

The School of Social Service Administration

Mission

The School of Social Service Administration is dedicated to working toward a more just and humane society through research, teaching, and service to the community. As one of the oldest and most highly regarded graduate schools of social work, we prepare professionals to handle society's most difficult problems by developing new knowledge, promoting a deeper understanding of the causes and human costs of social inequities, and building bridges between rigorous research and the practice of helping individuals, families, and communities to achieve a better quality of life.

Professional Purpose

Our educational program is grounded in the profession's history, purposes, and philosophy. Founded in 1908, the School of Social Service Administration (SSA) is one of a handful of institutions that has helped define the profession of social work and the field of social welfare. SSA's first leaders were activists in the Chicago settlement house movement, one of the main strands in what eventually became social work. Since its inception, while most early schools of social work concentrated on practical training for caseworkers, SSA's leaders insisted on the need for a solid foundation in social science and social research as well. In the decades since, the emphases on social research and on applying the insights of social science to solving human problems have continued. The School continues to establish the connections between the social and behavioral sciences, research, and the real world of policy and practice. SSA's interdisciplinary faculty is drawn from social work as well as from such related fields as economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, public policy, and public health. Research at the School reflects this diversity and contributes to the development of social work knowledge.

The Master of Arts program, is a two-year program that has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and its predecessor organizations since 1919. SSA was recently reaccredited through June 2020. The School prepares students for advanced professional practice. Based on a body of knowledge, values, and skills of the profession, SSA's diverse course offerings provide students with a solid foundation in the profession and substantive exploration of two concentrations, clinical practice and social administration, the latter of which includes focused attention to non-profit management, community organization and development, and social policy. Quality instruction promotes the development of competent and effective professionals in these areas. Classes are intended to challenge and engage students in the dynamic interplay of theory, research, and practice. Students gain an understanding that whatever the focus of their practice, from the clinical micro-level to the policy macro-level, their activities are guided by an appreciation of service in society and informed by a rigorous evidence and conceptual base.

Since 1920, our Doctoral Program has provided training for those interested in pursuing an academic career in social work and social welfare. SSA's doctoral graduates are leaders in the field of social work and social welfare scholarship. The program is designed to deepen students' mastery of both social science theory and research methods so that they are prepared to contribute to scholarly knowledge in innovative ways. The program accommodates students who are interested in developing and evaluating practice methods and interventions as well as those interested in understanding social problems and accompanying institutional and political responses. The diverse theoretical approaches of SSA's faculty make it uniquely positioned to support an interdisciplinary course of study.

Values

SSA's educational program is informed by the values of the social work profession. As such, we prepare professionals who are committed to improving the lives of vulnerable and diverse populations and promoting social and economic justice locally, nationally, and globally. Social work values ensure that service is driven by a humanistic perspective that values difference and asks us to consider the impact of our ideas and our work on the well-being of our clients, of our colleagues, of our agencies and on society as a whole. Our values require that we treat others with dignity and respect and make human rights and social justice central to our work. As a School, SSA strives to be an exemplar of social work education, committed to creating an inclusive curriculum and environment, welcoming to all.

Our values require that we behave ethically in both our personal and professional lives. Our ethical precepts encompass such matters as treating our clients with dignity, honoring human diversity and differences, never exploiting clients for our own interests and always acting in the best interest of clients. This is accomplished through human relationships, honoring the value of integrity and giving graduates the competence to achieve professional goals of the highest quality. Similar precepts govern our relationships with other professionals. We recognize our responsibilities to the organizations for which we work, but we also have the obligation to question policies and practices in the workplace that may not be aligned with the best interests of our clients. We value scientific inquiry and the use of scientific evidence, as well as the development and implementation of evidence-based policy and practice. Finally, our values require continued professional growth and development through lifelong learning.

Program Context

The University of Chicago

Since its founding, the University's mission has been expressed in its motto, *Crescat scientia; vita excolatur*, "Let knowledge grow from more to more; and so be human life enriched." The University is committed to the development of new knowledge, both for its own sake and for the common good. The link of its mission to the mission and purpose of SSA

is clear. As social problems become more complex, interconnected, and sprawling, SSA is building upon its distinctive interdisciplinary and applied traditions to generate more robust knowledge and to educate the most talented social work leaders, thereby achieving even greater social benefit, both locally and globally.

SSA's first dean, Edith Abbott, said in 1920 when SSA became a full-fledged professional school, that "only in a university, and only in a great university, could a school of social work get the educational facilities that advanced professional students must have if they were to become the efficient public servants of democracy." Our current President, Robert Zimmer, shares her sentiment and stated during his address during the 487th convocation, "The University of Chicago, from its very inception, has been driven by a singular focus on inquiry...with a firm belief in the value of open, rigorous, and intense inquiry and a common understanding that this must be the defining feature of this university. Everything about the University of Chicago that we recognize as distinctive flows from this commitment."

In his speech at the City Club of Chicago in April 2012, President Zimmer again emphasized the role of the University and SSA in generating knowledge for social benefit:

...since its earliest days, the University has strived to serve this city well. In fact, the University's first president, William Rainey Harper, saw service to the broader community as essential to the University's mission. To fulfill this mission, he established the Extension Division, which consisted of public lectures and correspondence courses, and the University Press, which dispersed University research to a wide audience. Both were revolutionary developments in American higher education. As Richard Storr wrote in his history of Harper's tenure as president, "The outward thrust of the University was both deliberate and continuous."

Zimmer continued,

I could offer a great many examples of academic and research programs that illustrate Storr's link.... But I would like to turn briefly to the School of Social Service Administration, whose service to the community epitomizes that outward thrust at the same time as it underscores the university's singular focus on inquiry and belief in data-driven arguments and ideas.... One of the earliest schools of social work, SSA has its roots in the Chicago settlement house movement and is firmly tied to the history and institutions of this city. At its inception, its mission was to provide professional academic training to those serving the most vulnerable residents in the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Over the years, faculty members, administrators, and alumni have helped draft parts of the Social Security Act, have enforced child labor laws, and have fought for low-income working mothers. They have fostered the century-long partnership with Children's Memorial Hospital (now the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago) and forged partnerships with over 700 agencies and programs throughout the city as part of their field placement program. They have moved from their professional training to leadership positions within social services agencies throughout the city and across the country, helping to shape the policies that transform lives. All the while, they have been focused on helping to find solutions for some of the most intractable problems of the city.

SSA is held to the highest of intellectual standards, and faculty recruitment and promotions are guided by rigorous expectations. Students take advantage of the opportunities available in the University and are able to make use of the rich course offerings of its other departments. In addition to taking courses at SSA from faculty trained across multiple disciplines, students take courses in the schools of law, business, medicine, divinity, public policy, and in departments of anthropology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and others. This is a university in which such a crosswalk between disciplines and departments is fluid, actively encouraged, and easily accomplished.

City of Chicago

As a great American city, Chicago and its surroundings provide a superb context for learning in the field. It is one of the nation's most diverse cities, a kaleidoscope of social and cultural traditions and populations. Chicago experiences all of the significant problems of the modern metropolis: poverty, violence, crime, dysfunctional schools, inadequate health services, drug use, family breakdown, social exclusion, and community disruption. There are both people with great progressive vision and forces that threaten to defeat them. Our students are able to witness, learn from, and contribute to this complex of activity.

Chicago has notably been at the forefront of pioneering movements in social work, community organizing, women's rights, urban planning and architecture, labor organizing, and African American politics. Building on this tradition, recent initiatives such as the University of Chicago Urban Labs (<https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu>), including its Crime Lab (<http://crimelab.uchicago.edu>), Education Lab (<https://uel.uchicago.edu>), the Network for College Success (<http://ncs.uchicago.edu>), the Employment Instability, Family Well-being, and Social Policy Network (EINet), (<http://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/einet>) the STI and HIV Intervention Network (SHINE), (<http://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/shine>) the Woodlawn Children's Promise Community, CalYOUTH (<http://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/cal youth>), the Smart Decarceration Initiative (<http://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/smart-decarceration-initiative>), and the Chicago Center for Youth Violence Prevention (one of 7 national Academic Centers of Excellence funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) —all led or co-led by SSA faculty—yield both knowledge for the field at-large and tangible benefit to the citizens of Chicago while offering opportunities to expand the University's partnership with the city of Chicago. Our ever-deepening partnerships with the neighbors in our community serve to enhance the quality of life and economic development of Chicago's South Side, the city of Chicago more broadly, and beyond to national and international levels. With this, SSA plays a very visible role in materially advancing the University's larger purpose to "enrich human lives."

Most recently, SSA has been a chief architect in developing new University urban efforts, including the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation (<https://urban.uchicago.edu/page/mansueto-institute-urban-innovation>), which draws on the

strengths of the University of Chicago, as well as SSA's approach in applying multiple lenses to complex social problems. As a hub focused on the possibilities of urbanization, the Institute will accelerate urban scholarship through seed funding for such issues as health care, youth development, and violence reduction research – areas where SSA plays a major role. And as home to urban scholars trained in a dozen different disciplines, SSA also is vital to UChicago Urban (<https://urban.uchicago.edu>), a newly launched University commitment that strives to understand urban issues and create positive impact on urban life. SSA has long pioneered the use of scientific research to identify the causes of and solutions to complex social problems.

The Global Context

As social problems become ever more globally interconnected, SSA has adopted a strategic commitment to and begun the deliberate implementation of a robust international social welfare program agenda. Our program presently includes a significant focus on international social welfare by integrating cross-national and comparative content into our curriculum, developing study-abroad and internship placement opportunities for students, organizing lectures by international scholars visiting Chicago, and promoting scholarly and student exchanges in partnership with peer institutions abroad.

With support provided by the University's Provost's Office, SSA has undertaken a permanent expansion of its faculty ranks, with a strategic focus placed on bringing in faculty with explicit expertise in global and international social welfare. Our first of several faculty hires in this emerging domain joined us in July 2012; since then, SSA has hired additional faculty members, taking SSA's expertise on global questions to an unprecedented level, and allowing the School to forge a defining role in the globalization of social welfare concerns and problems. We now have a full cadre in place that takes up social welfare policy and practice across Asia, Central/Latin America, the former Soviet Union, and Africa, which also complements work in Europe. SSA faculty also serve on the Steering Committee of the University's Center in Delhi, the University's Beijing Governance Committee, and the international advisory board of the *Indian Journal of Social Work*. We are completing our fourth year of a concentration in international social work, which builds out field experiences in India, China, Hong Kong, and through the University's Human Rights program. In addition, we are beginning to develop a global social policy and practice certificate for a more substantive cluster of courses and fieldwork.

One outgrowth of our growing visibility on the global stage is a new acceleration of our international student enrollment, which reached an all-time high this year.

We run an annual, intensive, one-month study-abroad program on urban poverty and community practice for our master's students in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, India, the oldest established school of social work in that country. This program combines classroom instruction, field experience (pairing SSA with TISS students in a small set of community placements), seminar discussion, and informal engagement with students and faculty from both schools. The program includes a reciprocal exchange in Chicago, in which TISS students engage in a parallel program to the one in India, strengthening comparative learning across institutions and countries and building meaningful peer relationships. This work has also begun to generate research collaboration among faculty at both institutions.

In China, SSA has established a relationship with colleagues at Peking University (PKU), the home to mainland China's oldest and most well-established social work program. We have hosted PKU faculty at Chicago on two separate occasions and have visited PKU to share insights and orientations to social work curriculum and field education as well as to explore common research interests. We are also partnering with PKU as part of the China Collaborative, an effort jointly sponsored by the Council of Social Work Education in the United States, China Association of Social Work Educators in China, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work to foster the advancement of social work education and the professionalization of social work in China during a time of rapid development. In addition to co-organizing with PKU two workshops in Beijing, SSA hosted, in fall 2014, a delegation of faculty from some of China's leading social work programs, introducing them to a weeklong immersion in SSA's robust educational fieldwork-classroom integration.

We established, in 2013, an intensive Institute in China in partnership with Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) which focuses on responses to social exclusion in Hong Kong, mainland China, and the United States. The annual program allows students from SSA and PolyU to learn from and gain perspectives each other. The intensive institutes have included local site visits in Hong Kong and Mainland China, where students have examined local social welfare issues facing migrants, asylum seekers, and tenant farmers, including housing shortages, health inequality, and economic development policies. As with the TISS program, this exchange is designed to maximize interaction and learning between students from Hong Kong, China, the U.S., and elsewhere, through a range of formal curricular, field-oriented, and informal interactions, and to leverage the comparative perspective such an exchange might provide to think critically about social work practice and social welfare.

SSA, with our counterparts at Peking University, co-sponsored and hosted a scholarly seminar and strategic planning workshop in June 2012 with support from the University of Chicago's recently established Beijing Center. The seminar explored international perspectives on social policy and urban problems. It brought together scholars from China, the United States, India, and South Korea to also explore knowledge about, policy responses to, and enduring questions focused on urbanization and globalization across particular substantive themes—education, health, children and youth, and poverty and development—as they are playing out across these four national contexts. Following the seminar, a strategic planning workshop was held to discuss the possibilities for both dyadic and multilateral exchanges and institutional relationships among participating institutions. The seminar and workshop were grounded in our developing relationship with PKU and were expanded to include key relationships and potential partnerships with two other peer social work schools in other parts

of Asia, TISS in India and Seoul National University in South Korea. A follow-up workshop was held in 2014, and another in June 2015 in Mumbai, India.

Further galvanizing our efforts is the Collaborative Exchange Program, launched in 2016, which establishes an endowed joint social work educational exchange program in partnership with PKU and PolyU. Working together, the three universities seek to promote the development of graduate social work education and research in China; facilitate international collaborative graduate education and research among the participating universities; and improve the quality of social work education in China, promoting a rigorously professionalized, effective, and ethical social work workforce and service system. Initially, the Collaborative Exchange Program will establish a Visiting Fellows Exchange program that will provide a platform for distinguished scholars to hold lectures and seminars, and to carry out intensive study to engage in meaningful cross-national and cross-university exchanges. The program also will host an International Study Exchange Program for master's and Ph.D. students that develops professional and academic leaders who further professionalize the social work field within China, and establish enduring institutional cross-national partnerships.

In addition to these developing relationships, the presence of the University of Chicago's Beijing Center and the recent opening of the University's Center in Delhi open exciting opportunities to provide continued support for ongoing cross-national exchanges, seminars, and conferences, including hosting students and scholars from China, India, the United States, and other countries for varying periods of time.

The Vision

The forces shaping social welfare are varied and shifting and require the most intense scrutiny, cross-cutting and creative scholarship, and science that can anticipate and guide the future. Further, the field requires the most rigorously trained practitioners, policy makers, and future scholars to develop and apply complex and emerging knowledge for the profession so that social welfare strategies and interventions maximally benefit those most vulnerable and the wider society.

The School and its culture exhibit several hallmarks that distinguish us as one of the schools of social work leading the field into the future:

1. Interdisciplinary focus

Historically, SSA has been home to the most interdisciplinary cadre of social welfare scholars in the world. Building on this long-established tradition, SSA has recently established a formalized vehicle to encourage more integrated and robust evidence-based solutions to the most complex of social problems that overcome the strong centrifugal forces in the academic world that pull apart scholars who share similar substantive concerns, but whose work ends up funneled into disciplinary silos. SSA has recently established several formalized interdisciplinary scholar networks, organizing researchers from across disciplinary lines to collaborate in generating innovative and more comprehensive knowledge to tackle society's social problems. The scholar networks connect theory to practice in the highest intellectual tradition of the University, linking some of our most influential social welfare researchers with leading scholars and practitioners from around the nation. Initiated in 2011 and currently supported at SSA are the Employment Instability, Family Well-being, and Social Policy Network (EINet) and the STI and HIV Intervention Network (SHINE). The scholar network vehicle anchors such interdisciplinary research activities at SSA and helps SSA to catalyze the development and translation of new high-impact scholarship so that it can more readily be put into practice—in the field and in the classroom.

2. Scholarship and research

Our faculty members are actively involved in cutting-edge scholarship and research that inform and shape the field. The opportunities SSA faces require disciplined intellectual intensity to pursue ideas and develop knowledge that challenge conventional ways of understanding social problems. We anticipate elevating further our intellectual leadership by recruiting additional eminent scholars who represent a rich mix of expertise and disciplinary diversity and whose ideas and intense inquiry generate new understandings and effective responses to the most intractable social problems of our times, including poverty, violence, social displacement, or other conditions that place individuals at risk for multiple adversities.

In the classroom, SSA seeks students who are serious about learning, intensely curious, analytical, and imaginative, with a clear moral compass. As social work is a rewarding field that offers real-world opportunities for promoting social justice, alleviating and preventing human suffering, we challenge students to understand root causes and human costs of social problems and think deeply to illuminate and implement effective, evidenced-based solutions. With a thorough grounding in practice and policy, coupled with analytical training to think at a complex level and solve problems, students carry out field placements in Chicago area not-for-profit organizations serving vulnerable populations, integrating the theories and techniques learned in the classroom with serving and working in the field. The SSA faculty continuously work to achieve a deeper integration between these two centers of learning: knowledge generated by faculty scholarship and research presented to students in class, and field education where this knowledge is applied to real-life situations. These efforts provide a distinctive advantage to our students and a hallmark of SSA's intensive educational approach linking conceptual knowledge to learning, while students play a role in the delivery of social services and evaluating their impact.

3. Person-in-environment

The foundation of our curriculum is built on the assumption that all clinical social workers need to understand and appreciate the complexities of communities and organizational theory and practice, the policies that govern human services, and how to advocate for change in those systems. Similarly, students who are preparing for work at larger system levels need to know and understand the needs of those who seek our services; they also need to know how to assess, intervene,

and evaluate those services. Our core curriculum gives equal weight to micro and macro practice, and the concentrations continue to be informed by issues at multi-system levels.

4. Developing skills in critical thinking

Effective and ethical practitioners must be skilled in raising questions about assertions made by theoreticians, researchers, supervisors, and colleagues. They must be able to analyze the purported rationale behind those assertions and assess the nature of evidence supporting them. We strive to produce professionals who engage in empirically-based practice and who understand the importance of garnering rigorous evidence that informs practice.

5. Chicago as the context for field work and other learning opportunities

Solving social problems requires not only conceptual clarity but also a deep real-world engagement in understanding and responding to such problems. Historically, SSA has played a lead role in tangibly advancing policies and practices serving vulnerable children and families, immigrants, the homeless, and those imprisoned or struggling with substance abuses. We have ongoing institutional partnerships with over 700 human service agencies, philanthropies, and government bodies in and around Chicago addressing those facing such deep problems. Indeed, many of our graduates serve as executives for the lead agencies in the community. Through our fieldwork partnerships in the community, each year our students provide more than a quarter million hours of direct service to the citizens of Chicago.

Goals of the School

Carrying out SSA's mission to enrich human life through scholarship, education, and service dedicated toward advancing a more socially just and humane society, we tackle the most intractable and costly of social problems by developing knowledge and rigorously trained professionals and by leading and informing the field in ways that advance our society and the concerns of those who are most vulnerable. In keeping with its mission, the School's goals are to:

- educate competent and effective professionals able to apply clinical, analytical, and organizational knowledge and skills to solve social problems and relieve the distress of vulnerable individuals through ethical practice in a rapidly changing global environment. This requires a learning environment that models respect for diversity and lifelong learners who can think critically about the world around them;
- produce scholarship which enhances our understanding of the nature and sources of problems of individuals, families, communities, and society and of effective means of preventing and intervening with those problems; and
- use the School's resources to advance social justice and to serve its immediate community and the field of social welfare through the translation of knowledge into action. We aim to provide leadership both institutionally and through the efforts of individual faculty.

Graduates of the School of Social Service Administration should be able to:

- understand that the foundation of effective service lies in a grasp of the person-in-environment. Individual distress occurs in a social context involving the interaction of biological, psychological, familial, economic, community, and cultural factors;
- understand that theories supported by empirical evidence serve as conceptual frameworks for examining individual distress, organizational functioning, community contexts, and social policies. These theories are drawn from multiple disciplines and become the foundation for a coherent framework from which to respond to human needs and promote social justice;
- think critically and challenge the underlying assumptions, core values, conceptual frameworks, and evidence on which our professional knowledge is based;
- engage in competent, ethical, and effective social work clinical practice or social administration; and
- become effective leaders in the fields of social work and social welfare.



Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Trajan.

Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.