GERO-SOCIAL WORK

Master of Social Work

What is Gero-Social Work?
Gerontological social work is social work practice with older adults – focused primarily on maintaining and enhancing their quality of life. Gero-social work includes attention to physical, social, familial, cultural, community, and societal factors that support and enhance the well-being of older adults and their families.

Why is this area of social work practice important?
“By 2020, one in six Americans are projected to be age 65 and older, with the most dramatic growth among those over age 85, elders of color, and women” (CSWE Gero-Ed Center, 2011). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2033, the population 65 and older will outnumber people younger than 18 for the first time in our history. These demographic changes will, in turn, lead to a need for social workers with interest, education, and experience working with older adults and their families.

The School of Social Work has developed opportunities for MSW students to explore their interest in working with older adults and their families: the Area of Emphasis in Aging (AEA) Scholars program, the Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education (HPPAE), and elective courses specific to practice with these populations.

Area of Emphasis in Aging (AEA) Scholars
Components of the AEA experience:

Networking and Collaboration: AEA involves community members, alumni/ae, students, and faculty members in a dialogue about practice with older adults and their families.

Building Knowledge: Scholars develop their skills and deepen their understanding of the context and unique needs of older adults and their families with courses, course assignments, and campus and community events.

Required Electives:
- GRSW 523: Practice with Older Adults and Their Families
- GRSW 623: Clinical Practice with Older Adults

Practice: Scholars gain hands-on experiential learning and apply social work values, knowledge and skills in a social work context during field practica.

Research: AEA scholars will contribute to the body of knowledge in this area of social work practice by focusing their clinical research paper (GRSW 682, Applied Research Seminar) on a topic related to older adults and their families.

Leadership: AEA scholars assume leadership roles on the AEA advisory council, guide the development of group service and academic projects, and represent this unique area of social work practice in the School of Social Work, on campus and in the professional community.

Stipend: AEA scholars receive a tuition stipend of $1,000 in their last semester of the program.
Frequently Asked Questions About AEA Scholars

Why consider an Area of Emphasis (AE) Scholars program? The AE Scholars programs focus on emerging practice areas and provide additional networking, collaboration and leadership opportunities for those interested in these critical areas.

Who can apply to AE Scholars programs? AE Scholars programs are designed as two-year experiences. All newly admitted Advanced Standing 2 year and Regular Standing MSW students are eligible to apply. Other students who have at least two years remaining in their MSW program and who meet the requirements of the program also may apply during the spring application period. Students apply to the AEA program after acceptance to the MSW program. Regular standing students who participate in HPPAE are also eligible to apply.

How competitive is it to be accepted to the AE Scholars programs? Applicants need to articulate and demonstrate relevant qualifications and professional goals, and a limited number of students are accepted each year.

What if I don’t want to apply or don’t qualify for an AE Scholars program? There are many ways to explore your areas of interest. All enrolled MSW students have the opportunity to further concentrate their studies through their choice of:

- Electives, including those required of AE Scholars
- Fieldwork placements
- Clinical research projects

Can I apply to more than one AE Scholars program? You may apply to more than one AE Scholars program; however, you may only be selected for one.

The Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education (HPPAE): HPPAE is a national program initiative to recruit and train the next generation of social workers to work with older adults and their families. With fewer than three percent of social work students currently specializing in aging, HPPAE seeks to address the need for 70,000 “aging savvy” professional social workers by 2020. HPPAE provides an opportunity to explore gero-social work as part of the foundation year of the MSW curriculum. Specifically, our program offers:

- Foundation-level field placement in full-time summer block format
- Placement in two different agencies that serve the aging population
- Tuition stipend of $1,000

Who can apply? Accepted Regular Standing students interested in gero-social work practice and planning to complete their foundation placement in summer block format.

Learn more about Gero-Social Work Practice

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