

*This form is intended to be used as a “soft copy” to gather requisite information related to new degree program applications. For programs to be included on Commission agendas from March 2022 onward, applications should be submitted through the Academic Program Review Portal (apr.ache.edu).

Alabama Commission on Higher Education

**NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL (NISP)
FOR A NEW PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION**

- 1. Institution:** University of North Alabama
- 2. Date of NISP Submission:** December 8, 2022
- 3. Contact Person and Title:** Dr. Ross C. Alexander, Provost and Executive VPAA
Telephone: (256) 765-4258
E-mail: ralexander3@una.edu
- 4. Program Identification:**
Award Level: Doctoral
Title: Doctor of Social Work
Degree nomenclature (e.g., MBA, BS): DSW
6-digit CIP: 44.0701
- 5. Program Administration and Implementation:**
Name of College/ School: College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering
Name of Dean: Sara Lynn Baird
Name of Department: Department of Social Work
Name of Chairperson: John Hodges

Proposed program implementation date: Fall 2024
Anticipated ACHE meeting to vote on proposal: June 2023
Anticipated date of approval from institutional governing board: March 2023
Other considerations for timing and approval (e.g., upcoming SACSCOC review):

SACSCOC approval will be required before implementation.

6. Program Design:

Brief Description of Program and Objectives:

The University of North Alabama's online Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program prepares students for the following: advanced trauma-informed social work practice and supervision, anti-oppressive social work education and training, and leadership in workforce development. The program prepares social work leaders to advocate for human rights and social/economic justice in diverse communities while incorporating the impact of global perspectives. The DSW program models a commitment to discovery and implementation of new knowledge, evidence-based research, and ethical use of technology to enhance critical thinking to promote human and community well-being while advancing community workforce development.

The DSW program will prepare the doctoral practitioner to utilize advanced theoretical frameworks in the critical application of innovative skills in the engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation of diverse clients and constituencies. The DSW curriculum is grounded in evidence-based research for implementation by advanced practitioners. Students will be equipped to be leaders in the fields of advanced social work practice and education. It is expected that the DSW program will take two years for the full-time student to complete (42 credit hours). Elements of the program are described after the program objectives.

Program Objectives

Graduates of this program will:

- A. Utilize advanced theoretical frameworks in the application of innovative skills in the engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation of diverse clients and constituencies.
- B. Demonstrate advanced social work practice skills in supervision at the agency and organizational level.
- C. Develop quantitative and qualitative research skills to address critical issues faced by vulnerable and underserved communities.
- D. Understand and implement the principles of evidence-based practice in selecting social work interventions
- E. Apply principles of social work policy practice to advanced clinical practice or organizational leadership
- F. Be prepared for faculty careers in academia

DSW COURSEWORK

The first stage of the DSW program is the major coursework. The purpose of this coursework is to prepare doctoral students in the practice areas of advanced clinical social work intervention with an integration of executive organizational leadership in workforce development as well as social work education and training. The coursework in the DSW program consists of 33 credit hours of content-focused classes as well as 9 credit hours of capstone (42 total credit hours). Coursework is facilitated online in 8-week, asynchronous sessions. Students must complete all DSW coursework (including one 3-credit hour elective in an area of interest) before scheduling their oral exam.

DSW ORAL EXAM

The second stage of the DSW program is the oral exam. The purpose of the DSW oral exam is to demonstrate advanced knowledge of required coursework as well as advanced social work theories and concepts related to advanced clinical social work practice. *The oral exam serves as entrance into the doctoral candidacy phase of the program and initiation of the DSW capstone process.* The oral exam will be administered through a live virtual presentation facilitated by the DSW Program Director. The oral exam will be evaluated by the 3-member doctoral committee, consisting of three approved social work faculty members (the Capstone instructor, DSW Program Director, and the DSW faculty mentor of record).

The oral exam will assess mastery of course concepts and Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) educational competencies. Students will be expected to prepare for the oral exam defense through a comprehensive review of their completed major assignments across the academic curriculum. Students will be assessed in the following areas:

- discuss mastery of course-related theory integration, assessment, evaluation, etc.;
- how these assignments provide a foundation for future advanced trauma informed social work practice;
- how the course work has prepared them for professional readiness in advanced clinical social work practice at the doctoral level;
- capstone topic of interest; and
- their professional career goals.

DSW CAPSTONE PROCESS

The third stage of the DSW program is the capstone process. The purpose of the capstone process is to develop knowledge and expertise in the student's field of practice that integrates mastery of program knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive/affective processes. The capstone is designed to incorporate components of knowledge, theory, and skills ascertained in the coursework sequence of the DSW program.

CAPSTONE STUDY PROPOSAL

The capstone proposal consists of one of the following four practice areas: a grant or policy proposal, research study, or program/curricular development. The DSW Capstone study proposal will consist of the following components:

1. **Capstone Seminar:** An approved project concept identification. This concept will be approved by the DSW faculty mentor of record.
2. **Capstone I/II:** A written proposal consisting of a literature review, relevant theory, and evidence-based research justifying their proposal concept along with the methodological approach. (The complete written capstone, including evaluation, will be approximately 25-30 pages in length.)
3. **Capstone III:** An oral defense of the proposal to the doctoral committee.

The capstone will be evaluated by the 3-member doctoral committee, consisting of three approved social work faculty members (the Capstone instructor, DSW Program Director, and the DSW faculty mentor of record). Upon successful completion of all required DSW program components, students will be awarded the DSW degree.

Proposed delivery format (100% in-person, 100% online, hybrid, multiple formats): All coursework will be completed online (asynchronous) with a low residency requirement. Two residency retreats (three days each) will be required. Each visit will take place during the fall semester, with options for virtual visits if necessary.

If hybrid, what % of program will be delivered online? N/A

Total Credit Hours required to complete the program (if range, enter minimum):

42

Please identify any specialized accreditation agency that may apply to this program and explain why your institution does or does not intend to seek specialized accreditation.

When available, we will pursue Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation. CSWE is currently conducting pilot accreditations for DSW programs nationwide. The proposed DSW program is created to be in alignment with CSWE standards, allowing for streamlined accreditation processes when we are able to seek accreditation.

Will the curriculum require work-based or experiential learning (internship, practicum, etc.)? If yes, please explain. Definitions and examples of different types of work-based learning are available at <https://www.alapprentice.org/>.

No

Will the program be designed to meet educational requirements licensure and/or certification required for entry-level employment? If yes, please list license and/or certification(s).

No

7. Employment Occupational Alignment

Using the federal Standard Occupational Code (SOC) System, please indicate the top three occupational codes related to post-graduation employment from the program. A full list of SOCs can be found at <https://www.onetcodeconnector.org/find/family/title#17>. A list of Alabama's "In-Demand Occupations" is available at <https://ache.edu/Instruction.aspx>

SOC 1 (required) 21-1022: Healthcare Social Workers

SOC 2 (optional) 21-1021: Child, Family, and School Social Workers

SOC 3 (optional) 21-1029: Social Workers, All Other

8. Relationship to other programs within the institution:

Is the proposed program associated with any existing offerings, including options within current degree programs? If yes, please explain. If this is a graduate program, please list any existing undergraduate programs which are directly or indirectly related. If this is a doctoral program, also list related master's programs.

This program will build upon the existing Master of Social Work (MSW) program offered at the university, as students from the MSW will be recruited to enter the DSW program after completing a minimum of 3 years of experience post-MSW attainment. There may be potential cross-listed electives with upcoming MSW level certificate courses. Faculty may teach across programs, and may also be assigned as mentors.

Will this program replace any existing programs or specializations, options, or concentrations within existing programs? If yes, please explain.

No

9. Relationship to programs at other Alabama public institutions:

List programs at the same degree level that use the same or similar CIP codes. If no similar programs exist within Alabama, please list similar programs offered within the 16 SREB states.

The University of Alabama offers a DSW program.

If the proposed program duplicates, closely resembles, or is similar to any other offerings in the state, please provide justification for any potential duplication.

There is only one existing DSW program in the State of Alabama, at the University of Alabama. The proposed program will allow students to progress through the program quicker (two years vs. three years) and is less expensive. Additionally, we will also serve an underserved region—as UNA is uniquely situated in the northern corner of the state to serve students from north Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

If you plan to explore program collaboration with other institutions, please explain.

There are no plans for collaboration with other institutions at this time.

10. Projected program demand

What is the primary methodology you will use to determine the level of student demand for this program? (Survey of current or former students, enrollments in existing programs or courses)

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects overall employment of social workers to grow 12 percent from 2020 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm>)

A Qualtrics survey of current UNA BSW and MSW students as well as alumni was conducted in August 2022. A total of 171 responses were collected. The survey consisted of three questions:

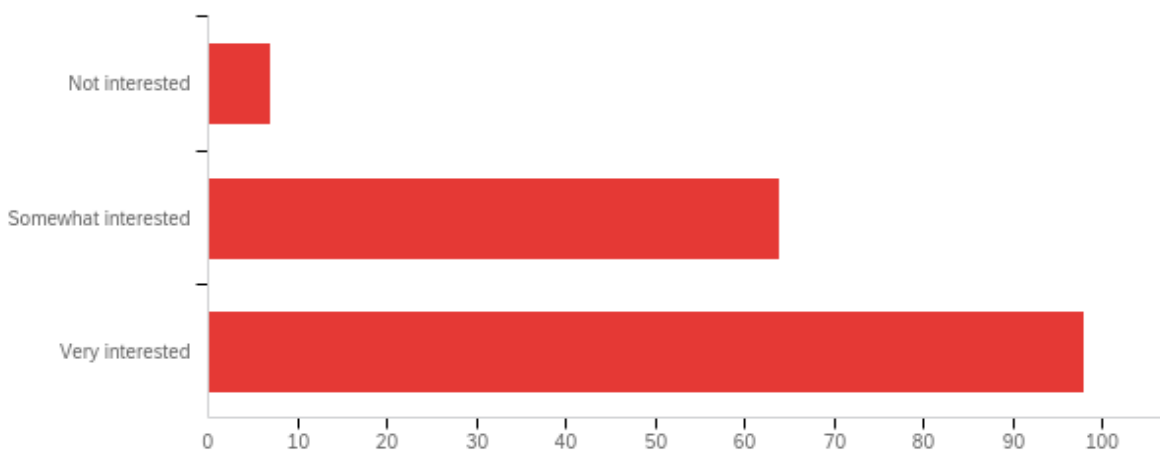
- 1) *How interested are you in an online Doctor of Social Work (DSW) degree program with an emphasis on advanced clinical practice from the University of North Alabama?*

- 2) *How much does the DSW program being entirely online affect your feelings in a positive way?*
- 3) *If you are interested in a DSW degree from UNA, what is your career interest that would lead you to pursue a DSW?*

Response summaries are included below:

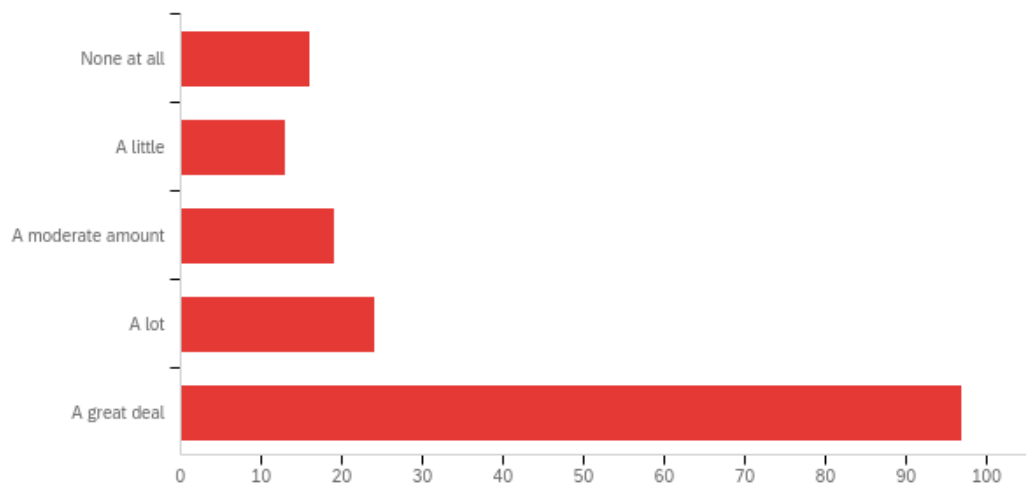
Q1 - How interested are you in an online Doctor of Social Work (DSW) degree program with an emphasis on advanced clinical practice from the University of North Alabama?

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How interested are you in an online Doctor of Social Work (DSW) degree program with an emphasis on advanced clinical practice from the University of North Alabama?	1.00	3.00	2.54	0.58	0.33	169



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Not interested	4.14%	7
2	Somewhat interested	37.87%	64
3	Very interested	57.99%	98
	Total	100%	169

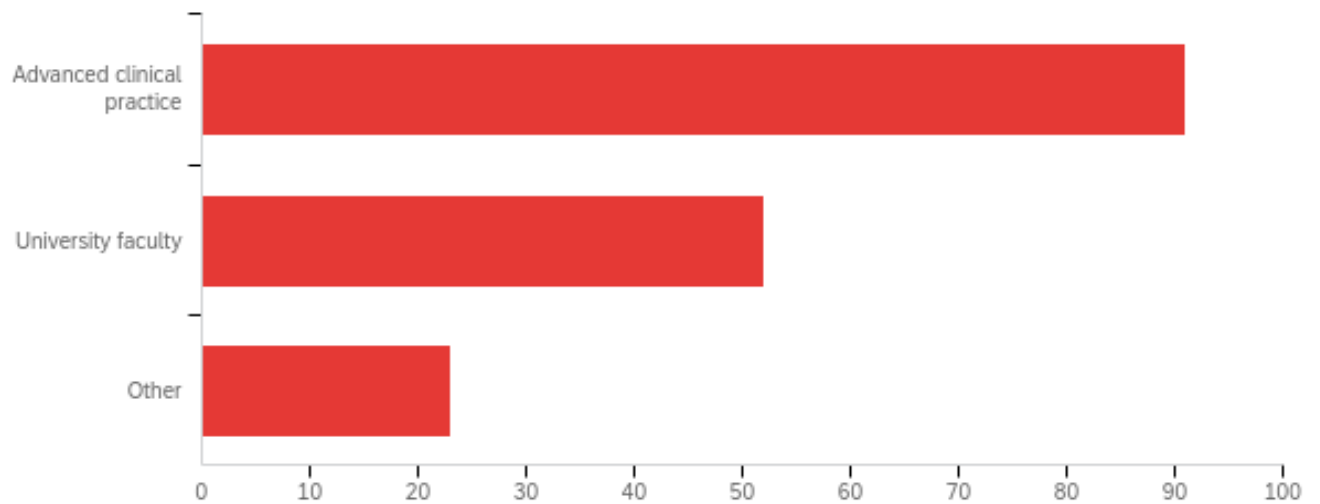
Q2 - How much does the DSW program being entirely online affect your feelings in a positive way?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How much does the DSW program being entirely online affect your feelings in a positive way?	1.00	5.00	4.02	1.36	1.85	169

#	Answer	%	Count
1	None at all	9.47%	16
2	A little	7.69%	13
3	A moderate amount	11.24%	19
4	A lot	14.20%	24
5	A great deal	57.40%	97
	Total	100%	169

Q3 - If you are interested in a DSW degree from UNA, what is your career interest that would lead you to pursue a DSW?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	If you are interested in a DSW degree from UNA, what is your career interest that would lead you to pursue a DSW?	1.00	3.00	1.59	0.72	0.52	166

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Advanced clinical practice	54.82%	91
2	University faculty	31.33%	52
3	Other	13.86%	23
	Total	100%	166

11. Determining State Need

What is the primary methodology you will use to determine state need for this program? (Labor market information, expert market analysis, state or regional economic development strategy)

Per the *Alabama Demand Occupations Report (2021-2022)* published by ACHE, the following social work specialties are considered in-demand occupations:

(https://ache.edu/ACHE_Reports/Meetings/Deadlines/Statewide_List_of_In-Demand_Occupations_2021-2022.pdf)

21-1022 Healthcare Social Workers
21-1021 Child, Family, and School Social Workers
11-9151 Social and Community Service Managers
21-1018 Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental
Health Counselors
21-1015 Rehabilitation Counselors
21-1023 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers
21-1094 Community Health Workers

Also, The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects overall employment of social workers to grow 12 percent from 2020 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm>)

Both of these data sources indicate fast growth for the social work profession in coming years. This will drive demand for highly trained social work clinicians, (including educators and supervisors) to train the next generations of social workers. These three areas are the focus of the proposed DSW program.