

AY20 Expedited Program Review Template

Submission date: January 29, 2020

Revised date: February 6, 2020

Program/s in this review: Master of Social Work

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

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

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

Relevance

The UAA Master of Social Work (MSW) program is the only MSW program physically located in Alaska, and it is designed to address the complex health, mental health, and social welfare challenges in Alaska. The MSW is a versatile degree that prepares graduates for clinical practice, policy practice, and leadership roles in a variety of service delivery settings, including mental health, substance use, disability, education, health care, and child welfare. The mission of the UAA MSW program is “to prepare advanced generalist social workers who address health and social issues in Alaska. Alaska’s unique and rich multicultural populations, geographic remoteness, and frontier status allow the real potential for skilled social work professionals to make a profound impact on social, economic and environmental injustice in our state.”

Alignment with UAA Mission & Interdependence with other Programs

In alignment with the UAA mission, the MSW program seeks to educate diverse, graduate-level social workers in communities across Alaska through high-quality distance education. In AY 2016-2017, the program combined the campus-based and distance-delivered programs into an integrated distance-delivered program to improve efficiency, increase student diversity, and better serve rural students. During the 2019-2020 academic year, MSW students are geographically dispersed across Alaska: Anchorage, Bethel, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Nome, North Pole, Palmer, Sitka, and Wasilla. In 2019, 33% of the 33 MSW graduates identified as students of color.

The MSW program offers an advanced standing MSW program option in which students with a BSW degree are waived the first year of the MSW program (the generalist curriculum) and enter directly into the second year (the advanced curriculum). Students from the UAA and UAF BSW programs have a direct pathway from the AA to the MSW degree without leaving their home community.

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The MSW program collaborates with other departments and graduate programs at UAA. In partnership with the Division of Population Health Sciences, we offer a dual MSW-MPH degree that includes a cross-listed program evaluation course. We also partner with Psychology to offer an interdisciplinary certificate in children's mental health, which includes cross-listed graduate electives. We partner with the Center for Human Development Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) graduate-level interdisciplinary training program, and the Center for Community Engagement and Learning, which provides community engaged opportunities for MSW students and faculty.

Partnerships

MSW faculty foster strong community partnerships through service-learning, research/evaluation, and professional service. The UAA MSW program partners with over 30 health and social welfare agencies across Alaska, which provide field practicum placements for MSW students. These partnerships benefit the MSW program by giving students the 900 hours of field experience required by the Council on Social Work Education. The agencies benefit from a strong workforce they helped train, as many graduates are subsequently hired by their field practicum agency. Additionally, the UAA MSW program has an international partnership with the University of the Arctic Thematic Network on Social Work.

Workforce Development and Employment Opportunities

A 2016 analysis of the social worker workforce in Alaska found that there will be a 24% increase in the need for social workers in Alaska by 2026 (Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2016). A 2018 national survey of MSW graduates found that 78% of graduates who searched for a job received a social work job offer (Salsberg, Quigley, Richwine, Sliwa, Acquaviva, & Wyche, 2018). MSW-level social workers are in high-demand in rural Alaska, which experiences a shortage of mental health professionals. The MSW degree prepares students to pursue licensure in Alaska as a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) or Type C Certification in School Social Work with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

Sources of Extramural Support and Funding

MSW faculty have received extramural support for evaluation, student support and workforce development activities from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the Health Resources & Services Administration, the National Child Welfare Workforce Initiative, the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the National Council on Behavioral Health. Over the past three years, faculty have secured over \$750,000 in external program, research, and evaluation funding. The Alaska Veterans Administration provides up to five paid internships a year to UAA MSW students.

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

Historical Program Context

Prior to AY 2016-2017 (FY 2017), the MSW program admitted students into distinct campus-based or distance-delivered MSW program options. The two programs shared the same MSW curriculum. However, the campus program admitted students every year, and students could attend full-time (2

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years) or part-time (3 or 4 years), while the distance program admitted every-other year (in odd numbered years), and distance students could only attend part-time (4 years). Students living in Anchorage or the Mat-Su Valley were not permitted to take distance courses.

Beginning in AY2015-2016, the School of Social Work faculty noticed a dip in enrollment and retention in the MSW program. We recognized that our model was inefficient and was not keeping pace with MSW programs that offered students flexibility, and that our two separate modes of delivery did not provide urban and rural students with opportunities to learn from each other. Consequently, we began planning for a new program delivery model. In AY 2016-2017, the faculty of the School of Social Work combined both programs into a single, distance delivered MSW program in order to improve efficiency, increase program enrollment, increase student diversity, and better serve rural students. AY 2016-2017 was a transition year in which the program only admitted students into the distance education option, while we continued to teach on-campus courses in order to phase out the on-campus option. In AY 2017 – 2018 we began offering only online courses, and in spring 2019 the MSW program graduated the last student who was originally admitted into the campus-based MSW program.

Current Program Context

The full MSW program is 62 credits and can be completed full-time in two years (4 semesters) or part-time in three or four years (6 or 8 semesters). Students with a BSW degree can complete an advanced standing option that is 35 credits and can be completed in one year full-time (2 semesters) or two-years part-time (4 semesters). We currently have the faculty capacity to offer one section of all courses in the generalist curriculum and 2 sections of the advanced generalist curriculum courses, which is a maximum program capacity of approximately 80 students.

The MSW program is distance-delivered using a combination of synchronous (Zoom web conferencing) and asynchronous educational technologies, and we aim to keep class sizes limited to 20 students. Synchronous portions of courses are offered from 5 pm – 8:45 pm to accommodate working students. The MSW program is intentional in assisting MSW students with developing relationships with each other and with faculty. To achieve a sense of community, all MSW students are required to attend a mandatory program intensive at UAA at the start of the year, and we use Zoom web conferencing to create social presence in our online courses.

MSW Program Graduation Efficiency

The Institutional Research data provides evidence that the UAA MSW program redesign has increased graduation rates, as the MSW program awarded 33 degrees in 2019, which is the highest number awarded by the program during the period under review. In contrast, 2019 was the lowest year for awarding master's degrees at UAA (N = 219) during the period under review. In 2019, the 33 graduate degrees awarded by the UAA MSW program accounted for 15% of all master's degrees awarded at UAA (N = 219) and 56% of all master's degrees awarded in the College of Health (N = 59). The MSW program has also been working to improve the diversity of MSW graduates, and of the 33 graduates in 2019, 64% identified as White, 9% identified as Hispanic, 15% identified as Alaska Native, 3% identified as Asian, 3% as American Indian, and 3% as African American.

All MSW students are assigned an MSW advisor, and MSW faculty work closely with students to support student success. Although the MSW degree has a higher number of credits per degree (M =

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57.6) compared with the average credits per degree for all master's degrees at UAA ($M = 36.6$), MSW students complete their degree in fewer semesters ($M = 5.5$) compared with all master's degrees ($M = 5.9$) and in fewer years ($M = 2.1$) compared with all master's degrees ($M = 3.0$).

Within the MSW program, the fluctuation in the number of credits per degree, the number of semesters per degree, and the number of years per degree in the MSW program are influenced by the number of students completing the program with advanced standing and in the full-time or part-time MSW program. Full-time advanced standing students with a BSW degree complete 35 credits in one year (2 semesters), while part-time students in the full MSW program complete 62 credits in 4 years (8 semesters). In 2019, MSW graduates completed an average of 53.9 credits, the lowest number of credits per degree since 2013. This indicates that the MSW program graduated a higher number of students with a BSW degree who were admitted with advanced standing. The average terms to degree and average years to degree are influenced by the number of full-time and part-time students. In 2019, the number of semesters (5.9 semesters) and years to degree (2.7 years) were high relative to the previous six years, which indicates that a greater number of graduates were part-time students than in previous years.

Program Demand & Enrollment

The MSW program at UAA has a history of strong enrollment, and that trend is continuing. The number of students enrolled in all graduate programs at UAA has decreased since 2013, but the MSW program has had consistent enrollment over the seven years under review. In 2019 the MSW program had our highest year of enrollment during the period under review with 71 students enrolled in the program, which is close to current MSW program capacity (approximately 80 students). In contrast, graduate programs at UAA had the second to lowest enrollment average in 2019 for the period under review.

Course Pass Rates

The UAA MSW program has consistently demonstrated high course pass rates and low D, F, and withdrawal rates. We attribute this to strong applicant screening, student advising, and student support. During the period under review, the MSW program has had an average course pass rate of 96.1%, which is higher than the average course pass rate for all graduate programs at UAA (89.0%). The average D, F, and withdrawal rate for the MSW program during the period under review was 2.1%, which was lower than the UAA average of 2.4%. The highest D, F, and withdrawal rate was 3.4% in AY 2016-2017, which was the first year that we admitted into the combined distance education program.

Credit Hour Production & Tuition Revenue

The 2020 Program Review data illustrates that the MSW program has increased efficiency and effectiveness. Since the MSW program fully transitioned to offering only online MSW courses in FY 2018 (AY 2017 – 2018), the MSW program has increased class sizes, class utilization, and tuition revenue. In addition, we have decreased the cost per student credit hour while the tuition revenue per credit hour has increased. In contrast, across all graduate-level courses at UAA, class sizes have decreased, enrollment has decreased, and the cost per student credit hour has increased. For example, in 2019, MSW courses had an average class size of 12.4 students, which was the highest MSW average class size during the period under review, while the average for all graduate-level courses at UAA was 7.9 students.

In summary, the 2020 Program Review data illustrates that the decision to develop a high-quality online MSW program has increased graduation rates, increased student diversity, and increased tuition revenue.

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

Specialized Accreditation

The UAA MSW program was established in 1995 and has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1999. In 2018, the MSW program underwent reaccreditation with CSWE, and we were found in compliance with all educational policy and accreditation standards and were granted continued reaccreditation for eight years.

Currency of the Curriculum

The UAA MSW program makes continual improvements to the MSW curriculum. In preparation for reaccreditation in 2016, the MSW program redesigned the entire MSW curriculum in 2015 in order to align it with the 2015 CSWE Accreditation Policy and Education Standards. In addition, the UAA MSW program uses the yearly program assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the MSW curriculum in achieving student learning outcomes. Based on the results of the 2017-2018 assessment report, the MSW program revised two courses in the advanced generalist curriculum (SWK A634 Transformational Leadership in Social Work Practice; SWK A635 Transformational Leadership Capstone) to link students with the social issues facing the communities in which they are either working or undertaking practicum. The MSW program continues to build graduate social work electives, such as military social work, medical social work, school social work, and mindfulness-based stress reduction, that will help students to address the current workforce needs. MSW faculty bring considerable expertise to the curriculum in substantive fields of social work practice reflecting the social issues Alaska faces.

Innovative Program Design & Distance Offerings

In AY 2016 – 2017, the UAA MSW program consolidated the campus-based and distanced-delivered program options into a single distance-delivered MSW program. Prior to the reorganization, both the campus and distance programs were under-enrolled. Our model of having two distinct programs did not meet the current needs of students, who wanted more flexibility and more access to online learning. In addition, students in the distance-education program were admitted every other year, could only attend part-time, and were required to attend a face-to-face intensive in Anchorage every semester, which was cost-prohibitive for many potential students. Finally, we did not have any integration of campus and distance students, yet our mission is to serve the entire state of Alaska.

The purpose of the reorganization was to improve efficiency and flexibility, increase program enrollment, increase student diversity, better serve rural students, and bring both urban and rural students into a common graduate educational experience. With the new innovative program design, all MSW students can attend part-time or full-time, rural and urban students learn from each other, and the program is more efficient. Students attend a maximum of two program intensives on campus at UAA. The program has been successful in meeting the aims of the reorganization. In AY 2018-2019, the MSW program achieved several bests across the years under review: highest number of students

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enrolled (N = 71); highest number of MSW degrees awarded (N = 33); largest average class sizes (M = 12.4); highest student to faculty ratio (15.2); and highest tuition per student credit hour ratio (484.4).

When the program transitioned to a single, distance-delivered MSW program, the UAA School of Social Work faculty were committed to improving the delivery of distance-education courses and programming. As a faculty, we decided to integrate Quality Matters standards into all MSW courses. All MSW faculty have received training in Quality Matters, and two faculty members have completed the training to be Quality Matters peer reviewers. One MSW course (SWK 634) is currently under a formal Quality Matters review to become a Quality Matters Certified Course.

Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Each year the MSW program undertakes a thorough program assessment and writes a detailed assessment report. The UAA MSW program assesses the explicit generalist and advanced generalist curriculum, which is the formal educational curriculum designed to prepare students to meet the generalist and advanced generalist competencies (student learning outcomes). The MSW program also assesses the implicit curriculum, which refers to the learning environment provided by the program and includes diversity, student development, student participation, and advising, retention, and termination. The entire School of Social Work faculty reviews the assessment report and contributes to identifying strategies for improvement of the explicit and implicit curriculum. In 2018 and 2019, the College of Health Dean's review of the MSW assessment report commended the MSW program for our commitment to academic assessment and program improvement.

The 2018 MSW program assessment report identified the need to increase the number of social work faculty to address the over-reliance on adjunct faculty, to increase response rates for our program assessment measures, and improve curriculum content related to policy practice and practice evaluation. To address these needs, the School of Social Work has begun to recruit and hire tenure-track faculty. We have also increased training and mentoring of adjunct faculty. We revised two advanced generalist courses, and we created several online base courses to improve course quality. We worked closely with students to improve assessment response rates. Results from the 2019 MSW program assessment demonstrated a positive impact of these efforts. However, program assessment is a continuous process, so the 2019 MSW program assessment identified three curricular areas for continued improvement: engaging in research informed practice and practice-informed research; engaging in policy practice; and practice evaluation. The MSW program committee is currently working to improve the curriculum to strengthen student achievement of these competencies.

Student Success Initiatives

The MSW program advances student success by creating a strong sense of community, integrating high impact practices, and providing consistent student advising. The MSW program creates a strong sense of community among MSW students through a yearly MSW program intensive, regular MSW program update newsletters, and regional MSW student coalition activities. We also have an online MSW program orientation in Blackboard that students complete upon their acceptance into the MSW program, which provides them with an opportunity to meet the other newly admitted MSW students.

The MSW program integrates several high impact practices. MSW class sizes are small (no more than 20 students), so faculty and students engage in class discussion and faculty can give timely feedback. Our faculty has championed the use of interprofessional student simulation, including developing

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inventive ways to provide simulation through distance delivery. The program integrates ePortfolios, so students have an opportunity to integrate and reflect on what they learn in the classroom and in field practicum. Through the MSW capstone project, students identify a current social problem in their community and integrate the MSW curriculum to design a micro, meso, or macro change approach to address the problem. 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 the proposal was 1-of-9 selected from over 100+ applications submitted nationally.

Finally, the MSW program has four faculty members dedicated to MSW advisement. They meet with students via Zoom web conferencing immediately upon admission to the MSW program and then at least once a semester. MSW advising is an opportunity for students to review their graduate studies plan, discuss electives, share their experience in the MSW program, and ask questions. When MSW students experience challenges in the MSW program, the program has a student review process in which the MSW program coordinator, faculty members, or advisors meet with the student to provide support and to develop a plan for improvement if needed.

MSW program commitment to student success is evident in the increase of the number of MSW degrees awarded, the high grade-passing rate, and the low D, F, and withdrawal rates. In addition, graduates from the UAA MSW program are highly successful after graduation filling high need positions in the health, behavioral health, and social welfare workforce in Alaska.

Student Accomplishments

Graduates of the UAA MSW program become leaders in health and social service organizations across Alaska. From 2014 - 2018, graduates of the UAA MSW program who have taken the ASWB Licensed Master Social Worker Exam (LMSW) have had an average pass rate of 84.3%, which is higher than the average North American pass rate. UAA MSW graduates taking the ASWB Licensed Clinical Social Worker Exam between 2014 – 2018 passed at an average rate of 75.5%, which is also higher than the average North American pass rate. Many MSW graduates provide leadership by becoming field instructors for the UAA BSW and MSW field education programs, and MSW alumni often become administrators or clinical supervisors in social service agencies, such as Denali Family Services, Office of Children's Services, and Volunteers of America to name a few. Finally, MSW alumni have applied for and received national fellowships, including the Ashley Brookes-Danso Memorial Fund Travel Scholarship to attend the CSWE Annual Program Meeting, the SAMHSA Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Fellowship Program, and the SAMHSA Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Fellowship Program for Tribes and Tribal Organizations.

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

The UAA MSW program is the only graduate-level social work program in the University of Alaska statewide system, and it is the only MSW program that is physically located in the state of Alaska and that focuses its curriculum on Alaskan strengths and needs. Without the UAA MSW program, the state of Alaska would not be able to train graduate-level social workers to fill the immense workforce need with professionals who likely remain within the state for their careers. The MSW program's

mission to serve the State of Alaska, reach out to students across the state, and fill workforce needs of the state make the MSW program highly distinctive and in alignment with the UAA mission.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

The UAA MSW program fulfills an important workforce demand for graduate-level social workers in Alaska, and we recommend that the MSW program receive strong support for growth through strategic student recruitment, engagement, and support. Since AY 2016-2017, the program has made several program changes in order to improve efficiency, increase program enrollment and retention, increase student diversity, and better serve rural students. These efforts have been effective, and the program is nearing capacity with the number of faculty available to teach the courses. The MSW program currently has capacity for about 80 students, and in AY 2018-2019 71 students were enrolled in the program. In order to increase the number of students in the program, the MSW program would need to add at least one section of all generalist courses, which is 10 courses (30 credits). In addition to faculty support to teach the courses, we also seek support for a Student Success Coordinator, who can coordinate MSW student recruitment, admissions, advising, mentoring, alumni outreach, student engagement, and student communications. Such a position is essential for program expansion.

Given the strong research interests of MSW program faculty members, and their need to balance considerable teaching with the pursuit of those interests, 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 an emphasis on tying together instruction, engagement, and inquiry into novel projects of national significance. Faculty research interests hold both local relevance within the state and national significance and include: prevention practice in child welfare and in Indian Child Welfare Act service delivery; substance use treatment in adolescence and adulthood; violence prevention and mitigation; mental health practice across the lifespan; supporting the health and well-being of Veterans; effects of climate change on mental health; homelessness; and food insecurity. The investment of university and state funds in such areas can strengthen the leverage 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 in communities facing these issues, and research in each of these research areas.