

**Texas A&M University-Commerce
Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)
Student Handbook**



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The BSW Program

The Undergraduate Social Work Program at Texas A&M-Commerce offers the BSW degree which prepares graduates for immediate entry into direct human service professional positions. The program has been accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1978 and is the only undergraduate major that educates students to become licensed professional social workers. Social Work's focus on the "person-in-environment" uniquely prepares BSW graduates to work effectively with individuals, families, small groups, communities, and organizations. BSW graduates from Texas A&M-Commerce Social Work Department are prepared for careers in women's shelters, child and adult protective services, schools, mental health settings, nursing homes, hospitals, and other interesting agencies which serve people in need.

The BSW curriculum consists of 121 semester hours, 60 of which are social work major requirements. The remainder are University Studies courses required of all students for graduation from A&M-Commerce. The social work courses are arranged in sequenced semesters. Social work majors should begin this sequence at the beginning of the sophomore year. Prospective social work students who transfer to A&M-Commerce from another school should seek immediate advisement from the BSW Program Director.

Social Welfare Minor

The Social Work Program offers a minor in Social Welfare. A minor in Social Welfare is a good choice for persons majoring in related disciplines (e.g., Psychology, Counseling, etc.) who may wish to work in health or human services settings. This minor does not qualify a person to become licensed as a social

worker; however the 18 semester hours that are required for the minor provides students with useful information regarding human development over the life span, basic interviewing skills, knowledge about major social welfare policies, and other content areas relevant to work in human services.

Mission Statement for the Social Work Department

The mission of the Social Work Department is “*to promote and enhance the education and development of professional social workers who seek to improve social, economic and environmental conditions of diverse populations of Northeast Texas.*”

Mission, Goals & Objectives of the BSW Program

The mission of the Baccalaureate Social Work Program is “*to engage students in an educational process in which they develop the professional identity, knowledge, skills, values, and ethics necessary for effective entry-level generalist social work practice and for ongoing professional education and development*”.

Goals of the BSW Program

The BSW program has four overall program goals. They are:

1. To prepare students for entry- level generalist social work practice with a variety of client systems in a variety of settings.
2. To prepare students for graduate studies in social work or related disciplines.
3. Through a liberal arts education, provide students with opportunities to develop self-awareness, enhanced understanding of diversity, capacity for critical thinking, and belief in human dignity and potential.
4. Through curricular offerings and extracurricular activities, socialize students to the profession of social work, its purposes, code of ethics, and commitment to social justice.

Program Objectives of the BSW Program

The ten program objectives are more specific. The program seeks to prepare graduates who can:

1. *Identify and assess interactions between client systems and social environments.*
2. *Develop and implement plans for intervention with client systems at any level, based on assessment, aimed at obtainable goals, and selected after exploration of available options.*
3. *Empower and guide clients in the development and use of problem solving and coping strategies, and in the enhancement of developmental capacities.*
4. *Link client systems with social institutions and other resources that can provide needed services and opportunities.*
5. *Utilize effective interventions with and provide advocacy for oppressed populations, especially women, minorities, and gay and lesbian persons.*
6. *Analyze the extent to which organizations operate humanely and effectively and promote needed improvements.*
7. *Actively work with others to ensure that resource systems offer services that are equitable, just, and responsive to the needs of client systems.*
8. *Employ research methodologies to determine the effectiveness of intervention efforts with client systems.*
9. *Take responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of one's professional services through evaluation of practice activities, and by participating in ongoing programs of professional and personal development.*
10. *Maintain professional affiliations and practice according to accepted professional standards and ethics.*

These objectives are measured by several ongoing evaluation methods to ensure the program is achieving its intended outcomes.

BSW Program Curriculum

The BSW curriculum ensures that appropriate courses are offered in each of the following areas:

Values and Ethics

(Addressed in each social work course)

Diversity

(Addressed in Anthropology 114, Sociology 111, and in most social work courses.)

Populations-at-Risk and Social and Economic Justice

(Addressed in Anthropology 114, Sociology 111, Sociology 311, Social Work (SWk) 348, and in most other social work courses.)

Human Behavior and the Social Environment

(Concentrated in SWk 275 and SWk 322.)

Social Welfare Policy and Services

(Concentrated in SWk 225 and SWk 328.)

Social Work Practice

(Concentrated in Swk 250, Swk 325, SWk 329, Swk 331, and SWk 422.)

Research

(Concentrated in SWk 350 and SWk 424.)

Field Practicum

(Addressed in SWk 425 and SWk 426 . Assignments for Field are also given in SWk 422 and Swk 424.)

Course Requirements for the Social Work Major

All students who graduate from A&M-Commerce must complete the University Studies requirements. These are:

English 101, 102

Math 141, 175, or 179

Speech 111 or 245

2 lab sciences (8 semester hours in Human Anatomy and Physiology or Biology 107 required for Social Work Majors)

History 121, 122
 Political Science 220, 221
 3 semester hours Humanities/Fine Arts
 Anthology 114
 3 semester hours Visual/Performing Arts
 2 semester hours P.E. activity classes
 *1 capstone course

** Capstone courses, required of juniors and seniors, are intended to help students develop more sophisticated reasoning skills.*

Courses required specifically for the BSW degree are:
 Sociology 111, 311
 Psychology 131
 Social Work 225, 250, 275, 322, 325, 328, 329, 331, 348, 350, 370, 422, 424, 425, 426, and a social work elective

Not all social work courses are offered every semester, and some must be taken before a student can take others. The careful sequencing of courses allows students to build a strong knowledge and skills base for social work practice.

The recommended order for taking coursework is:

Freshman 1	Freshman 2	Sophomore 1	Sophomore 2
Eng 101	Eng 102	SWk 225	SWk 250
Hist 121	Hist 122	Soc 111	SWk 275
Psy 131	Math 141, 175 or 179	4 s.h. Sci (Bsc 107)	4 s.h. Sci
Anth 114	PSci 220	Spc 111 or 245	Elective
3 s.h. Hum	3 s.h. Vis/Perf Arts	Psci 221	Elective
1 s.h. P.E.	1 s.h. P.E.	Elective	
Junior 1	Junior 2	Senior 1 (summer)	Senior 2
SWk 322	SWk 325	SWk 422	SWk 424
SWk 328	SWk 329	SWk 425	SWk 426
SWk 331	SWk 348	Capstone	SWk Elective
SWk 370	SWk 350	Soc 311	
Elective	Elective		

Admission to the Social Work Major

Admission to the Social Work Program occurs while students are enrolled in SWk 250, and must be completed by the first class day of the first Junior semester. Since admission to the BSW program occurs when students are enrolled in SWk 250 or SWk 275, students who want to transfer these courses from other schools must complete an application to the program PRIOR to enrolling in the upper division (300 or 400 level) social work classes, or within the first 3 days of the semester. The BSW Admissions Committee will review any applications from transfer students immediately in order to allow continuation in upper division social work courses. Social work degree plans are completed at the time of admission to the program (during the latter part of the sophomore year) by the students and the BSW Director.

Enrollment in junior-level social work classes will require a “permit” for students to enroll. This will allow the BSW Director to ensure all students enrolled in upper division social work classes are qualified to do so. In addition, it will allow any transfer students to be assigned to a faculty advisor at that time.

Students submit an application form, a narrative statement of their interest in Social Work, three references, transcripts, and estimates of grades from current professors. Application forms are available in the Social Work office. The Admissions Committee, comprised of the instructors for SWk 225, SWk 250, and SWk 275, will review each application to the major. Admissions criteria includes:

1. Completion of the required liberal arts perspective (English composition; American history; American and Texas government; humanities; science, including human biology; speech; math; and foreign language and/or behavioral science courses).
2. A Grade Point Average of 2.5 in Psy 131; Anth 114; Soc 111; SWk 225; and estimated grades for SWk 250 and SWk 275).
3. An overall Grade Point Average of 2.5.
4. Evidence, from classroom observations of the three instructors, of

- a. Values compatible with the social work profession, as reflected in the NASW Code of Ethics,
- b. good attendance habits,
- c. good written and oral communication skills,
- d. acceptance of diversity in others,
- e. adequately developing self-awareness,
- f. acceptable growth in empathic interviewing skills, and
- g. potential for success in the upper division coursework and field practice.

Students who have not met all admissions criteria, but are likely to be able to prior to entry into Field Practicum, may be admitted on a conditional basis, with a plan for remediation. Not everyone is well suited to become a professional social worker; therefore students are assessed for their appropriateness to serve people who are very vulnerable or dependent. Those students not admitted will be advised on whether to take remedial action or to select another program or major. Junior and Senior social work classes are restricted to those students who have been fully or conditionally admitted to the program.

The admissions criteria have been developed based on the faculty's experience. They are designed to help ensure that students who are admitted to the program are likely to succeed in the program, and have potential to become a competent and valued member of profession.

Academic Advising

Upon admission to the BSW program, students will be assigned to a faculty member who will be their ongoing academic advisor. Academic advising is helpful to ensure the completion of all requirements in a timely manner. Students are expected to meet each semester with their assigned academic advisor.

Placement in the Field Practicum

Social Work is a licensed profession. Practitioners must be able to apply professional knowledge and skills in an ethical manner. Social work education, therefore, includes opportunities for skill development. Practice classes provide skill development activities so that students learn skills such as interviewing and assessment, intervention and evaluation.

During the senior year, students complete internships during the *summer* and *fall* semesters. Students are assigned to social services agencies by the Field Coordinator, with consideration of the students' interests and learning needs, and the availability field agencies.

These internships provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills learned in classes to real-life situations with clients. Field Practicum students are supervised and guided by professional social workers in agencies in order to ensure that they have productive, educational experiences.

Admissions to the Field Practicum

Students entering Field must be fully admitted to the Social Work Program and have completed required prerequisites with a grade of "C" or higher in all social work courses. They must have a GPA of 2.5 in the major and overall, and must have completed the application process for Field. Field students are required to have reliable transportation. (See the Field Manual for additional information).

The field experience entails completion of 460 clock hours at the field agency, weekly attendance at a seminar on campus and enrollment in related, concurrent classes. The Field Coordinator makes field agency assignments with input from the student and field agency staff. Most students feel that their field internships are among the most valuable experiences in the program. They feel they gain not only better skills and additional knowledge, but also self-confidence. Field experiences often help a student narrow their choices for a field of practice within social work. Field Instructors can be very helpful in assisting students with the job search process. Many students are hired by agencies in which they completed internships, or by agencies they learned of while in field.

Title IV-E Program

The Title IV-E Program is a collaborative partnership with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). The purpose of the Title IV-E Program is to increase the qualifications and numbers of BSW graduates who seek employment with Child Protective Services (CPS). Child Protective Services workers investigate and resolve child abuse and neglect complaints, provide services to families, and recruit and evaluate foster and adoptive parents.

This federally funded initiative provides stipends (cash grants) to qualified students in the Social Work Department at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students in the Title IV-E program participate in coursework that will prepare them for work in Child Protective Services. Academic preparation in the classroom and in the field internship provides experiences in referral services, preparation for and participation in judicial proceedings, placement of children, and the development of case plans, case review, case management, and supervision of children.

Upon graduation from the Social Work Program, stipend recipients are required to seek employment with TDPRS/CPS for a specified period of time. The Title IV-E Program is a great opportunity for social work students who are interested in a career in child welfare.

Student Organizations

All students in social work classes are eligible to join the Advocates of Texas A&M-Commerce (the “A-TEAM”). This is a student organization that provides social events, opportunities for community service, and development of leadership skills for members.

Honor Society

A&M-Commerce also has a chapter of Alpha Delta Mu, a national honor society for social work students. To be eligible, students must be in the Field Practicum, and have an overall GPA of 3.00 or higher. Membership is life long.

Problem Resolution

Social Work majors have all the same rights as other A&M-Commerce students. The A&M-Commerce Student Handbook details those rights and explains complaint and grievance procedures.

Within the Social Work Program, students have the right to appeal course grades, admissions committee decisions, decisions relating to field admission and agency assignments, and any adverse action taken by any social work faculty against any social work student. The appeal process is the same for all types of appeals.

The student should attempt to resolve the problem directly with the involved faculty or committee. If the problem cannot be resolved between the student and the other party, the student next seeks assistance from the BSW Program Director. If the student needs further resolution, the Department Head can be consulted. If no satisfactory solution is found, the student may consult with the Dean of the College, who will either assist the student or refer the student to the appropriate administrative person for further help.

Master of Social Work Program at Texas A&M-Commerce

For students interested in continuing their education beyond the BSW degree, Texas A&M University-Commerce offers a Master of Social Work (MSW) Program. The MSW Program provides students with the skills and knowledge of the advanced generalist model with an emphasis on rural issues and prepares advanced social work practitioners for comprehensive and professional service delivery in Northeast Texas. Additional information on the MSW Program at Texas A&M-Commerce is available in the Social Work Office.

Regulation of the Practice of Social Work

Most states regulate the practice of social work through certification or licensure. Persons without these credentials are prohibited by law from calling themselves social workers or practicing social work. The State of Texas licenses social workers at several levels: LBSW (Licensed Bachelor Social Worker—

BSW required); LMSW (Licensed Master Social Worker—MSW required) LCSW-(Licensed Clinical Social Worker—MSW plus 3 years clinical experience required) and LMSW-AP (Licensed Master Social Worker, Advanced Practitioner—MSW plus 3 years advanced experience required).

In Texas, only graduates of CSWE-accredited programs (and those in candidacy for accreditation) may sit for the state-licensing exam.

Becoming a Licensed Social Worker in Texas

The Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners, 100 W. 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756-3183 (phone # 1-800-232-3162) is responsible for licensing social workers for practice in Texas. Copies of the current booklets from the Board, outlining licensing requirements and procedures, are available in the Social Work office.

Most students apply for licensure during the semester in which they graduate. They complete an application form, provide references, and take the exam. Then, following graduation, they supply the Board with an official transcript showing they have earned a BSW degree. If the degree granting University's social work program is CSWE-accredited and a passing exam grade, the license is then issued.

Other Helpful Information

Additional information that may be helpful to BSW students can be found in the BSW Student Orientation Notebook online. In addition, memos, policies, and notices are posted on bulletin boards in the hallways. Please contact the Social Work office at **(903) 468-8100** or see our web site at www.tamu-commerce.edu/social-work for more information.

Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners

Code of Ethics

- (a) A social worker must observe and comply with the code of ethics and standards of practice set for them in this subchapter. Any violation of the code of ethics or standards of practice will constitute unethical conduct or conduct that discredits or tends to discredit the profession of social work and is grounds for disciplinary action.
1. A social worker shall not refuse to do or refuse to perform any act or service for which the person is licensed solely on the basis of a client's age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.
 2. A social worker shall truthfully report or present her or his services, professional credentials and qualifications to clients or potential clients.
 3. A social worker shall only offer those services that are within his or her professional competency.
 4. A social worker shall strive to maintain and improve her or his professional knowledge, skills and abilities.
 5. A social worker shall base all services on an assessment, evaluation or diagnosis of the client.
 6. A social worker shall provide the client with a clear description of services, schedules, fees and billing at the initiation of services.
 7. A social worker shall safeguard the client's rights to confidentiality within the limits of the law.
 8. A social worker shall avoid a relationship with other persons that are detrimental to a client or former client.
 9. A social worker shall not engage in any exploitative or sexual act with a client or former client.

10. A social worker shall refrain from providing service while impaired due to the social worker's physical or mental health or the use of medication, drugs or alcohol.
 11. A social worker shall evaluate a client's progress on a continuing basis to guide service delivery and will make use of supervision and consultation as indicated by the client's needs
 12. A social worker shall refer a client for those services that the social worker is unable to meet and terminate service to a client when continued service is no longer in the client's best interest.
- (b) The grounds for disciplinary action of a social worker shall be based on the code of ethics or standards of practice in effect at the time of the violation.