School of Social Work History and Objectives

The School of Social Work was established in 1965, when an act of the Alabama Legislature created a graduate school of social work, the first graduate social work program in the state. The undergraduate program began in 1970 and a doctoral program was added in 1975. The undergraduate program is the only one in the state offered within a comprehensive school of social work.

Social work is a challenging and rewarding profession that has as its goal helping people live satisfying lives within their families and their communities. The profession’s focus is on action to help people affect positive changes in their lives.

At the bachelor’s and master’s levels, the School of Social Work prepares social workers to plan, administer, deliver and evaluate social services for citizens of the state, region and nation. The bachelor of social work degree prepares the graduate to begin generalist practice in a variety of settings. The master of social work degree prepares the graduate for advanced, specialized practice. The doctor of philosophy degree prepares graduates to develop and impart knowledge to advance the profession. The faculty engage in research and professional activities designed to enrich educational programs, improve social conditions and meet the special needs of the state, region and nation.

The undergraduate program leads to the bachelor of social work degree. The primary objective of the undergraduate program in social work is the preparation of students for effective practice of professional social work in beginning-level positions. The graduate is prepared as a social work generalist with skills to assist individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities in achieving goals, solving problems and bringing about change where it is needed. Additionally, this program prepares students to enter graduate study in social work or related fields. It also provides interested persons with knowledge of social welfare needs and the means of providing for those needs. These objectives, however, are secondary to the primary objective of preparation for practice.

Five basic requirements of the BSW program prepare the student for practice as a generalist social worker: required liberal arts courses, elective courses, required social work courses, elective social work courses and supervised social work field education.