

APPENDIX M

Request for Authorization to Establish a Master of Social Work Degree at Western Carolina University

Introduction

Western Carolina University notified the UNC Office of the President of its intent to plan a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree (CIP 44.0701) in December 2003. The university requests authorization to establish the program in August 2005.

Program Description

The proposed MSW will consist of 60 hours of course and field practicum work. Students will work in an approved social work agency for two days a week in the first year and three days a week in the second year. The first year of the program will include courses in social work practice, research, social policy, and human behavior and the social environment. The second year is the concentration year in which students gain in-depth knowledge and skills in a special area of practice. The MSW will build on the undergraduate social work program, which has been accredited and operational since 1974. The program will seek accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education, the national accrediting body. An additional faculty member will be hired upon authorization of the program.

Program Need

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment of social workers will grow faster than the average for all occupations for the remainder of this decade due to the increasing elderly population and the resulting growth of positions needed in hospitals, long-term care facilities, assisted living, and home health care. In NC, Community Mental Health Centers are no longer providing direct counseling to clients, but instead are operating as case managers. This gap in mental health care increases the need for Masters level social workers, who provide more than half of the mental health counseling in the nation. Additional psychiatric and medical social workers will be needed in western NC according to the NC Employment Security Commission. It is anticipated that 55 full-time students and 20 part-time students will be enrolled four years after program establishment.

Resources

No additional state resources are required. Program needs will be addressed through internal reallocations and enrollment increase funds.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Governors approve the request to establish a Master of Social Work degree at Western Carolina University effective August 2005.