During the Spring 2011 online sessions, the Online Testing Center was created as a centralized location for all testing issues related to the Division of Online Programs.

The Online Testing Center assists online students with non-technical issues regarding the Securexam Remote Proctor, as well as all other online testing issues such as course examinations, technical requirements for testing, and comprehensive exams. The Online Testing Center is available from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday.

Students should contact the Online Testing Center if they have questions regarding ordering the Securexam Remote Proctor®, accessing a particular exam, issues experienced during an exam if the exam has been accessed, or questions about comprehensive exams. Students should also contact the Online Testing Center with general questions about the online exam process.

The Online Testing Center also assists instructors with setting up examinations for use with the Securexam Remote Proctor®, reviewing and preparing exam videos for the Academic Integrity Committee, and setting up the Online Comprehensive Exam for graduating students.

The Online Testing Center maybe reached at by emailing uwaotc@uwa.edu or by dialing 1-877-892-1835 and selecting option 3. Students experiencing technical issues of any nature during their online courses should visit the UWA HelpDesk at www.helpdesk.uwa.edu. After creating a ticket, the student will be assisted by the appropriate representative.
Imagine the stereotypical office of a mental health therapist. A cozy room with comfortably worn leather chairs, a mahogany desk and matching credenza guarding shelves where volumes of books and bric-a-brac rest.

Oh, and there's the couch. What good would any therapist be without the couch and the accompanying box of tissue?

Now visit Foust Hall on the University of West Alabama campus. Behind a door simply marked “1” is the office of Dr. Debbie Ann Baker-Dean. Dr. Baker-Dean, with an alphabet soup of degree acronyms trailing her name, operates out of what may have once been a classroom in a building built in 1922 to house the teaching lab at Alabama Normal College and Laboratory School.

There are no leather chairs or mahogany desks in Foust 1. There isn't even a couch. Three six-foot tables in a loosely configured “U” shape, along with red plastic and metal chairs more suited for a picnic than therapy constitutes the décor. Dr. Baker-Dean – PhD, MS, MMPA, BA and AA – has a classroom work table masquerading as a desk for her computer and the telephone.

The telephone is Dr. Baker-Dean's equivalent to the therapist's couch. The phone is where she conducts her most important business. It is ... pun intended ... where she answers her life's calling.

"We do a lot of phone therapy," said Dr. Baker-Dean. "We use email, but since it’s not encrypted, we have to be very general and that isn't always what our students need. We are visiting the use of Skype and GoTo Meeting, but the bulk of my sessions are over the telephone at this time."

While the office furnishings may be Spartan, the concept and execution of offering mental health therapy to online college students is a novel approach.

"UWA is way ahead of the curve," Dr. Baker-Dean said. "Online therapy has been around for years, but UWA is the only institution I know of offering mental health therapy to online students."

Baker-Dean, who earned four degrees from Mississippi State, works under the UWA Counseling Services umbrella but her assignment is therapy for online students. While happy to schedule a session with online faculty, her primary focus is the student.

"There is a need out there," said Dr. Baker-Dean. "We are helping more students than I originally thought. There are a lot of people hurting and not a lot of places for them to go for help."

Dr. Baker-Dean is proud that the mental health therapy sessions she conducts are offered free of charge to online students. She emphasizes that sessions are completely confidential, with the lone exception being a student who may present a danger to themselves or others.

"Students deal with depression, stress and anxiety, often feeling overwhelmed by the demands of online learning," Dr. Baker-Dean said. "In early January, at the start of Spring 1, we had several students contact us and then it leveled off until Spring 2 started and it picked up again."

Dr. Baker-Dean doesn't meet with students face-to-face, although an informed consent procedure is adhered to for therapy administered over the phone. While conducting sessions exclusively over the phone is not always preferable, it does provide benefits that in-person therapy may lack.

"Men are more apt to call than to show up face-to-face. It’s the same thing as trying to get men to visit their medical doctor, they are usually more reluctant than women," she said. "We hope people understand is that mental health issues are no different than physical ailments. If you are diabetic, you take your insulin. Mental health therapy is a treatment just like any other treatment plan."

Dr. Baker-Dean splits time between UWA, where she is available 20 hours per week for online students, her private practice in Meridian, Miss., and her work in as a Vocational Expert for Social Security in Jackson, Miss. With plenty to keep her presently occupied, Baker-Dean is certain the demand for mental health therapy for online students will soon require full-time attention.

Noting that UWA’s current online student enrollment is equal to or greater than its traditional student population, she says the numbers alone will demand more therapy time and energy be devoted to online student’s mental health.

An overwhelming majority of online students at UWA are enrolled in graduate level guidance, counseling and/or psychology degree programs. There were 313 candidates for the master's and 29 candidates for the education specialist degrees in those fields at recent spring commencement exercises. A majority of those had earned their degree as online students.

Asked whether having so many students working toward therapy-providing careers may decrease the need for online student services, Dr. Baker-Dean smiled a wry smile, eyes sparkling with an insider’s knowledge.

“They know,” she said, “that in this business we are all just wounded healers.”
Computer Requirements For Online Students

- Microsoft Office Suite (latest version)
- OS: Windows XP (32 bit)/Windows Vista (32/64 bit)/Windows 7 (32/64 bit) / Mac OSX v10.5 & v10.6
- Memory: 512 MB RAM (Windows XP); 1 GB RAM (Windows Vista/Windows 7/Mac)
- Remote Proctor does not support non-English operating systems
- Hard drive: 20 GB of free space
- Screen resolution: Minimum 1024 x 768
- Internet connection: High speed (DSL, Cable or LAN) is required. Dialup, cellular high speed and satellite Internet service is not supported for use with the Remote Proctor system.

IMPORTANT UWA ONLINE DATES

June 6 Begin registration for both fall sessions
June 13 Last day for 50% tuition refund
June 24 Summer comps registration deadline
July 8 Online comprehensive exams for all master’s degrees

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Division of Online Programs
Visit UWA Online at These Upcoming Conferences

June 13
Alabama School Library Association — Birmingham
Kent Partridge

June 15-16
Alabama Education Technology — Birmingham
Dr. Martha Hocutt, Kent Partridge

June 23-28
American Library Association — New Orleans
Vivian Hauser

June 26-29
International Society Technology in Education
Philadelphia, PA
Dr. Martha Hocutt, Kent Partridge

Advisors for UWA Online Students
Call 1.877.892.1835 or email online@uwa.edu

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The University of West Alabama
Division of Online Programs
UWA Station 46
Livingston, AL 35470
877.892.1835 ph
205.652.3492 fax
http://online.uwa.edu