

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

A higher degree. A higher purpose.

Statement by Dr. Raymond Trybus, Walden University College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Senior Director, Psychology Licensing & Regulatory Affairs
Before the 79th Oregon Legislative Assembly

SB 418 – Educational and training qualifications necessary to be licensed to practice psychology

APRIL 9, 2015

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Raymond Trybus and I am the Senior Director for Psychology Licensing & Regulatory Affairs and Program Director, MS Clinical Psychology at Walden University.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my support for Senate Bill 418. SB418 would change the recently-enacted restrictive requirements for licensing as a psychologist. In particular, the recent change limits eligibility for psychology licensing to those applicants who graduated from a doctoral program in psychology that is accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). However, APA, unlike other related professional accreditation agencies, will not accept an application for accreditation from doctoral programs that are “substantially or completely” online. Accordingly, SB418 makes changes that do not permit the State Board of Psychologist Examiners to deny approval of doctoral programs in psychology based upon the program not holding accreditation from APA, nor based upon the manner in which the program conducts the in-residence portion of its curriculum, nor based on whether courses in the program are offered online or on-ground.

Let me now offer background on Walden University, and further explanation of our reasons for supporting SB418.

For more than 40 years, Walden has been a university with curricula that emphasize a scholar-practitioner philosophy: applying theoretical and empirical knowledge to professional practice with the goal of improving organizations, educational institutions, and whole communities. Walden is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The university provides students with an engaging educational experience that connects them with expert faculty and peers around the world. Walden is the flagship university in the Laureate International Universities network—a global network of more than 80 campus-based and online universities in 29 countries enrolling more than 950,000 students.

The majority of Walden students—close to 89%—work full time, part-time, or are self-employed. Additionally, Walden’s student body is diverse. Women comprise more than 75% of Walden’s student body and more than 52% are of ethnic minority background. Walden is dedicated to providing access to higher education for adult learners, and more than 80% of Walden’s students are 30 years of age or older.

The data is similar for Walden’s 48 Oregon students earning degrees through the School of Psychology. The average age of the student body residing in the state of Oregon is 41 and 71% are female.

Walden University responds and will continue to respond to the educational needs of a diversified population. The university has 357 Oregon residents currently enrolled and 898 alumni in the State of Oregon whose 920 degrees awarded are helping the state achieve the goals expressed in ORS 351.009 which are as follows:

- 40% of Oregonians will hold a Bachelor’s degree or some type of postgraduate degree.
- 40% of Oregonians will hold an Associate degree

or some postsecondary training.

- 20% of Oregonians will hold at least a high school diploma or equivalent.

Walden has consistently contributed to the aspirational goals outlined in ORS 351.009 and has done so by charging tuition rates comparable to the in-state tuition rates of Oregon State University.¹ SB 418 offers an opportunity for highly trained and credentialed psychologists to obtain licensure in the state of Oregon while serving communities and constituents around the state. In fact, our students are completing research in real applied areas. For example, one of our students completed her dissertation by exploring empirical evidence for use of mindfulness-based relaxation techniques among local Southeast Asian immigrants suffering from PTSD as a result of the genocide in and around Cambodia in the 1970's.

Walden University is in favor of Senate Bill 418 – a measure intended to assure equality of opportunity for students who either choose or are required, for a variety of personal or financial reasons, to pursue a significant portion of their higher education on-line. The bill will also ensure that such students will acquire the educational and training qualifications necessary to be licensed to practice psychology. Walden University supports an equal and fair opportunity for students who have completed a doctoral psychology program from an institution accredited by the Higher Learning Commission to obtain licensure in the state of Oregon.

In addition to regional accreditation, Walden University has sought and obtained programmatic accreditation for many of its degree programs. These accreditations are as follows:

¹ *Walden's M.S. in Psychology program per credit tuition = \$445/credit and Walden's PhD in Psychology = \$485/credit. Oregon State University's Ecampus graduate per credit tuition = \$496/credit.*

Program	Accredited by
Counseling	Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)
Nursing	Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)
Teacher Education	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) <i>Now known as CAEP – Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation</i>
Business	Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
Project Management	Global Accreditation Center (GAC) of the Project Management Institute (PMI)

However, Walden University is unable to seek programmatic accreditation for its doctoral psychology programs from the American Psychological Association (APA) because APA’s Commission on Accreditation (CoA) adopted a regulation in 2010 that prohibits programs that are fully or substantially online from applying.² The APA reaffirmed its restrictive language in new standards promulgated last month and effective in 2017. Despite full compliance with professional expectations for socialization and face-to-face instruction through residency requirements, online programs with eminently qualified faculties and demonstrated instructional effectiveness are barred from programmatic accreditation.

Seventeen states, including Arizona, California, Nevada, Texas, and Washington State already license psychologists equally from substantially online programs, regardless of APA accreditation. Oregon’s neighbors recognize the tremendous public health risks of maintaining outmoded licensure standards and have acted decisively to remedy the acute shortage of mental health professionals in rural areas.

Walden University has ensured compliance with professional expectations for socialization and face-to-face instruction through its residency requirements.

² APA. (2010). *Implementing Regulation C-27: Distance and electronically mediated education in doctoral programs*. Commission on Accreditation. www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/about/policies/implementing-regulations.aspx.

Through a blended or hybrid model that meets the DOE definition of in-residence courses, academic and professional activities are monitored by Walden faculty for quality and effectiveness of learning.

Conclusion

Everything Walden University develops and implements is designed with the student at the center of the educational activity. Walden is committed to providing access to education, especially for nontraditional students, and to representing underserved populations and those who are located in rural areas. Our adherence to the highest levels of quality and integrity drive our commitment to offer the best educational and professional opportunities to our students, faculty, and staff. We look forward to the continued leadership of the members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly to ensure that all students in the state of Oregon have access to higher education programs in the psychology discipline.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.