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BACCALAUREATE AND MASTER'S DEGREES

NEW PROPOSAL FORMS
(Submit One Copy)

LETTER OF INTENT

Institution: Albany State University

Institutional Contact (President or Vice President for Academic Affairs): Dr. Abiodun Ojemakinde, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: April 27, 2009

School/Division: College of Arts and Humanities

Department: Psychology, Sociology and Social Work

Name of Proposed Program: Masters in Social Work

Degree: M.S.W.

Major: Social Work

Degree Inscription: Masters Degree in Social Work

CIP Code: 440701

Anticipated Starting Date: **Fall 2010**

Program Classification: Social Work

1. Program Description and Objectives:

a. Objectives of the Program

The proposed Master of Social Work Program will focus on the development of the advanced generalist scholar/practitioner. Further, the program will draw from a curriculum enhanced, from an ecological and global perspective, by knowledge, values and skills based on scientific inquiry, or evidence based practice (EBT). Its advanced concentration will prepare students for

clinical licensures and will focus on the prevention, intervention and treatment throughout the lifespan. The overall objective is to prepare students to promote the well-being of individuals, families and communities within the State; particularly in rural areas of Southwest Georgia.

The MSW curriculum objectives are derived from the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Explicit Curriculum Educational Policy (EP) 2.0 (1-10). In that CSWE is moving from the utilization of objectives to competencies, the proposed MSW Program's objective is to educate all students to be able to demonstrate the following competencies: utilization of critical thinking skills; assessment of multiple systems; advance social and economic justice; demonstrate professionalism and assume leadership roles within the community. The Social Work Program will also seek to prepare students to serve diverse populations who are depressed, marginalized and underserved in rural Southwest Georgia and rural America.

b. Needs the program will meet

There is an outcry from the community and the State for ASU to implement a Master's in Social Work program to accommodate individuals within and without underserved areas approximately 75 miles from ASU. ASU is located 70 miles from the northern Florida line, and 40 miles from the eastern Alabama line, and is uniquely situated in the southwestern part of Georgia wherein the nearest similar program is 100 miles away. Albany State University is a regional University in Georgia, and serves the Southwest quadrant of the State.

The national trend for Social Work shows that there will continuously be a great need for trained professionals providing social services. The need for masters-level social workers has increased in that employers (like A.T. & T, I.B.M., Kraft, Corning, etc.) have steadily moved toward providing social services for their employees and the wider community (Karen Dewitt, 1998).

The program will meet the community's demand for more Social Workers at the professional level. The proposed program will serve as a means for meeting the needs of individuals wishing to secure a higher level of professionalism in Social Work as well as meet an identified need within the community for more Social Workers at the professional level. The University System's investment in the proposed program will provide persons in Southwest Georgia the opportunity to matriculate at the graduate level at Albany State University (ASU) who would not otherwise have an opportunity to receive a master's degree due to their perceived inability to

leave their permanent living area. This program will be the first and only provider of this degree in the Southwest region of Georgia.

c. Brief explanation of how the program is to be delivered

The proposed Master's Program will be administered through the traditional classroom, face to face instruction, in addition to a mandatory 950 hours in a field practicum experience. Due to CSWE's stance/view regarding on-line instruction of social work classes, for purposes of accreditation, implementation of on-line courses will not be pursued during initial accreditation.

d. Prioritization within the institution's strategic plan

The proposed program will promote the fulfillment of the Institution's Strategic Plan towards the advancement and realization of Goal I: Strategies one and two: to provide educational programs to meet the needs of the University's diverse student population (nontraditional students); enhance the role of the University as a leader in providing quality educational experiences...; Goal II: Strategies three, four and five: to provide...life-long learning and economic development to improve the quality of life in Southwest GA.; offer an array of university programs to advance educational, social and cultural opportunities in the region; and develop educational innovations to address the issues and problems in the region.

2. Description of the program's fit with the institutional mission and nationally accepted trends in the discipline.

The proposed master's program will be in concert with the primary mission of ASU to educate students to become outstanding contributors to society. It will also encapsulate the University System of Georgia's commitment to excellence and responsiveness within a scope of influence defined by the needs of an area of the state, and by promoting programs that are particularly outstanding or have distinctive characteristics that have a magnet effect throughout the region or state. Further, the proposed Master's program will be a high quality generalist practice program that will support a variety of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and professional academic programs at the Master's level, including the M.P.A. Program and the Criminal Justice Program.

Albany State University is a regional University in Georgia, and serves the Southwest quadrant of the State. The University's mission is to offer programs and activities that seek solutions for the City of Albany as well as the rural communities located in Southwest, Georgia. As was

stated earlier, the University's goal is to strengthen its historic mission, while serving the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population in Southwest Georgia as well. The Social Work Program's mission also seeks to serve diverse populations who are depressed, marginalized and underserved in rural Southwest Georgia and rural America. The proposed master's program will meet Southwest Georgia's need for masters-level social workers in the area. The proposed program will further meet the needs of Southwest Georgia's underserved population of "persons in place" (potential students living in the region), who want to obtain an MSW without having to travel a great distance. This program will be the only graduate level social work program in Southwest Georgia providing a master's degree.

Several national trends for Social Work show that there will continuously be a great need for trained professionals providing social services. The need for masters-level social workers has increased in that:

1. Today, the Social Work profession is losing social workers between the ages of 45 to 65, and many are disaffiliating themselves. A leadership void in the profession is caused by this action. Due to a lack of administrative training social workers have inadequate self-marketing skills, and agency directorships are consistently being awarded to professionals with MBAs rather than to professionals with the MSW. The question to be raised for new programs is whether students will be taught courses in administration, economics and policy that would secure clinical licensure. ASU's proposed master's program will prepare potential students to become licensed social workers of the future, thereby answering the aforementioned question in the affirmative.
2. The third trend over the last 20 years, not only in the State of Georgia but in other states as well, has been to hire people with bachelors and associates degrees in other disciplines instead of MSWs. As a result, the profession is becoming "deskilled". While all social service agencies are suffering under the same conditions, some are in a better place to work because of forward-thinking leadership. The ASU's proposed master's program will be able to respond to all of the aforementioned trends by investing in the Social Work profession by educating persons-in-place and those from underserved communities who desire to matriculate at the master's level.

3. Description of how the program demonstrates demand and a justification of need in the discipline and geographic area and is not unnecessary program duplication.

In that Albany State University is a regional University in Georgia, and serves the Southwest quadrant of the State, the proposed master's program will meet Southwest Georgia's need for master level social workers in the area. The need for not only MSW's but BSW's as well in the State of Georgia is due to the Consent Decree in Kenny A. vs. Perdue wherein the State must comply with the minimal qualifications noted for those persons hired to work in child welfare. The State of Georgia Department of Family and Children Services did in fact identify ASU as one of the universities to meet their need for BSW's and has most recently agreed to assist the University in filling the void of MSW's.

The proposed program will further meet the need of Southwest Georgia's population of persons in place who want to obtain an MSW without leaving their environment. This serves the State and individuals as they are not forced to leave their families and current employers to pursue a higher level of education to meet the needs of their employers, clients and the community.

This program should be offered at Albany State University because it will be the ONLY graduate level Social Work program in the Southwest region of Georgia. Prospective students in Southwest Georgia are underserved, and are considered persons-in-place. Further, the agencies in Southwest Georgia have a shortage of graduate level social workers to fulfill their needs. The following Universities in the State of Georgia offer the MSW Programs— Clark Atlanta University, Georgia State, Kennesaw State University, Savannah State, University of Georgia, and Valdosta State. Travel time for individuals in Southwest Georgia to the aforementioned universities ranges from a minimum of an hour and a half to four and a half hours from areas to be serviced by ASU. There is a definite need for the MSW Program in Albany and its surrounding areas.

4. Brief description of institutional resources that will be used specifically for the program (e.g., personnel, library, equipment, laboratories, supplies & expenses, capital expenditures at program start-up and when the program undergoes its first comprehensive program review.

The State Human Resources and The Department of Family and Children Services Education and Training Department have committed to support the **master's program financially for four (4) years**. The financial support of faculty will be discontinued 2013 or 2014, depending upon when the program is approved by the Board of Regents and the University. The program will then ask to

receive State appropriations; however, the program should be accredited by the Council on Social Work Education which will contribute to the status of the program and its ability to gain more financial stability.

In compliance with CSWE requirements, six faculty members will be hired specifically for the proposed graduate program. Also in accordance with Social Work accreditation standards some faculty currently teaching in ASU's BSW program cannot be utilized. The funding secured through DFCS will sustain six faculty members and one support staff and two graduate assistants for four years.

The 3rd floor of the existing C. Harnett Building will house the proposed program. Accommodating faculty for the proposed program will require six faculty offices, one computer lab, a resource library and clinical laboratory. The University's existing library will continue to be a resource and the initial supply of new materials will be subsidized by DFCS. The existing resources currently available at the University's library will continue to be employed by both students and faculty. Other expenses will include the ordering of texts for the program's classes, computers for six new faculty and one staff, office supplies and the expenses of accreditation. A large percentage of the expense for the initial start up of the program will be provided by DFCS. The University's primary obligation at the outset will largely encompass the expenses associated with allocating and making ready the spaces within the existing facility, as well as the cost of pursuing accreditation. The University's initial expense for accreditation of the program will occur during Benchmarks I through III. Bench I will not occur until the proposed program is approved by the State of Georgia Board of Regents.

Benchmark I includes a Commissioner's visit and review of documents to affirm the proposed program is in compliance with accreditation standards. In order to receive candidacy status the program must be in compliance with Benchmark I, including the hiring of three faculty and the Chair.

During Benchmark II the program will be granted a second year of candidacy after the Commissioner's review—upon site visitation—of the program establishes compliance with standards specific to the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (i.e. the explicit curriculum, field curriculum, student development, administrative structure, resources, diversity, and assessment).

Benchmark III will occur upon successfully passing Benchmark II. A final site visit authorized by the Commissioner will verify that the program is in compliance with all of the accreditation standards specific to EPAS. Feedback from the Commissioner's report in Benchmark III will be used to improve the self-study.