

Majoring in. . . .

# Social Work

## **Description of Social Work**

Social workers address personal and social problems; formulate, implement and evaluate policies and programs; engage in knowledge development for the profession; and influence community decision making. Social workers work with individuals, families and communities who experience vulnerability because of the lack of personal, social and/or institutional resources to meet their emotional, health and economic needs.

The B.S.W. Program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education. The curriculum is designed to prepare graduates for beginning level generalist social work practice. This approach assumes interdependence between individuals and their social environment. Students gain a broad knowledge about individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities and the ways in which each support or inhibit optimal functioning.

To be prepared for this level of practice, students learn the history and current development of social welfare programs, methods of influencing social change, professional values and ethics, the particular needs of oppressed populations, theories of human behavior, family, group, community and organizational functioning, an appreciation of research and methods of practice evaluation, and practice skills for practice with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations.

## **Course Requirements**

The Bachelor of Social Work requires completion of 121 credits, including 45 credits in the major. The curriculum of the baccalaureate program is specifically designed to prepare students for beginning-level generalist social work practice. This practice

model requires a broad base of knowledge about individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

**Major courses:** Some representative courses students in Social Work take include the following:

- Intro to Social Work
- Communication in the Helping Process
- Human Behavior in the Social Environment
- Research in Social Work
- Social Welfare Legislation and Services
- Social Work Practice
- Social Work with Oppressed Groups
- Supervised Social Work Practice Internships

**General Education Pre-professional Courses:** General education pre-professional courses provide an essential foundation for the upper level professional curriculum and are required for admission to junior and senior social work courses. These courses include: anthropology, Biology, English, math, ethics or critical thinking, psychology, and sociology

### **Careers in Social Work**

Employment opportunities for graduates with a B.S.W. degree are diverse and can include jobs that deal directly with people, as well as jobs in community planning, organizational administration and policy development. Typical areas of employment include the following:

- public child welfare
- foster care and adoption services
- social work in hospital settings
- social work in mental health settings

- alcohol and substance abuse treatment centers
- social work with persons who are elderly
- public and semi-private organizations that deal with minorities and oppressed groups, including:
  - women's and children's shelters
  - AIDS treatment and prevention centers
  - teen-age pregnancy prevention programs
  - domestic violence prevention and treatment
  - administration and policy development of organizations that provide services to minority and oppressed groups.

### **Next Steps**

If you are interested in learning more about majoring in Social Work at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU Social Work webpage at [www.vcu.edu/slwweb](http://www.vcu.edu/slwweb)
- Take an introductory Social Work course (SLWK 201).
- Read about the Social Work major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the Social Work curriculum worksheet with an academic advisor

- Talk to one or more upper-level Social Work students about their major experience
- Discuss the major with one or more Social Work professors. [www.vcu.edu/slwweb](http://www.vcu.edu/slwweb)
- Learn about internship possibilities through the Social Work Field department.  
<https://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/swfid>
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in Social Work
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the Social Work textbook section.
- Read specific information about careers in the Occupational Outlook Handbook located at [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco).

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