

IOWA

School of Social Work

MSW STUDENT HANDBOOK 2024-2025

Edited by Stephen Cummings,
September 2024.

WELCOME

Welcome to the University of Iowa School of Social Work. You are beginning a professional education in a program with a commitment to social change, a mission of preparing effective social work professionals, and a focus on building the knowledge base of social work practice.

Our program focuses on interactions among systems. This perspective enables consideration of different system levels at the same time and provides social workers with a particularly useful structure of organizing knowledge about clinical and community interventions, case management, program development, and policy analysis and advocacy.

Social Work is distinctive among professions. Our values include a commitment to social justice and social change. These value commitments are expressed in the school's focus on clinical and leadership theories and models and on individual, group, family and community-based approaches to social work practice.

MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

The Mission of the School of Social Work is to develop culturally responsive practitioners, scholars, researchers, and leaders to create a more just society.

To accomplish our shared goals, the School of Social Work faculty, staff, and students embrace six core values:

- Service to State
- Cultural Competency and Diversity
- Research
- Social Justice
- Education for the Future
- Strength-Based Ecosystem Perspective

STRATEGIC PLAN AND GOALS, 2021-2026

Focus Area 1: Student Success

- **Goal I: Provide state of the art MSW and BA curriculum that addresses pressing issues in the field of social work.**
 - Strategy 1: Redesign and implement new curriculum structure to prepare students for practice at multiple system levels and with various populations.
- **Goal II: Increase enrollment in and completion of certificate programs.**
 - Strategy 1: As appropriate, provide all three certificates in online and in person.
- **Goal III: Provide social work education that is available to students at all programmatic levels.**
 - Strategy 1: Leverage the historical excellence of graduate level social work education in the state.
 - Strategy 2: Continue to grow UI-SSW's presence statewide through site locations in Iowa City, Sioux City, Des Moines.

- Strategy 3: Increase enrollment in Iowa City BA program.
- Strategy 4: Increase enrollment in PhD program.

Focus Area 2: Research and Discovery

- **Goal I: Increase grant activity in department.**
 - Strategy 1: Leverage grant expertise in College (Social Science Institute) and SSW (NRC) to create infrastructure for grant activity.
- **Goal II: Increase the visibility and vitality of faculty scholarship.**
 - Strategy 1: Design and implement communication structure for showcasing student and faculty excellence.
- **Goal III: Increase enrollment and research productivity of doctoral students.**
 - Strategy 1: Increase enrollment of research-focused doctoral students.
 - Strategy 2: Strengthen research productivity of PhD students to prepare for job market.

Focus Area 3: Engagement

- **Goal I: Showcase the infusion of social work advocacy and practice into the larger University, State and Regional community**
 - Strategy 1: Refocus the role of Wild Bill's Coffeeshop to include focus on social justice and disability rights advocacy.
 - Strategy 2: Build community education programming to meet the needs of the social work community.
 - Strategy 3: Strengthen relationships between the school and community agencies through field placements.

Focus Area 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Collaboration

- **Goal I: Cultivate a culture in the School to deepen and enhance inclusiveness, and to fully respect and appreciate diverse voices and backgrounds.**
 - Strategy 1: Investigate best practices for conducting an organization audit to assess commitment and accomplishments in social justice and culturally responsive practice.
 - Strategy 2: Strengthen retention/recruitment of BA, MSW, and PhD students and faculty/staff of color, disability, LGBTQ, and first generation.
 - Strategy 3: Support ongoing work with faculty to become an anti-racist and culturally competent organization.
 - Strategy 4: Support immersion and international learning and scholarship.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & RESOURCES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK DIRECTOR

Associate Professor Miriam Landsman, PhD, MSW

Miriam Landsman, PhD, is the Director of the School of Social Work. Dr. Landsman is also the Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice. Dr. Landsman's primary areas of research are family-centered approaches to child welfare practice, and development of the child welfare workforce.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Associate Professor Megan Gilster, PhD, MSW

Megan Gilster, PhD, is the Associate Director of the School of Social Work. Dr. Gilster is a Research Fellow in the Social and Education Policy Research Program in the University of Iowa Public Policy Center. Her research addresses how community and neighborhood conditions matter for the well-being of residents

MSW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Clinical Associate Professor Stephen Cummings, MSW, ACSW, LISW

Stephen Cummings, MSW, ACSW, LISW, is the MSW Program Director. He is responsible for the development and maintenance of the MSW educational programs of the school and for resolving student problems related to the educational program and is an important resource for students. (Rm. 321-1A in North Hall, Iowa City. Professor Cummings also has an office in Des Moines, room 123, in the John and Mary Pappajohn Education Center.

MSW PRACTICUM DIRECTOR

Clinical Assistant Professor Sarah Witry, MSW, LISW

Sarah Witry is the Practicum Director. She provides leadership and oversight of the MSW and BA Practicum Programs and also administers the Iowa City (BA and MSW) and Online (MSW) practicum. All students in these centers will interact with the Practicum Director. The Des Moines and Sioux City programs have designated faculty who administer those practicum sites and processes.

ADVISORS

Advisors monitor the student's progress through the curriculum. They approve changes in registration. Advisors are involved in approving change of status from part to full-time status and change of concentration. If a concern is filed regarding a student's advancement in the program, the advisor is involved in assisting with the development of the remediation plan (see [Student Advancement Policy](#) in [Appendix B](#). Each student is assigned a faculty advisor. Should a student desire to change their advisor, see the Change of Advisor form on the School's Advising resource page: <https://socialwork.uiowa.edu/graduate/advising>.

STAFF

Program and Admissions Manager

The Program and Admissions Manager provides support to the Director, Administrator, Faculty Program Directors and Certificate Coordinators with developing, interpreting and implementing School, CLAS and Graduate College,

and CSWE educational policies and procedures. They provide administrative support for planning and delivery of the school's programs, for student retention and success and alumni services.

Admissions Specialist

The Admissions Specialist provides leadership for the School of Social Work program directors for undergrad/graduate admissions and academic programs, academic advising to BA & MSW students, planning and implementation of outreach and recruitment activities on and off campus. They collaborate with the Graduate College Admissions office to maintain the graduate application database.

Des Moines and Online Program Coordinator

The Des Moines and Online Program Coordinator provides instructional support for the School of Social Work's students, adjunct faculty, and regular faculty at the Des Moines Learning Center and the Online (Hybrid) program, including enhanced use of distance education strategies/technologies. They provide developmental activities to sustain/grow the MSW programs in Des Moines and online and provide office coordination and management for these programs.

Operations Administrator

The Operations Administrator oversees the Operations of the School, including budget preparation and overseeing of financial accounts. They oversee research assistantship and teaching assistantship appointments, other departmental financial aid and award processes, and can provide information regarding funding for student research projects.

Operations Coordinator

The operations coordinator assists the Director and provides coordination and support for School operations, including space and equipment. The operations coordinator manages the main office in Iowa City and supervises work study students.

FACULTY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION POSITIONS

Role	Faculty/Staff Member
Director	Miriam Landsman
Associate Director	Megan Gilster
BA Program Director	Alison Oliver
MSW Program Director	Stephen Cummings
Director of Practicum Education	Sarah Witry
Distance Education Administrator	Stephen Cummings
Ph.D. Program Director	Megan Gilster
National Resource Center Director	Miriam Landsman

Aging and Longevity Studies Certificate Program Coordinator	Mercedes-Bern Klug
Resilience and Trauma Program Certificate Coordinator *	Harmony Linden
Critical Cultural Competence Certificate Coordinator *	Yolanda Spears

* Certificate is available only to undergraduate students.

MSW PROGRAM HANDBOOK AND WEBSITE RESOURCES

The MSW Handbook and School of Social Work website provide access to information about the curriculum and sequencing of courses, selected University, School and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) policies, and the administrative and committee structure of the school. While the Handbook is updated annually, timely updates are provided on the website: <https://socialwork.uiowa.edu/>.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

University administrative offices (e.g. The Office of the Registrar), social work faculty, staff and students rely upon University Email and LISTSERVs to communicate. Students are expected to check their university email account (@uiowa.edu) routinely. Refer to the University of Iowa's resource site for detailed information: <https://basbls.uc.uiowa.edu/advising/getting-started/university-email-and-office-365>.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Students provide feedback and input into the program in several ways.

- Students evaluate each course and instructor using the university wide system of assessing the Classroom Environment (ACE) forms.
- Students are surveyed after finishing their foundation courses, and prior to graduation.
- Students are frequently asked for input regarding course content, and satisfaction with the program through survey and/or focus groups. These inputs assist faculty with program improvement.
- Alumni are surveyed at one and five years after graduation.
 - Students are encouraged to organize in the Social Work Student Organization. A formal UI Graduate Student Association may be renewed each year and the MSW Director is the liaison.
- MSW students may participate in the University of Iowa Graduate Student Senate: <https://gss.grad.uiowa.edu/>

INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM PLANNING

Students admitted to the MSW program will establish a plan to finish their degree in two, three, or four years. Students are required to meet with their advisor shortly before the early registration period to be authorized to register. Authorization is required to progress to the next semester, or to graduation.

Modifications to the structured sequenced program require both advisor approval and MSW Program Director, Practicum Education Director, and in some cases, the Program and Admissions Manager. This is necessary to ensure adherence to CSWE policy. This process also aids in adequately planning for class size and practicum placements.

IMPORTANT EVENTS AND DEADLINES

SCHEDULE OF COURSES

All information provided by The University on policies and [deadlines, registration procedures, fees, schedules](#) are available on the Registrar's Office website: <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/calendars-deadlines>).

GRADUATION AND COMMENCEMENT

Students in good standing with the School of Social Work and the Graduate College will be eligible to apply for graduation and participate in commencement. Students will receive updates regarding eligibility to graduate from the School of Social Work. Students are expected to be aware of their academic plan and eligibility for graduation. Questions regarding eligibility to graduate may be reviewed with the student's advisor.

- **Degree application:** Use the link on your [MyUI dashboard](#) to start the application process. Information is available regarding this process on the [Registrar's website](#). <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/degree-application>.
 - Students are eligible to apply for graduation in the final semester, should they have completed all requirements of the MSW Program.
- **Commencement:** The Graduate College schedules Commencement Events for both May and December. Students are advised to monitor communication from the University of Iowa regarding planning for commencement events.
 - The School of Social Work has historically held events to recognize student graduation at various locations and dates in the spring. Announcements regarding these events are usually made in the spring semester; students are encouraged to monitor communications via their University email for details.

LICENSURE APPLICATION

For students seeking their LMSW license, Iowa and other states may allow the application process to begin in the final semester prior to graduation.

- **State board examination:** Most states, including Iowa, require students seeking licensure to pass a the ASWB exam. Students may be able to take this exam in spring semester. The school will provide guidance via email announcements. Details regarding this process are subject to change.

THE MSW PROGRAM

The specific mission of the MSW program is to prepare social workers for leadership in the profession and for advanced social work practice in one of two concentrations: Clinical Practice or Leadership Practice.

The MSW Program develops high levels of skill in practice applying the values and ethics of the social work profession to complex ethical issues, with an emphasis on social justice and social change. The research mission

of the University ensures that students learn about faculty research, critical thinking, analytic and scientific ways of thinking, and practice and program evaluation.

GOALS OF THE MSW PROGRAM

- 1. To prepare students to shape the profession's future by providing education in family-based, community-based, and culturally competent practice approaches using the person in environment framework.***
- 2. To prepare competent professionals for autonomous practice and leadership within the professional community that includes advanced interventions at multiple system levels, supervision, program development, program administration, training, evaluation of practice, dissemination of new models of practice, and policy development.***

The University of Iowa MSW program has been continually accredited by the Council on Social Work education (CSWE) since 1951.

CSWE has adopted a competency-based education framework. A competency-based approach identifies and assesses what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in its education policy:

Competency-based education rests on a shared view of the nature of competence in professional practice. Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes to practice situations in a culturally responsive, purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being.

The nine social work competencies are listed in this section with full descriptions in [Appendix B](#). Each competency describes the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that make up the competency at the generalist level of practice, followed by a set of behaviors that integrate these components. These behaviors represent observable components of the competencies, and the descriptions that precede them represent the underlying content and processes that inform the behaviors.

Master's programs extend and enhance the nine social work competencies, and any additional competencies added by the program, for each area of specialized practice. By extending and enhancing the competencies, programs provide master's-level students with the four dimensions (i.e., knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes) relevant to each area of specialized practice. A specialized competency description is being developed to incorporate the four dimensions and specialized behaviors for each competency in our new curriculum design.

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice

Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

The competencies are described in detail in [Appendix B](#).