

**TOPIC: PROPOSAL TO OFFER A MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
 AT METROPOLITAN STATE COLLEGE OF DENVER**

PREPARED BY: DR. JULIE CARNAHAN

I. SUMMARY

The Board of Trustees of Metropolitan State College of Denver has submitted a proposal for a Master of Social Work (MSW). The MSW will educate a diverse group of MSW-level professional social workers to function as advanced practitioners, community leaders and administrators in a multicultural and global society.¹

Department of Higher Education staff supports the proposed Master of Social Work degree.

II. BACKGROUND

The following is summarized from the Metro State proposal for the Master of Social Work degree:

Metro State proposes a master's level graduate program in social work. MSW programs serve two cohorts of students: (1) bachelor-level graduates from majors other than social work who complete both years of the MSW program; and (2) as an advanced standing program for graduates of accredited undergraduate bachelor in social work programs who only complete the second year.

The first year of an MSW program is the foundation year. The second year of an MSW program is the "concentration year." Metro State's MSW program would have two concentrations: 1) Individuals and Families (elective courses would include sub-specialties in child and adolescent mental health, adult mental health, older adults, and child welfare) and 2) Macro Practice (elective courses would include sub-specialties in social entrepreneurship, program design and development, and program management and organizational leadership).

These two concentration areas reflect the two career pathways that MSWs most often take: 1) Direct practice with individuals, families and groups (these individuals can pursue a license as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker or LCSW); or 2) Indirect practice developing and managing organizations (these individuals can pursue a license as a Licensed Social Worker (LSW).

¹ Metro State College New Degree Proposal, Master of Social Work, page 1

The MSW program will:

Prepare students to conduct themselves as professional social workers striving for continual professional development, exercising ethical decision making, practicing personal reflection and self-correction.

Prepare students for evidence-based, culturally sensitive advanced clinical social work practice with vulnerable and diverse populations including individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities and larger systems using scientific inquiry, research informed practice and practice-informed research.

Prepare students to be advanced macro-level social workers who are community and agency leaders, administrators, advocates and researchers in political and service delivery

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT:

The Master of Social Work degree is congruent with the statutory role and mission for Metropolitan State College of Denver to “offer a variety of liberal arts and science, technical, and educational programs. The college may offer a limited number of professional programs. In furtherance of its role and mission, Metropolitan State College of Denver may offer master’s degree programs that address the needs of its urban service area. C.R.S. 23-54-101.

EVIDENCE OF STUDENT DEMAND

The Social Work Department conducted an online survey via Survey Monkey to all alumni of the BSSW program. They received responses from 240 alumni. These are all students who are eligible for the advanced standing option. The survey results concluded that while 80% of alumni who took the survey had intended to obtain their MSW, less than half or 45% actually did. Of the students who did not pursue their MSW degree, 49% said that the cost of attending a MSW program at a private institution was the determining factor. MSCD’s public status will provide a competitive edge against the tuition rates of a private institution. In addition, 24% of respondents reported their reason for not obtaining a MSW degree was the lack of distance education. MSCD’s MSW program will provide a combination of on campus and hybrid courses to accommodate student’s scheduling needs.

The National Association of Social Workers, Center for Workforce Studies (2006) summarized workforce findings in a report entitled, “Assuring the Sufficiency of a Frontline Workforce: An National Study of Licensed Social

Workers, Executive Summary.” The study concludes that there is an increasing need for trained professional social workers due to demographic changes in the population, the aging social work workforce nearing retirement and the failure to retain social workers in the field. The study cites a finding by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) that “the demand for new social workers will increase between 18 percent and 26 percent by the year 2014.” It is unlikely that the current number of graduating BSW and MSW social workers that stay in the profession will meet this demand.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

The Department staff have reviewed this proposed program to ensure that it meets the State’s performance measures outlined in C.R.S. 23-1-107. The program meets all performance measures.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the Master of Social Work degree to be offered by Metropolitan State College of Denver.

V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. 23-1-107

VI. ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS

The program proposal materials are attached.