

**MSU School of Social Work**

**Statewide Blended Advanced Standing Clinical Master of Social Work Program**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – FALL 2013**

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## MSU School of Social Work

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#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – FALL 2013

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- **I've heard about the MSW program offered by Michigan State in locations throughout Michigan. What is the purpose of this program?**

In keeping with MSU's statewide land grant mission, the basic purpose of the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM is to respond to the professional development needs of the human services community throughout the state. There are many people working in human service agencies that seek the professional growth and skill development only a graduate social work program can provide. The combination of full-time employment, family, and other community obligations makes it very difficult for many of these individuals to continue on to a full-time MSW program, especially if this requires the extra burden of a long commute. By combining its fully accredited MSW Clinical Program with the best features of online learning, MSU offers the opportunity to pursue this degree program from anywhere in the state\*. This will permit qualified applicants (*BSW degree from CSWE-accredited program granted within the last six years, minimum 3.25 GPA for last 60 credits or two years of BSW program, and home residence more than 50 miles from East Lansing, Oakland, and Saginaw campuses*) to continue their social work professional education without some of the disruptions inherent in programs outside their area. MSU has 20+ years of prior experience in delivering other off-site MSW graduate programs and has been involved in Distance Education programs throughout Michigan, including highly successful programs in Marquette, Traverse City, Gaylord, Saginaw, Flint, Sault Ste Marie, Lapeer, and Alpena.

\*Applicants must live in Michigan or within 50 miles of the state border.

- **How is the program set up?**

Through contracts and partnerships with colleges and universities throughout the state, this program provides the entire MSW advanced standing degree program from Michigan State University to students using a combination of face-to-face instruction, interactive video (ITV or videoconferencing), and online learning. All courses required to complete MSU's CSWE-accredited MSW degree requirements (with a concentration in clinical social work practice) are offered through the program. MSU faculty members are available in person, on ITV, and online for various segments of each course.

- **Why might I choose a blended program over a fully online program?**

The Statewide Blended Program combines the best features of face-to-face, videoconferencing, and online instruction. Courses in this program are roughly 80% online and 20% face-to-face, making this program a great option for students who wish to continue in their place of

employment while pursuing the MSW degree, without sacrificing the relationships that are formed in traditional campus-based programs. The online component of this program allows for less time commuting to campus and less time spent in the classroom, giving students more flexibility in their schedules. Online instruction is thoughtfully balanced with face-to-face instruction between students, faculty, and social work professionals serving as mentors. In the Statewide Blended Program, students are divided into regional learning communities based on their location in the state, with each learning community having an assigned mentor for the duration of the program. Not only are students part of a larger cohort of 25-30 students, they are also part of these smaller learning communities, which provide students with a sense of connection, support, and professional modeling. Graduates of the Statewide Blended Program stress the importance of this blend in reducing feelings of isolation and increasing supports necessary for successful completion of the program.

- **Who teaches the courses and where?**

Courses are taught by MSU faculty in East Lansing. In addition to the MSU faculty member teaching the course, courses during the second year of the program also have approximately five faculty mentors, generally social work educators or social work practitioners from local communities. Faculty mentors work with groups of about five students in pursuing the objectives of each course. MSU faculty, mentors, and students meet monthly via ITV during the second year of the program and face-to-face each summer during the Summer Institute (see below).

- **When did the program begin?**

The Statewide Blended Regular Clinical MSW Program was launched in the spring of 2006. The first cohort of students started coursework in May 2006 and graduated in May 2009. This has been a highly successful program, with 25-30 students admitted every year.

The STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM builds upon the tradition of the 57-credit Statewide Blended Regular Program by offering a 38-credit Advanced Standing option to qualified applicants throughout the state in a two-year part-time model.

It is our expectation to recruit a cohort of 15-25 students in the Statewide Blended Advanced Standing Program each year. The first cohort of students began classes in June 2013 and will graduate May 2015.

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS & APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

- **What are the requirements for admission?**

Applicants for all of MSU's Advanced Standing MSW programs must meet the following requirements:

- All applicants **MUST** have a bachelor's degree in social work from a program accredited by the CSWE and was granted within the last six years.
- A grade-point average of at least 3.25 (on a 4.0 scale) during undergraduate studies. The grade point average in the last 60 credits or their equivalents of undergraduate courses is also considered. Applicants with GPAs lower than 3.25 will not be considered for the Advanced Standing program.
- Evidence of personal and professional qualities considered important for the practice of social work.

In addition to meeting the requirements listed above, **STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM** applicants must:

- Live more than 50 miles from MSU's East Lansing, Oakland, and Saginaw campuses. Out-of-state applicants must live within 50 miles of the MI border;
- Have easy access to high speed Internet service on a regular basis;
- Be willing to devote one week in June for two summers to the required Statewide Blended MSW Program Summer Institute on the MSU campus in East Lansing;
- Be willing to devote one Saturday each month during the fall and spring semesters for the second year of the program to the required course ITV sessions (locations spread out throughout the state)
- Be willing to spend considerable time in the on-line environment for the completion of all social work courses.

If all of these requirements are met and the application is complete, it will first be reviewed according to normal School admissions review procedures. If the application meets the general requirements for admission to the MSW program, the applicant will receive information concerning the Phase 2 requirements for the **STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM**. Since a considerable component of the academic work in the Statewide Blended Program is completed online, applicants are asked to complete a free Online Assessment and Orientation Program (OAOP) on how to learn effectively in the online environment to insure applicants are aware of, and prepared for, the substantial online components of the Statewide Blended Program. After completion of the OAOP, applicants may be asked to take part in a personal interview either by phone or in-person in East Lansing.

• **When should I apply?**

The application deadline for the **STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM** is **January 10, 2014**. All application forms and materials are available on the School of Social Work's website:

<http://socialwork.msu.edu/msw/admissions.php>

*NOTE: The entire application process is completed online.*

- **How many students are admitted, and when can I expect to know whether I have been accepted into the program?**

We admit between 15 to 25 students in the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM each year. Letters of acceptance to all successful applicants will be emailed after completion of all required steps in the application process, typically in late-March to early-April. Accepted applicants then begin coursework in June.

## **COURSES, CONCENTRATIONS, & SCHEDULES**

- **What concentration (major) is available?**

The STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM offers a concentration in Clinical (interpersonal) Practice, which deals with individual, dyad, family, and small group levels of intervention. This is generally the most popular concentration in master's level programs in social work. A concentration in Organization and Community Leadership is not currently available to students in the Statewide Blended Program.

- **What kind of time commitment does this program require?**

The STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM is a 2-year, part-time, year-round program. Students in the program begin coursework in June and graduate in May two years later. There are required courses year-round for both years of the program.

The program includes 38 credit hours of graduate courses in social work practice methods, policy, human behavior in the social environment, and research methods, as well as supervised field education in a social work setting totaling 600 hours spread over two-and-a-half semesters. Students in this program will be required to complete all courses in the curriculum according to the schedule offered by MSU. Courses will not be repeated during the proposed program.

There will be considerable online content for all courses. In general, for graduate social work courses students should expect to spend 8 to 12 hours per week PER COURSE to complete readings, written assignments, and online activities. Most semesters will involve two courses (16 to 24 hours per week total) or one course plus field education (24 to 28 hours per week total).

Field education activities (16 hours per week for two-and-a-half semesters, generally during normal business hours) will be scheduled for Summer Session B (July-August), Fall, and Spring semesters in the second year of the program. Additional details about the field component are noted below.

Even though graduate education is a major time commitment, the part-time nature of the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM allows students to continue to work full-time, manage family and other life demands, etc.

- **What are the travel requirements for this program?**

Students in the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM are required to attend the annual Summer Institute for both years of the program. This weeklong event is held in East Lansing at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center.

One Saturday per month during the fall and spring semesters for the second year of the program, students must travel to a regional learning community location for ITV (videoconference) class sessions (8 trips total). In the past, these sessions have been hosted in Marquette, Gaylord, Mt. Pleasant, Grand Rapids, and Oakland. The exact locations of the regional meetings cannot be determined until after the successful candidates are admitted. Sites must have compatible ITV facilities available. In general, the locations will be picked to minimize the average distance traveled by the students in each regional group, and to try to limit the commute to no more than about 90 miles (one-way) done once per month. For most students it will be considerably less.

- **What is the schedule for the Summer Institutes and Saturday sessions?**

The annual Summer Institute is generally held during the last week in June each year. However, due to room availability at the Kellogg Center and Father's Day, some years Summer Institute is held earlier in June. The 2014 Summer Institute will be held from Sunday, June 22 through Thursday, June 26. A block of hotel rooms at the Kellogg Center have been reserved for students for this week – lodging expenses are paid by the student. Although students are not required to stay at the Kellogg Center, it is *highly recommended* that they do so, especially during the first year of the program. Regardless of where students decide to stay, they must be available to take part in scheduled events and activities, class assignments, etc. from 8:00a.m. to 8:00p.m. for the entire week – no exceptions.

The ITV class sessions will be one Saturday each month during the fall and spring semesters of the second year of the program, with the rooms open at 9:30a.m. and classes starting promptly at 10:00a.m.; scheduled sessions will end at 3:00p.m.

- **What if I start the program but for some reason I cannot finish it on schedule? Can I finish at a later date, perhaps in East Lansing?**

If for some reason students are unable to finish the program on schedule it is generally possible to request an extension in meeting degree requirements and then to complete the program. However, in the Statewide Blended Program the only option is to request a leave of absence for a full year and then join the next cohort if space is available. There is no guarantee that the site for regional classes and meetings will be exactly the same, and thus the monthly Saturday sessions may involve traveling a greater distance.

If the reverse situation should occur and students wish to complete the program at a faster pace, it may be possible to transfer to East Lansing to complete the program on a full-time basis on campus.

- **What is the overall sequence of courses for the program?**

Semester	Year 1 Courses	Year 2 Courses
<b>Summer</b>	<b>SW 812B</b> (2 crs) Int of Theory Policy Eval <b>SW 843</b> (2 crs) Clin Assessment & Diagnosis (online) Elective(s) Summer Institute	<b>SW 842B</b> (2 crs) Adv Gen Practice Mth <b>SW 893B</b> (2 crs) Fld Educ Adv Gen Prac Elective(s) Summer Institute
<b>Fall</b>	<b>SW 830A</b> (2 crs) SW Res Methods & Data Analysis (online) <b>SW 845</b> (3 crs) Admin Skills for SW Pract (online) Elective(s)	<b>SW 850</b> (3 crs) Clin SW Pract I <b>SW 894D</b> (4 crs) SW Fld Ed: Clin Pract I Elective(s) Monthly Saturday Seminar
<b>Spring</b>	<b>SW 822</b> (3 crs) Topics in Pol Prac & Advocacy (online) <b>SW 832</b> (2 crs) App SW Res: Surv & Fld Design (online) Elective(s)	<b>SW 851</b> (3 crs) Clin SW Pract II <b>SW 894E</b> (4 crs) SW Fld Ed: Clin Pract II Elective(s) Monthly Saturday Seminar

**NOTE:** Students in the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING PROGRAM must complete six credit hours of electives in addition to all required courses. These courses may be completed during any of the semesters noted in the table above. Options will be discussed at the Summer Institute.

## **FIELD EDUCATION**

- **How does field education (sometimes called internship or practicum) work?**

Field education is the experiential component of the MSW program where theory integrates with practice. The purpose of field education is to provide supervised opportunities directed toward student development of professional identity, self-understanding, and competent practice.

Students in the advanced standing MSW program must complete 2½ semesters of field education (a total of 600 hours). This means students spend sixteen hours per week for 2½ semesters in human service organizations that are affiliated with the University. These experiences must be supervised by an MSW with two years post-master's experience.

In the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM, students complete the field education requirement during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the program (July-May).

- **How might I combine field education with my full-time job?**

Sixteen (16) hours of field education are completed during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00a.m. to 5:00p.m.). Combining this with classes (at least one each semester) and full-time employment can be difficult for students. However, every effort will be made to place you in an agency geographically suitable to you. Employment related options are not available for Advanced Standing students. Working students must be available to be in their field agency during traditional business hours at least one day a week.

Regardless of your employment situation, the Field Education Office at MSU will work collaboratively with community agencies throughout the state to arrange and monitor an appropriate field placement for you. Questions concerning field education requirements may be directed to Cheryl Williams-Hecksel at [will1534@msu.edu](mailto:will1534@msu.edu).

**NOTE:** For more details on Field Education requirements, policies, procedures, etc., please see the Field Education website:

[http://socialwork.msu.edu/field\\_education/index.php?submenuheader=4](http://socialwork.msu.edu/field_education/index.php?submenuheader=4)

## **FINANCIAL AID & PROGRAM EXPENSES**

- **Will financial aid be available from MSU so I will be able to pay for tuition, fees, textbooks, or other items related to my graduate education?**

Part-time and graduate students in general have fewer options for financial aid. Students who wish to participate in various loan programs can apply for financial aid by filing a FAFSA (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid) with the MSU Office of Financial Aid:

<http://www.finaid.msu.edu>

Since the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM starts in June 2014, it is important for students who wish to make use of student loans to complete the 2013-2014 FAFSA for summer loans, as well as the 2014-2015 FAFSA for Fall and Spring loans.

- **Where else can I turn for financial assistance to help make the MSW program more feasible?**

If you are employed in a human service agency, your employer may be an excellent source of financial support throughout the degree program. For example, a number of public and private agencies provide tuition reimbursement programs to support professional development of their staff. Another approach in some cases may be to arrange for paid field education hours. Finally, some community and civic groups close to your place of employment and/or residence may provide support.

The MSU School of Social Work will gladly provide documentation of student status and other material routinely required in support of student applications for financial assistance. However, it is up to individual students to seek out and make arrangements for such support.

Local libraries, bookstores, and the Internet all are potential sources of information about scholarships, fellowships, grants, and loans. Some may be open to all applicants, while others are targeted at special populations (e.g., women, minorities, veterans, etc.). You may want to start with the MSU Financial Aid home page at: <http://www.finaid.msu.edu>.

- **What are the actual costs of the MSW program?**

Tuition for the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM is the same as tuition for all MSU graduate courses. For the 2013-2014 academic year, the IN-STATE tuition rate is **\$621.25** per credit hour. (The advanced standing MSW degree program requires 38 credits for completion.)

Additional information on all university tuition/fees is available at:  
<http://ctrl.msu.edu/COStudentAccounts/Default.aspx>

- **How do the costs of the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM compare with those in the two-year part-time campus-based programs such as East Lansing, Saginaw, and Oakland?**

Type of cost	Campus-Based Programs	Statewide Blended Program
Tuition	\$621.25/credit hour (2013-2014 academic year)	SAME
Field Education	2½ semesters of field; efforts made to keep placements close to where students live or work	SAME
Course materials (books, course packs, etc.)	As required by instructors	SAME
Summer Institute	Not required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mileage for 1 round-trip to East Lansing</li> <li>• Lodging for 4 nights (reduced rate available at the Kellogg Center)</li> <li>• Annual Summer Institute &amp; Technology Fee of \$475 (paid in May)</li> </ul>
Attendance at courses	<p>Weekly commuting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 days per week x 30 weeks first year</li> <li>• 1 day per week in second year x 30 weeks each year</li> <li>• Plus once or twice per week in summers</li> </ul> <p>A total of <b><u>AT LEAST 120 round-trips</u></b> between your home and a campus site, with each trip most likely including the cost of meals, childcare, time off from work, etc.</p>	<p>Monthly commuting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Saturday round-trip per month (during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the program) to a regional site which should be no more than 90 miles away</li> </ul> <p>A total of <b><u>8 round-trips</u></b> for the two-year program, with each trip most likely including the cost of lunch and childcare.</p>

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, LIBRARIES, & COURSE MATERIALS**

To help prepare students for the use of technology in the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM, all applicants are required to complete an Online Assessment and Orientation Program (OAOP) as part of the admissions process (see page 3). In addition, the School of Social Work will provide a required technology orientation during the Summer Institute.

- **Do I have to have a computer and an internet connection to be admitted?**

Yes! Students are expected to have personal, readily available access to computing capability, as well as a high-speed internet connection. During the admissions process we will be using email to communicate with you, and you must have access to a computer and a high-speed (not dial-up) Internet connection to complete some components of the admissions process.

Access to sufficient computing resources is essential to successfully completing the program. School announcements, course requirements, library resources, and communication with faculty and other students will all be provided through email and web sites. Especially because this is a statewide off-campus program, with students away from campus for most components, access to sufficient computing resources is critical to maintain contact with the School. The use of various information technologies (video conferencing, computers, the Internet, and so forth) in the MSW program also reflects their increasing use in social work practice, and developing skills in the use of these technologies is one of the goals of the MSW program.

**You MUST have high-speed (not dial-up) Internet access readily available where you envision doing most of your course work in place by Summer, 2014.**

- **What are the School's expectations concerning computer size, features, and software?**

If you plan to purchase a new computer, **we recommend that you consider a laptop** for its portability to the Summer Institute and Saturday sessions. In general, you will need a computer that meets the standards identified on this MSU website: <http://vplits.msu.edu/guidelines-policies/computer-requirement.html>

**NOTE:** You may want to take advantage of the student prices available through MSU to get both hardware and software. Specific details concerning recommended computer resources can be found in the online catalog available at the MSU Computer Store (<http://www.cstore.msu.edu>).

In terms of software, the only required application is the Microsoft Office Suite (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc.) or open source equivalents. The MSU Computer Store has an excellent student price on the Microsoft Office Suite.

- **What are my options for obtaining a computer to use?**

MSU students are permitted to purchase computers and software through the MSU Computer Store. A good way to find out about prices and options is to visit their web site at:

<http://www.cstore.msu.edu>.

As noted above, all courses will be incorporating computer-based components. This makes easy access to a computer essential. It is our understanding that because the computer is a required element in the MSW program, the cost of a new computing system can generally be included as an educational expense when you apply for financial aid.

- **What kind of computer support will be available?**

The School of Social Work is moving toward greater inclusion of information technology in all of its courses, and we will be committing resources to supporting your efforts to utilize the technology. There will be technical support to aid in issues related to connecting with the School and its faculty through e-mail and other mechanisms. MSU provides online technical advisors to assist with course-related technology issues. These will be described during the Summer Institute.

What we will not be able to provide is a basic repair service for your hardware or software. After you purchase your own computer, service should come from whoever sold you the system. This also applies to your software purchases.

- **How do students have access to library resources?**

Students will have complete online access to MSU's library catalog, bibliographic databases, and on-line professional journals. In addition, MSU's Distance Learning Services staff will obtain copies of requested articles and books and mail them to students at no additional cost other than return postage for the books (see <http://www2.lib.msu.edu/about/dls/division-dls.jsp> for details). There will be an orientation to these services during the Summer Institute.

- **How do we handle textbooks and course packs?**

Books for all courses can be ordered by phone or online from several East Lansing and national booksellers. When required for specific courses, course packs (collections of readings) can be ordered by phone or online. Other material will generally be provided through course web sites, where you will be able to download and print documents.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For general information about the STATEWIDE BLENDED ADVANCED STANDING CLINICAL MSW PROGRAM, you may contact Tina Blaschke-Thompson at [st8wide@msu.edu](mailto:st8wide@msu.edu).

For information concerning field education requirements, please contact Cheryl Williams-Hecksel at [will1534@msu.edu](mailto:will1534@msu.edu).

For information about application and admission issues and general requirements for the MSW program, please contact Joan Reid at [reidj@msu.edu](mailto:reidj@msu.edu).

**We hope this FAQ document has addressed all of your questions about the program. Please contact any of the people listed above to discuss any of these topics and/or obtain additional information.**