

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

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School of Social Work

**Doctor of Social Work (DSW)**  
**Student Handbook**  
**2021-2022**



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# DSW Student Handbook

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## From the School of Social Work Director

Welcome to the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) at the University of Memphis. The University of Memphis is a Carnegie classified Research Institution with Higher Research Activity. It is also a University that is committed to engaged research. You have chosen a wonderful institution for pursuing your doctoral education in social work!



The mission of the School of Social Work is to be a leader in social work education by: preparing students with cutting-edge social work skills necessary to practice in complex settings; creating knowledge through research and engaged scholarship; reducing poverty, inequality, and social and economic injustice through evidence based practices; and addressing the needs of the Mid-South within a global perspective. We are excited to have you in our program to help us make this mission a reality!

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                      |    |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS MISSION .....              | 4  |
| COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MISSION .....           | 4  |
| SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION .....                  | 4  |
| COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE .....     | 4  |
| DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MISSION .....          | 5  |
| DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES..... | 5  |
| ADMISSIONS.....                                      | 5  |
| Admissions Requirements .....                        | 5  |
| Readmissions Requirements .....                      | 6  |
| CURRICULUM .....                                     | 6  |
| Sample Study Plan .....                              | 6  |
| Courses .....                                        | 7  |
| Electives .....                                      | 9  |
| Distance Learning & Residency .....                  | 9  |
| RETENTION AND GRADUATION .....                       | 10 |
| Retention Requirements .....                         | 10 |
| Graduation Requirements .....                        | 10 |
| DISSERTATION .....                                   | 11 |
| Advisor and Dissertation Committee .....             | 11 |
| Dissertation Proposal Defense .....                  | 12 |
| Dissertation Defense .....                           | 13 |
| TUITION AND FEES .....                               | 15 |
| FINANCIAL AID.....                                   | 15 |
| Federal Fund .....                                   | 15 |
| Graduate Assistantships .....                        | 15 |

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS MISSION**

The University of Memphis is a learner-centered metropolitan research university providing high quality educational experiences while pursuing new knowledge through research, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary and engaged scholarship. A doctoral degree-granting urban research university, The University of Memphis is committed to excellence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional education; in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge; in service to the metropolitan community, the state, and the nation; and in preparation of a diverse student population for successful careers and meaningful participation in a global society. The University of Memphis remains committed to the education of a non-racially identifiable student body and promotes diversity and access without regard to race, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

## **COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MISSION**

The School of Social Work at the University of Memphis is part of the College of Arts and Sciences. The College of Arts and Sciences is the largest college in the University of Memphis, comprising 24 academic units, the ROTC, and multiple research centers, including two Centers of Excellence. Providing over quarter-million credit hours of instruction annually, the College of Arts and Sciences offers a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum to equip its students in pursuing rich personal and professional lives. It is dedicated to providing educational opportunities that broaden student knowledge within the major areas of human study, in-depth understanding of at least one area of inquiry, and the skills and abilities necessary for a lifetime of learning, career success, and participatory citizenship. The College provides quality undergraduate and graduate education by training students to think critically about their course of study, themselves, and the world around them. Through programs of basic and applied research, the College's faculty and students increase knowledge and address the complex issues, local and global, facing all citizens.

## **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK MISSION**

The School of Social Work seeks to be a leader in social work education by: preparing students with cutting-edge social work skills necessary to practice in complex settings; creating knowledge through research and engaged scholarship; reducing poverty, inequality, and social and economic injustice through evidence based practices; and addressing the needs of the Mid-South within a global perspective.

## **COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

A primary focus of the Master of Social Work program is to enhance human wellbeing and help to 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. This mission is

consistent with the values of the social work profession in that all aspects of the program are committed to enhancing service to vulnerable populations while promoting social justice. The program is committed to developing student knowledge, values, and skills essential to competent social work practice, the importance of human relationships, the dignity and worth of all persons and integrity throughout all aspects of professional practice.

### **DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MISSION**

The mission of the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program is to prepare practitioner-scholars who can generate new social work knowledge and respond to increasingly complex practice. The DSW program seeks to enhance the professional skills of practicing social workers and prepare them for supervision, teaching, management, and data-driven decision-making.

### **DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Aligning with the mission statements of the University of Memphis, the School of Social Work, and the DSW program, the DSW program has established five learning outcomes:

1. Evaluating social work services and practice environments using twenty-first century skills in data-driven analysis and informatics.
2. Demonstrating social work leadership and management skills to respond to complex practice environments locally, nationally, and globally.
3. Educating the next generation of social workers through supervision and training to be leaders in a changing practice environment.
4. Demonstrating leadership skills in interdisciplinary environments in collaboration with diverse clients and communities.
5. Contributing to social work knowledge through research and practice.

## **ADMISSIONS**

### **Admissions Requirements**

Admission to the DSW program requires:

1. A Master of Social Work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.
2. Two years of full-time post-MSW practice experience (or equivalent part-time experience).
3. Submission of transcripts from undergraduate program and MSW program.
4. Submission of GRE scores that demonstrate competence in writing and quantitative skills (in addition to GRE scores, international applicants should submit Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores).
5. A Professional Goal Statement (see the online application for specific requirements).
6. A Professional Resume/CV.

7. Three letters of reference.

The DSW Program Committee reviews all submitted materials. Admissions decisions are made on the applicant's meeting admissions requirements and the overall quality of professional background in social work, scholarship, academic ability, research capacity, and the fitness for the program.

### **Readmissions Requirements**

Once accepted into the DSW program, students are expected to enroll every semester thereafter and make satisfactory progress toward the degree. Students who do not enroll for one semester must apply for readmission compliant with the Graduate Admissions guidelines. Submission of an application for readmission does not ensure acceptance. An application for readmission may be rejected or additional requirements may be imposed on the student.

## **CURRICULUM**

The DSW program requires the completion of a minimum of forty-eight (48) credit hours.

1. Students are required to complete thirty (30) credit hours of required coursework. The required courses are as follows:
  - 8020 Fundamentals of Quantitative SW Research (3)
  - 8030 Qualitative Methods for SW (3)
  - 8040 Advanced SW Theory (3)
  - 8050 Writing for Publication (3)
  - 8055 Informatics & Data-Driven Decision Making (3)
  - 8060 Developing Fundable Proposals (3)
  - 8075 Reflective Supervision (3)
  - 8080 Managing SW Practice (3)
  - SUAP 8100 Public Policy Statistics (3)
  - PADM 8600 Admin Theory & Ethics (3)
2. Students are also required to complete a minimum of twelve (12) credit hours of electives.
3. Students are required to complete a minimum of six (6) credit hours of dissertation (SWRK 9000).

### **Sample Study Plan**

The DSW program is designed for students to complete their degree in three years. A sample of a three-year study plan is included below:

**Even-Year Cohort****Odd-Year Cohort****Year 1**

|               |                                      |                                         |   |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Fall</b>   | PADM 8600/7600 Admin Theory & Ethics | SUAP 8100/7100 Public Policy Statistics | 3 |
|               | SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory         | PADM 8600/7600 Admin Theory & Ethics    | 3 |
| <b>Spring</b> | SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research   | SWRK 8030 Qualitative SW Research       | 3 |
|               | SWRK 8060 Develop. Fund. Proposals   | SWRK 8075 Reflective Supervision        | 3 |
| <b>Summer</b> | SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication    | SWRK 8080 Managing SW Practice          | 3 |
|               | Elective                             | Elective                                | 3 |

**Total 18****Year 2**

|               |                                         |                                     |   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Fall</b>   | SUAP 8100/7100 Public Policy Statistics | SWRK 8055 Informatics & Data-Driven | 3 |
|               | Elective                                | SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory        | 3 |
| <b>Spring</b> | SWRK 8030 Qualitative SW Research       | SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research  | 3 |
|               | SWRK 8075 Reflective Supervision        | SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication   | 3 |
| <b>Summer</b> | SWRK 8080 Managing SW Practice          | SWRK 8060 Develop. Fund. Proposals  | 3 |
|               | Elective                                | Elective                            | 3 |

**Total 18****Year 3**

|               |                                     |                        |   |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>Fall</b>   | SWRK 8055 Informatics & Data-Driven | Elective               | 3 |
|               | SWRK 9000 Dissertation              | SWRK 9000 Dissertation | 3 |
| <b>Spring</b> | Elective                            | Elective               | 3 |
|               | SWRK 9000 Dissertation              | SWRK 9000 Dissertation | 3 |

**Total 12****Courses****SUAP 8100 Public Policy Statistics (3)**

Introduction to processes of conducting statistical analyses of data relevant to public issues, problems, and policies in the areas of public administration, criminal justice, planning, and

health administration; particular emphasis on providing an understanding of statistical concepts and techniques necessary for empirical analysis and decision-making.

**SWRK 8020 Quantitative SW Research (3)**

Course covers fundamental strategies for developing a quantitative research study.

**SWRK 8030 Qualitative Methods for SW (3)**

The purpose of this advanced course is to further prepare doctoral students to organize and conduct qualitative research. Students will learn the history of qualitative methods and the theoretical underpinnings to qualitative data collection and analysis.

**SWRK 8040 Advanced SW Theory (3)**

Course covers major theories that have influenced social work research, social work practice, and social welfare policy. The interdisciplinary nature of social work theory and history of social work will be covered. Students will learn methods of theory building and theoretical modeling. Prerequisites: SWRK 7002, 7003, 7021, 7022, 7025, & 7030.

**SWRK 8050 Writing for Publication (3)**

Course introduces students to the process of writing for publication. Course will be a project-focused seminar in which students will formulate a concept for a scholarly paper, draft the paper, and rewrite the paper based on a review from peers. Course will also cover the process of writing an abstract for a scholarly presentation.

**SWRK 8055 Informatics & Data-Driven Decision Making (3)**

This course emphasizes the use of information technology in social work practice (1) to improve overall quality of services provided by clinicians as well as (2) to leverage the implicit knowledge of workers so that agencies foster ongoing innovations in service provision.

**SWRK 8060 Developing Fundable Proposals (3)**

Course is designed to prepare students to apply knowledge of evidence-based interventions and knowledge of policy related to social work practice to the development of a proposal for funding. Foundation knowledge and skills in grant writing will be explored. There will also be emphasis on working effectively with others to operationalize ideas to create a program or a plan in response to a request for proposals/applications. Students will learn to organize a proposal and respond to reviewers. Particular emphasis is placed on proposals for social work practice with culturally diverse, vulnerable and high-risk populations.

**SWRK 8075 Reflective Supervision (3)**

Reflective supervision is a regular collaborative reflection experience between a service provider and supervisor that builds on the supervisee's use of his/her thoughts, feelings, and values within a service encounter. In this course, the student will learn about the origins and history of different models of supervision. Through discussion and practice, the student will learn how supervision can provide a rich opportunity for service providers to further their self-awareness and skills.

### **SWRK 8080 Managing a SW Practice (3)**

Course covers aspects of managing social work practices that function as non-profits.

### **PADM 8600 Admin Theory & Ethics (3)**

Significance of public administration in American government; includes an introduction to formal organization theory and bureaucracy, decision-making theory, leadership and motivational theory, and current trends and problems in the study of public administration. Prerequisite(s): SPAN 7102 or equivalent.

### **SWRK 9000 Dissertation (1-6)**

Candidates for graduation will be required to complete a dissertation. Grade of S/U, or IP will be given.

## **Electives**

The DSW program requires the completion of a minimum of twelve (12) credit hours (4 courses) of electives. The electives allow students to tailor their program of study to their interests. Students who are interested in higher education teaching can use the electives to complete a certificate in higher education teaching offered through the Department of Leadership in the College of Education. Students who are interested in advanced training in research methods or statistics can use the hours to pursue either a Qualitative Methods or Quantitative Methods Graduate Certificate in the College of Education or a Graduate Certificate in Health Analytics through the School of Public Health. Students who are interested in advanced clinical methods can use their electives to take clinical courses through social work, counseling, or psychology. Students can also use electives to take coursework in a population specialty (e.g., health care, gerontology).

## **Distance Learning & Residency**

The DSW program is offered via distance learning. All courses are available online. The University of Memphis has resources for online teaching through the UM Global. The UM Global provides review of courses, workshops on online teaching, online tutoring, online writing support, and other online support for students. Furthermore, students are asked to come to campus approximately one week per year to complete in-person residencies. The in-person

residencies provide the opportunity to become oriented to the program, meet fellow students, meet the faculty, and form dissertation committees. Students are also required to have synchronous meetings. The plan for the in-person residencies are as follows.

### **Year 1 Residency: Research Boot Camp**

Year one residency focuses on review of research skills and basic statistics concepts. Students have the opportunity to meet students who are further along in the program and establish mentoring relationships with advanced students.

### **Year 2 Residency: Management & Evaluation Boot Camp**

Year two residency focuses on management and evaluation. Students have the opportunity to hear from funders and local leaders about best practices in management and best practices in grant writing and program evaluation.

### **Year 3 Residency: Dissertation Boot Camp**

Year three residency focuses on the dissertation. Students will have an opportunity to work on their IRB proposal, dissertation proposal, and hold a dissertation committee meeting.

Workshops focus on strategies for outlining your dissertation and setting a schedule of due dates for chapters.

## **RETENTION AND GRADUATION**

### **Retention Requirements**

Retention requirements for the DSW program include:

1. Students must comply with all retention standards of the Graduate School at the University of Memphis.
2. Students are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00. Should the student's cumulative GPA fall below that mark, a period of one semester will be allowed to correct the deficiency. Students failing to improve their GPA to an acceptable level in that time will be dismissed from the program.
3. No more than 6 hours of "C-," "C" or "C+" will be applied toward meeting degree requirements. No grade of a D+ or lower will count toward the degree.

### **Graduation Requirements**

Graduation requirements for the DSW program include:

1. Completion of all required coursework with no more than 6 hours of C (i.e., "C-," "C" or "C+") grades.
2. Completion of a dissertation.

## **DISSERTATION**

The dissertation is viewed as the capstone of the doctoral student's academic training, reflecting the student's capability for independent research. All students must complete an original investigation presented in the form of a dissertation. The dissertation must contain original research based on either primary data collection or secondary data analysis. The empirical data for the dissertation may be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods in nature. The dissertation work needs to be of publication quality, and acceptable to the school of social work and to a committee of dissertation readers. The traditional doctoral dissertation consists of a statement of the problem, specific aims, and related research questions/hypotheses; a literature review; explanation of research methodology, data collection procedure, analysis of data; presentation of results; and a discussion of findings and their social work implications.

All phases of the dissertation research are primarily the responsibility of the student, with the dissertation committee serving mainly as a reviewer and sounding board. Prior to conducting the dissertation research, the student must take an oral proposal defense to the dissertation committee and then obtain approval for the research by the Institute Review Board (IRB) at the University of Memphis. Upon completion of the independent dissertation research work acceptable to the committee, the student must take a final oral defense of his or her dissertation to the dissertation committee and all other interested persons. The defense includes the student's presentation of a summary of the dissertation research work and follows responses to questions of the committee. The student receives immediate oral feedback (i.e., 'Pass,' 'Pass with Revisions,' 'Not Pass' or 'Fail') following the oral defense. The dissertation should refer to the dissertation guidelines of the Graduate School and follow the reporting standards in general of the American Psychological Association. The primary procedures and timeline of the dissertation are as below:

- By the end of the first year of doctoral studies, a faculty advisor is assigned to each student in consultations with the DSW program coordinator.
- By the end of the second year of doctoral studies, the dissertation proposal is developed and the dissertation committee is formed in consultations with the faculty advisor.
- By August (fall semester) of the third year of doctoral studies, the oral proposal defense of the dissertation is held to the dissertation committee.
- By March (spring semester) of the third year of doctoral studies, the oral dissertation defense is held to the dissertation committee and all other interested persons.

### **Advisor and Dissertation Committee**

Each student is assigned a faculty advisor by the end of the first year of doctoral studies. The student should work with the DSW program coordinator for assignment of the faculty advisor

based on compatibility of the student and faculty research interests. The student should consult with the faculty advisor prior to registering for courses each term so that the advisor may help the student to choose courses consistent with his or her educational and professional goals. By initiating regular advising meetings, the student needs to seek professional success and enhance academic performance. The student should also make sure to discuss with the advisor the follows:

- Frequency of advising meetings
- A plan and tentative time frame for dissertation work
- Recommendations for members of the dissertation committee
- IRB protocol application for the dissertation research and the dissertation proposal
- Development of the literature review and methodology chapters
- Opportunities for internal/external grants to support the dissertation research
- Opportunities for participating in research projects and publications related to the dissertation

By the end of the second year of doctoral studies, the student should assemble his or her dissertation committee in consultation with the faculty advisor. The dissertation committee consists of three graduate faculty members. Among the three, the two members must be from social work but the other one may be from an external discipline. The student must have his or her committee organized prior to registering dissertation credits. The student should complete the Dissertation Faculty Committee Form and submit the complete form to the Graduate School as soon as the committee is formed. The Dissertation Faculty Committee Form can be located at the website of Resources of the Graduate School. The student is responsible for having all required forms related to his or her dissertation completed and submitted in a timely manner.

### **Dissertation Proposal Defense**

The student must submit a written dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee prior to conducting his or her dissertation research. The dissertation proposal must be reviewed and approved by the dissertation committee. For this purpose, the student should work closely with his or her committee members to produce an acceptable dissertation proposal. The student should submit the proposal to the committee and ask for an oral proposal defense within 4 weeks after submission of the proposal. The oral defense of the dissertation proposal should be held before the dissertation committee by August (fall semester) of the third year of doctoral studies. At the defense, the dissertation committee reviews the student's dissertation proposal consisting of the first three chapters (i.e., introduction, literature review, and methodology) and provides feedback for revisions. After committee approval the student must submit his or her IRB protocol application to the University Human Subjects Review Committee for human

subject research. After obtaining approval of the IRB, the student can carry through his or her dissertation research work and write up the results with committee advisement.

The dissertation proposal defense is different from the final oral dissertation defense in that students do not pass or fail the proposal defense and the meeting for the proposal defense is not public, and only the student and the committee members attend. The goal of the proposal defense is for members of the dissertation committee to reach consensus that the student has designed a research project that is feasible to complete and will contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. If the committee cannot reach consensus that the student is ready to move forward with the research project, it is responsible for advising the student about what should be done to develop a satisfactory proposal. This may mean requiring the student to complete additional work on the proposal. It may also mean additional meetings until the committee is satisfied that the student is ready to move forward with his or her dissertation research project.

The dissertation proposal constitutes the first three chapters of the dissertation (i.e., introduction, literature review, and methodology). The proposal should also discuss expected results and include references. The first chapter of introduction should cover an introduction of the research topic, an overarching background of the research problem, statements of clear and focused research problem, research purpose and objectives, research questions/hypotheses, significance of the research, and definitions of the terms. The second chapter of literature review should be detailed and comprehensive reviews of literature on the topic of interest as well as a theory/theoretical framework. The third chapter of methodology should include sub-sections that cover research design, settings, participants and recruitment, data collection and measures, and data analysis (including proposed outcome analyses and power calculations, if appropriate). Expected results may be a paragraph or two that describe what findings are expected based on the questions/hypotheses, as well as potential obstacles and their solutions. The references section should be formatted in APA style and include all citations.

### **Dissertation Defense**

A satisfactory final oral dissertation defense is required for the approval of a dissertation research. A copy of the final dissertation should be given to each of the student's committee members. Upon the receipt of the copy of the dissertation, the committee members should complete the review of the dissertation and make a decision of holding a final oral dissertation defense within 15 working days. When the student's committee has reached consensus that the dissertation is ready for defense, the student should consult with his or her dissertation chairperson to aid in scheduling the final oral defense of the dissertation research. The student must work closely with the chairperson to secure a list of preferred dates and times for the

defense. The student will then help contact these persons to determine a best date for all concerned and will oversee making final arrangements for the defense meeting. The final oral dissertation defense should be held by March (spring semester) of the third year of doctoral studies. The oral defense requires participation by all members of the dissertation committee. The committee members may participate electronically if they cannot be physically present (e.g., restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, conducting professional activities away from campus). The student is responsible for scheduling the defense and ensuring that the electronic system is adequate for the intended purpose. At the final oral dissertation defense, the student presents his or her dissertation work to the dissertation committee and all other interested persons. The final oral dissertation defense is expected to take approximately 30 minutes but no more than 40 minutes followed by an open question and answer session with guests. After guests' questions are answered, they are dismissed, and the student responds to questions from his or her committee members. After this questioning, the committee votes to approve or disapprove the dissertation. The decision of the committee must be unanimous. The final oral dissertation defense may result in one of the following decisions:

- **Pass.** This decision indicates that the committee unanimously agrees that the student has satisfactorily defended his or her dissertation research work. When the student has only very minor revisions to make after defending the dissertation, the committee should feel free to sign the report and leave oversight of revisions to the chairperson.
- **Pass with Conditions.** This decision indicates that extensive revision is necessary, but that the committee is willing to examine the revised dissertation research work without requiring another oral defense.
- **Not Pass.** This decision indicates that the committee is not satisfied with the dissertation work, but anticipates that it could be made satisfactory with significant revisions. This decision still requires another oral defense.
- **Fail.** This decision and the accompanying individual committee members' reports on the dissertation research indicate that the committee has decided that the dissertation work is unsatisfactory and the student may not revise and resubmit. If the committee cannot reach consensus, the Director of the School of Social Work may make the final decision.

The total defense lasts approximately one and a half hour. The student should bring the partially completed Thesis/Dissertation Defense Results Form (accessible at the website of Resources of the Graduate School) with him or her to their defense. In case of holding an electronic oral defense, the student should have the chairperson of the dissertation committee obtaining the partially completed form or a copy of the form scanned at least five working days before the defense date. Once the student has successfully defended his or her dissertation, the committee completes the form and submits it to the Graduate School according to the guidelines of the Graduate School. When scheduling the oral defense, the student should be

mindful of the Graduate School deadlines for submitting completed dissertations. The student's final oral defense of the dissertation before the committee is the final step for the doctoral degree requirements. When the committee requests revisions of the student's dissertation at the defense, the student should submit the revisions within ten working days to the committee for approval.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

Admission to the Doctor of Social Information on current tuition and fees can be obtained from the University of Memphis Bursar's Office website (<http://bf.memphis.edu/finance/bursar/>). Graduate students may be eligible for a variety of financial aid options. Students should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For general financial aid information for graduate students, including Assistantships, Fellowships, Work Study Programs, Awards and Scholarships, students should inquire at the Student Financial Aid office ([www.memphis.edu/FinancialAid/](http://www.memphis.edu/FinancialAid/)). Students are encouraged to investigate opportunities for student aid offered by the University of Memphis, including loans, scholarships and assistantship opportunities.

## **FINANCIAL AID**

### **Federal Fund**

Admission Limited federal assistance, in the form of Stafford Loans, is available. Contact the Office of Student Aid at (901) 678-2303 for more information. Some students may seek aid through VA benefits or Title IV funds. VA benefits and Title IV funds for enrollment fees are subject to cancellation and immediate repayment if the recipient stops attending, whether or not he/she has withdrawn or dropped a course. The instructor will report the last known date of attendance as the "unofficial withdrawal date." Students who stopped attending will be assigned a grade of "F" in courses from which they have not withdrawn according to the policies of the university.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

The School of Social Work awards a small number of graduate assistantships annually. Serving as a graduate assistant provides a stipend for the academic year plus a partial waiver of tuition and fees. The School has the option of awarding either part-time or full-time graduate assistantships. Part-time assistantships waive some in tuition and fees and provide half of the stipend. Both types of assistantships require the student to be enrolled as a full-time student. Social work graduate assistantships require weekly service to the School of approximately 10-20 hours. This service normally takes the form of aiding one or more faculty members with their research or teaching responsibilities. Appointments of graduate assistants are made on an annual basis but may be renewed by the School for one additional year, depending on performance. A yearly application is required. A graduate assistant is expected to make

satisfactory progress toward the completion of his or her degree. To do this, a graduate assistant must enroll for a minimum of six hours of course work per semester and must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 at all times. Failure to maintain a grade point average of 3.0 disqualifies a student from holding a future graduate assistantship.