

LEADING THE NEXT GENERATION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017–2021

OF SOCIAL WORK



SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



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TAKING CHARGE OF OUR FUTURE

THANK YOU to the Executive Committee and the faculty, alumni, students, field partners and staff members whose ideas and insights resulted in this strategic plan. The open planning process began in fall of 2016, and it continues to be refined. The plan embraces a five-year, forward-thinking agenda that provides the framework for action to achieve our School's grand vision—leading social work into the next generation. Specific action steps and measurable outcomes will help us realize the full potential of the School's future opportunities and impact.

This report describes the University of Michigan School of Social Work's five strategic goals. These goals enhance excellence in education and research; increase accessibility to a Michigan Social Work degree; dedicate resources to diversity, equity and inclusion; and engage communities to advance social justice. The resulting strategic plan will enable faculty, students and graduates to animate the future of the social work profession.

GOAL 1 Deliver educational programs that are original, creative and prepare graduates for leadership in interprofessional and interdisciplinary practice, and knowledge development.

GOAL 2 Improve access to an affordable education at the U-M School of Social Work.

GOAL 3 Build and sustain a School environment that is based on respect for all and dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion.

GOAL 4 Engage with local, regional, national and global communities to advance social justice and create progressive change.

GOAL 5 Lead the profession by advancing the scientific basis of the social work vocation and enhance interdisciplinary knowledge that informs solutions for social and human problems.

The School's Senior Management Team and Executive Committee will lead implementation of action plans, monitor progress and modify strategies to achieve priorities through united and collective action.

Our mission, goals and vision for the School are inspiring, and ever more important for our world. I appreciate our community's engagement and commitment to this work.

Respectfully,

Lynn Videka, *Dean and Carol T. Mowbray Professor of Social Work*

A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE



SINCE 1921, the University of Michigan has offered a formal social work curriculum. From 1921 to 1935, an undergraduate social work curriculum was offered in the University's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA). In 1927, the U-M Board of Regents authorized granting a special certificate to those who completed Social Work curriculum requirements and a field work assignment. In 1936, the University offered the first Master of Social Work (MSW) degree through the Institute of Public and Social Administration, which by 1946 had become the Institute of Social Work. From 1936 to 1951, a total of 265 MSW degrees were granted. In 1951, the University moved the School of Social

Work graduate program from Detroit to Ann Arbor into a small house on Washington and Thayer, and then moved to the Frieze Building. In 1998, Michigan Social Work relocated to a new, state-of-the-art building on the corner of South University and East University streets, the School's current location.

Today, the MSW is the School's largest program with 800 students and a robust interdisciplinary curriculum offering 24 study combinations, with concentrations in interpersonal practice, community organization, human service management and social policy and evaluation. Approximately 70 percent of students focus on small social systems (individuals, families



“FOR 20 OF THE PAST 21 YEARS, THE SCHOOL HAS HELD THE U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT’S TOP NATIONAL RANKING FOR MSW PROGRAMS.”

and groups), and 30 percent of students opt for larger social system focus (community organizations, human service management or social policy and evaluation). The School collaborates with more than 550 MSW fieldwork sites in Southeast Michigan, the Midwest region and across the country and the world. For 20 of the past 21 years, the School has ranked as the top MSW program in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*, based on peer MSW quality assessment by deans.

In 1957, the Michigan Social Work faculty created the joint PhD program in social work and social science. This program leads to a distinctive interdisciplinary degree in social work and one of five social science fields: psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology and economics. Since the 1960s, Michigan Social Work PhD graduates have been the prominent leaders in social work education, research and policy.

In 2010, Michigan Social Work introduced an interdisciplinary minor in Community Action and Social Change (CASC), creating an undergraduate role that prepares

students from any field to become dedicated and active citizens working for social good. Each year, CASC draws more than 200 students from LSA; College of Engineering; Ford School of Public Policy; Ross School of Business; Stamps School of Art & Design; School of Information; School of Kinesiology; School of Music, Theater & Dance; School of Nursing and School of Public Health. Since the launch of CASC eight years ago, 715 students have declared a CASC minor, making CASC the second-largest minor on campus.

As Michigan Social Work approaches its 100-year anniversary in 2021, it is uniquely positioned to lead the search for solutions to societal challenges across Michigan and around the globe. Michigan Social Work continues to define evolving social work practice through research impact, practice initiatives and local-to-global community partnerships in research and practice. Centennial events will celebrate the School’s history and explore how the School is poised for even greater accomplishments in its next 100 years.



OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING JOURNEY

IN FALL 2016, Dean Videka engaged the School's Executive Committee, the Dean's Advisory Board and the faculty in developing a five-year, forward-thinking strategic plan. The plan creates a shared set of priorities and goals for the School, to realize the School's full potential as a leader in social work and social work education.

The Executive Committee and faculty established an inclusive, data-driven approach to planning. First, a strategic planning consultant helped create a structure for the plan and worked with the School through two faculty retreats. Second, the Executive Committee scanned its environment — the School's internal ecosystem, the University of Michigan as a whole, higher education across the globe and the profession of social work. Third, input was gathered from faculty, alumni and students. Feedback was collected from surveys and focus groups with students, focus groups with Alumni Board of Governors as well as from all alumni through a social media community voice tool. Outside consultants conducted comprehensive reviews of the School's marketing, communications and technology services. These efforts provided data for a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities and threats) analysis that leveraged the internal and external environmental scan, and informed the School's vision and the resulting plan.

The faculty held a retreat at the Michigan Union on April 25, 2017. The purpose was to articulate the School's mission and values and to identify areas of priority for the School's strategic vision for the next five years. The attendees affirmed the School's mission, created a statement of School core values, discussed key environmental trends and identified the School's strengths and weaknesses and its opportunities and threats. The faculty then created the "Grand Vision" and strategic goals for the plan.

At a second retreat on August 29, 2017, the faculty revised the strategic goals, and created objectives and action steps. Follow-up discussions at several 2017–18 faculty meetings further refined goals, objectives and action steps.

This document is the product of a year and a half of strategic planning. It provides the blueprint for the Michigan Social Work mission, vision, core values, goals, objectives and actions that arose from this planning process.

MISSION, CORE VALUES AND A GRAND VISION FOR THE SCHOOL'S FUTURE

MISSION

Advancing the social work profession's vision and values, Michigan Social Work seeks to develop a more equitable, caring and socially just society. Such a society meets basic human needs, eliminates social and economic inequities and empowers individuals, their communities and institutions to reach their aspirations and potential. Drawing on an interdisciplinary faculty within a public university seated in a region of enormous need and promise, the School is dedicated to education, research and service that fosters progressive change at local, national and global levels.

CORE VALUES

- Striving for excellence in all we do
- The dignity and worth of every person
- Integrity
- Diversity in people and ideas
- Social justice
- The importance of human relationships
- Service
- An inclusive learning environment
- A positive work climate

A GRAND VISION FOR THE SCHOOL'S FUTURE

Michigan Social Work will lead the social work profession—including education, knowledge development, practice and positive impact on society—as it moves into the next generation.



PRIORITY STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The following framework provides the base for action to achieve the grand vision of the School. Each of the five strategic goals is discussed in context. A detailed set of objectives identify specific measurable targets for each goal. The distinctive outcomes indicate the achievements desired as each goal is accomplished. For further information on action steps and strategies to goal achievement refer to the detailed Strategic Plan available at ssw.umich.edu/r/ssw-strategic-plan.

GOAL 1

Deliver educational programs that are original, creative and prepare graduates for leadership in interprofessional and interdisciplinary practice, and knowledge development.

Objective 1

Advance the role of U-M Social Work in undergraduate education, with a focus on expansion.

Objective 2

Deliver a distinctive, engaging and effective MSW education that prepares the future leaders of social work micro and macro practice.

Objective 3

Position U-M Social Work's doctoral education as a critical component to produce the next generation of international social work education and scholarship leaders.

THE CONTINUOUSLY SHIFTING NATURE of our economy and changes in society require social work education to offer educational programs that engage students and that prepare them for the practice, education and research careers of tomorrow. Job growth in social work is projected to be strong. Necessary skills for graduates include keen direct practice abilities; management, community and organizational skills; the ability to work with diverse people and to collaborate with other professionals; technology skills; and the ability to compete for traditional and nontraditional careers in all sectors. Key social trends driving the need for social work include disparities in health, education and economic opportunities; the aging of the U.S. population with the retirements of the baby boom generation; shifts in immigration and an increasingly diverse society; and changing policies and structures for meeting social needs that are driven by increasing American conservatism and political conflict.

Michigan Social Work is in a unique position as the top-ranked school of social work and home to talented and influential social work faculty members, who are world-recognized and leading intellectuals. Historically, the School has been a national leader in social work education as well as micro and macro practice. The School is situated in a university that is ranked the fourth public college in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*, within a cross-disciplinary, collaborative culture.

The School is committed to delivering excellent lifelong educational experiences and to position each of its academic programs to be outstanding in quality and innovation, and to be future-oriented. The MSW program has begun a major redesign, its first in more than two decades. The School will extend its impact on undergraduate education at Michigan by building on the successful Community Action and Social Change minor. The School's distinctive Joint PhD program, the result of a collaboration between Michigan Social Work and various departments in the social sciences, underwent an external committee review formed by the Rackham School of Graduate Studies in 2005 and will have a Social Work-led major review in the 2018–19 academic year.

Distinctive Outcomes:

- Creative and innovative curricula for undergraduate, MSW, PhD and lifelong learning levels.
- Applicants and enrollment will strengthen.
- MSW graduates will demonstrate excellent knowledge and skills in contemporary and evolving social work practice.
- Positive student climate will facilitate strong student satisfaction, engagement and academic performance.
- Vibrant and attractive lifelong learning programs will be available for social workers as their careers evolve over time.
- Dynamic student-alumni networking outlets will cultivate and maintain relationships that increase knowledge and provide professional and personal resources.
- Robust PhD student productivity in publication, program completion and academic career placement.
- MSW graduates will be successful in attaining licensure.
- Impressive career placement will be observed at the graduate MSW and PhD levels.
- Graduates will demonstrate leadership in practice, research and in social work education.



GOAL 2

Improve access to an affordable education at the U-M School of Social Work.

Objective 1

Create program structures for working and nontraditional students.

Objective 4

Ensure enrollment strength and stability through marketing the School's programs to prospective students with contemporary, high-yield strategies.

Objective 2

Optimize financial aid by strong resource development focused on student support.

Objective 3

Enhance financial aid by strong and efficient distribution and management of financial aid.

Distinctive Outcomes:

- New educational pathways for working, commuting and nontraditional students.
- Student performance will exceed 95 percent on competencies and program completion.
- Career placement will exceed 95 percent within 10 months of graduation.
- Funding for scholarships, internships and fellowships will be increased, reducing graduation average debt to half its current level.
- Strong student satisfaction with financial aid counseling will be observed.
- Graduates will meet licensing requirements and acquire skill sets that match evolving employer demands.

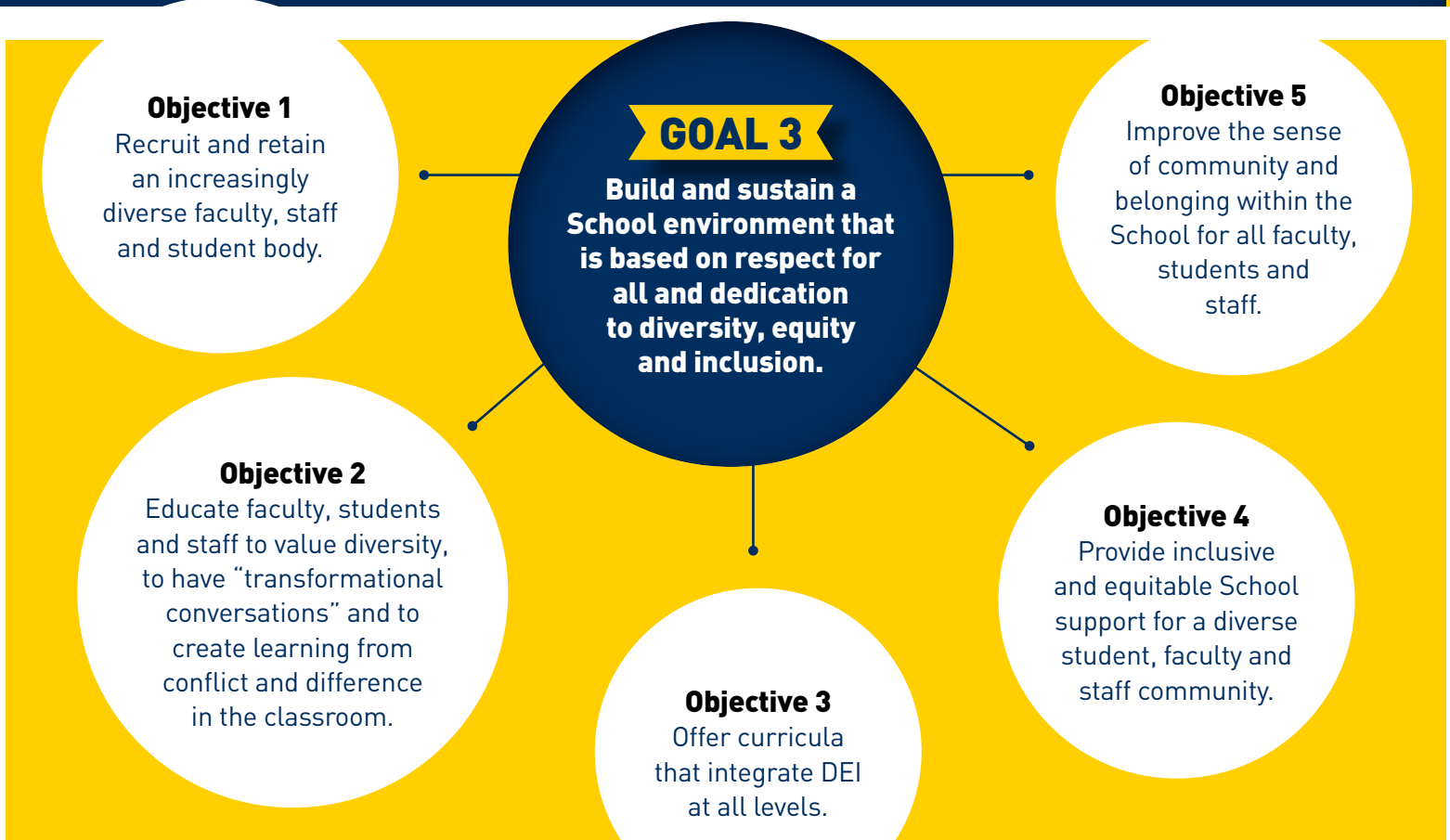
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IS ONE OF AMERICA'S DEEPEST SOCIAL INEQUITIES. According to the U.S. Department of Education, college and graduate education is more expensive now than at any other time in history, mostly due to declining public support for higher education. Over the past two decades, every state has disinvested in higher education. Many students and families across the country are concerned about the rising cost of college and the competition for admissions. Low-income students face resource hurdles such as inadequate finances, unavailable family support and a lack of personal or professional mentors. The current cost of a Michigan MSW leads to an average \$41K debt load for graduates. The average first-year salary for Michigan Social Work graduates is \$45K, almost equal to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2017 median annual wage of \$48K for all employed social workers across the country.

People who receive social work services are an increasingly diverse population. The profession must supply an increasingly diverse workforce. The growth projection for the social work profession, especially for populations that are currently underserved, provides an opportunity for the School to create a part-time program for working students.

This goal embodies the School's mission to "change society." As an educational institution, one of the most important ways that Michigan Social Work can change society is to contribute to educational equity across social class and race, and thus, contribute to a diverse social work workforce. Michigan Social Work aspires to improve access, affordability and student support that aligns value with each student's individual circumstances. Financial resources and optimal distribution of financial aid to students with high need are key steps to achieve access and affordability of a Michigan Social Work education. Establishing additional pathways to a less costly education for working and nontraditional students leads to greater career opportunities and higher wages for those interested in pursuing the social work profession.

“The University of Michigan cannot be excellent without being diverse in the broadest sense of that word. We also must ensure that our community allows all individuals an equal opportunity to thrive.”

-President Mark Schlissel, Launch of DEI Strategic Plan



DEDICATION TO HUMAN DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

is a core mission of Michigan Social Work. The University and the School have a long history of dedication to social justice and to diversity, equity and inclusion. In 2016, every unit within U-M created a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) strategic plan. The School embraced this directive with vigor. Under the leadership of social work professors Jorge Delva and Beth Glover-Reed, the faculty completed and endorsed its DEI strategic plan in summer 2016. This plan is available at ssw.umich.edu/offices/diversity-equity-inclusion.

DEI plan implementation began during 2016–17, and dovetailed with other local and national events. On U-M’s campus, there were new incidents of hate and bigotry that mirrored national incidents of police brutality toward African American men, women and children. There was also growing evidence of the structural inequity toward Black Americans in the criminal justice system, the exclusion of immigrant and refugee populations and the increasing visibility of white supremacy. These events underscored the relevance of the 2016 DEI Strategic Plan and the urgency to expand and deepen the focus of the School’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. In the environmental scan, every school constituency affirmed the centrality of this goal, including the importance of improving the climate for faculty, students and staff at Michigan Social Work.

This section of the School’s strategic plan integrates the original DEI Strategic Plan to create and maintain an educational and working environment that is respectful of differences and free from harassing behavior, while incorporating it within the context of the holistic future of Michigan Social Work.

Distinctive Outcomes:

- Faculty, staff and student diversity will increase in regard to race, ethnicity and income.
- Establishment of U-M’s ADVANCE Program for recruitment, retention, climate and leadership development will lead to greater faculty hiring results.
- Michigan Social Work will exhibit a culture that encourages “transformative conversations” and learning experiences.
- Student, faculty and staff will demonstrate diversity, equity and inclusion competency skills.
- Quality student, faculty and staff professional development training opportunities will help reduce racism and oppression.

“As we embark on Michigan’s third century, I believe our future success will be defined in part by our ability to contribute to the solution of society’s most daunting problems, bringing to bear the full intellectual might of our academic breadth and depth.” **-President Mark Schlissel, 2017 Leadership Breakfast**

Objective 1

Create and implement a research-practice-service agenda for the School with a public scholarship approach in Detroit and other local areas of need.

GOAL 4

Engage with local, regional, national and global communities to advance social justice and create progressive change.

Objective 4

Promote and support faculty and students to be action leaders in local, state and national social justice change movements.

Objective 2

Use the capacity of the Program Evaluation Group to advance engagement with the School’s regional communities.

Objective 3

Expand the School’s global program in order to fulfill U-M’s role as a global leader in social work and social work education.

Distinctive Outcomes:

- Michigan Social Work will lead the University’s community and social engagement that builds a reputation for actualizing social change and public policy.
- Dynamic student advocacy projects, global learning and evaluation experiences will foster learning, research and service to address serious worldwide problems.
- Engaged research conducted by Michigan Social Work faculty and students will result in community impact as well as recognition by society.
- Flint, Detroit and Washtenaw County will benefit from Michigan Social Work research that informs multifaceted community services and programs.

DURING THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN’S BICENTENNIAL, President Mark Schlissel hosted a series of three colloquia on the future of the University. The second colloquium attracted more than 500 faculty, staff and students to Hill Auditorium to listen to leaders from 12 of the world’s most prominent research universities discuss the positive impact higher education has on society. The panelists examined how research universities are increasingly criticized for their lack of engagement and investment in the communities in which they are located. They concluded that research universities are at a crisis in terms of their role in society. President Schlissel has taken a strong stand on endorsing and expanding the role of societal engagement at the University of Michigan.

As a public institution, the University of Michigan has a mission *to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.*

This priority resonates with the Michigan Social Work mission, which states “The School is dedicated to education, research and service that fosters progressive change at local, national and global levels.” With an explicit community engagement agenda, the School is in an ideal position to fulfill its mission and to be a leader in affirming the University’s commitment to have a positive impact on the society that we serve.

The School has a long tradition of service in Detroit and in applied and engaged research. This strategic goal aims to achieve engagement that produces tangible social change. Over the past two decades, the School has supported Detroit community revitalization initiatives and now stands at a turning point. President Schlissel’s Poverty Solutions Initiative is headed by social work professor Luke Shaefer. With this goal, the School will chart its engagement agenda for the next five years. Michigan Social Work research and student learning will create impact. To do so, research and education must be driven by community members’ voices. The School will engage with and create positive change within the communities with which it collaborates.





GOAL 5

Lead the profession by advancing the scientific basis of the social work vocation and enhance interdisciplinary knowledge that informs solutions for social and human problems.

Objective 1

Support team-based as well as individual research programs and achievement.

Objective 3

Advance diversity, equity and inclusion through knowledge development that emphasizes social justice through public, engaged scholarship, research and dissemination.

Objective 2

Support team-based research programs accomplishment, and support for “next-level” achievements in key areas of research excellence, including a diversity-rich scholarship portfolio and strong societal impact.

DURING THE PAST FOUR DECADES, THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION HAS

strengthened its commitment to research. Federal funding has increased, and social work research is more visible in media and public policy impact. The U.S. continues to affirm its dedication to research as an economic engine, despite considerable challenges from anti-scientific groups. As an example, the 2019 budget for the National Institutes of Health has increased by over five percent. Especially pressing is the need to learn more about effective services to diverse and underserved populations.

Networks of research and collaborative “team science” exert the greatest influence on scientific findings. Student and faculty collaborative research drive the strongest PhD and postdoctoral programs. However, the field of social work lags behind other fields in its infrastructure and realization of team science.

The University of Michigan has been an international research leader for the past 60 years. The School’s scholarship is distinguished by its focus on engagement, social equality and social justice across diverse populations; however, the School has not emphasized team science, nor has it emphasized integrating doctoral students in faculty research agendas. The interest in research labs as a collaborative structure provides opportunities to increase team science and mentoring within the School.

This strategic goal is specifically focused on extending the School’s leadership and influence on social work and interdisciplinary and interprofessional knowledge development into the next decade of the profession.

Distinctive Outcomes:

- Michigan Social Work’s reputation as a leader in engaged scholarship.
- An increased number of interdisciplinary team research projects.
- Sponsored funding growth.
- Increases in faculty major research awards.
- Increased national, international and state research leadership appointments.
- Dissemination of Michigan Social Work findings in highly ranked journal articles, media and speaking engagements.



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