5 years.

Vanessa Kettering, an advisor with positive psychology programs at Claremont Graduate University, mentioned that working adults often ask about online courses in positive psychology when they inquire about CGU’s programs (phone interview, November 23, 2009).

Impact on the Online Series

At the present time, our Department is offering a series of online courses in positive psychology but has not offered a certificate in the field. If the undergraduate certificate program is approved, five new elective courses will be developed within two years.

Impact on Other Institutions

This program should have no direct or adverse impact on other USHE institutions.

New Faculty

Three new instructors will be needed to teach new elective courses in 2011. These instructors will be paid through the student credit hours generated by the new courses.

Marriott Library E-Reserve

The Marriott Library currently has an E-Reserve listing for each online course. No other learning resources are needed.
Section III

Need for a Certificate Program

Our Department has received emails from individuals in Brazil and in other countries asking about our Series. Several of our former online students have inquired about taking advanced courses in positive psychology. Recently, one student asked to be placed on a waiting list in case our Department offers formal training in positive psychology in the future.

A general applied positive psychology undergraduate certificate program is not currently available at any institution.

Graduate certificate programs are offered at University of Sydney in Australia (graduate certificate in applied science or applied positive psychology as part of a master’s of coaching psychology program) and University of East London (a diploma and graduate certificate are a part of the master’s of applied positive psychology program).

Graduate degree programs in the U.S. are offered at East London University, University of Pennsylvania, Claremont Graduate University, and Case Western Reserve University.

Commercial coaching certification courses (i.e., Dean’s MentorCoach $1995 program held once a week for 31 weeks) are offered independently or for CEU credit. The Technology University of Sydney offers a short 3-day executive coaching certificate for $2,640. San Francisco State University offers 7 classes for CEU credit in a core strengths coaching certificate for $2,900.

Similar Undergraduate Certificate Program at the U of Maryland

The University of Maryland at College Park offers an undergraduate certificate program in applied positive psychology project management: [http://pm.umd.edu/page.php?id=655](http://pm.umd.edu/page.php?id=655).

“CAPP-PM Academic Programs: (taken from the UM website) CAPP-PM develops and delivers undergraduate and graduate courses within the University of Maryland Project Management Program. These courses are offered as both core required courses and electives…. Course topics include but are not limited to forming high performance project teams, project leadership, effective communication practices, strengths-based management practices, managing conflicts, and leading organizational change.”

Careers in Positive Psychology

A growing number of professionals from varying backgrounds have decided to pursue training in applied positive psychology and a certificate in coaching. Lawyers, business managers, mental health professionals, HR trainers, and sports psychologists are among the types of professionals interested in adding training in applied positive psychology and coaching to their expertise. A
new career specialty is a positive psychology coach. Harvard Medical School hosts an Institute of Coaching, an Annual Coaching Conference, and a new professional journal called

**COACHING: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice.** At Harvard’s Institute of Coaching, $100,000 is awarded in yearly grants to researchers and graduate students.

Please see [http://www.cgu.edu/include/Org_Careers.pdf](http://www.cgu.edu/include/Org_Careers.pdf) for new careers in Positive Organizational Psychology.

**Student Demand for the Positive Psychology Online Series**

Judging from the numbers of students enrolled in our Series from 2005 to the present, student demand is increasing. In Summer Semester 2005, two 2-credit course offerings yielded only 38 total graduate/undergraduate students. In Spring Semester 2008, enrollment in six positive psychology online courses reached nearly 200 undergraduate/graduate students. Interestingly, undergraduate students outnumber graduate students almost 10:1. In 2009—during the recession—our enrollment in the Positive Psychology Online Series totaled over 450 students. A few days before Spring Semester 2010, enrollment was approaching 200 undergraduate students and 20 graduate students in the Series.

Several times each semester, students ask for information about our courses to petition their departments to use a positive psychology course as an elective in a program or as upper division or graduate elective credit. For example, the Peace and Conflict emphasis in Communication allows students to use ED PS 5060 as an elective. The Department of Social Work has approved at least two of our courses for MSW students. Other departments are adding our positive psychology courses as requirements for related degree programs.

**Benefits of an Online Certificate Program**

The online nature of the Positive Psychology Series has attracted students from all over the world. By offering the first online undergraduate certificate program in applied positive psychology, the University of Utah will earn prominence in an emerging field.

**Advantage of Undergraduate Preparation in Positive Psychology**

In the Global Well-Being Conference in October, 2007, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a “founding father” of Positive Psychology and professor at Claremont Graduate University shared a concern about the pool of doctoral candidates hoping to be the first students in CGU’s new doctoral programs in positive psychology ([http://www.cgu.edu](http://www.cgu.edu)). He mentioned that the first group of applicants seemed more interested in applying happiness principles to their own lives than in contributing to new research in the field. If undergraduate students have a chance to apply positive psychology to their personal lives, relationships, education, and professions before graduate school, they may be better prepared for the academic focus and rigor of research-oriented programs.
Section IV

Assessment of Program Effectiveness

Volunteer TAs will interview students earning the undergraduate certificate in applied positive psychology. Volunteer TAs will assess the quality of the certificate program by noting effects such as career enhancement or preparation for graduate study. Results of the interviews will be used to evaluate the certificate program.

Standards for Completion

Students will have a minimum GPA of 2.0 for 20 credit hours and must pass a comprehensive essay exam (a proctored written exam) with a C grade at the end of their program.

Continuous Improvement of Curriculum

All students in the certificate program will be strongly encouraged to submit an evaluation for each course. Feedback will be used to improve curriculum in the certificate program.

Section V

Budget for the Program

This program will not affect the current faculty and teaching assistant budgets. All TAs will be volunteers trained before each Fall semester, instructors will be paid from the SCH generated by the courses, and the coordinator will be paid at the same percentage currently in place to teach courses and administer the program.

Reallocation of Budgetary Resources

No reallocation of budgetary resources will be required for this program.

TACC Grants

Graduate students, teaching assistants, instructors, or professors applying for Technology Assisted Curriculum Center (TACC) grant money to design online courses will use the funds to develop five additional elective courses. (See Appendix A.)

Impact on Current Departmental Budget

The Educational Psychology Department is operating the Series and will operate the Undergraduate Certificate Program as a self-sustaining entity. Other programs in the Department are offered exclusively to graduate students. This certificate program will have little impact on
existing graduate program budgets. It may have a slightly favorable impact because graduate Educational Psychology programs (Counseling Psychology, Professional Counseling, etc.) now utilize graduate online courses in applied positive psychology as electives.

Appendix A

Courses & Descriptions

Required Courses (12 hours)

ED PS 5960-091 Overview of Positive Psychology (3 credits)
This course provides an overview designed to give students "a taste" of the positive psychology movement and how positive psychological principles can be applied to various areas of life to help individuals have greater life satisfaction and happiness.

ED PS 5060-090 Forgiveness & Anger Reduction (3 credits)
Forgiveness and Anger Reduction is a course for students who would like to help others reduce their destructive anger from a long-term minor grudge by using step-by-step forgiveness and anger reduction processes. Students will learn two models of forgiveness: the Enright model and the Luskin model. Students will teach the principles of the Luskin and Enright models to older teenagers or adults at the end of the semester. Students will also learn about the Carter and McKay theories of anger management and will practice techniques to reduce long-term destructive anger.

ED PS 5960-093 Enhancing Happiness and Life Satisfaction (3 credits)
This is an activity/application self-coaching course. Students will apply Frisch’s Quality of Life Coaching exercises/interventions to high-priority areas of life and will practice weekly exercises designed to increase “strengths ‘of the heart’” (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). “Forty percent of our happiness is controlled by our choices or intentional activities that we pursue… The figure rises to 50 percent if we view our life circumstances as changeable… through our own best efforts” (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2007).

ED PS 5960-095 Quality Intimate Relationships (3 credits)
Quality Intimate Relationships teaches students what skills, characteristics and traits constitute a good relationship and how to implement these in their lives. The nature and importance of intimacy, the influence of culture, individual differences, experience, and human nature on intimacy and relationship skills will be explored. Students will be encouraged to explore their personalities, self concept, expectations and communication styles and how they will and do impact their relationships.

Elective Courses (minimum of 8 hours required)

ED PS 5960-092 Coping with Difficult People (2 credits)
This course is designed for those who want to learn to communicate more effectively with difficult people. The material covers skills needed to deal with others in pressured situations and techniques to avoid getting caught up in defensiveness. In addition, strategies on how to merge into a conflict situation and lead it toward purposeful objectives are taught.
ED PS 5960-098 Growing from Traumatic Life Experiences (3 credits)
In this course, students learn about Wilson’s “Positive Psychology of Trauma and PTSD,” posttraumatic growth (PTG), and stress-related growth (SRG). Students explore 20 growth concepts and three models of PTG using a case study approach by analyzing how individuals develop strengths and transform themselves after adversity. Although two weeks of the course focus on traumatic stress reactions and PTSD, students explore the “best (i.e., highest, growth-promoting, self-actualizing) consequences of psychic traumatization” (Wilson, 2006).

ED PS 5965-090 Stress, Meditation & Mindfulness (3 credits)
This course provides systematic training in the practice of meditation. Students explore scientific and traditional views of meditation. The course focuses on meditation and mindfulness and how these principles have been shown scientifically and indigenously to reduce stress and have other positive impacts on the human condition. The course provides step-by-step instruction on develop a daily meditation practice (especially geared to Westerners).

Interdisciplinary Elective Courses

Health Education 5020 Positive Physical Health
Psychology 2440 Attitudes and Persuasion

ELECTIVES TO BE ADDED IN 2010
   ED PS 5960-094 Divorce: Life Reconstruction (2 credits)
   ED PS 5960-096 Forgiving Yourself: A New Lens on Life (2 credits)

ELECTIVES TO BE ADDED IN 2011
   ED PS 5960-097 Changing Addictive Thinking (2 credits)
   ED PS 5960-099 Enhancing Subjective Well-Being in Late Mid-Life (2 credits)
   ED PS 5960 Positive Organizational Psychology (2 credits)
   ED PS 5960 Changing Children’s Behavior Using Positive Methods (2 credits)
Appendix B

Positive Psychology Staff

Online Program Coordinator  J. G. Farr, MEd

Online Instructors  
Trish Henrie, PhD 091, 092, 095  
J. G. Farr, MEd 5060, 093, 098  
Terisa Gabrielsen,* MS, 094  
Clark Slagle, MS 5965  
Emma Mansour (MS, May 2010), 099  
*also serves as a TA for five required courses

Volunteer TAs in Sp 2010  
Linda Sorensen (Learning Sci PhD prog.) 091  
Karin Cummins (MSW, May 2010) 5060  
Jacob Adams, MEd (ELP PhD prog.) 098  
Kali Korbis, MS (Comm PhD prog.) 093  
April Hewes, MSW, Course Design  
Jerome Roque, 096 Course Design (IDET)  
Chris Brennan, 097 Course Design only  
(Psychology master’s program)  
Julie Vesely, 094 & 099 Course Design only  
(Applying for master’s in ED PS Counseling)  
Paige Zuckerman, Assistant Director, Psychology  
Undergraduate Advising, 092
Appendix C

Graduate Programs in Positive Psychology

Master’s Programs
Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

MSc Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP), University of East London, London

M.A. in Positive Developmental Psychology and Evaluation, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA

M.A. in Positive Organizational Psychology and Evaluation, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA

Master of Science in Positive Organizational Development, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH

Ph.D. Programs
Ph.D. in Positive Developmental Psychology, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA

Ph.D. in Positive Organizational Psychology, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA

Diploma in Positive Psychology (Mexico)
Diplomado En Psicología Positiva, Universidad Iberoamericana, Ciudad de México, Mexico
February 19, 2010

TO:   David Pershing  
       Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

FR:   John Francis  
       Chair, Undergraduate Council

RE:   Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology

At its meeting of Tuesday, January 26, 2010, the Undergraduate Council voted unanimously to approve a proposal from the Department of Educational Psychology for an Undergraduate Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology. The delay in forwarding this proposal to you was because the Council’s approval was contingent on the inclusion in the proposal of some additional letters of support, which the Department has now provided. A copy of the proposal, with supporting letters, is attached.

We are asking you, if you also approve of the proposal, to forward it on to the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate for their consideration.
January 21, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

As director of the Department’s curriculum, I’m writing this letter of support on behalf of the Department of Educational Psychology for the proposed Undergraduate Certificate in Positive Psychology. This program has evolved over the past several years, and receives rave reviews from students. Because the program is online, it allows undergraduate to enhance their skills in positive psychology even though they may live some distance from the University of Utah campus. I believe this program will provide undergraduates with a solid educational experience that will enhance their interpersonal skill set.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Gardner, Ph.D.
Associate Chair and Professor
Educational Psychology
February 8, 2010

John Francis
Associate VP-Undergraduate Studies

Dear Dr. Francis:

I am writing to indicate support by the College of Social and Behavioral Science for the Department of Educational Psychology’s proposal for an Undergraduate Certificate in Positive Psychology. In reviewing this proposal, I have checked with departments in the College whose interests most closely align with this proposed certificate program. I do not find duplication of efforts or of program. In fact the proposed certificate program should be complementary to CSBS programs and offers expanded educational opportunities for students. Thus, I would like to extend my support for this program. Please feel free to contact me should you need additional information.

[Signature]

Sincerely,

Stephen E. Reynolds,
Associate Dean

Cc: Elaine Clark, Chair Dept of Educational Psychology
    Cynthia Berg, Chair Dept of Psychology
    M. David Rudd, Dean College of Social and Behavioral Science
February 18, 2010

John G. Francis, PhD
Senior Associate Vice President
Undergraduate Studies
Sill Center
University of Utah

Dear Dr. Francis:

On behalf of the College of Health, I am pleased to take this opportunity to write in support of the Department of Educational Psychology’s proposal for an Undergraduate Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology.

I have reviewed this proposal with our departments of Exercise and Sport Science, Health Promotion and Education, and Parks, Recreation and Tourism. These departments currently offer courses that could contribute to an Applied Positive Psychology curriculum.

The College of Health supports this proposed academic program. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

James E. Graves, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor

JEGmp
January 25, 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to give my full support for the Proposal for an Undergraduate Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology. This unique program within the College of Education's nationally ranked Department of Educational Psychology has experienced an explosion of student demand since its inception in 2005.

Begun shortly after positive psychology burst on to the scene in 1998, Educational Psychology's courses in this area highlight why we are a state and national leader in the training of counselors and psychologists. Now, through our proposed undergraduate certificate, the Department will be able to continue serving large numbers of undergraduate students, whose enrollment in the Positive Psychology courses far exceeds that of graduate students.

Serving undergraduates through this proposed certificate program is extremely important for a variety of reasons, student retention perhaps being chief among them: positive psychology teaches students how to make the most of their own strengths, resilience and creativity, while at the same time helping them to enhance their work ethic, teamwork skills and communication abilities—all vital skills for college success.

Again, I fully support this proposal and encourage you to approve it immediately.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Hardman
Dean
2 March 2010

A. Lorris Betz
Senior Vice President for Health Sciences
Bldg 550, 5th Floor
Campus

Dear Vice President Betz,

Enclosed is the proposal for the WOMAN and CHILD Institute which was approved by the Graduate Council on February 22, 2010. Included in this packet are the proposal and signature page.

Please forward this packet to the President’s Office for his signature before being forwarded to the Academic Senate to be placed on the information calendar for the next meeting of the Senate.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Wight
Dean, The Graduate School