



May 3, 2017

Dr. Vistasp M. Karbhari
President
The University of Texas at Arlington
Box 19125
Arlington, TX 76019-0125

Dear Dr. Karbhari:

Thank you for your letter of November 22, 2016, transmitting a prospectus for an off-campus instructional site where 50% or more of the Ph.D. program in Physics and Applied Physics will be offered, effective fall 2017.

The location of the site is as follows:

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
One West University Boulevard
Brownsville, TX 78520

Offering the program at the site through a cooperative (or extended) doctoral program is consistent with the mission of the University. Students in the program at the site will be admitted into the Ph.D. program in Physics and Applied Physics by the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). They will fulfill all requirements of the Ph.D. degree in Physics and Applied Physics offered by UTA and will be granted Ph.D. degrees under the authority granted to UTA. The program will fill a need to expand the educational opportunities for students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) who wish to pursue doctoral studies in physics and applied physics since UTRGV does not currently offer a Ph.D. degree in Physics and Applied Physics. In addition, UTA resident students will be allowed to take courses and participate in research with world recognized expertise in general relativity and gravitational wave research. Documentation of planning for the cooperative program was provided.

A primary feature of the cooperative program is to enable students who have initiated graduate research at UTRGV and have met the entrance requirements of the UTA Ph.D. program in Physics and Applied Physics to carry out their Ph.D. research at UTRGV under the joint supervision of UTA and UTRGV faculty. UTRGV faculty who co-supervise research will serve as adjunct faculty at UTA and must meet all requirements to serve as Graduate Faculty in UTA's physics department. Students will be able to fulfill their coursework requirements through remote participation in regular UTA graduate courses through internet-based live streaming. Students will be able to take their diagnostic exams (qualifiers) at the UTRGV campus under a proctoring arrangement with UTRGV faculty. Admission requirements for UTRGV students will be the same as for UTA students and program requirements will be the same as well.

Course descriptions were provided. Two methods of assessment built into the larger structure of UTA assessment will be used: the Unit Effectiveness Process and Student Feedback Surveys. Data is disaggregated by location so the comparability of student learning at each site can be assured. Improvements in the off-site location will be reflected in the Improvement Report which is part of the Unit Effectiveness Process.



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Students in the program at the off-campus site will have full online access to all relevant journals and other library materials necessary for the program as well as access to UTA IT and UT System Supercomputing Facilities. Students may also be provided access through their research advisors to other library and computer resources including those at UT System component campuses and at national and international research laboratories. Further, a discovery tool, Summon, is available. This tool searches across the majority of the libraries' resources using a single, Google-like search. Specific databases and journals were listed. Interlibrary loan is available as well.

Other student support services include academic advisors in person, through email, and via phone; guidance in selection of course work and scheduling of Ph.D. program exams; academic support programs at UTRGV and UTA including research laboratories; support programs specifically for graduate students; and orientation.

Physical facilities to support the program include classrooms equipped for remote attendance, technology sufficient to support instructional modalities used by UTA and UTA adjunct faculty members, and state of the art facilities for research purposes such as the Center for Advanced Radio Astronomy and Laser Interferometer Gravitational-waves Observatory. Financial resources to support the program offered at the site appear adequate.

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reviewed the materials seeking approval of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley off-campus instructional site. It was the decision of the Board to approve the site and include it in the scope of the current accreditation. The site will be reviewed again, which may include a site visit, as part of the institution's fifth-year or decennial review.

Enclosed is an invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of review of the prospectus.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belle S. Wheelan".

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/ABC:iy

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Loraine Phillips, Assistant Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting
Dr. Steven M. Sheeley