

AGENDA ITEM

A-2. UNC System Academic Degree Program Action..... David English

Situation: Section 400.1.1[R] of the UNC Policy Manual, *Regulation for Academic Program Planning and Evaluation*, defines the academic program actions that require approval from the University of North Carolina Board of Governors and those actions that are delegated to staff at the University of North Carolina System Office. This report presents those program actions that require Board approval.

Program Establishment

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) CIP 44.0701

Background: Per Section 400.1 of the UNC Policy Manual, *Policy on Academic Program Planning*, the constituent institutions and the UNC System Office review academic degree program offerings and bring periodic requests for program establishment, discontinuation, and consolidation recommendations to the Board. Items such as change of delivery mode, change of program title or Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes, change of off-site locations, and change of specialty codes are delegated to UNC System Office staff.

Assessment: Approval of the requested program action is recommended.

Action: This item requires a vote by the committee, with a vote by the full Board of Governors through the consent agenda.



**Request for Authorization to Establish
Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)
CIP 44.0701
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

I. Program Highlights

- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill proposes the establishment of a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW).
- The BSW will prepare career-ready, competent, and skilled practitioners to address complex social challenges and strengthen individual, family, and community well-being across North Carolina. Total projected enrollment in year five is 75 students. Enrollment in the BSW would be capped at 75 students, with Board of Governors authorization required to increase that limit.
- The proposed BSW is designed to expand North Carolina's social work workforce pipeline without adversely affecting enrollment at existing UNC System BSW programs. The program will primarily serve students who are already enrolled or admitted at UNC–Chapel Hill and who currently lack an undergraduate social work pathway at the institution. By adding capacity within UNC–Chapel Hill's already planned undergraduate growth, the program complements existing BSW programs across the UNC System, rather than redistributing students among institutions.
- The proposed program addresses a critical workforce need identified in the UNC System Workforce Alignment Report. Distinctive strengths include a 400-hour supervised practicum, statewide agency partnerships and research opportunities, and a preparation pathway that supports eligibility for Advanced Standing MSW study at UNC–Chapel Hill or other institutions.
- The proposed BSW aligns with UNC–Chapel Hill's mission by expanding access to high-quality public education, preparing graduates for public service careers, and addressing critical workforce shortages in North Carolina's health and human service systems.
- Graduates will enter high-demand human service careers or pursue graduate study, supported by a projected 13.7-percent increase in North Carolina social work employment over the next decade.

II. Academic Program Planning Criteria (UNC Policy 400.1)

1. **Relation to Campus Distinctiveness and Mission.** The proposed BSW advances UNC–Chapel Hill's mission by expanding academic options for its undergraduates and strengthening the University's longstanding leadership in public service, community engagement, and meeting North Carolina's workforce needs. The program supports UNC System priorities by addressing workforce shortages in health and human services, promoting enrollment growth and student success, and preparing graduates to meet critical community needs across North Carolina.
2. **Student Demand.** UNC–Chapel Hill's projected growth to 26,000 undergraduates supports meeting strong internal demand for social work study while helping address persistent workforce needs across North Carolina. For fall 2025, UNC–Chapel Hill received approximately 84,317 undergraduate applications, a record high, and newly launched undergraduate social work courses enrolled at capacity in their first semester. Early indicators confirm strong on-campus demand: the School of Social Work's interest database has grown to 175 current and admitted students, with approximately 100 attending informational sessions held in spring 2026.

Table 1. Other UNC System Enrollments in Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Programs

Institution	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23	AY2023-24
App State (on-campus, online, site-based)	363	353	320	380
East Carolina University (on-campus)	127	130	147	126
ECSU (on-campus, online, site-based)	125	98	78	62
FSU (on-campus)	76	71	76	82
North Carolina A&T (on-campus)	243	231	195	178
NC Central University (on-campus)	208	192	174	168
NC State University (on-campus)	187	207	179	186
UNC Charlotte (on-campus, online)	157	177	167	151
UNC Greensboro (on-campus)	216	351	262	263
UNC Pembroke	254	202	177	166
UNC Wilmington (on-campus, online)	189	176	176	153
Western Carolina University (on-campus)	88	94	87	76
Winston-Salem State (on-campus)	60	67	89	50

Table 2. UNC System Completions for Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Programs

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23	AY2023-24	AY2024-25
App State	105	99	112	103	95	95
East Carolina University	71	64	67	73	64	51
ECSU	12	25	21	20	15	12
FSU	54	40	38	41	36	43
North Carolina A&T	56	52	50	45	48	48
NC Central University	70	60	51	47	44	40
NC State University	66	54	67	46	64	72
UNC Charlotte	57	63	78	71	80	51
UNC Greensboro	94	78	112	91	72	67
UNC Pembroke	65	76	57	50	50	39
UNC Wilmington	76	89	73	81	73	68
Western Carolina University	55	41	59	50	51	25
Winston-Salem State	30	26	30	47	33	39

Table 3. IPEDS Peer Institutions Completions for Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Programs

Institution	AY2019-20	AY2020-21	AY2021-22	AY2022-23
University of Wisconsin-Madison	93	97	101	108
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	76	81	86	90
The University of Texas at Austin	128	134	141	149
The Ohio State University	152	159	166	174
University of Georgia	109	114	119	126
University of Washington	84	86	91	95

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Completions Survey, CIP 44.0701 (Social Work), bachelor's degree level, 2019–2023 reporting years.

3. **Employment Opportunities for Graduates.** Graduates will be career-ready for front-line roles in child welfare, behavioral health, schools, healthcare, aging services, and community organizations, evidenced by strong statewide demand and accelerated pathways to MSW study.

Table 4. Estimated Employment in North Carolina for Standard Occupational Classification Codes (SOC) Cross-walked to CIP Code: 44.0701 with a Matching Education Level Requirement

Education Level Requirement	Count of SOC Codes	2022	2032 Estimate	Net Change	Percent Change
Bachelor of Social Work Degree	2 (21-1021 and 21-1029)	14,370	16,340	+ 1,970	+ 13.7 percent

Source: North Carolina employment projections (2022–2032) for SOC 21-1021 (Child, Family, and School Social Workers) and SOC 21-1029 (Social Workers, All Other), Projections Central via ONET OnLine State Occupational Projections.

Table 5. Median Wage for SOC Codes Cross-walked to CIP Code: 44.0701 [Social Work]

Educational Level Requirement	SOC Count	Median Wage
Some College or Associate Degree	1	\$38,147/yr (≈\$18.34/hr × 2,080; Social & Human Service Assistants, SOC 21-1093)
Bachelor's Degree	5	~\$58,520/yr (average of NC medians across SOC 21-1021, 21-1022, 21-1023, 21-1029, 21-1092)
Doctoral or Professional Degree	1	\$75,020/yr (national median for SOC 25-1113)

Source: CIP 44.0701 (Social Work) figures determined using (1) the CIP→SOC occupation list shown in a Lightcast Analyst PDF export and (2) the most recent public NC OEWS wage estimates (May 2023) for those SOC.

4. **Impact on Access and Affordability.** Expanding access to an in-state BSW program at UNC–Chapel Hill supports affordability for North Carolina students. With median social worker wages around \$58,000 and typical public undergraduate debt near \$25,000, the estimated debt-to-earnings ratio is ~0.4, with about eight percent–10 percent of earnings used for repayment.
5. **Program Specific Fees or Tuition.** UNC-Chapel Hill is requesting a program-specific fee for this program. The BSW will require a one-time special fee of \$357, which will cover a major-specific orientation as well as practicum fees to cover training and support of social work supervisors in the community.

Table 6. Full-Time 2025-2026 Bachelor's of Social Work Tuition and Fees per Year (In Dollars)

Category	Resident	Non-Resident
Tuition	\$7,019.00	\$43,152.00
Tuition Differential	--	--
Mandatory Fees (Athletics, Student Activities, Health Services, Educational & Technology, Campus Security, Debt Service, ASG)	\$2,068.00	\$2,068.00
Special Fees	\$357.00	\$357.00

6. **Expected Quality.** The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited BSW program features a 400-hour supervised practicum, evidence-informed curriculum, and strong statewide partnerships, with quality ensured through experienced faculty leadership, structured assessment of nine competency areas, and rigorous external accreditation review.
7. **Faculty Quality and Number.** The program builds on nine experienced social work faculty who developed the curriculum and will be strengthened through phased hiring of additional BSW faculty over four years to support instructional quality, accreditation, and enrollment growth.
8. **Relevant Lower-level and Cognate Programs.** The proposed BSW builds upon the School of Social Work's longstanding Council on Social Work -accredited MSW and Ph.D. programs, leveraging existing expertise in generalist practice, evidence-informed research, and practicum education to extend high-quality social work training to the undergraduate level.
9. **Availability of Campus Resources (Library, Facilities, etc.).** Existing campus facilities are sufficient to support the BSW program, with modest renovations necessary to create a dedicated undergraduate suite funded through state allocations, tuition revenue, F&A funds, and trust resources, requiring no major construction.
10. **Existing Programs (Number, Location, Mode of Delivery).** Thirteen UNC System public institutions currently offer BSW programs, and these programs make essential contributions to North Carolina's social work workforce. The proposed UNC–Chapel Hill BSW is not intended to duplicate or compete with those programs, but to add targeted capacity for a distinct student population: students who are already enrolled or admitted at UNC–Chapel Hill and who currently do not have access to an undergraduate social work major at the University. Statewide need remains substantial despite the important contributions of existing programs. North Carolina continues to experience shortages in behavioral health, child welfare, aging services, intellectual and developmental disability services,

school social work, and services for individuals involved with the criminal justice system. Existing BSW programs collectively produce fewer graduates than are needed to meet employer demand across the state, and workforce shortages are especially acute in rural and underserved communities. In this context, additional educational capacity is consistent with North Carolina's approach in other high-demand public-serving professions, including nursing and teacher education, where multiple undergraduate programs across institution types are necessary to meet statewide demand.

UNC–Chapel Hill's proposed program also differs from existing programs in its institutional context and intended enrollment base. The program will be campus-based, tied to UNC–Chapel Hill's planned undergraduate enrollment growth, and supported by the School of Social Work's existing MSW infrastructure, statewide practicum partnerships, and research-intensive public service mission. The program will create a pathway for UNC–Chapel Hill undergraduates who otherwise would major in related fields and later pursue a traditional MSW program. It therefore expands the number of students entering the social work pipeline rather than shifting students away from other UNC System institutions.

11. **Potential for Unnecessary Duplication.** The proposed BSW at UNC–Chapel Hill is designed as an additive workforce-capacity strategy, not as a competing program that would draw students away from existing UNC System institutions. The primary enrollment source for the BSW will be students who have already chosen UNC–Chapel Hill and who currently must select another major—often psychology, human development, public policy, or a related field—if they are interested in social work. Since the BSW is required to pursue employment as a North Carolina Certified Social Worker (CSW), those students must subsequently pursue the MSW, adding time and cost to their educational path.

Early evidence indicates that this demand already exists within UNC–Chapel Hill's current and admitted student population. Newly launched undergraduate social work courses enrolled at or near capacity in their first semester, approximately 100 current and admitted students attended spring 2026 informational sessions, and the School of Social Work's interest database includes more than 160 current or newly admitted UNC–Chapel Hill students. These indicators suggest that the proposed program will capture unmet internal demand rather than divert students from other UNC System institutions.

The proposed program includes safeguards to reduce the risk of adverse effects on peer institutions. Practicum placements will be developed through UNC–Chapel Hill's existing MSW field education infrastructure, statewide agency partnerships, the NC Field Education Consortium, and flexible placement models that include summer placements in students' home communities and other underserved regions. These strategies are intended to expand placement capacity rather than compete for a fixed pool of local placements.

12. **Feasibility of Collaborative Program.** UNC–Chapel Hill developed the proposed BSW in active collaboration with, and with support from, the Social Work Coalition on NC Workforce Development, a statewide effort to expand educational capacity and address documented workforce shortages. Coalition discussions have consistently identified the need for additional BSW pathways across North Carolina, and the proposed program is designed to contribute new capacity within that shared statewide strategy.

The program also responds to statewide workforce need that exceeds current educational output. North Carolina continues to face shortages in behavioral health, child welfare, aging services, school social work, intellectual and developmental disability services, and services for individuals involved with the

criminal justice system. The Social Work Coalition on NC Workforce Development, representing a statewide collaborative effort among social work programs and workforce partners, has emphasized the need to expand access to social work education across institution types and regions. Within that statewide strategy, the UNC–Chapel Hill BSW adds capacity in the Research Triangle while complementing existing programs across the UNC System.

The BSW program strengthens statewide collaboration through the Social Work Coalition on NC Workforce Development, the NC Field Education Consortium, Rural Interprofessional Longitudinal Scholars (RIPLS) rural partnerships, and accelerated MSW pathways, supporting coordinated workforce development with peer institutions.

13. **Other Considerations.** The proposed BSW will strengthen North Carolina’s social work workforce pipeline while minimizing enrollment and placement impacts on other UNC System institutions. Students who wish to pursue BSW degrees at regional institutions, rural-serving institutions, HBCUs, or institutions closer to home will continue to have strong established options across the state. The UNC–Chapel Hill program serves a different and currently unmet need: providing a social work pathway for students who have already selected UNC–Chapel Hill and would otherwise pursue a non-social-work undergraduate major. The program will also support rural and underserved communities by enrolling students from across North Carolina and enabling practicum options in home communities and high-need regions. Through rural partnerships, RIPLS participation, statewide field-placement coordination, and Advanced Standing MSW pathways, the program can help students maintain regional ties and return to communities with significant workforce needs.

Total projected enrollment in year five is 75 students. Enrollment in the BSW would be capped at 75 students, with Board of Governors authorization required to increase that limit.

III. Summary of Review Processes

1. **Institution Review Process and Feedback.** Following a two-year feasibility study, the School of Social Work faculty approved the proposed BSW program in November 2024. The Request for Preliminary Authorization was approved by the College of Arts and Sciences Administrative Board in April 2025, and the Chancellor authorized submission of the Request to Establish to the UNC System.
2. **UNC System Office Review Process and Feedback.** Throughout the review process, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provided relevant information pertaining to program requirements and resources. The institution submitted appropriate documentation and research to support the statements made.

IV. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the UNC Board of Governors approves the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill request to establish the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) (CIP 44.0701) effective Fall 2026.



Social Work Coalition

ON NC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

July 6, 2026

To the University of North Carolina System Academic Affairs:

On behalf of the Social Work Coalition on NC Workforce Development, we write to express our support for efforts to expand access to high-quality social work education in North Carolina. We support the development of new social work degree programs that are intentionally designed to address documented workforce shortages, expand educational access, and complement existing statewide efforts to strengthen the social work workforce pipeline. The proposed Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill represents an influential opportunity to expand educational capacity and strengthen the statewide workforce pipeline.

The Coalition was formed through a collaborative partnership among 25 schools of social work and statewide stakeholders committed to addressing North Carolina's growing shortage of social workers. Across the state, employers continue to experience significant workforce shortages in behavioral health, child welfare, aging services, intellectual and developmental disability services, school social work, and services for justice-involved populations. These shortages affect communities across North Carolina and are particularly acute in rural and underserved areas.

Since its formation, the Coalition has worked collaboratively to strengthen the social work workforce pipeline through coordinated statewide strategies focused on recruitment, retention, educational access, and practicum support across all 100 counties. Through active engagement with public and private sector partners, we have secured vital financial investments that support students pursuing social work education and incentivized practicum placements across critical public service sectors.

Fundamental to the Coalition's mission is that addressing North Carolina's workforce shortages requires expanding access to social work education across institution types and regions of the state. The UNC System workforce alignment report highlights the need for social workers in North Carolina, specifically in areas such as health support services, mental health and substance use counseling, and programs and services for aging adults. Furthermore, NC's projected population growth necessitates expanding education and training programs for social workers, vital to meet the current and future needs of the state.

Within this context, the proposed in-person BSW degree at UNC-Chapel Hill represents an opportunity to increase educational capacity in the Research Triangle. The proposed program has the potential to complement existing social work education programs by expanding capacity, increasing access, and strengthening the statewide workforce pipeline.

The Coalition has acknowledged the enrollment challenges facing higher education nationally and the importance of coordinated statewide public education and marketing efforts to increase awareness of social work careers and pathways into the profession. Expanding educational opportunities is a strategic mechanism for equipping graduates with the skills needed to serve the state.





Social Work Coalition

ON NC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We note that these efforts align closely with the recent creation of the [Public Service Leadership Program](#) (PSLP), a statewide partnership among the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, Dogwood Health Trust, and the Social Work Coalition on NC Workforce Development focused on strengthening North Carolina's social work workforce. The PSLP reflects a significant statewide commitment to addressing workforce shortages through coordinated recruitment, leadership and clinical practices skill development, mentorship, public service placements, and educational pipeline development efforts across high schools, community colleges, and universities.

Due to time constraints, a sub-group of co-chairs was available to develop and approve this letter of support. The discussion was thoughtful and constructive; the perspectives reflected here represent only a subset of the broader coalition. We feel that the proposed in-person BSW degree is aligned with these broader statewide workforce development goals and is an important component of North Carolina's collaborative strategy to expand and strengthen the social work workforce pipeline. This letter represents a significant step towards the coalition's support for future social work program expansion.

Sincerely,

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