

### **Advanced Generalist Practice**

Every MSW program has an area of specialization. For our program, this is Advanced Generalist Practice, which, according to data from the Council on Social Work Education, is one of the fastest growing areas of specialization for MSW programs in the United States (Dran, 2014; Lavitt, 2009). The Advanced Generalist specialization allows students to practice broadly and deeply, encompassing what Bolin (2014) identified as a “both/and” perspective of the helping process as multidimensional and complex.

The advanced generalist approach to social work practice is characterized by the practitioner’s ability to simultaneously address complex situations within and across multiple levels and systems. This strengths-based orientation is grounded in a liberal arts foundation and guided by a systems approach incorporating core social work knowledge, values, skills, cognitive and affective aspects, and ethics and respect for diversity. Using research-informed practice, the advanced generalist social worker promotes positive change in the social, political, and economic arenas to advance human rights.

Advanced generalists, as described by Derezotes (1999) have greater knowledge and higher skill levels that enable them to address more complex human and organizational problems and to supervise and administer programs, including guiding the work of others. Our curriculum prepares students to be innovative, thoughtful, independent and ethical social work practitioners. Upon graduation students are able to engage in multidimensional problem setting, leadership and self -reflection, ethical advocacy and lifelong development of the profession by finding ways to share their knowledge of effective interventions (Lavitt, 2009, Dran 2014)

The Advanced Generalist Practice specialization builds on the skills learned in the generalist year. Social workers in the South-Central region of Pennsylvania, and beyond, need to be prepared to work in diverse geographic areas (from rural areas to cities) where they are called upon to address multiple problems across multiple systems of intervention (individual, family, group, community, and organizational). The generalist perspective, as described by Sheafor and Horejsi (2003), enables social work practitioners to draw upon many theories and models to develop the most suitable interventions with client systems at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

### **Program Mission**

The mission of the joint MU-SU MSW Program is to provide accessible social work graduate education in the South-Central region of Pennsylvania. We prepare students to be effective advanced generalist practitioners, committed to the purpose and values of the social work profession.

### **Program Goals**

The MU-SU MSW Program seeks to:

1. Prepare students for competent advanced generalist practice through the acquisition and demonstration of social work competencies consistent with CSWE educational policy and accreditation standards.
2. Prepare students with the specialized knowledge and skills for social work practice with client systems to facilitate change within the boundaries of ethical practice and with attention to the profession's commitment to social justice and human rights.
3. Encourage students' commitment to continued professional development and lifelong learning by providing opportunities for community engagement and real-life learning experiences.

The MU-SU MSW Program goals are derived from the joint mission and from the Statement of Purpose of the CSWE EPAS document. Program Goal 1 addresses the first part of the mission: *The mission of the joint MU-SU MSW Program is to provide accessible social work graduate education in the South-Central region of Pennsylvania. We prepare students to be effective advanced generalist practitioners.* The 2015 EPAS bases measurement of social work education on nine core competencies, with each competency further operationalized in a set of corresponding performance behaviors. Program Goal 2 addresses the second part of the mission *committed to the purpose and values of the social work profession*, and Program Goal 3 seeks to extend the mission through *professional development and lifelong learning initiatives of the program*.