



Grand Valley State University School of Social Work

Grand Valley State University was chartered by the Michigan Legislature in 1960, in response to the need for a public, four-year institution of higher education in the Grand Rapids-Holland-Muskegon Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), the state's second largest metropolitan area. Since 1963, when there were 226 students and 14 faculty members, Grand Valley has grown to become a comprehensive university with more than 23,000 students and more than 700 faculty members.

As the metropolitan area's population reached 850,000 in the early 1980s, representing almost a 26 percent increase, Grand Valley's enrollment topped 6,000 students. By 1992, the university's enrollment doubled to exceed 12,000 students; and between 1992 and 2008, it nearly doubled again, to slightly less than 24,000 students.

Today, a strong liberal education serves as the foundation for Grand Valley's wide array of undergraduate and graduate programs, fostering critical thinking, creative problem solving, and cultural understanding. Through personalized learning enhanced by active scholarship, Grand Valley accomplishes its mission of educating students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. This mission attracts students from throughout West Michigan, the state, the nation, and from around the world.

The university offers degrees from campuses in Allendale, Grand Rapids, and Holland and centers in Muskegon, Traverse City, and Sault St. Marie. Students pursue majors, minors, and professional credentials and degrees in more than 200 programs, including 69 undergraduate majors and 26 graduate programs. These are delivered in state-of-the-art facilities, ranging from wireless academic buildings to modern living centers to performance and athletic spaces.

Grand Valley's Meijer Campus in Holland provides students with the opportunity to take select undergraduate and graduate courses or earn a degree in liberal studies. At the Northwestern Michigan College University Center in Traverse City students may earn undergraduate degrees in liberal studies and elementary teacher certification, with majors in language arts or social studies. Advanced degree programs leading to a master's degree in education and social work are also offered there. At the Stevenson

Center for Higher Education on the campus of Muskegon Community College, master's degrees in education and social work are offered as well as an undergraduate degree in elementary teacher certification with a major in social studies.

The largely residential Allendale Campus comprises 1,275 acres of beautifully wooded grounds. It incorporates a complete college experience with numerous student organizations, an array of nationally ranked NCAA athletics, and many year-round arts and entertainment events. Nearly 5,300 students live on campus in university living centers and apartments. The Robert C. Pew Grand Rapids Campus, which includes the L.V. Eberhard Center and the Richard M. DeVos Center where the School of Social Work is housed, provides an important link to the business, health, and cultural community of Michigan's second largest city. With a focus on graduate and professional studies, the Pew Grand Rapids Campus serves more than 9,000 students.

University Mission

Grand Valley State University educates students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. The university contributes to the enrichment of society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service.

University Values

Effective Teaching

Our highest priority is to offer outstanding teaching in all of our undergraduate and graduate programs. The teaching culture of Grand Valley State University is characterized by the continual development of excellence in the classroom, the recognition of multiple ways of learning, and the accessibility of faculty to students. In order to nurture the habits of intellectual growth, we seek to instill in our students curiosity as well as the love of learning. Students acquire new knowledge and explore its application through research, artistic expression, and scholarly activity. We value the vigorous engagement of students in the classroom and other learning environments.

Liberal Education

Grand Valley State University is committed to providing each student a broad educational experience that integrates liberal learning with preparation for career or profession. Liberal education begins with encountering the great ideas of diverse traditions in the humanities, the creative and performing arts, the natural and social sciences, and mathematics, and is an essential part of all of our professional programs. We value the liberal ideals of critical thinking and preparing students for lifelong learning. The practice of liberal learning develops the skills of inquiry and reflection, which guide students to think for themselves, gain self-knowledge, and make ethical judgments. Such learning can inform individual and collective actions and prepare students for the responsibility of local, national, and global citizenship.

Scholarship

Scholarship is an essential component of the university's mission as an institution of higher learning and community service. Excellence in teaching at the university level depends upon active scholarship by faculty members. Through basic and applied research, artistic expression and performance, and other forms of scholarship, faculty members contribute to the development and application of knowledge, and create a dynamic environment for learning. Active scholarship may include collaboration of faculty and staff with students, business and labor,

government, and community organizations. In this way, the benefits of a liberal education can extend beyond classroom walls to lifelong learning and partnerships between the university and its diverse communities.

Inclusion

Possessing and mastering a range of thoughtful perspectives is necessary for open inquiry, a liberal education, and a healthy community. Recognizing this, Grand Valley seeks to include, engage, and support a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff. The institution values a multiplicity of opinions and backgrounds and is dedicated to incorporating multiple voices and experiences into every aspect of its operations.

Community

Grand Valley values its connections to and responsibility for local communities, the West Michigan region, the state, the nation and the world. The university embraces the participation of diverse individuals, groups and organizations from every corner of the globe and both encourages and supports the participation of its students, faculty and staff in educational opportunities abroad. To foster and expand these community connections, the institution and its members promote value and honor diverse perspectives; act with integrity; communicate openly and honestly; and accept responsibility for their words and actions.

Service

We at Grand Valley State University value the collaboration of faculty, staff, and students with external partners in addressing mutual interests and regional needs. The university offers the communities it serves resources and inspiration in their own lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Faculty and staff are encouraged to contribute their expertise and service to the university, their disciplines' professional organizations, and the community. Students are encouraged to be active citizens, to become active service providers, and to take part in various service learning and volunteer opportunities in the community and abroad.

Sustainability

Grand Valley values the guiding principles of sustainability in helping meet the current needs of our faculty, staff and students as well as striving not to compromise the future needs of generations that follow. We are committed to working with our community partners to create a sustainable future for our university, our community, and our region. We will model applied sustainability best practices in our campus operations and administration, education for sustainable development, student involvement, and community engagement by promoting social responsibility, encouraging environmental stewardship and creating efficiencies and value for the work we perform. We will provide our students with excellence in education for sustainable development by embedding theory, systems oriented thinking, and service learning into our curricular and extracurricular programs.



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION AND GOALS

The School of Social Work derives its mission from Grand Valley State University's mission of liberally educating students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. Toward that end, the School prepares its students to attain social work practice and professional leadership; advance the field's knowledge of effective professional practice and education through research and evaluation; enhance and sustain the welfare and well-being of the citizens, organizations and communities of West Michigan, the state, the nation, and the world; and further the goals of the University and of the social work profession in this region and beyond.

All of the School's programs are grounded in the profession's body of knowledge, values and skills that support and enhance the opportunities, resources, and capacities of people to achieve their full potential; prevent and alleviate personal, interpersonal, organizational and societal problems; and improve the conditions that limit human development and adversely impact the quality of human life. The School celebrates and affirms the importance of diversity in all of its forms, and it supports the expansion of human rights, cultural competence, empowerment, social and political justice, civic participation and equality in West Michigan and around the world.

The School's legacy emphases on social justice and on meeting the significant professional workforce needs of an expansive West Michigan social services sector remain strong. A third distinctive feature of the School is its integration and promotion of domestic and international service learning opportunities that prepare of students for 21st century practice in increasingly global economic and social contexts.

How the mission is consistent with the profession's purpose and values?

The primary purpose of the social work profession as explicated in its *Code of Ethics* is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. An historic and defining feature of social work is its focus on individual wellbeing in a social context and the wellbeing of society.

Fundamental to the professional practice of social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Competent social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. They are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. Professional social work activities may take the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. In all practice settings and sectors, social workers seek to enhance the capacity of people to address their own needs. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.

This professional mission is rooted in a set of core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, which comprise the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective. These values – also detailed in the *Code of Ethics* -- are service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, competence and sustainability.

The mission of the GVSU School of Social Work is fully aligned and entirely consistent with the profession's purpose and its values. The School prepares students to prevent and alleviate a wide range of personal, interpersonal, organizational and societal problems; as well as to improve the conditions that limit human development and adversely impact the quality of human life. Its longstanding emphasis on preparing students to be effective advocates for social justice in areas such as human rights, cultural competence, oppression, discrimination and prejudice, disparity, empowerment, social and political action and civic participation readies them for lifelong roles of professional and community leadership in the region, the state, the nation and the world. Its emphasis on preparing them for effective practice in hundreds of human service agencies serving client systems at all levels in the urban, suburban and rural communities of West Michigan helps to meet the specific and particular needs of the region and state for competent social work practitioners. And its emphasis on service learning in domestic and international settings provides them with opportunities to contribute to the common good in myriad ways that enhance their identification with the profession and broaden their world views.

How the mission is consistent with the program's context?

The Grand Valley State University School of Social Work is situated in a University that views itself as a public institution with a local, regional and state commitment and a global perspective. Teaching in the liberal tradition – which acquaints students with the tradition of humane values and the heritage, problems, and perspectives of their own and other cultures -- is at the heart of this University's educational mission. The University is dedicated to educating students to become competent professionals in their chosen fields, as well as to providing them with the general knowledge and skills

required to participate intelligently in public discourse. The University's key values, which have been incorporated into the values of the School of Social Work, include effective teaching, a liberal education, scholarship, diversity and community and service.

As within the larger institutional context in which it plays a major role, the School of Social Work fosters a teaching culture characterized by the continuous development of excellence in the classroom, the recognition and celebration of multiple ways of knowing and learning, and the accessibility and connection of faculty to students. To nurture the habits of intellectual growth, the School instills in students both curiosity about the world and its people, as well as a love of learning. Students are supported in acquiring and applying knowledge through research, scholarship and community service, and their vigorous engagement in the classroom and other learning environments is valued and supported.

The School builds its professional education course work on the foundation of a broad educational experience rooted in the tradition of liberal learning. It values and promotes the liberal ideals of critical thinking and the preparation of students for lifelong learning that can inform their individual and collective actions and prepare them for advocacy and service, as well as the assumption of responsibility for local, regional, national and global citizenship.

GVSU's School of Social Work emphasizes scholarship and the production of knowledge to guide and enhance professional practice. Through basic and applied research and other forms of scholarship, faculty and students are encouraged to collaborate with one another and with organizations, businesses and others inside and outside of the university to solve the social and economic problems of the region, state, nation and world. Both the School and the University encourage students to study and learn abroad as a means of broadening their understanding of the world's needs.

In terms of diversity and community, the School of Social Work reflects, contributes to and gains from the multi-cultural and diverse learning environment of Grand Valley State University, and it seeks multiple and innovative ways to incorporate different voices and experiences into every aspect of its organization and operations. In addition to valuing and including local communities of the West Michigan region in all of its program offerings and opportunities, the School also acts with integrity, communicates respectfully with and accepts responsibility for its words and actions that affect all stakeholders.

The mission of the School of Social Work is also very closely aligned with the significant value that Grand Valley State University places on service and service sustainability. In the context of the broader institution, the School values the collaboration of faculty, students and staff with external partners to address mutual interests and regional and/or statewide needs. And it values the development and ongoing support of service opportunities and human service solutions that deliver lasting, permanent value to West Michigan, the state, nation and beyond.

The School of Social Work's goals reflect its mission to serve Western Michigan and the broader world through effective teaching, the provision of a professional curriculum rooted in the tenets of a liberal education, focused scholarship; an emphasis on diversity and social justice, and a commitment to serve individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities in need.

The School's goals reflect its commitment to prepare competent and effective professionals, develop and promulgate social work knowledge, and provide leadership to human service delivery systems and the social work profession as a means of achieving its mission. Echoing the profession's history, purposes, and philosophy, these goals are based on a shared commitment to educate social workers for effective practice in the 21st century; contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of the profession's knowledge, value, and skill bases; and, provide leadership and other key supports to the social services communities and the social work profession in West Michigan and beyond.

The School's overarching goals are:

1. The School of Social Work provides a generalist social work curriculum in a high quality learning environment that prepares BSW graduates for entry level social work practice that promotes social and economic justice and endeavors to address poverty and other social problems within organizational, individual, and community contexts within, but not limited to, West Michigan and the state of Michigan.
2. The School of Social Work provides an MSW foundation curriculum in a high quality learning environment that prepares students for success in the advanced generalist social work concentration.
3. The School of Social Work provides an advanced generalist social work curriculum that prepares MSW graduates for autonomous social work practice that promotes social and economic justice and endeavors to address poverty and other social problems within organizational, individual, and community contexts within, but not limited to, West Michigan and the state of Michigan.
4. Graduates of all programs of the School of Social work exhibit a professional commitment to enhancing social justice, promoting human rights, ensuring the dignity and worth of all individuals, practicing with integrity, upholding one or more of the profession's *Code of Ethics*, incorporating diversity into their practice, and advancing the profession's reputation and knowledge base.
5. Graduates of all programs of the School have the knowledge, skills and values they need to create and/or identify and acquire new information about

professional social work practice as such information becomes available throughout the course of their careers.

6. Graduates of all programs of the School are competent users of technologies and proficient consumers of training opportunities that support their lifelong professional development, and they are committed to remaining professionally and technologically proficient throughout the course of their careers in the social work profession.

The goals for the MSW Advanced Generalist Program are:

1. To award the graduate degree to individuals who are not only skilled practitioners but also capable of assuming leadership and scholarly professional roles in the community, region, state, national and global communities.
2. To contribute to the ongoing development of professional social work knowledge and practice through research and scholarly inquiry that employ state-of-the-art technology.
3. To maximize the strengths and assets within local, regional, statewide, national and international social welfare and human services communities through direct participation in organizing, leading and participating in effective capacity building and social and political action activities.

The core competencies as defined by the **2008 EPAS** (see EPAS document) serve as the objectives for the BSW and MSW programs. These practice behaviors and advanced practice behaviors that guide the overall goals of the BSW and MSW Programs.

For further information, please visit the GVSU School of Social Work website: www.gvsu.edu/ssw

or call the GVSU SSW Grand Rapids, Michigan office at 616-331-6550 or the GVSU SSW Traverse City, Michigan office at 231-995-1840.