

**Role of the Master's Degree in Master's Social Work Education**

**Policy Statement from the NADD Board**

Master's degrees have been the established, terminal practice degree in the social work profession since the first half of the twentieth century, and for this reason, the majority of people teaching in social work education programs have the master's as their terminal degree. Over the course of their careers, social workers may elect to continue their education and pursue doctor of philosophy degrees (PhDs) or doctor of social work degrees (DSWs). However, there is huge variation in the content and focus of those doctoral degrees: those degrees can prepare professionals to be social work researchers, educators, leaders, administrators, or other types of advanced practitioners, and this latter group might focus on practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, or social policies. For this reason, we, the members of the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, seek to clarify the educational degree requirements for those faculty members who are educating students who are pursuing a master's degree in social work. ***Simply stated, we see the master's in social work as the terminal social work degree to teach social work courses, for all the reasons listed below:***

- a) The master's in social work is the graduate degree with the greatest prevalence in social work practice across the nation, licensable in every state. The degree prepares professionals to do social work practice at all levels, from clinical practice to macro practice. As such, it is the current gold standard for social work practice in North America, and it is the only advanced social work degree that includes all the core content needed for all graduate level, licensable social workers in all types of social work practice.
- b) As professional schools, it's essential that we ground our students in the current professional environment, as well as prepare students for the future. This requires a good mix of educators from both academic and real-world practice settings. For this reason, master's degree programs rely heavily on part-time faculty who are working in local, regional, state or national settings to provide the "grounded-in-the-profession" perspective. In addition, more programs are hiring these professionals to be full-time practice-based faculty. Practice-based full-time faculty go by many different titles in social work programs, and yet they share the characteristic that their purpose, like that of part-time faculty, is to ground social work course work in the realities of the social work profession.
- c) Beyond grounding our education in the professional practice environment, the master's degree as the terminal degree for educating social work master's students also ensures that our graduate master's programs have faculty who reflect the diverse social work workforce.

Endorsed unanimously by the undersigned members of the NADD Board of Directors on May 7, 2019.



Martell Teasley, NADD Board President, University of Utah



Robin Mama, Monmouth University



Karen Bullock, North Carolina State University



Goutham Menon, Loyola University Chicago



Sandra Crewe, Howard University



Anna Scheyett, University of Georgia



Noreen Mokuau, University of Hawai'i at Manoa



Nancy Smyth, University at Buffalo



Gautam Yadama, Boston College