

Learner-Centered Education Program
Arizona Board of Regents
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FORM

Proposal Title: A Collaborative, Portable, Learning-Centered, 34-credit hour Master of Social Work Degree Program

Institution: Arizona State University DEPT/Unit: Social Work

Multi-Campus/University Projects
(check other campuses or universities participating)
X ASU Main ___ UA
___ ASU East ___ UA South
___ ASU West X NAU

List other participating agencies:

Briefly describe the program and the development plan.
Arizona State University West Department of Social Work, Arizona State University Main School of Social Work, and Northern Arizona University's Department of Sociology and Social Work have developed a collaborative, portable, learner-centered, 34-credit hour Master of Social Work (MSW) degree program. There are currently 27 students enrolled in the program. This proposal seeks funding to help continue the program through graduation of the current cohort.

Funding Category

Indicate a primary (P) and, if applicable, secondary (S) funding category:

Professional Development _____ Program or Course Development/Modification _____
LCE Research _____ Improved Assessment of Learning Outcomes _____

Authorizations

Project Director

Signature: _____

Mailing Address: Arizona State University West, P.O. Box 37100, Phoenix, AZ 85069-7100

Name: Melissa Lavitt Title: Chair & MSW Director

Phone: 602-543-6615 Fax: 602-543-6612 Email: Melissa.Lavitt@asu.edu

Department Chair / Unit Director/ College Dean/Provost

Name: Manuel Avalos Title: Associate Vice Provost

Signature

Official Authorized to Enter into Contractual Obligations

Signature _____

Name: Cheryl A. Lee, CRA Title: Sponsored Projects Site Supervisor

Phone: 602-543-4505 Fax: 602-543-4359 Email: Lee.Cheryl@asu.edu

c/o Arizona Board of Regents
2020 N. Central Avenue, Suite 230
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: 602-229-2500 • Fax: 602-229-2555
www.abor.asu.edu

Master of Social Work Degree Program
Regents Innovation Fund: Grant Proposals for Learner-Centered Education

Funding category: Development or Modifications of Programs, Courses, or Course Modules using LCE Techniques

PART 1. Abstract:

The Arizona State University West Department of Social Work, the Arizona State University Main School of Social Work, and Northern Arizona University's Department of Sociology and Social Work have developed a collaborative, portable, learner-centered, 34-credit hour Master of Social Work (MSW) degree program. The first year of the program was partially funded (\$50,000) by the Regents Fund 2003. There are currently 27 students enrolled in the program. This proposal seeks funding to help continue the program through graduation of the current cohort.

The collaborative portable model is the first of its kind in the nation. Its current success depends on the strong collaboration that exists between the three campuses, and the innovation and creativity of the faculty at each of the institutions. For example, the compressed time format, the emphasis on "real life" assignments, and the use of a cohort model are strategies to provide a learner-centered professional degree program to rural and reservation-based social workers.

Due to the resource intensive nature of graduate social work education, it is prohibitive for a single institution to deliver an accredited MSW program to rural and Native communities, in spite of the need. Therefore, this collaboration provides access to professional education where none previously existed. Although the first cohort has not yet graduated, strong interest already exists to replicate the program in other rural parts of the state (e.g., Kingman, Yuma).

The overall goal of the learner-centered project is to provide support for the development of Arizona's rural social service workforce by expanding the educational and professional opportunities for targeted individuals (i.e., Bachelor-level social workers in rural Arizona).

GOAL 1: To continue to provide access to an MSW degree program for bachelor-level social workers (BSW) in rural northern Arizona. In particular, the program targets American Indian bachelor-level social workers that live on or close to reservation communities in northern Arizona. The overall target group is nontraditional working students.

Original Objectives (current progress):

1. Recruit cohort of 25 students.
(Current cohort of 27.)
2. Forty to 50% of the cohort will be American Indian students.
(Currently, over 60% of the cohort is American Indian.)
3. Eighty percent of the cohort would be non-traditional working students.
(Currently, over 90% of cohort is employed by a social service agency.)
4. The program incorporates flexible arrangements of time (compressed weekend format) and place (Flagstaff).

Outcome Measure:

The recruitment (successfully recruited 27 students), admission (admitted 27 students), and retention and graduation rates of the cohort continue to be assessed.

GOAL 2: To address the unmet social service needs in northern Arizona due to a shortage of MSW-educated professionals. Only a very small percentage of the 300 rural social workers in the state hold the MSW degree and are providing services to rural and tribal areas in both northern and southern Arizona.

Objective (current progress):

Employment of MSW graduates in social service agencies or tribal social services in northern Arizona. (This will be assessed after graduation).

Outcome Measure:

Post-graduation employment survey of cohort (i.e., agency, position)

GOAL 3: To continue to deliver an MSW program that allows for a contextual “fit” of the curriculum. It is important that students learn social work practice in the setting where they will ultimately use their skills in order to best meet the needs of the people they will be serving, i.e., American Indian and rural communities in Arizona.

Objective (current progress):

Graduate competent MSW-level social workers who are prepared to work in rural communities. (This will be assessed after graduation).

Outcome Measure:

Evaluate post-graduation social work practice effectiveness of cohort participants

PART 2. Identification of Need

Brief Project Description:

Participants have been admitted to ASU West’s Advanced Standing MSW program and will graduate from ASU West with a Master’s degree in social work in May 2005. The delivery of the program, however, represents a collaborative effort between social work departments at West, Main, and NAU. The portable, 34-credit hour MSW program successfully began in May 2003 and continues through May 2005 on the NAU campus. The curriculum is delivered throughout the year, including the summer, so that students can complete their degree in a timely fashion. Each 3-credit hour course is taught over a six-week block with classes on Friday evenings and all day Saturday. Field internship will occur in agencies near Flagstaff.

ASU West and ASU Main are delivering the required coursework (24 credits) and NAU will deliver the field practicum component of the program (10 credit hours), beginning summer 2004. An advisory committee consisting of faculty from all three campuses and representatives of rural and American Indian social service agencies provides feedback and guidance to ensure that the program is able to meet its stated objectives.

The project utilizes a cohort model. There are currently 27 enrolled students who will progress through the program together. The Flagstaff location and the compressed weekend format allows Native American, reservation-based residents and others in surrounding rural areas to drive to Flagstaff for the weekend only. Participants will complete their field placements where they live rather than requiring them to do it in Flagstaff.

Why This Project is Necessary:

Rural areas of Northern Arizona, especially reservation communities, have high rates of unemployment, poverty, behavioral health problems, and substance abuse. The prevalence of social, psychological, and health problems increases the need for professionals that qualified to intervene effectively with clients and provide supervision to staff involved in direct practice. Social workers with bachelor’s degrees are generally not qualified to engage in these activities, nor are they eligible for certification to engage in independent clinical practice. Therefore, the lack of masters’ level practitioners prohibits third party reimbursement and adversely affects agency accreditation status.

In 1996, the NAU Social Work Program developed a satellite Bachelor’s of social work (BSW) program in Tuba City in collaboration with the Navajo Nation. The graduates of this program have remained in the Northern Arizona region and are employed in social service positions, primarily on the Navajo and Hopi reservations. NAU started another BSW satellite program in Kingman in January of 2000. The graduates of the NAU BSW program are eligible for Advanced Standing and constitute a sizeable potential market for a MSW degree program in the northern region of Arizona. Many bachelor-level social workers (BSW) in rural Arizona do not have the resources to relocate to Phoenix or Tempe to attend MSW programs at the West or Main campus (NAU does not have an MSW program). Furthermore, many have family obligations that prevent them from leaving the area. In 2000, ASU Main School of Social Work began an off-site MSW program on the NAU campus; this group graduated in May 2003. The resources required to sustain that

program were significant. The program was not cost-effective, in the long-run, for one department to manage. Thus, the three social work departments devised a way in which each department could contribute to the current program, thus increasing its viability and potential for achieving permanent status within the Universities and ensure access of rural BSW professionals to an accredited graduate social work program.

Strategic planning to make the current ASU/NAU collaboration self-sustaining continues. The need for a rural-based Advanced Standing MSW program has been well established; a waiting list already exists with the names of individuals requesting information regarding the next location of the portable MSW program.

How the Project Supports the Learner-Centered Initiative:

The flexible arrangement of time (compressed weekend format) and place (northern Arizona) for the program is one of the critical components of successful learner-centered education. In addition, the utilization of a cohort model underscores the emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy. Students are progressing through the program together while developing a mutual support network that instructors rely on to promote **collaborative learning** through group projects, on-site field experiences, and students teaching students activities.

Students are encouraged to integrate their work and social contexts with the academic material. It is well documented that different people (e.g. men/women, American Indian/dominant culture) have different ways of "knowing" and learning. Students are encouraged to share their "ways of knowing" and incorporate them into learning assignments with the intention of enriching the diversity of the learning environment. During a recent class, for example, the American Indian students explained the cultural relevance of a particular practice model to their non-Indian counterparts.

Social work education is competency-based and emphasizes professional knowledge, values and skill development. Therefore, learner-centered approaches to help students master specific competencies are indigenous to social work education. For example, students are expected to develop competency in applied action-oriented research. To that end, students are required to complete an agency-based applied research project in their capstone course (SWG 693 Applied Project). In their field internship, students must complete a hands-on project that: 1) focuses on an underserved group or unmet community need; and 2) is useful to the agency. Examples of current students' projects include: development of a domestic violence advisory committee for the Navajo Nation; clarification of sovereignty issues in the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act, to name a few. Results of the applied project will be presented at a Poster Session to which the community will be invited.

The Need for Short-term Funding:

The primary funding needs for the project include the part-time Program Coordinator/Field Liaison salary, quarter-time administrative support, travel funds for ASU West and Main faculty who teach a course in the program, and faculty associate support, as needed. The program continues to require a part-time coordinator to provide on-site professional mentoring, advising, and field liaison activities to cohort members. In addition to providing student support and advising, the program coordinator is also involved in securing internship sites for the students, managing the administrative details of off-site registration, and other tasks associated with academic programming. She has a .25 administrative assistant.

As stated previously, our first (2003) ABOR LCE grant request was only partially funded. In part, this was due to concerns about the level of monetary commitment of the departments to the collaborative program. In response to this feedback, the funding structure of the program has been modified. Student credit hours for fall semester 2003 were assigned in the usual fashion to the department that was teaching the course and the tuition dollars were funneled to the University-at-large. However, in spring 2004, student credit hours will not be accumulated by ASU West or Main. Instead, tuition money will go in to a local account (via the College of Extended Education) and will be used directly to support the program. NAU will also funnel their summer tuition for field placements directly into the program.

The program appreciates the previous LCE funding it received and used it to leverage additional resources. We successfully sought and received scholarship support from the Ottens Foundation, and applied for, but did not receive support from APS Foundation. A federal grant to educate and train rural child welfare workers was recently submitted; the outcome is not yet known. Furthermore, discussions are underway in each of the departments to find ways to secure state resources to continue the program after the first cohort. Therefore, additional LCE support is needed in order to graduate the first cohort, evaluate the extent to which the desired outcomes were met, and demonstrate the need to continue the collaboration in a way that makes it self-sustaining. As before, we were able to secure external funding because of the LCE endorsement; we

will now strive to make the collaborative endeavor a permanent feature of departments' state-supported budgets.

PART 3. Technical Needs

No external consultants have been required. Students have access to NAU satellite computer labs in Tuba city, Keams, and Ganado. This allows students to have remote access to ASU West's and NAU's libraries.

PART 4. Work Plan

Timeline:

<i>Feb– April '04</i>	Finalize field internship sites and supervisory responsibilities
<i>April – June '04</i>	Incorporate resources for Portable, Learner-centered MSW Program in departmental budget requests; or find alternate long-term funding mechanism
<i>May – August '04</i>	Provide field liaison support to students engaged in internship. Facilitate agency buy-in for Applied Projects. Prepare recruitment plan and materials.
<i>Sept. '04</i>	Begin active recruitment of next cohort - site to be determined by Program Advisory Board
<i>May '05</i>	Poster Session of the Applied Project & Graduation

ASU West and ASU Main are providing instructors for the 8 courses that comprise the Advanced Standing curriculum. NAU is providing the field component of the program using its current complement of BSW affiliated agencies. West and Main are each responsible for four courses, which are identified below.

Schedule and Institutional Affiliation of Courses

Summer 2003: ASU West SWG 600 Foundation for Advanced Social Work Practice

Fall 2003: First Six Weeks: ASU West SWG 610 Practice III Advanced Generalist Practice
Second Six Weeks: ASU Main SWG 691/606 Differential Assessment

****(Start of Proposed New Funding)**

Spring 2004: First Six Weeks: ASU Main SWG 697/644 Social Work Practice with Rural Populations
Second Six Weeks: ASU Main SWG 631/632 Advanced Policy Analysis

Summer 2004: **NAU SWG 645 Professional Experience – Field (7 credit hours)**
ASU West SWG 693a Applied Project – Part I (1 credit hour)

Fall 2004: NAU SWG 646 Professional Experience – Field (3 credit hours)
First Six Weeks: **ASU Main** SWG 612/681 Practice IV Social Work Administration/Supervision

Spring 2005: ASU West SWG 693b Applied Project – Part II (2 credit hours)
ASU West SWG 615 Social Work Practice with Children and Adolescents (3 credit hours)

PART 5. Key personnel

Principal Investigators:

Melissa Lavitt, PhD (Chair)
Social Work Department
Arizona State University
West Campus
602-543-6615
Melissa.Lavitt@asu.edu

Karen Gerdes, PhD
School of Social Work
Arizona State University
Main Campus
480-965-0505
Karen.Gerdes@asu.edu

Anne Medill, PhD
Department of Sociology and
Social Work
Northern AZ University
928-523-0122
Anne.Medill@nau.edu

PART 6. Expected Results & Outcomes

The assessment of the program occurs at two levels: 1) assessment of the specific goals of the rural-MSW cohort model; and 2) assessment of the desired outcomes of the ASU West MSW program. The first set of goals, as outlined in this proposal, reflects the unique needs of rural and Native American students using an inter-university collaboration to deliver the program. The latter goal refers to the specific academic and professional competencies that exist for all graduates of ASU West's MSW program.

Expected results of LCE Initiative – Rural MSW Cohort Program

Goals of the proposed program are:

1. To provide access to advanced standing MSW degree program for current holders of BSW degree.
2. To address unmet social service needs of rural Arizona
3. To deliver program that allows for contextual “fit” of curriculum.

Assessment and Measurement of desired outcomes:

Goal 1. Assess admission and graduation rates of cohort.

Expected outcomes: 40-50% of admitted cohort will be American Indian, with approximately 90% retention and graduation (Goal partially fulfilled or exceeded.)

Goal 2. Assess employment rates of graduates in rural and/or tribal agencies

Expected outcomes: 90-100% of graduates will be employed in rural/tribal settings as social workers. (Partial fulfillment; see table of employers.)

Goal 3. Assess professional competency of cohort in terms of their achievement of advanced generalist practice program objectives in a rural setting.

Expected outcomes: The ASU West MSW program, in keeping with accreditation requirements of the Council on Social Work Education, has a clearly defined method of assessing fulfillment of its program objectives. Assessment data are collected from the following sources: **Exit Survey** consisting of students' self-assessment of competency in prescribed set of social work skills and knowledge areas; **Applied Project Poster Session** and the assessment of students' achievement of programmatic goals using survey instrument; **Survey of Alumni** to provide data on relevancy of professional training; **Input from Portable/Rural MSW Advisory Board** to assess curriculum, field internship program, and achievement of learner-centered focus

The MSW program has two sets of learning objectives. The first set includes desired outcomes common to all MSW programs, as articulated by the Council on Social Work Education. The second set is unique to ASU West's MSW program and reflects the desired outcomes of the program's curriculum.

Professional Learning Objectives: Areas of competency common to all MSW programs (summarized)
advanced practice, multi-dimensional assessment, social policy analysis, research, supervision, organizational change

Program-specific Learning Objectives: Areas of competency unique to ASU West (summarized)
Integration of theory & practice, multi-system competency, diversity assessment of client and community, social change for underserved groups, professional leadership

Outcome data will be summarized by the Director and **disseminated** to all members of the collaboration, the Advisory Board, and other relevant audiences. Their input will guide program modification and strategic planning.