

MSW Program Lunch Break Chat Transcript

July 16, 2019

12:02:13 From Caitlin Plamp

Hello! Welcome to the Lunch Break Chat! My name is Caitlin Plamp and I am the Admissions Coordinator in the Department of Social Work at MSU Denver. Please turn off your cameras and let me know if you have any questions

12:04:16 From [Participant 1]

Thank you. Is there any audio yet?

12:04:47 From Caitlin Plamp

There is no audio or video for the lunch break chat - this is a text-based chat that gives you a chance to ask questions of our team in real time

12:05:06 From [Participant 1]

OK great!

12:05:40 From [Participant 1]

May we start with questions?

12:05:54 From [Participant 2]

What is required for the admission application as far as essays and letters of rec?

12:06:25 From Caitlin Plamp

Yes please! I apologize, this system doesn't show messages that were sent before you joined the chat, so I may be repeating myself at times as new people join

12:07:05 From Caitlin Plamp :

Hi [Participant 2], great question!

12:07:55 From [Participant 1]:

What does the class make up look like demographically? How many students in the co-hort and how many do complete online vs. mixed for the full 2 year program?

12:08:31 From Caitlin Plamp :

We will release all of the details around the essay and letter of recommendation when the application opens on September 3rd, but for now the basics are that you will be required to write a personal statement essay (we will provide the prompts for you to answer as well as the required length) and you will need 3 professional letters of recommendation. For recommendations, you will enter your recommender's information into the application system once it opens in September, and they will receive detailed instructions from us on how to submit their letter and an evaluative form. You do not have to collect recommendations to submit.

12:08:47 From Caitlin Plamp :

Great question [Participant 1]! Give me just a minute to pull up my demographic information

12:11:18 From Caitlin Plamp :

We do not have cohorts in our program in the traditional sense due to the number of ways students have to complete the program (full time vs. part time, on campus, online, and hybrid sections of the courses, etc.). As a student, you may take 3 classes on campus, 1 online, and 1 hybrid one semester and then be taking 5 on campus the following semester.

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12:11:51 From Caitlin Plamp :

Overall, in the 2018-2019 academic year we had around 400 total students in our program

12:12:12 From [Participant 2] :

Okay thank you! Sorry I wasn't sure how this chat would work and just kind of threw that question out there. Do you know on average how much the degree will cost with the Advance-Standing full time program? Are there additional fees or is it the regular full-time tuition posted?

12:12:42 From Caitlin Plamp :

Of those, it was about a 50/50 split between those over the age of 30 and those under the age of 30, 88% were female as is common in helping fields, 64% identified as white, 30% identified as students of color, and 6% did not share race/ethnicity information

12:13:51 From Caitlin Plamp :

As far as the breakdown of full-time/part-time, I don't have that data easily accessible, but typically we see about 75% of our applicants apply to be full-time and 25% apply to be part-time. There is a similar split in course delivery, with around 75% applying to be mixed traditional and 25% applying to be fully online. This does change while people are in the program as their needs and outside commitments change.

12:15:46 From [Participant 1]:

I noticed several scholarship opportunities. Could you discuss the details of how to apply for scholarships? Especially if there is a CO program that has tuition reimbursement for the MSW program.

12:16:09 From Caitlin Plamp :

Hi [Participant 2] - you can find our 2019-2020 cost information sheet on our website at <https://msudenver.edu/media/content/departmentofsocialwork/19-20MSWProgramCosts.pdf>. This does include information on both base tuition and fees. Keep in mind graduate tuition does tend to increase around 3-7% from year to year. For a student starting the Advanced Standing Program (36 credit hours, one year full time) in summer 2020 I would estimate that it would cost around \$20,000 to \$21,500 for the entire program (depending on tuition and fee increases for the 2020-2021 academic year)

12:17:10 From [Participant 1]:

Also, is the co-hort a close knit group with personal interactions that would assist with participating in the mixed traditional program?

12:17:25 From Caitlin Plamp :

Hi [Participant 1] - all of our scholarship and stipend opportunities can be found on our website at <https://msudenver.edu/socialwork/scholarshipsstipends/>. For our scholarships, the application will open sometime this fall (we will notify all prospects and applicants when it becomes available) and will close sometime in spring 2020. You can apply for our scholarships prior to receiving an admissions decision, as we only award scholarships after admissions decisions are made.

12:17:38 From Caitlin Plamp :

I am not aware of any programs in Colorado that provide tuition reimbursement for an MSW degree

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12:18:05 From [Participant 3] :
I noticed that WRGP works with MSU-Denver for the Masters of Social Work program. Could y'all tell me more about this and how many of your students use it?

12:18:41 From Caitlin Plamp :
I would say our students do definitely form bonds with their classmates, as you may have class with the same students over and over again but we do not have a cohort system (i.e. we do not specify which specific sections of classes you take, and you do not take all of your classes with the same small group of students)

12:19:23 From [Participant 2] :
Thank you! What makes an application competitive?

12:20:25 From [Participant 3] :
How do you guys view applicants that have spent time a few years working in the field between their Bachelors and Master's?

12:21:19 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 3] - great question! We are fairly new to WRGP (Western Regional Graduate Program) so I do not have data on how many of our students use it. To my understanding, WRGP students receive in-state tuition rates, but I am not an expert on tuition and financial aid. If you send me an email at socialwork@msudenver.edu I can connect with our Office of Graduate Studies who manages our participation in WRGP and get back to you!

12:22:14 From [Participant 4] :
Hello

12:23:02 From [Participant 4] :
I have a question about early admission. There was a mention applicants can apply for "early standing" in October. Is this only for people in the advance standing program or can any applicant apply early?

12:23:05 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 2] - overall, it is hard to define what makes an application competitive. We use a very holistic admissions review process, evaluating all pieces of the application to determine if a student is prepared to succeed in the program and in the field of social work. Overall, my advice is always to give your application the time it deserves. Make sure you don't rush your essay and you answer all the prompts that will be provided. Make sure you have professional (not personal) recommendations. Document all of your professional, educational, and volunteer history in the professional history form. Make sure you give us everything we need to evaluate your application in its entirety so we can understand why you would be a strong candidate in our program.

12:23:24 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 4] - welcome to the chat! Let me answer a question [Participant 3] sent before you joined and then I will get to your question!

12:24:29 From [Participant 5] :
In terms of choosing individuals to complete recommendations, how would you suggest choosing? What should we consider in selecting individuals? (i.e. duration of relationship vs. relevance to social work)

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12:24:43 From Caitlin Plamp :

Hi [Participant 3] - that is totally fine! As I mentioned, about half our students are over the age of 30 and I would say the majority of our students did not go straight into grad school after finishing their undergraduate degree. As I just mentioned in my answer to [Participant 2], part of the application is a professional history form where you document all of your professional, educational, and volunteer history. We don't require work in the field to apply or be accepted, but it does help strengthen your application to have relative work experience (i.e. working with people in a helping capacity)

12:25:27 From [Participant 1]:

Does "in a helping capacity" include volunteer work?

12:25:41 From [Participant 3] :

Thank you! To tag onto [Participant 5]'s question: do you require recommendations from professors?

12:26:33 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 4]'s question about the priority consideration deadline - any applicant can apply for that! We will have a deadline in late October and, if all of your application materials are submitted prior to that date, your application will be reviewed in advance for priority admission. The way that works is that the faculty review all priority applications in November and December. Those ranked in the very top of the group are sent their admissions decisions in late December or early January while all other applicants are notified that we are rolling their application forward to view against the full pool of applicants after the final deadline.

12:28:31 From [Participant 1]:

For those of us "over 30" (or maybe have been out of college 30 years ;)) how heavily does the GPA weigh into the decision process?

12:28:40 From Caitlin Plamp :

Hi [Participant 5] - great question! The first criteria when choosing a recommender would be to make sure you have a professional relationship with them, i.e. not your best friend or your aunt who hired you to work at her store (both are real life examples of recommendations we've received). Next, you want to look for who can write the strongest letter about why you will succeed in graduate school AND/OR why you will succeed in the field of social work. Faculty and supervisors (work or employment) are more highly valued by the committee than recommendations from co-workers, but as long as the recommendation is professional and can speak to your skills that is what you are looking for!

12:29:04 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 1]'s question about "helping capacity" - yes, on the professional history form you document professional and volunteer history, so either works

12:29:59 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 3]'s question about if we require recommendations from professors - it depends. For applicants applying to the Advanced Standing program, one of their recommendations has to come from someone associated with their undergraduate social work program. This could be a faculty member, an advisor, a field supervisor, etc. For the Regular Program, we do not require recommendations from faculty.

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12:32:19 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 1]'s question about how heavily the GPA plays a role - it definitely plays a significant role, but not an insurmountable one. Your GPA is just one of the elements we look at in our holistic review. We look for a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher, but we also recognize that life happens and you can grow from where you were when you were first starting out at college and bombed a semester. Around 15% of the applicants we accept each year have a GPA below 3.0, and they were accepted because the rest of their application (recommendations, essay, professional history form and, for Advanced Standing applicants, case study) showed that they had the potential to succeed in the program despite what their undergraduate GPA may say.

12:33:20 From [Participant 2] :

What percentage of applicants get into the program?

12:33:34 From [Participant 3] :

What does a typical week look for a grad student? I know some programs only have classes (8 hour days or so) two days a week.

12:34:29 From [Participant 5] :

To follow-up in [Participant 4]'s question about the priority consideration deadline - say, you apply by that deadline and are not admitted. Will your application then be considered with the larger pool of applicants on the rolling basis? (I believe that the answer would be yes, based on the information you provided but just to clarify :)

Also, thank you for your answer on the recommendation question!

12:34:36 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 2]'s question about acceptance rates - the Regular Program has an average acceptance rate of 75% and the Advanced Standing Program has an average acceptance rate of 70%. Because Advanced Standing applicants are essentially applying to be second year graduate students (since they only take concentration year coursework), the application process is more competitive and the faculty reviewers hold them to a higher standard

12:36:31 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 3]'s question about what a typically week looks like - it varies for our students depending on if they are full-time or part-time. Full-time students have let us know they typically spend around 50 hours/week between classes, homework, reading, and field placement hours while part-time students are typically only spending around 30 hours/week on those same areas. Our on campus sections only meet one day per week for a three-hour block instead of meeting twice per week for an hour and a half block. Foundation year courses are held on Mondays and Wednesdays, with the occasional Friday or Saturday options, while concentration year courses are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with the occasional Friday or Saturday options. Does that all make sense?

12:37:14 From Caitlin Plamp :

To answer [Participant 5]'s question about if you don't get accepted at priority - yes, your application rolls forward to be considered against the full group. We do not deny anyone at priority - we only offer acceptance or notify you that your application is being moved forward.

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12:38:09 From [Participant 4] :
Maybe I missed this on the website, but I cannot find the prompts for the essay. Have you all released what they will be?

12:38:29 From [Participant 2] :
Okay thank your for answering questions so thoroughly!

12:38:38 From [Participant 3] :
Foundation and Concentration year courses would be taken at different term/semesters, yes?

12:39:34 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 4] - no, we have not released the essay prompts or any detailed information about the application yet. The application system won't open until September 3rd. At that point in time we will post detailed information about all application requirements including a step-by-step walkthrough of the application process on our website. If you have filled out the information request form for the MSW Program (https://connect.msudenver.edu/register/requestgradinfo?sys:field:prospect_grad_program_interest=09c9ab7e-3756-4fac-a274-fcc935d9fb9a) you will be notified when the application materials and instructions become available!

12:41:43 From Caitlin Plamp :
To answer [Participant 3]'s question about foundation vs. concentration - yes, our coursework is very sequential. Students in the Regular Program must complete all foundational (5000-level) coursework before beginning the concentration (6000-level) coursework. Advanced Standing students must complete both summer bridge course requirements prior to starting the concentration coursework in the fall. For more information about the curriculum, you can visit <https://msudenver.edu/socialwork/programscurriculum/mswprogram/regularprogram/> (Regular Program) or <https://msudenver.edu/socialwork/programscurriculum/mswprogram/advancedstandingprogram/> (Advanced Standing Program)

12:42:39 From [Participant 3] :
Thank you so much for providing links!!!

12:43:07 From [Participant 4] :
Also could you clarify the acceptance rate number? I saw it is 75% for regular program, but how many people actually apply each year?

12:45:13 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 4] - great question! The exact number of applicants has varied from year to year, but the acceptance rate has remained steady at around 75%. Over the past four application cycles, we have had:
2016 Application Cycle - 201 applicants, 148 accepted
2017 Application Cycle - 309 applicants, 242 accepted
2018 Application Cycle - 291 applicants, 220 accepted
2019 Application Cycle - 314 applicants, 230 accepted

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12:45:35 From Caitlin Plamp :

Those numbers are just for the Regular Program - if anyone would like the more detailed breakdown for the Advanced Standing Program let me know and I can pull those too

12:45:50 From [Participant 5] :

Thank you for all these answers, Caitlin! Could you elaborate on the Regular Program field work experience? How do internships compare between foundation year and concentration year (hours, skill level, competitiveness)? How do students find opportunities?

12:46:06 From [Participant 4] :

Thank you so much that makes!

12:49:10 From Caitlin Plamp :

Great question [Participant 5]! In both the foundation and concentration coursework, students do a year long field placement. If you are full time in the Regular Program, that means you will have a field placement all four semesters you are in the program. If you are part-time in the Regular Program, you will only have a field placement in years two and four. The foundation field placement requires 16 hours/week at your placement and the concentration field placement requires 20 hours/week at your agency. From my understanding, the foundation placements tend to be more broad, in environments where students can learn about micro, mezzo, and macro, while the concentration placements are more focused. We have a dedicated Office of Field Education that works with students to secure their field placements and maintains a database of placement opportunities. Currently, I believe we have relationships with over 500 agencies throughout the state of Colorado as well as a handful of students outside the state of Colorado that they have worked with to find placements in their state.

12:49:48 From Caitlin Plamp :

If you have any more detailed questions about the field placement process, you can email me at socialwork@msudenver.edu and I will connect with a member of the field team to reply

12:50:56 From Caitlin Plamp :

We have about 10 minutes left in the chat, so if anyone has additional questions now's the time to ask! If you think of a question later, you can always email me at socialwork@msudenver.edu and I will get back to you within 2 business days. As a reminder, my name is Caitlin Plamp and I am the Admissions Coordinator for the Department of Social Work.

12:53:02 From [Participant 4] :

In regards to the competitiveness, I know you all said you take a holistic approach. But are there any general recommendations you could offer? Such as would it help to be in a current volunteer program? Or what about attend conferences related to social work/psychology>

12:53:39 From [Participant 4] :

Lastly, does the program have any involvement with students getting licensure? Or is that a completely independent route the student does on their own after graduation?

12:53:54 From Caitlin Plamp :

I saw we just had someone new join - the chat doesn't always show messages sent prior to when you joined, so I'm going to say again quickly that we have less than 10 minutes left and if you don't get your

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questions answered today you can always email me at socialwork@msudenver.edu. I'm also going to look into posting a transcript of this chat (with all of the prospective student names redacted) to our website

12:54:39 From [Participant 6] :
Hi everyone, a transcript of the chat would be great!

12:55:01 From Caitlin Plamp :
To answer [Participant 4]'s question about general recommendations for the application - I answered this question for [Participant 2] earlier so I'm going to copy and paste that answer below:

12:55:17 From Caitlin Plamp :
Overall, it is hard to define what makes an application competitive. We use a very holistic admissions review process, evaluating all pieces of the application to determine if a student is prepared to succeed in the program and in the field of social work. Overall, my advice is always to give your application the time it deserves. Make sure you don't rush your essay and you answer all the prompts that will be provided. Make sure you have professional (not personal) recommendations. Document all of your professional, educational, and volunteer history in the professional history form. Make sure you give us everything we need to evaluate your application in its entirety so we can understand why you would be a strong candidate in our program.

12:56:13 From Caitlin Plamp :
In general, if you have no prior relevant experience, then yes, volunteering can strengthen your application. But, we look at both duration and relevance when evaluating prior experience and with application deadlines in October and January you would not have a lot of time to build up additional brand new experience

12:56:51 From [Participant 7] :
what are the various ways to complete the practicum? can you do it during the summer?

12:57:27 From Caitlin Plamp :
We have about five minutes left! I did just find a way to download the transcript, so once I redact all names and personal information I will get the full transcript posted to the website. It will be available at <https://msudenver.edu/socialwork/about/informationssessions/>

12:57:40 From [Participant 6] :
Thank you!

12:58:40 From [Participant 4] :
Perfect, thank you so so much Caitlin I really do appreciate this.

12:59:03 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 7]! Practicums, or field placements as we call them, are always completed during the academic year as there is a classroom component to the placement itself. You stay at one placement for the full academic year (fall and spring) and stay in the same section of the field course with the same instructor and classmates. You cannot complete field placement hours during the summer. Does that answer your question?

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12:59:53 From [Participant 1]:
Is there summer work as part of the full time regular program?

13:00:37 From [Participant 7] : yes thank you!

13:01:05 From Caitlin Plamp :
Hi [Participant 1] - no, there are no required summer courses. Occasionally we offer concentration year electives over the summer to help students lighten their load during the academic year, but our program is primarily restricted to the fall and spring semesters.

13:01:06 From Caitlin Plamp : Thank you everyone for joining me today for our first Lunch Break Chat of the 2020 admissions cycle! It was so nice chatting with you all and I will try to get the transcript up within the next week. If you have any further questions, feel free to email me any time at socialwork@msudenver.edu. Again, my name is Caitlin Plamp and I am the Admissions Coordinator here in the Department of Social Work.