

**Submission date:** Revised/Update Program Review Submitted 02/10/2020

**Program/s in this review:** Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Members of the program review committee:**

- Kathi Trawver, Chair, Professor & BSW Program Coordinator, Anchorage
- David Moxley, Professor & Director of the School of Social Work, Anchorage
- Alexa Filanowicz, Clinical Assistant Professor & BSW Field Coordinator, Anchorage

### **1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)**

#### **Relevance**

The UAA BSW program's mission is to prepare its students to meet the broad social service and health needs of Alaska. Alaska needs a trained workforce able to effectively address a broad array of intersecting and complex social and health disparities related to poverty, racism, and social injustice and high rates of substance use, mental illness, suicide, family/interpersonal violence, justice involvement, food and housing insufficiency and homelessness, and lack of access to care.

The campus-based BSW program offers students an intensive professional development program incorporating theory, skill development, practicum experiences, a cohort-based experience, and a practice focused integrative capstone. The program prepares students to effectively intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to address Alaska's complex social issues and fill critical front-line positions in public, nonprofit, and tribal community-based organizations. Further, the BSW program prepares students for accelerated graduate education, including enrollment in the UAA MSW program that educates them to take on higher-level supervisory, administrative, and community leadership roles.

#### **Support to Other Academic Units**

The program actively coordinates and collaborates with UAA community campuses and provides two GER courses (one is designated as a Native-themed course), the social welfare minor, and the children's mental health certificate, all made available to other disciplines across UAA campuses. Recently, the BSW program and the Alaska Office of Children's Services (OCS), Child Welfare Academy, and several UAA programs developed the Interprofessional Child Welfare Occupational Endorsement Certificate that will expand training and employment opportunities for students across academic disciplines.

#### **Partnerships Outside UAA**

Faculty foster strong community partnerships through service-learning, research/evaluation, and professional service. Faculty have built numerous community partnerships (e.g., Food Bank of Alaska, Bean's Cafe, Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH), OCS, Project Homeless Connect). The CCEL has recognized BSW faculty with the 2019 Community Builder Award, the annual the Selkregg Community Engagement and Service Learning Award twice, and nominated a faculty member for Campus Compact's Ehrlich Civically Engaged Faculty Award (2017 national finalist). Research/evaluation partners include several state and non-profit organizations (e.g., Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA), Department of Corrections, Alaska Court System, Head Start, Catholic Social Services, Network on DVSA, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska). Examples of service

partnerships include Denali Family Services, National Association of Social Workers, Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Division of Behavioral Health, Disability Law Center, Council on Social Work Education, and Alaska Homeless Management System.

The BSW program has over 40 years of developing strong community partnerships with practicum sites in public, non-profit, and tribal organizations. Currently the BSW program supports MOAs with over 50 practicum sites that provide experiential education to BSW students under the supervision of experienced social work practitioners. Students rank their practicum experience as the principal source of learning about practice and the synergies between coursework and practicum experiences as a distinctive aspect of their learning experience at UAA.

### **Workforce Development and Employment Opportunities**

The BSW program has demonstrated a strong and sustained commitment to building Alaska's social service and behavioral health workforce. The program has had four successful extramural workforce development programs funded from extramural sources (e.g., HRSA, National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, National Council on Behavioral Health, Alaska Exposure Grant). Currently, the BSW program is working with OCS to develop a comprehensive workforce partnership.

### **Extramural Funding**

The BSW program is productive in bringing in external funding. As noted above, the program has received over 1 million dollars in external funding for workforce development programs. Currently, program faculty are working closely with the Alaska Office of Children's Services to secure federal funding to support additional workforce development in public and tribal child welfare. Over the past three years, faculty have secured over \$750,000 in external program, research, and evaluation funding.

### **High Demand Job Designations**

Social Work is a top growth profession both nationally and within Alaska. Overall, the employment of social workers is projected to grow 11% from 2018 to 2028, a rate much higher than all other occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). In Alaska, social work is identified as being 1 of the 25 top growth professions (Alaska Department of Labor, 2018). The BSW program produces educated and skilled graduates who fill high-demand and critical social service and healthcare positions across Alaska.

## **2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)**

### **Program Enrollment**

Over each of the past 7 years, the UAA BSW program has consistently maintained between 120 and 140 declared program majors, including pre- and full-major freshman-through-senior students. However, because students are not required to declare or change majors until they become seniors and are fully admitted into the program as full majors, the accuracy of the count is imperfect. Thus, included in the 140 students are those who have become full majors through a designated program admissions process who have senior standing and have been fully admitted into the BSW program. The annual number of those full major students have ranged from 24 to 33, with an overall review period average of 29.6.

### **Course Pass Rate**

During the program review period, BSW class sizes have ranged from 14.7 to 19.8 students, with an overall average of 17.2 reflecting the fact that this is an accredited professional program that has designated student-to-ratio numbers. BSW students passed their courses at higher average rates than reflected in UAA-wide average student data. To illustrate, BSW students have an average 83.6% pass rate of completed 100 and 200 level courses compared to an institutional average of

80.2%. Further, they have an average 93.7% pass rate of their 300 and 400 level courses compared to the UAA average of 90%. Overall, BSW students completed 100 through 400 level courses at an average of 90.3% compared to an institutional average of 87.2%.

Student BSW student grades of “D,” “F,” and “withdraw” were also lower than institutional wide student data during the review period. In 100 and 200 level courses, an average of 15.4% BSW students received a “D,” “F,” or “withdraw,” compared to 20.7% of the total student body. This difference is more pronounced when considering that the 2018/2019 BSW 100 and 200 level rate was 10.5%. Similarly, the average 300 and 400 level “D,” “F,” and “withdraw” rates of BSW students were 5.2% compared to the 9.1% average of overall UAA students.

Although the aforementioned rates are more favorable than institutional-wide averages, they still leave opportunity for improvement. Further, we believe these rates may in part reflect our students’ education trajectory, which often includes course work taken much earlier in their lives, older returning students, and students who have completed courses toward another ultimately unsatisfactory or unsuccessful major before finding their academic home in the UAA BSW program.

### **Awarded Degrees & Degree Efficiency**

During this review period, UAA awarded 178 BSW degrees (M=25.4; SD=5.6), with an annual graduating class ranging from 19 to 33 students and taking an average of 5 years (SD=1.2) or 8.6 semesters to complete their degree. BSW students complete their degree in less time than the UAA institutional average of 6.2 years and 9.9 semesters for the same period of time. On average, BSW students on average graduate with approximately 105.5 in-residence credits compared to 121 credits institution wide. This may be attributed to the fact that many of our students enter the program as transfer students or students who have changed their major to social work later in their academic career.

### **Faculty-to-Student Ratio, Internal Demand, & Class Utilization**

BSW faculty-to-student ratio is good at 16:1, which is higher than the average College of Health ratio of 12:1. The review data show average BSW class sizes ranging from 14.7 to 19.8 (M=21.7), also higher than the College of Health’s average class size of 16.6. T

The program has offered a total of 4,315 class seats during the review period. Further, the data show that social work majors are primarily --- but not solely --- responsible for the program's student credit hours and occupation of class seats. During the review period, 100-400 level BSW courses produced 11,313 in-major student credit hours and 2,130 out of major student credit hours (total = 13,443), showing that social work majors produce 84% of total credit hours. Similarly, out of 4,315 total available social work class seats, social work majors fill 3,602 (83%). These data are consistent with an undergraduate professional program with a designated workforce development mission and is an added bonus that we offer other disciplines relevant courses their students find relevant.

### **External Demand**

Between 2009 and 2018, out of 178 program graduates, a total of 68 UAA BSW students (38.2%) went on for further education and graduated from an additional degree program, assumed to be primarily graduate education. These data “ring true” with faculty knowledge of our students and demonstrates the BSW program’s strong contribution to preparing UAA students for continued education. Yet, the value of the BSW program is so high for Alaska, many students go immediately into the workforce filling positions with considerable responsibility for serving Alaska’s most vulnerable residents.

### **Faculty Credit Hour Production**

The 2013-2019 review period data show average faculty-to-course credit hour ratios consistently ranging between 1-to-23.8 and 1-to-24.9 hours. Although BSW program accreditation requires 8 course releases to ensure minimum program coordination standards are consistently met and taking those coordinators out of credit hour production, the BSW faculty average credit hour production of 1-to-23.9 hours is comparable to the College of Health's overall ratio average of 1-to-24.1 hours.

### **Institutional & Program Costs**

For the AY 2019/2020 academic year the School of Social Work costs to support its BSW and MSW faculty (note: social work faculty teach across both programs) and Program Director, including wages and benefits, are \$1,141,624. Using social work course enrollment as of January 9, 2020, credit hour production multiplied by the 100% of the tuition rates yields \$782,467, leaving a GF obligation of \$359,157. Based on this budget, excluding summer expense and revenue, as well as external funding receipts, and using a 100% tuition revenue model, two of 10 faculty members produce net revenue for the university, two approximately breakeven, and tuition and external funding revenue does not cover the full cost of the remaining six faculty members. Of those six, four have administrative assignments for degree program coordination that are required by accreditation and management of the School of Social Work, thereby reducing their capacities to generate tuition revenue for an academic year. The remaining faculty members have been recently appointed with reduced workloads to facilitate their transition into the school.

According to the provided data, total annual instructional costs for the BSW program 2015-2019 have ranged from a low of \$428,683 to a high of \$534,658 (M=\$461,595), currently trending downward. During this same period, tuition revenue has increased, as faculty produced over 2-million dollars in student credit hours with a yearly average of \$435,776. Although costs are going down, currently our costs exceed our tuition revenues.

## **3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)**

### **Background, Accreditation, & Currency of Curriculum**

The BSW program originated in 1973 within the Department of Sociology and in 1976, the Board of Regents approved the degree. The program was first accredited by the Council on Social Work Education in 1978 and has held full, unstipulated, and continuous accreditation since. The accreditation reaffirmation process is held every 8 years, with our last reaffirmation granted in 2018.

To prepare for our 2018 reaffirmation, faculty revised the program description, student learning outcomes, curriculum (including every BSW course to align with new competency-based accreditation standards), and program assessment plan. This most recent revision successfully moved our program from a traditional learning model (i.e., what the program provides) to a more current competency-based program (i.e., what students have learned and demonstrate) with considerable emphasis on service learning, case study models, and practicum. In addition to assessment of explicit curriculum (i.e., the program and its courses), this past reaffirmation also required us to assess the *implicit* curriculum (i.e., learning environment). The program next stands for reaffirmation in 2026.

### **Program Innovation**

**Program Developments.** In response to Alaska's compelling social problems, health disparities, and workforce deficits, BSW faculty have strategically prioritized areas that provide both a well-articulated focus for students (i.e., child welfare, veterans and military families, behavioral health, poverty, food/housing insecurity and homelessness, and civic engagement) and align with state needs. If desired, students may structure their studies around these high-need practice areas. We are also developing an AA in Social Work to address unmet incremental academic and career needs of students

and streamline the academic experience for students seeking baccalaureate degrees. The BSW program has led the design of the interprofessional child welfare occupational certificate program, built on expert designed coursework and in alignment with Alaska Office of Children's Services' practice and performance competencies. We also have led several innovative workforce development programs supported through external grants supporting specialized training and stipends to students in rural practice, behavioral health, and child welfare. The most recent is funded by the National Council on Behavioral Health to train future social workers in substance use treatment and provides \$6,000 stipends for students. It should be noted that our proposal was 1-of-9 selected from over 100+ applications submitted nationally.

***Course/Curriculum Enhancements.*** The program focuses efforts on quality enhancement through creative budget-neutral expansion of course content and delivery. Our faculty has championed the use of interprofessional student simulation, including developing inventive ways to provide simulation through distance delivery. The program has increased infusion of trauma-related content across courses. We have limited but strategically use adjunct faculty who bring extensive real world experience to the classroom. We are also revising lower division core BSW courses, including a GER, to distance formats based on Quality Matters to expand delivery options. One last example is the development of academic course credits for select trainings offered by the Child Welfare Academy.

***Expanded Community Partnerships.*** The BSW program continues to expand and deepen its community partnerships to co-create innovative opportunities for students, workforce initiatives, and community-based participatory faculty service learning, evaluation, and research. Recent projects include a social work practice class partnership with Bean's Café in which social work students practiced their developing interviewing skills through administration of customer satisfaction surveys. We are working with the Alaska Office of Children's Services to develop a broad BSW and MSW comprehensive workforce development program, including a student stipend program and providing program evaluation. Additionally, BSW students recently revised the Little Blue Booklet, which is the primary community resource guide provided by the Municipality of Anchorage. We continue to expand our partnerships through a variety of creative projects and evaluation with Alaskan veteran, tribal, behavioral health, food insecurity, homeless, and interpersonal violence programs.

#### **Distance Education in the BSW Program**

While the BSW is offered as a campus-based program, we offer three 100/200 level courses (2 of which are GER courses) in a distance format at least annually to allow community campus students access to our lower division courses without commuting. In addition, summer elective courses are most often offered in a distance format, allowing our students maximum flexibility during the Alaskan summer. Faculty teaching BSW distance courses have been trained in Quality Matters (QM) and the course shells are under revision to meet QM standards.

#### **Program Student Learning Outcome Assessment**

Using a continuous program improvement model, the program conducts an annual cycle of assessment of student demonstration of program student learning outcomes (SLOs) and its learning environment. The program utilizes three standardized direct measures, two of which are nationally normed and one that is a direct measure of student demonstration of SLOs actual practice. We assess the BSW implicit curriculum through an annual survey and end-of-year student focus group interviews. Once data is collected, the BSW program coordinator analyzes the data and the results are presented in a written report to faculty. The results are discussed at an annual faculty meeting held within the first two weeks of fall contract where the faculty identifies any necessary assessment-informed program, explicit and implicit curriculum, and/or assessment revisions to undertake during each upcoming academic year.

Explicit curriculum data, using longitudinal collection and national comparisons, consistently show that BSW students are learning and demonstrating SLOs at rates higher than national averages. They tend to do best in ethics, diversity, and

effective relational skills across client systems and less well in research methods and policy practice. Examples of program responses include revising program standards, course revisions, committing to decreased use of adjunct faculty, and prioritizing filling open faculty positions with those who have considerable expertise in research and policy instruction.

Results of implicit curriculum assessment consistently highlight a welcoming and inclusive environment, strong and positive relationships with faculty and staff, and feeling supported and considered in program structure and delivery. Students have identified increasing opportunities for meaningful input to the program who have limited time and continuing efforts to increase the staff, faculty, and student diversity of the faculty.

### **Student Success Initiatives**

Student well-being and success is vitally important and is fostered throughout the strong and stable program by a committed, experienced faculty. Faculty members use high-impact educational practices and conduct academic and professional advising. Student needs are understood and considered through student-centered course offerings and scheduling, continuous efforts at obtaining additional scholarship and student support opportunities, and listening to our students. Having a relatively low faculty-to-student ratio allows for faculty to know our students and for students to know our faculty.

***High-Impact Practices.*** We strategically employ high-impact educational practices to impact student learning including the use of common intellectual experiences, writing intensive courses, course-based collaborative assignments, community-based research opportunities, extensive research and classroom-based service and community-based learning, internships, e-portfolios, departmental honors, a designated capstone course, and a culminating student project.

***Academic and Professional Advising.*** Faculty view academic and professional advising to students as an extension of their teaching and have made the pedagogical standards guiding advisement part of the program culture. Faculty provide advising extending beyond that of a degree completion focus, to a much broader view to help students reflect on their learning and integrate the application and relevance of what they are learning from different courses to real world social work practice. Faculty advisors are keenly able to assess student circumstances and their academic and professional goals to help them access unique academic and other experiential opportunities as they develop into professional social work practitioners.

### **Student Accomplishments**

BSW students are highly diverse and are often first generation and come with complex personal histories and multiple responsibilities. However, they are a highly motivated and exceptionally resilient group. They consistently obtain at or above average scores on national standardized social work curricula testing when compared to national averages. Approximately 25% of our students earn grades placing them on the Dean's and/or Chancellor's list and at least 40% of our current senior class will be eligible to graduate with Departmental Honors.

Our students make a difference and are consistently recognized for their efforts. For example, we recently had a BSW student awarded the prestigious Udall Foundation Scholarship (UAA's only winner of that scholarship to date) and another who received honorable mention. Both the 2013 and 2016 UAA Alumni Humanitarian Award was presented to UAA BSW graduates. Further, over 20 BSW students have been selected as Community Engaged Service-Learning Assistants and we typically have students who also graduate from the University Honors program. In another example, last year four students submitted a competitive proposal to the National Indian Child Welfare Association national conference where they presented a panel on efforts to positively impact the overrepresentation of Alaska Native children in the Alaska's foster care system. We consistently have students conduct community-based independent research projects. Many of our

graduates go on to graduate school and most importantly, our graduates are employed throughout the state in a variety of professional social work roles and improve the lives of Alaskans.

#### **4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)**

The UAF BSW and UAA Bachelor of Human Services (HUMS) programs superficially duplicate the UAA BSW program. The UAA BSW program differs substantially from these programs in its mission, higher student achievement, and offering broader student opportunities, a partner graduate degree, and collective resources of a larger faculty. The UAA BSW program faculty members are more likely to hold the Ph.D., undertake research in partnership with students and community agencies, and focus on addressing workforce needs across Alaska.

Given the expanse of Alaska that makes accessing higher education challenging, the UAA BSW program and UAF share efforts to advance professional social work practice across Alaska. Together the two programs cover the social work education needs of urban and rural Alaska through campus-based (UAA and UAF) and distance-delivered education (UAF). The UAF BSW focuses on rural-remote social work practice with indigenous populations and the UAA BSW has a broader focus of statewide urban and rural-hub practice.

The more recently developed UAA HUMS degree is duplicative and competes with the BSW. At UAF, the BSW and HUMS programs are not duplicative of each other, having formed a partnership in which the HUMS AAS directly articulates students into the BSW program and does not offer a bachelor's degree. At UAA, there is no partnership or program articulation, making differentiating the two baccalaureate degrees challenging.

The UAA BSW program specifically differs from the HUMS degree in its long-standing professional grounding as a designated title-protected profession and educational discipline. At UAA, the BSW program differs in its engagement of students in research, equipping graduates to earn Alaska licensure (HUMS graduates do not qualify for professional licensure), preparing students for employment and graduate school, and qualifying students for admission to advanced standing in accredited MSW programs (i.e., the generalist portion of the MSW degree is waived).

#### **5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)**

The BSW program has successfully educated Alaska's social work students for over 40 years with a highly trained, engaged, and productive faculty. The BSW program is highly effective as demonstrated by its commitment to the social service and behavioral health needs of Alaska and its workforce, sustained accreditation, rigorous program assessment and results, significant student achievement, and long-standing statewide community partnerships.

When comparing BSW students to the broader institution, our students have higher average course pass rates and lower rates of "D," "F," and/or Ws. They have higher graduation rates, and earn their degrees in less time and with fewer completed credits. Further, our graduates are accomplished and fill critically needed workforce roles in Alaska. The program data shows higher than average class sizes, student credits hours, and graduation rates.

Specifically, we recommend that the BSW program receive strong support for growth through strategic student recruitment and expanded student access and options to the degree program. Our strategic goals include the ability to offer students rolling course sequencing and admissions, summer practicum options, enhanced quality distance options, and exploration of expanded program delivery locations and community workforce development partnerships. We also request resources to expand our use of high impact --- but labor-intensive --- simulation and experiential learning opportunities. These recommendations will require additional faculty to staff program initiatives (e.g., additional course/program options, OCS workforce program, coordinate expanded programming). Additionally, we seek support for

a student navigator position that will focus on student recruitment and retention. Investment in the School's recruitment capacities is a strategic one since there is considerable promise in the expansion of student enrollment, the diversification of the student body, and the professional development of students in key emphasis areas that prepare them further for engagement of Alaska's serious social issues.

Seed funding that will facilitate faculty research can further strengthen the interplay among instruction, substantive inquiry, and civic engagement. This interplay will increase substantially the distinctiveness of the school and attract faculty nationally who are drawn by the School's emphasis on tying together instruction, engagement, and inquiry into novel projects of national significance. Five areas hold both local relevance within the state and national significance. These are (1) prevention practice in child welfare and in Indian Child Welfare Act service delivery, (2) substance use treatment, (3) violence prevention and mitigation, (4) practice with people who face challenges as a result of severe and persistent mental illness, and (5) supporting the transition of Veterans, particularly combat exposed ones, and Veteran health promotion. The investment of university and state funds in such areas can leverage the efforts of social work faculty in seeking and securing federal funding. What is distinctive here is that social work faculty have the considerable ingenuity for connecting pedagogy, engagement of students and faculty in communities facing these issues, and research in each of these five areas.