

TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK AT COLORADO MESA UNIVERSITY

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends approval for Colorado Mesa University (CMU) to offer a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is limited to review for fit with statutory role and mission, per §23-5-129(6)(b), C.R.S.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

The goal of the proposed program is to educate students as generalist social workers who embrace the mission and core values of social work, including issues of diversity, social and economic justice, and community service. The program is committed to building a student's education on a solid base that includes a liberal arts perspective vital to the development of a social worker. This goal fits the mission of CMU as it seeks to engage students in opportunities for applied learning, and ties in strongly to the Institutional Vision and Values (2010) of the University to provide a "curriculum, often bridging liberal education and professional programs, that successfully prepares students for the 21st century in the areas of personal and social responsibility, civic engagement, ethics, and intercultural/global learning."

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is attached (Appendix A).

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports CMU's statutory role and mission, which states:

There is hereby established a university at Grand Junction, to be known as Colorado Mesa university, which shall be a general baccalaureate and graduate institution with selective admission standards. Colorado Mesa university shall offer liberal arts and sciences, professional, and technical degree programs and a limited number of

graduate programs. Colorado Mesa university shall also maintain a community college role and mission, including career and technical education programs. Colorado Mesa university shall receive resident credit for two-year course offerings in its commission-approved service area. Colorado Mesa university shall also serve as a regional education provider. C.R.S. §23-53-101

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that the institution's proposed degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The program was approved by CMU's Board of Trustees at its March 19, 2014 meeting. CMU confirms the degree meets gtPathways requirements.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Colorado Mesa University's proposal to offer a Bachelor of Social Work degree.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:
(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

APPENDIX:

Appendix A: Additional Information

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This additional information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

EVIDENCE OF NEED

According to 2010 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Social Work is one of the fastest growing careers in the United States. The profession is expected to grow by 25% from 2010 to 2020, a faster-than-average rate for all occupations. This projected growth is due largely to the aging population and the demand for trained, licensed social workers in the fields of medical social work, such as hospitals, nursing homes, hospice, home health, and veteran's affairs. Other areas of job growth and demand that are potential employers of program graduates include mental health, addictions, corrections, and child welfare.

Course enrollments offer one indicator of student demand and interest in the field. In fall 2012, the first semester a social work course was offered at CMU, enrollment for SOWK 150: Introduction to Social Work, was 32 students. In spring 2013, 33 students registered for the course, and 35 enrolled in fall 2013, with three waitlisted. A second indicator of interest is declaration of Social Work as a minor. By the end of the spring 2013 semester, more than 50 students had done so. These students are primarily Psychology, Sociology and Criminal Justice majors, but minors also include students from a broad range of other disciplines (e.g., Nursing, Spanish, Education, Business, and Kinesiology). The first cohort, in fall 2014, is projected to have 10-15 students, followed by the second cohort in fall 2015 of 15-20 students, and a third cohort in fall 2016 of 20-25 students. Initial cohort enrollments will likely be capped at 20-25 students per year, based on two faculty teaching the required courses and supervising field practica.

DUPLICATION

Department staff confirms that a search of the SURDS database revealed baccalaureate degrees in social work at Colorado State University, Colorado State University – Pueblo, and Metropolitan State University of Denver.