

Course Requirements

Simmons MSW students must take sixteen courses to graduate. Eleven of these 16 are required of all MSW candidates and five are electives. ULP students must take specified leadership courses as two of the five electives available to MSW students: Year I students take “Leadership Skills for Social Work Practice,” and Year II students take “Leadership in Action for Social Work Practice.” Both courses must be taken concurrently with field placement.

In addition to the leadership courses, students are required to take four skills-based, non-credit mini-courses over the course of their enrollment. Required mini-courses include Oral Presentation Skills, Community Politics, and Grant Writing; students select their fourth mini-course from a list of choices. Mini-courses are generally scheduled in September before the first year field placement begins and during the January break and in May so that they do not conflict with field placements. If a student should choose to enroll in a mini-course that meets at a time when he or she is scheduled to be in the field, it is the student’s responsibility to negotiate time away from the agency with the field supervisor.

Spanish Language Option

In recognition of the importance of future leaders speaking more than one language, the School of Social Work has developed on-site Spanish courses for social workers. These three-credit courses may be taken as electives. Additionally, in collaboration with programs in Cuernavaca, Mexico and Costa Rica, four-week immersion experiences have been developed. These programs are open to all Simmons students and any social worker in the field interested in pursuing Spanish. This component is not required.

Urban Leadership Field Placements

ULP students address clinical practice issues with multicultural populations through their field placements in Year I and Year II. The placement agency provides an opportunity for leadership activity for Year I (Foundation Year) students and supports a leadership project for Year II (Concentration Year) students.

Agencies that accept ULP students must be prepared to support students in fulfilling the ULP’s specialized requirements at the school and in the field. Faculty Field Advisors work closely with agencies to help them promote students’ leadership learning.

Foundation Year (Year I):

Learning leadership skills is a developmental process. During the first year clinical field placement, ULP students are encouraged to explore the functioning of the field placement organization and the community it serves, and to participate in carrying out the mission of the organization. Assignments in the Leadership I course are designed to help students develop this broader focus. While students are not expected to initiate and carry out a leadership project as they are in Year II, they are expected to pursue opportunities to move beyond the level of direct service to clients and engage in leadership-related activities. These activities, which generally involve observation or limited participation, should be jointly identified by the student, the field supervisor, and field advisor. Activities might include attending board meetings, serving on a quality assurance committee, helping to conduct a needs assessment, assisting with a community event hosted by the organization, or supporting implementation of a new policy or procedure.

Concentration Year (Year II):

During Year II, the program emphasizes development of leadership skills through the UL Project, an opportunity for students to practice taking leadership in their clinical field placements. The project assignment requires students to identify a compelling “larger systems” obstacle to service delivery at their placement agency, develop appropriate intervention plans, and take leadership for facilitating change which benefits the agency and the community it serves. The goals of the assignment are to: 1) provide students with an opportunity to integrate leadership learning into clinical practice; 2) enable students to develop leadership skills; 3) help students to assess their own skills as leaders and to identify areas needing further development; and, 4) support leadership learning and activity by exposing students to agency leaders who share their own experiences of leadership. With careful

Course Requirements

planning, the UL Project can and should make a valuable contribution to the work of students' placement agencies. See Concentration Year Project Guidelines on page 4.

Students must develop and implement projects in addition to managing a clinical caseload, but should be able to fulfill this requirement within the 24 hour per week field education commitment. The project may be completed during a concentrated period of effort, rather than week by week. In some cases, it may require additional time beyond normal coursework and field placement demands.

Other Leadership Learning

Taking initiative to respond to challenges and demands is integral to students' development of leadership skills. From time to time, ULP students will be asked to take on responsibilities that are outside of the normal student role, such as mentoring an incoming student, meeting with prospective students, leading a discussion, and planning orientation events. It is expected that, when students are asked to respond, ULP students will accept the challenge, and that they will take leadership when they perceive an unmet need.

Expectations of Students

Students in the ULP must meet the same admissions requirements as other MSW candidates. In addition, they must demonstrate potential for leadership and a commitment to working in urban communities with diverse populations.

Just as there are criteria for admission to the ULP, there are also criteria for remaining in the program. Urban Leadership students are expected to:

- ✓ Receive no grade in any course lower than a B or Pass
- ✓ Perform well in the field
- ✓ Exhibit leadership qualities
- ✓ Participate in the life of the school and in ULP activities
- ✓ Attend required events
- ✓ Always act in an ethical manner
- ✓ Work collaboratively
- ✓ Follow through when given any remedial direction

Students who do not meet these expectations may be asked to withdraw from the ULP.