EPC PROPOSAL FORM

Submit **a pdf version with all appropriate signatures** (or attached email signatures with endorsement or reservations) **and a Word version** (without signatures) to facgov@plu.edu.

Deadlines: Type 3 - November 1. **Type 2** - December 1. **Type 1** - October 1 for J-Term and Spring requests; March 1 for Summer/Fall requests. *Early submission is strongly recommended.*

Originating Academic Unit(s):	Social Work
Name of Academic Unit Head	Anissa Rogers
Date Proposal Submitted:	10/7/2026

REQUIRED SIGNATURES FOR APPROVAL

(Note: Type 1 only does not require Dean or Provost signature.)



10/7/26

*Academic Unit Head (**printed name and signature**) Date*



10/7/26

X With Endorsement
☐ With Reservations

College Dean *Date*

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

One-sentence summary of the proposal.

The purpose of this Type III proposal is for the creation of a Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program. As proposed, DSW courses would first be offered in the fall of 2028, with the first cohort graduating in spring 2031.

Has this proposal been formally approved by at least 2/3 of the full-time teaching faculty in your academic unit?

☒ **Yes**
☐ **No** (indicate why not)

Does this proposal impact any other academic units?

☐ **Yes** (provide email statement of support from the heads of impacted units indicating at least 2/3 of the full-time teaching faculty in those units support that impact or, if not, why not)
☒ **No**

Does this proposal involve Core Curriculum elements in any way?

☐ **Yes**
☒ **No**

TYPE 1

Check all that apply.

☐ Add Core Curriculum element to a Special Topics course[+]
☐ Add, change and/or remove Core Curriculum element to an existing course[+]
☐ Change a course's credit hours
☐ Change course description (if change alters learning objectives or a student could retake the altered course for credit then submit as new course)
☐ Change grading type (e.g. P/F, letter grade)
☐ Catalog editorial change
☐ Change course number
☐ Change course title
☐ Prerequisite change within the academic unit only
☐ Reactivation of formerly offered course(s)

TYPE 2: SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Check all that apply.

☐ Add a permanent Core Curriculum course[+]
☐ Add a permanent non-Core Curriculum course[††]
☐ Add or remove cross-listing to pre-existing course
☐ Change a concentration requirement**
☐ Change a major requirement**
☐ Change a minor requirement**
☐ Change a prerequisite involving another unit's course
☐ Create new department code
☐ Create new subject prefix
☐ Delete course
☐ Eliminate concentration
☐ Eliminate degree
☐ Eliminate major
☐ Eliminate minor
☐ Merge multiple department codes into single or new department code (indicated preferred code below)

_____

☐ Other:

_____

TYPE 3: NEW PROGRAMS - REQUIRES FACULTY ASSEMBLY AND BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVAL

Check all that apply.

☐ Add certificate (non-Continuing Education)^^
☐ New concentration^^
☒ New degree^^
☐ New major^^
☐ New minor^^
☐ Other:

_____

[+] *Review How to Request a Core Element and complete the Worksheet for Requesting a Core Element; include a syllabus.*
[††] *Include a syllabus.*
** *Complete the EPC Curriculum Change Template and a revised two-year course cycle.*
^^ *Complete the EPC Curriculum Change Template, a revised two-year course cycle, and an Institutional Impact Evaluation Form.*

STATEMENT OF RATIONALE (1000-word limit) Provide a statement of rationale for your requested changes. Include information on impact on student learning and outcomes.

Social work offers four pathways: the BSW for introductory practice, the MSW for advanced practice, the PhD for generating scholarly knowledge, and the DSW for practitioner-scholars who translate evidence into practice, develop and evaluate interventions, lead organizational change, and advance the profession through practice-informed scholarship. Thus, the DSW occupies a distinct space between master's-level preparation and research-focused doctoral education.

The DSW is an emerging degree in social work education, with approximately 40 practice-doctorate programs currently operating in the United States. The number of programs has grown substantially (from 5 in 2014 to approximately 38–40 today), reflecting the demand from experienced licensed social work practitioners for additional in-depth clinical and research training. Further, in light of this demand, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) recently initiated accreditation of practice doctorates, with CSWE beginning to accept applications for accreditation in 2025.

Why a DSW

Social workers increasingly manage complex health, aging, child welfare, behavioral health, substance use, criminal justice, and other individual and community needs. A DSW gives experienced practitioners advanced expertise beyond the MSW, closing the gap between research and implementation by training them to identify problems, evaluate evidence, and adapt interventions in the field. These practitioners often move into roles shaping programs, policy, and workforce development where they are asking questions such as, "Does this work? For whom? How can we improve it?" DSW education builds applied research, evaluation, and quality-improvement skills for exactly this work, without the research-intensive focus of a PhD.

Why PLU

The DSW program proposal aligns with PLU's 2026–2027 strategies and tactics related to program growth and expansion. It also fills a geographic gap: of 39 DSW programs reported nationally in 2025 (Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work, 2025), only four are on the West Coast — Walla Walla University (WA, online), Warner Pacific (OR, online), and USC and California Baptist (CA, both online, one with residencies). Most programs cluster in the Great Lakes and Southeast, leaving few options for students seeking in-person, regionally-based components. A Pierce County program could differentiate itself through regional partnerships, place-based learning, applied clinical research, and direct engagement with the local behavioral health workforce.

Regional Need

Pierce County's population reached an estimated 946,288 in 2025, up 2.7% since 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025), and the county has named behavioral health workforce development a top priority. Its Behavioral Health Workforce Report (Advocates for Human Potential, 2023) found the system hasn't kept pace with demand, citing recruitment, retention, career pathways, and education as key gaps, a shortage more recent county planning documents confirm, with providers reporting persistent difficulty hiring qualified clinicians.

At the same time, the region has a strong employment base to sustain a doctoral program: health care and social assistance employ nearly 65,000 workers in Pierce County (roughly one in five workers), with continued growth projected across schools, corrections, hospitals, integrated health care, disability and elder services, government agencies, and private practice (Advocates for Human Potential, 2023). A DSW program would draw students from and return graduates to an active regional network rather than operating in isolation.

Building on Existing Infrastructure

Washington already has established BSW and MSW programs, creating a natural pipeline into doctoral study. A DSW would not duplicate the MSW; instead, it would allow experienced practitioners to pursue doctoral-level preparation in clinical practice, leadership, applied research, evaluation, and teaching without leaving the South Sound, which is particularly suited to working professionals not seeking a traditional research PhD.
This matters because the county needs not just more social workers, but more social workers equipped to lead the systems they work within. Pierce County's workforce analysis (WorkForce Central, 2025) specifically calls for stronger education and training, clearer career pathways, workforce diversity, retention, and expanded community-based capacity. A DSW addresses this directly by developing practitioners into clinical leaders, supervisors, program evaluators, and organizational leaders.

Finally, social work programs need faculty who combine advanced practice expertise with applied scholarship and teaching ability. A DSW offers a pathway for practitioners moving into education, administration, and research roles, strengthening not only the region's behavioral health workforce but also its future social work education workforce.

Summary
Pierce County's growing population, documented behavioral health workforce shortage, and expanding health and social-service sector create a clear need for advanced professional leadership, while the region's existing social work education infrastructure and large network of practice sites provide fertile ground for doctoral training. A DSW would meet both needs at once. Unlike a research-oriented PhD, DSW education would prepare practitioner-scholars to translate knowledge into improved practice, building experienced social workers into clinical leaders, educators, supervisors, and evaluators equipped to address complex social and behavioral health challenges in the South Sound and beyond.

References
Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (2023). *Pierce County behavioral health workforce report*. Pierce County, Washington. piercecountywa.gov.

Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (2025). https://www.gadesocialwork.org/AF_MemberDirectory.asp?version=1&utm_source=cha tgpt.com

U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). *Pierce County population data* [Data set]. U.S. Department of Commerce. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/piercecountywashington/PST045225

WorkForce Central. (2025). *Current employment sector and workforce shortage data*. https://workforce-central.org.

Proposed Catalog Language changes for all areas requiring change (blue Bold for additions and ~~blue Strikethrough~~ for deletions).

Catalog Language

DSW Program Mission

The Doctor of Social Work (DSW) program at Pacific Lutheran University prepares experienced, master's-level social workers to be practitioner-scholars who advance ethical, equity-centered, and evidence-informed practice across clinical, organizational, community, and policy settings. Grounded in

the profession's core values, the program equips graduates to critically translate research into innovative practice, engage in systematic inquiry responsive to the needs of diverse communities, and provide leadership in practice, supervision, consultation, and advocacy.

Program Outcomes

1. **Advance social work practice through innovative, evidence-informed approaches that address complex clinical, behavioral health, and social service needs across micro, mezzo, and/or macro practice settings.**

2. **Critically evaluate, integrate, and apply research-informed knowledge to assess complex practice problems, develop innovative interventions, and improve social work service delivery.**

3. **Conduct systematic inquiry and practice-based evaluation using doctoral-level scholarship to examine interventions, programs, and systems and generate practice-relevant knowledge.**

4. **Demonstrate leadership and disseminate practice-relevant knowledge through clinical leadership, advocacy, supervision, consultation, teaching, professional presentations, scholarship, and other forms of knowledge translation.**

Admissions

Admission to the DSW program is based on a holistic review of the applicant's academic and professional practice preparation, contributions to the social work profession, and commitment to social justice. Review of applications and acceptance into the DSW program is determined by faculty evaluation by the DSW Graduate Admissions Committee. Review of applications are on the basis of the following requirements:

1. **GPA of 3.2 or higher from a CSWE-accredited program. A petition is available if the minimum GPA isn't met;**

2. **Minimum of three years of post-MSW full-time practice experience and currently practicing;**

3. **Three letters of recommendation; two must be from professional sources;**

4. **Personal statement (includes diversity and social justice statement and goals for pursuing a DSW degree);**

5. **CV or Resume;**

6. **Writing sample articulating applicant's use of theory to ground practice and area of interest or inquiry applicant wants to pursue;**

7. **Interview.**

Admissions Materials

Official MSW transcripts from a CSWE-accredited program
Three letters of recommendation
Personal statement
CV or resume
Writing sample

Continuation Policy for the DSW Program

To remain in the program, a student must: 1) maintain an overall 3.2 grade point average and 2) demonstrate behavior that is consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics and University Code of Conduct.

Transfer Credits

With the approval of the DSW Director, a maximum of 9 graduate credits may be transferred from other universities. The courses must fulfill PLU DSW course requirements and learning outcomes.

Courses

DSW Degree Requirements

Course List
SOCW 701 Applied Quantitative Research & Statistics for Community Settings (4)
SOCW 702 Qualitative Research Methods for Community Practice (4)
SOCW 703 Portfolio Seminar I - Case Study (4)
SOCW 704 Community-Based Participatory Research for Applied Practice (4)
SOCW 705 Portfolio Seminar II - Literature Review or Academic Teaching Experience (4)
SOCW 706 Portfolio Seminar III - Program Evaluation (4)
SOCW 720 Emerging interventions and Modalities (4)
SOCW 725 Advocacy and intervention with Marginalized Populations (4)
SOCW 730 Advanced Topics in Health, Mental Health, and Substance Use (4)
SOCW 735 Advanced Topics in Trauma-Informed Care (4)
SOCW 740 Advanced Topics in Crisis Care (4)
SOCW 745 Implementing Translational Research in Service Delivery (4)
SOCW 750 Critical Perspectives on Service Delivery Systems (4)
SOCW 755 Strategies for Decolonized Leadership, Supervision, and Consultation (4)
SOCW 760 Connecting Clinical Care and Legislative Advocacy (4)

Total Credits 60

Course Descriptions

SOCW 701: Applied Quantitative Research & Statistics for community settings

This course provides advanced training in designing, executing, and evaluating applied research and statistical analyses within non-profit, healthcare, behavioral health, educational, and

municipal organizations. Moving beyond theoretical statistics, students learn how to formulate action-oriented research questions, partner ethically with diverse communities, select appropriate quantitative or mixed methodologies, and execute statistical analyses to inform program evaluation, grant proposals, and policy decisions. Through hands-on application using statistical software (e.g., R, SPSS, or Stata), students gain practical experience cleaning messy real-world datasets, conducting multivariable analyses, and communicating results through executive dashboards and policy briefs. (4)

SOCW 702: Qualitative Research Methods for Community Practice

This course provides advanced training in qualitative research design, data collection, and rigorous analysis tailored specifically for community-based practice, human services, and non-profit settings. Centered on equity, participant agency, and social justice, the course equips students to capture the lived experiences of community members to inform advocacy, policy formation, and program development. Students will explore major qualitative paradigms—including phenomenology, grounded theory, thematic analysis, and narrative inquiry. Through field-based exercises, students learn to conduct in-depth interviews, facilitate focus groups, perform participant observations, and apply visual/art-based data collection techniques. (4)

SOCW 703: Portfolio Seminar I - Case Study

Portfolio Seminar I is an intensive, independent research course designed as the first phase of the DSW portfolio sequence. Working independently under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor, students design and execute an in-depth, agency-based case study centered on an active healthcare, behavioral health, educational, or social service organization. The course bridges high-level academic inquiry and field-based practice, training students to analyze real-world organizational dynamics, program implementations, service delivery challenges, or policy applications. Students engage in rigorous primary and secondary data collection—such as key informant interviews, administrative data analysis, document reviews, and workflow observations—to evaluate organizational phenomena within their authentic operational contexts. Emphasizing scholarly writing, methodological rigor, and professional publication standards, students construct a publication-ready manuscript structured according to peer-reviewed journal specifications. (4)

SOCW 704: Community-Based Participatory Research for Applied Practice

This course examines the integration of social advocacy, policy change, and participatory research methodologies to address complex social, health, and economic inequities. The course moves beyond traditional researcher-driven paradigms to focus on shared governance, co-production of knowledge, and community-led action. Students will master the practical mechanics of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR)—from establishing Community Advisory Boards (CABs) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements to co-designing interventions and conducting collaborative data analysis. Simultaneously, students learn to translate participatory evidence into effective community advocacy campaigns, coalition-building strategies, legislative testimony, and strategic communications that drive systemic policy reform. (4)

SOCW 705: Portfolio Seminar II - Literature Review or Academic Teaching Experience

Portfolio Seminar II serves as the second capstone experience in the graduate portfolio sequence. Working independently under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor, students select one of two specialized professional tracks designed to align with their doctoral or executive career trajectories: Track A: Systematic Literature Review or Track B: Academic Teaching Experience. In Track A (Literature Review), students design, execute, and draft a comprehensive, synthesis-driven systematic or scoping literature review on a behavioral health, health systems, or social practice topic. Adopting established reporting frameworks students construct a publication-ready manuscript structured for submission to a peer-reviewed academic journal. In Track B (Academic Teaching Experience), students complete a mentored higher education teaching practicum. Students co-teach or independently instruct an undergraduate or graduate course, developing a comprehensive learning units, delivering guest lectures, creating authentic assessments, facilitating asynchronous/synchronous learning environments, and cultivating a distinct Philosophy of Teaching statement. (4)

SOCW 706: Portfolio Seminar III - Program Evaluation

Portfolio Seminar III is an advanced, independent capstone course designed to train graduate students in conceptualizing, executing, and reporting a comprehensive, agency- or community-based program evaluation. Working independently under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor and in partnership with a target human service, health, educational, or municipal organization, students apply rigorous evaluation methodologies to assess program efficacy, process efficiency, or community impact. Integrating frameworks from the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE), and culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) models, students design a complete evaluation plan tailored to organizational needs. Students collect and analyze primary or secondary multi-source data to answer actionable evaluation questions. The course culminates in a publication-ready evaluation report structured for a peer-reviewed journal, or an actionable executive report and presentation for agency leadership and community stakeholders. (4)

SOCW 720: Emerging Interventions and Modalities

This course examines cutting-edge, evidence-informed intervention modalities and emerging service delivery frameworks. As the landscape of mental health, social service delivery, and technology evolves, social workers must navigate novel therapeutic paradigms while maintaining core values of social justice, cultural responsiveness, and professional ethics. Students will examine contemporary and non-traditional therapeutic approaches, including digital mental health (telehealth and AI-augmented tools), somatic and body-centered therapies, novel trauma-informed frameworks (e.g., IFS, EMDR concepts), and alternative care modalities like psychedelic-assisted therapy and nature-based interventions. The course critically analyzes the empirical base, ethical implications, accessibility barriers, and cultural alignment of these interventions, particularly in relation to serving diverse, historically marginalized, and under-resourced populations. Through case simulations, critical appraisals, and intervention design, students will build advanced clinical decision-making skills to ethically integrate emerging tools into generalist and specialized practice. (4)

SOCW 725: Advocacy and Intervention with Marginalized Populations

This course integrates critical theoretical frameworks with advanced clinical interventions and systemic advocacy. Students interrogate the structural, historical, and institutional forces that generate and sustain marginalization, moving beyond traditional, deficit-based clinical models toward praxis that centers liberation, healing-centered engagement, and sovereignty. Designed for experienced social work practitioners, this course bridges critical theory and practice-based clinical skills across the lifespan and across diverse populations, including Indigenous communities, undocumented immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, youth, military-connected populations, and older adults. Doctoral students analyze how clinical assessment, therapeutic alliance, case conceptualization, and clinical supervision can be transformed into tools for critical consciousness and systemic advocacy. Through systematic inquiry and research translation, students evaluate contemporary ethical dilemmas at the intersection of clinical practice, institutional policy, and human rights to lead equitable practice, consultation, and advocacy across micro, mezzo, and macro ecosystems. (4)

SOCW 730: Advanced Topics in Health, Mental Health, and Substance Use

This course evaluates emerging paradigms, innovative modalities, and technological evolutions across integrated health, mental health, community health, and substance use systems. Moving beyond foundational diagnostic and intervention models, this course emphasizes the translation of cutting-edge research into advanced clinical practice, supervisory leadership, and service delivery design. Students critically examine contemporary clinical innovations, including somatic frameworks, neurofeedback, harm reduction, and neurodegenerative care across the lifespan through human-centered, client-centered, and psychiatric survivor-centered lenses. Additionally, the course interrogates the rapid integration of virtual care, hybrid service delivery models, and artificial intelligence in behavioral health. Doctoral students will analyze the ethical, legal, and clinical implications of these emerging practices, equipping them to lead, supervise, and innovate within rapidly changing community health and healthcare ecosystems. (4)

SOCW 735: Advanced Topics in Trauma-informed Care

This course critically examines advanced theories, neurobiological foundations, and evidence-informed models for trauma-informed care (TIC). Students will evaluate current research, historical and complex trauma frameworks, secondary traumatic stress, and anti-oppressive practice paradigms. The course emphasizes translational scholarship, equipping social work practitioners to design, evaluate, and lead trauma-informed systems, interventions, and policy initiatives. (4)

SOCW 740: Advanced Topics in Crisis Care

This course examines advanced clinical models, systems-level architecture, and leadership strategies in emergency mental health and crisis care across micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice. Students will evaluate real-time triage methodologies, suicide risk assessments, mobile crisis response, non-carceral emergency models, mass casualty and disaster response protocols, and legal/ethical complexities. The course emphasizes translational scholarship and equips DSW leaders to design, implement, and evaluate trauma services with emphasis on anti-oppressive practice. (4)

SOCW 745: Implementing Translational Research in Service Delivery

This course provides advanced training in translating empirical research discoveries across the translational continuum from efficacy and effectiveness trials into sustainable practice within health, behavioral health, and human service delivery systems. Bridging the gap between scientific discovery and front-line service delivery, this course focuses on the theories, methodologies, and operational strategies required to integrate evidence-based interventions into complex organizational and community environments. Students explore the multi-level determinants that influence research translation, including policy ecosystems, organizational climate, clinical workflows, provider behavior, and community engagement. In this course students learn to assess organizational readiness, design targeted translation strategies, maintain intervention fidelity while executing necessary adaptations, and evaluate multi-level delivery outcomes. Special emphasis is placed on health equity, de-implementation of outdated or harmful practices, and continuous quality improvement (CQI) mechanisms to sustain research-backed practices over time. (4)

SOCW 750: Critical Perspectives on Service Delivery Systems

This course critically interrogates institutional service delivery systems and the structural power dynamics embedded within them. Designed for experienced social work leaders, this course examines how state-sanctioned systems, including prisons, juvenile justice, child welfare, involuntary behavioral health hospitalization, military institutions, and end-of-life care, function as sites of both care and social control. Grounded in anti-carceral social work, critical disability, decolonial frameworks, and abolitionist praxis, students deconstruct how institutional surveillance, coercion, and bureaucracy impact clinical encounters and client outcomes. Doctoral students bridge critical systems analysis with advanced clinical skills, supervision, and organizational consultation. Through systematic inquiry and research translation, students formulate strategies to navigate ethical dilemmas, mitigate moral injury, advance client autonomy, and design transformative, equity-driven alternatives to legacy systems of care. (4)

SOCW 755: Strategies for Decolonized Leadership, Supervision, and Consultation

This course critically examines dominant models of leadership, clinical supervision, and consultation through a decolonized lens, challenging Eurocentric, hierarchical, and pathology-focused frameworks that have historically shaped the profession. Students will explore how colonialism, white supremacy culture, and institutional power dynamics show up in organizational structures, supervisory relationships, and consultation practices, and will build alternative models rooted in relational accountability, shared power, cultural humility, and indigenous and community-based ways of knowing. Through reflective practice, students will develop strategies for leading teams, supervising practitioners, and consulting with organizations in ways that center equity, healing, and the lived expertise of historically marginalized communities. (4)

SOCW 760: Connecting Clinical Care and Legislative Advocacy

This course examines the intersection of clinical practice and legislative and policy advocacy. Students will explore how clinical insights such as caseload patterns, service gaps, and systemic

barriers can be translated into evidence-based policy recommendations, and conversely, how legislative and regulatory environments shape the conditions of clinical care. Drawing on clinical experiences, current legislation, and advocacy frameworks, students will critically analyze the policymaking process and develop coalition-building and legislative communication skills to improve practice on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Emphasis is placed on ethical, equity-centered advocacy that amplifies client and community voice within legislative processes. (4)

If there are new courses in your proposal, please complete the following for each new course.

Course Code (e.g. ANTH 102) and number of credits (e.g. 4 or 1-4):

SOCW 701 (4)
SOCW 702 (4)
SOCW 703 (4)
SOCW 704 (4)
SOCW 705 (4)
SOCW 706 (4)
SOCW 720 (4)
SOCW 725 (4)
SOCW 730 (4)
SOCW 735 (4)
SOCW 740 (4)
SOCW 745 (4)
SOCW 750 (4)
SOCW 755 (4)
SOCW 760 (4)

Is this a course that can be repeated?

☐ **Yes** (must be clear in course description)

Number of times repeatable ***–or–***

Number of credits repeatable

x **No**

Grade Type

☐ Check if Pass/Fail rather than Standard Letter Grade

Does this proposal require the commitment of new or substantially different support services (e.g., Library acquisitions, Information and Technology Services, Wang Center, Internships)?

x **Yes** (explain what services and provide email statement of support from those areas)

Additional work will be required from the financial services and registrar's office to support the program. Specifically, SFS will have additional students to work with and the registrar's office will have to schedule the courses, support additional students through registration, records management, and degree awards. Both offices are aware of the proposed degree, and the department is grateful for their support of new programs.

No

Explain how the proposed change(s) will be staffed.

The proposed degree requires the addition of two full-time, tenure-track positions and one half-time staff position. One faculty position will serve as DSW Director. Two faculty members are required for CSWE accreditation. Further explanation and information is available in the Institutional Impact Form.

If this proposal impacts regular offerings of Core Curriculum, FYEP and/or IHON courses, explain how.

N/A

Are special budgetary arrangements and funding required? If "no", explain how the proposed changes will be integrated with current financial resources. (Budgetary considerations will be reviewed/approved by Dean and Provost.)

☒ **Yes** (Explain what types of support will be used to meet the budgetary requirements of the proposed change(s). Include the source(s) of funding, percentage of costs covered, and time frame covered.)

See Institutional Impact Form

☐ **No**

Institutional Impact Evaluation Form

1. **Name of Proposed Program:**

Doctor of Social Work (DSW)

2. **Executive Summary**: In 1-2 paragraphs, describe the proposed program, including a clear statement of how the program meets the mission of the university.

There is a compelling need for a Doctor of Social Work program in Pierce County given the region's growing population, substantial behavioral health workforce shortages, expanding health and social-service sector, and need for advanced professional leadership. Pierce County has identified behavioral health workforce development, recruitment, retention, career pathways, and expanded education and training as significant regional priorities. At the same time, the South Sound has an established social work education infrastructure and a large network of health care, behavioral health, schools, child welfare, criminal justice, and community-based organizations that provide a strong practice environment for doctoral education. A DSW program would build on this infrastructure by providing experienced MSW practitioners with doctoral-level preparation in advanced practice, applied research, program evaluation, teaching, supervision, leadership, and systems change. Unlike a research-oriented PhD, the DSW would prepare practitioner-scholars to translate knowledge into improved practice and service delivery. Establishing the program in Pierce County would therefore address both a regional workforce need and a doctoral education opportunity by developing experienced social workers who can strengthen clinical practice, educate future professionals, lead organizations, evaluate programs, and advance innovative responses to complex social and behavioral health challenges.

The proposed DSW Program aligns with PLU's mission to "...educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care - for other people, for their communities, and for the Earth" in several ways. For example, the program's mission reflects PLU's in the programs' commitment to preparing practitioner-scholars who advance equity-centered practice across clinical, organizational, community, and policy settings as well as translating research into innovative practice that is responsive to the needs of diverse communities. The courses in the program reflect the program's mission by preparing advanced scholar-practitioners who can generate innovative research that is translated into practice to improve the quality of life and services for individuals, families, organizations, communities, and systems. Finally, the DSW program proposal aligns with PLU's 2026–2027 strategies and tactics related to program growth and expansion.

3. **Proposed Program Start Date**: Fall, 2028

4. **Program Offerings:**

   a. Describe the type of program (new degree, new major, new minor, new concentration).

      The proposed DSW program is a new degree (doctorate) that would be housed in the Department of Social Work, which is home to both baccalaureate and masters programs in social work.

   b. Identify the delivery format for the program (face-to-face, online, blended, or competency-based) and rationale for this format.

      The DSW program will be delivered in a hybrid format that requires once a month residences where students come to PLU in person. The rationale for this format is that we expect students to enroll who are from across the state, region, and nation. Thus, we can accommodate students who are geographically dispersed and who likely work full-time. Work can be done independently through asynchronous instruction, then students will gather over a once-a-month weekend for additional instructions.

      Program Overview

To prepare practitioner-scholars to advance ethical, equity-centered, and evidence-informed practice across clinical, organizational, community, and policy settings, the PLU Doctor of Social Work (DSW) Program provides rigorous training with emphasis on practice-informed research and research-informed practice as foundational priorities. Students complete three years of full-time study composed annually of two 4-credit courses per semester in the fall and spring and one 4-credit course of guided independent work in the summer. Students are awarded the DSW after the completion of 9 semesters and 60 credits.

Curriculum Components

The DSW Program at PLU is composed of three components: advanced practice coursework, practice-oriented research and methodological study, and coursework to elevate practitioners' teaching, supervisory, and consultative capacities. During each year of study, students follow a carefully prescribed combination of courses from these three component groups to ensure progression toward the doctorate. This includes a cumulative focus each year on a research project that the student finalizes during guided independent work during the summer.

During the regular academic year, students complete prescribed work at home over a three-week period before traveling to campus during the fourth week and participating in a three-day "residency" that involves seven hours of class a day, Friday through Sunday. Students may commute to campus during a residency or elect to reside in available student housing (pending discussion with PLU Housing) or in accommodations near campus. At the end of each residency, students return home and begin preparation for the following month's visit. Fall and spring semesters are composed of four residencies each, for a total of eight residencies per academic year. Guided independent study during the summer involves periods of synchronous online communication, but no residency.

Course Structure and Organization

Each residency day is divided into morning and afternoon sessions. In this way, a three-day residency is composed of six sessions.

Courses are one semester in length and composed of four distinct modules that correspond to a semester's four residencies. Modular content for each course is further divided into three sessions per residency. In this way, a student's two courses in any given semester will be composed of modules that align with each of the semester's residencies and contain content divided into distinct topics that account for each residency's six sessions. Within a residency, session topics will be offered in the sequence that best supports program objectives and student learning. For example, a student's first year fall semester course in Emerging Interventions and Modalities may have an October residency module whose three sessions occur Friday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning.

Advanced practice coursework emphasizes topics and modalities selected to strengthen direct practice, with particular focus on enhancing service to marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Courses within this curriculum component include the aforementioned Emerging Interventions and Modalities, as well as Advocacy and Intervention with Marginalized Populations, Advanced Topics in Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse, Advanced Topics in Crisis Care, and Connecting Clinical Care and Advocacy, as examples.

Practice-oriented and community-focused research emphasizes knowledge generation, application, and dissemination for both practice enhancement and community benefit. Coursework is composed of Applied Quantitative Research & Statistics for community setting, Qualitative Research Methods for Community Practice, and Community-Based Participatory Research for Applied Practice.

Finally, coursework on teaching, supervision, and consultation occurs throughout the curriculum to contextualize students' advancing practice and research capabilities, while preparing them to disseminate

knowledge and function as leaders. Examples of coursework in this area include Strategies for decolonized leadership, supervision, and consultation.

c. Describe the curriculum and program requirements by providing a clear description of the courses required to complete the program and any program-specific policies (e.g., credit hours in residency, GPA requirements). Include course offerings, number of credits, prerequisites, and any general education elements. Clearly distinguish between existing courses and any new courses that will need to be created or deleted. If you are using preexisting catalog language, please highlight changes by using **blue boldface** for changes and ~~blue strikeout~~ for deletions.

The DSW program consists of two classes per semester for three years (fall and spring semesters), and one course each summer for three summer terms. The only requirement for the program is that students must maintain a GPA of 3.2 to continue in the program. If a student falls below this standard, the DSW director will work with the student to raise the GPA and mitigate any barriers that may be creating problems to successfully complete the course(s). Further, the program will have in place a continuation policy that articulates expectations of the program as well as ways to dispute grades, policies, and other processes. This policy is below. Also below is the description of courses. These policies and requirements, that will appear in the catalog, are listed in the EPC form.

DSW Degree Requirements

Course List

SOCW 701 Applied Quantitative Research & Statistics for Community Settings (4)
SOCW 702 Qualitative Research Methods for Community Practice (4)
SOCW 703 Portfolio Seminar I - Case Study (4)
SOCW 704 Community-Based Participatory Research for Applied Practice (4)
SOCW 705 Portfolio Seminar II - Literature Review or Academic Teaching Experience (4)
SOCW 706 Portfolio Seminar III - Program Evaluation (4)
SOCW 720 Emerging interventions and Modalities (4)
SOCW 725 Advocacy and intervention with Marginalized Populations (4)
SOCW 730 Advanced Topics in Health, Mental Health, and Substance Use (4)
SOCW 735 Advanced Topics in Trauma-Informed Care (4)
SOCW 740 Advanced Topics in Crisis Care (4)
SOCW 745 Implementing Translational Research in Service Delivery (4)
SOCW 750 Critical Perspectives on Service Delivery Systems (4)
SOCW 755 Strategies for Decolonized Leadership, Supervision, and Consultation (4)
SOCW 760 Connecting Clinical Care and Legislative Advocacy (4)

Total Credits 60

Course Descriptions

SOCW 701 Applied Quantitative Research & Statistics for community settings (4)

This course provides advanced training in designing, executing, and evaluating applied research and statistical analyses within non-profit, healthcare, behavioral health, educational, and municipal organizations. Moving beyond theoretical statistics, students learn how to formulate action-oriented research questions, partner ethically with diverse communities, select appropriate quantitative or

mixed methodologies, and execute statistical analyses to inform program evaluation, grant proposals, and policy decisions.Through hands-on application using statistical software (e.g., R, SPSS, or Stata), students gain practical experience cleaning messy real-world datasets, conducting multivariable analyses, and communicating results through executive dashboards and policy briefs.

SOCW 702 Qualitative Research Methods for Community Practice (4)

This course provides advanced training in qualitative research design, data collection, and rigorous analysis tailored specifically for community-based practice, human services, and non-profit settings. Centered on equity, participant agency, and social justice, the course equips students to capture the lived experiences of community members to inform advocacy, policy formation, and program development. Students will explore major qualitative paradigms—including phenomenology, grounded theory, thematic analysis, and narrative inquiry. Through field-based exercises, students learn to conduct in-depth interviews, facilitate focus groups, perform participant observations, and apply visual/art-based data collection techniques.

SOCW 703 Portfolio Seminar I - Case Study (4)

Portfolio Seminar I is an intensive, independent research course designed as the first phase of the DSW portfolio sequence. Working independently under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor, students design and execute an in-depth, agency-based case study centered on an active healthcare, behavioral health, educational, or social service organization. The course bridges high-level academic inquiry and field-based practice, training students to analyze real-world organizational dynamics, program implementations, service delivery challenges, or policy applications. Students engage in rigorous primary and secondary data collection—such as key informant interviews, administrative data analysis, document reviews, and workflow observations—to evaluate organizational phenomena within their authentic operational contexts. Emphasizing scholarly writing, methodological rigor, and professional publication standards, students construct a publication-ready manuscript structured according to peer-reviewed journal specifications.

SOCW 704 Community-Based Participatory Research for Applied Practice (4)

This course examines the integration of social advocacy, policy change, and participatory research methodologies to address complex social, health, and economic inequities.The course moves beyond traditional researcher-driven paradigms to focus on shared governance, co-production of knowledge, and community-led action. Students will will master the practical mechanics of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR)—from establishing Community Advisory Boards (CABs) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements to co-designing interventions and conducting collaborative data analysis. Simultaneously, students learn to translate participatory evidence into effective community advocacy campaigns, coalition-building strategies, legislative testimony, and strategic communications that drive systemic policy reform.

SOCW 705 Portfolio Seminar II - Literature Review or Academic Teaching Experience (4)

Portfolio Seminar II serves as the second capstone experience in the graduate portfolio sequence. Working independently under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor, students select one of two specialized professional tracks designed to align with their doctoral or executive career trajectories: Track A: Systematic Literature Review or Track B: Academic Teaching Experience. In Track A (Literature Review), students design, execute, and draft a comprehensive, synthesis-driven systematic or scoping literature review on a behavioral health, health systems, or social practice topic. Adopting established reporting frameworks students construct a publication-ready manuscript structured for submission to a peer-reviewed academic journal. In Track B (Academic Teaching Experience), students complete a mentored higher education teaching practicum. Students co-teach or independently instruct an undergraduate or graduate course, developing a comprehensive learning units, delivering guest lectures, creating authentic assessments, facilitating asynchronous/synchronous learning environments, and cultivating a distinct Philosophy of Teaching statement.

SOCW 706 Portfolio Seminar III - Program Evaluation (4)

Portfolio Seminar III is an advanced, independent capstone course designed to train graduate students in conceptualizing, executing, and reporting a comprehensive, agency- or community-based program evaluation. Working independently under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor and in partnership with a target human service, health, educational, or municipal organization, students apply rigorous evaluation methodologies to assess program efficacy, process efficiency, or community impact. Integrating frameworks from the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE), and culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) models, students design a complete evaluation plan tailored to organizational needs. Students collect and analyze primary or secondary multi-source data to answer actionable evaluation questions. The course culminates in a publication-ready evaluation report structured for a peer-reviewed journal, or an actionable executive report and presentation for agency leadership and community stakeholders.

SOCW 720 Emerging Interventions and Modalities (4)

This course examines cutting-edge, evidence-informed intervention modalities and emerging service delivery frameworks. As the landscape of mental health, social service delivery, and technology evolves, social workers must navigate novel therapeutic paradigms while maintaining core values of social justice, cultural responsiveness, and professional ethics. Students will examine contemporary and non-traditional therapeutic approaches, including digital mental health (telehealth and AI-augmented tools), somatic and body-centered therapies, novel trauma-informed frameworks (e.g., IFS, EMDR concepts), and alternative care modalities like psychedelic-assisted therapy and nature-based interventions. The course critically analyzes the empirical base, ethical implications, accessibility barriers, and cultural alignment of these interventions,

particularly in relation to serving diverse, historically marginalized, and under-resourced populations. Through case simulations, critical appraisals, and intervention design, students will build advanced clinical decision-making skills to ethically integrate emerging tools into generalist and specialized practice.

SOCW 725 Advocacy and Intervention with Marginalized Populations (4)
This course integrates critical theoretical frameworks with advanced clinical interventions and systemic advocacy. Students interrogate the structural, historical, and institutional forces that generate and sustain marginalization, moving beyond traditional, deficit-based clinical models toward praxis that centers liberation, healing-centered engagement, and sovereignty. Designed for experienced social work practitioners, this course bridges critical theory and practice-based clinical skills across the lifespan and across diverse populations, including Indigenous communities, undocumented immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, youth, military-connected populations, and older adults. Doctoral students analyze how clinical assessment, therapeutic alliance, case conceptualization, and clinical supervision can be transformed into tools for critical consciousness and systemic advocacy. Through systematic inquiry and research translation, students evaluate contemporary ethical dilemmas at the intersection of clinical practice, institutional policy, and human rights to lead equitable practice, consultation, and advocacy across micro, mezzo, and macro ecosystems.

SOCW 730 Advanced Topics in Health, Mental Health, and Substance Use (4)

This course evaluates emerging paradigms, innovative modalities, and technological evolutions across integrated health, mental health, community health, and substance use systems. Moving beyond foundational diagnostic and intervention models, this course emphasizes the translation of cutting-edge research into advanced clinical practice, supervisory leadership, and service delivery design. Students critically examine contemporary clinical innovations, including somatic frameworks, neurofeedback, harm reduction, and neurodegenerative care across the lifespan through human-centered, client-centered, and psychiatric survivor-centered lenses. Additionally, the course interrogates the rapid integration of virtual care, hybrid service delivery models, and artificial intelligence in behavioral health. Doctoral students will analyze the ethical, legal, and clinical implications of these emerging practices, equipping them to lead, supervise, and innovate within rapidly changing community health and healthcare ecosystems.

SOCW 735 Advanced Topics in Trauma-informed Care (4)

This course critically examines advanced theories, neurobiological foundations, and evidence-informed models for trauma-informed care (TIC). Students will evaluate current research, historical and complex trauma frameworks, secondary traumatic stress, and anti-oppressive practice paradigms. The course emphasizes translational scholarship, equipping social work practitioners to design, evaluate, and lead trauma-informed systems, interventions, and policy initiatives.

SOCW 740 Advanced Topics in Crisis Care (4)

This course examines advanced clinical models, systems-level architecture, and leadership strategies in emergency mental health and crisis care across micro, mezzo, and macro levels of social work practice. Students will evaluate real-time triage methodologies, suicide risk assessments, mobile crisis response, non-carceral emergency models, mass casualty and disaster response protocols, and legal/ethical complexities. The course emphasizes translational scholarship and equips DSW leaders to design, implement, and evaluate trauma services with emphasis on anti-oppressive practice.

SOCW 745 Implementing Translational Research in Service Delivery (4)

This course provides advanced training in translating empirical research discoveries across the translational continuum from efficacy and effectiveness trials into sustainable practice within health, behavioral health, and human service delivery systems. Bridging the gap between scientific discovery and front-line service delivery, this course focuses on the theories, methodologies, and operational strategies required to integrate evidence-based interventions into complex organizational and community environments. Students explore the multi-level determinants that influence research translation, including policy ecosystems, organizational climate, clinical workflows, provider behavior, and community engagement. In this course students learn to assess organizational readiness, design targeted translation strategies, maintain intervention fidelity while executing necessary adaptations, and evaluate multi-level delivery outcomes. Special emphasis is placed on health equity, de-implementation of outdated or harmful practices, and continuous quality improvement (CQI) mechanisms to sustain research-backed practices over time.

SOCW 750 Critical Perspectives on Service Delivery Systems (4)

This course critically interrogates institutional service delivery systems and the structural power dynamics embedded within them. Designed for experienced social work leaders, this course examines how state-sanctioned systems, including prisons, juvenile justice, child welfare, involuntary behavioral health hospitalization, military institutions, and end-of-life care, function as sites of both care and social control. Grounded in anti-carceral social work, critical disability, decolonial frameworks, and abolitionist praxis, students deconstruct how institutional surveillance, coercion, and bureaucracy impact clinical encounters and client outcomes. Doctoral students bridge critical systems analysis with advanced clinical skills, supervision, and organizational consultation. Through systematic inquiry and research translation, students formulate strategies to navigate ethical dilemmas, mitigate moral injury, advance client autonomy, and design transformative, equity-driven alternatives to legacy systems of care.

SOCW 755 Strategies for Decolonized Leadership, Supervision, and Consultation (4)

This course critically examines dominant models of leadership, clinical supervision, and consultation through a decolonized lens, challenging Eurocentric, hierarchical, and pathology-focused frameworks that have historically shaped the profession. Students will explore how colonialism, white supremacy culture, and institutional power dynamics show up in organizational

structures, supervisory relationships, and consultation practices, and will build alternative models rooted in relational accountability, shared power, cultural humility, and indigenous and community-based ways of knowing. Through reflective practice, students will develop strategies for leading teams, supervising practitioners, and consulting with organizations in ways that center equity, healing, and the lived expertise of historically marginalized communities.

SOCW 760 Connecting Clinical Care and Legislative Advocacy (4)

This course examines the intersection of clinical practice and legislative and policy advocacy. Students will explore how clinical insights such as caseload patterns, service gaps, and systemic barriers can be translated into evidence-based policy recommendations, and conversely, how legislative and regulatory environments shape the conditions of clinical care. Drawing on clinical experiences, current legislation, and advocacy frameworks, students will critically analyze the policymaking process and develop coalition-building and legislative communication skills to improve practice on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Emphasis is placed on ethical, equity-centered advocacy that amplifies client and community voice within legislative processes.

d. Provide a two-year course cycle for delivering the curriculum.

The DSW program is a three year program. The table below outlines the years and semesters the courses are offered. The titles in *italics* are taught in the summer semester.

Y1 Fall	Y1 Spring
SOCW 701 Applied Quantitative Research & Statistics for community settings (4)	SOCW 702 Qualitative Research Methods for Community Practice (4)
SOCW 720 Emerging interventions and modalities (4)	SOCW 725 Advocacy and intervention with marginalized populations (4)
	SOCW 703 Portfolio Seminar I - Case Study (4)
Y2 Fall	Y2 Spring
SOCW 704 Community-Based Participatory Research for Applied Practice (4)	SOCW 735 Advanced topics in trauma-informed care (4)
SOCW 730 Advanced topics in health, mental health, and substance use (4)	SOCW 740 Advanced topics in crisis care (4)
	SOCW 705 Summer 2 Portfolio Seminar II - Literature Review or Academic Teaching Experience (4)
Y 3 Fall	Y3 Spring
SOCW 745 Implementing Translational Research in Service Delivery (4)	SOCW 755 Strategies for decolonized leadership, supervision, and consultation (4)
SOCW 750 Critical perspectives on service delivery systems (4)	SOCW 760 Connecting clinical care and legislative advocacy (4)
	SOCW 706 Summer 3 Portfolio Seminar III - Program

	Evaluation (4)

e. Provide completion pathways (including two and four-year advising plans for undergraduate programs).

N/A

f. Identify the learning outcomes for the program. For undergraduate programs, also describe the connection to the Integrative Learning Objectives.

The learning outcomes for the program flow from the program's mission and guide the learning outcomes for the courses. Further, the learning outcomes are responsive to CSWE accreditation requirements:

1. Advance social work practice through innovative, evidence-informed approaches that address complex clinical, behavioral health, and social service needs across micro, mezzo, and/or macro practice settings.
2. Critically evaluate, integrate, and apply research-informed knowledge to assess complex practice problems, develop innovative interventions, and improve social work service delivery.
3. Conduct systematic inquiry and practice-based evaluation using doctoral-level scholarship to examine interventions, programs, and systems and generate practice-relevant knowledge.
4. Demonstrate leadership and disseminate practice-relevant knowledge through clinical leadership, advocacy, supervision, consultation, teaching, professional presentations, scholarship, and other forms of knowledge translation.

g. Provide a plan for assessing program learning outcomes.

CSWE requires specific core expertise and skills to be articulated for DSW programs that are accredited (these are set by CSWE and interpreted and applied by individual programs). These requirements relate to advanced practice skills and community research skills. Following CSWE accreditation guidelines, our two program assessment outcomes are as follows:

Research Skills: Students will develop either 2 or 3 manuscripts that are adequately prepared for peer review publication submission.

Demonstrated Advanced Practice Skills. Students will present a comprehensive, formal case and defense. The case may be focused on clinical, practice, supervision, mentorship, or consultant skills.

h. Identify program entrance requirements, including application processes, if appropriate.

i.

The entrance requirements and application processes are as follows. Some of the requirements, such as post-MSW practice experience, are dictated by CSWE accreditation requirements, while others reflect best practices for preparation for doctoral work:

Admissions

Admission to the DSW program is based on a holistic review of the applicant's academic and professional practice preparation, contributions to the social work profession, and commitment to social justice. Review of applications and acceptance into the DSW program is determined by faculty evaluation by the DSW Graduate Admissions Committee. Review of applications are on the basis of the following requirements:

1. GPA of 3.2 or higher from a CSWE-accredited program. A petition is available if the minimum GPA isn't met;
3. Minimum of three years of post-MSW full-time practice experience and currently

practicing;
4. Three letters of recommendation; two must be from professional sources;
5. Personal statement (includes diversity and social justice statement and goals for pursuing a DSW degree);
6. CV or Resume;
7. Writing sample involving applicant's theoretical orientation and area of interest or inquiry applicant wants to pursue;
8. Interview.

5. External Authorization: Will the proposal require authorization from NWCCU, the state of Washington, or an external accreditation body?

After approval by the EPC and the PLU Board of Regents, as a new degree, the proposal will require review by NWCCU, the State of Washington, and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, the social work education accrediting body).

Accreditation will be sought through the Council on Social Work Education. We will initiate the accreditation process before October 1, 2027, and proceed through three benchmarks over the course of three years. By initiating the process before October 2027, we ensure enrollees for fall 2028 and beyond will retroactively graduate from an accredited program.

6. **Rationale**:

a. Provide evidence of demand for the proposed program, which may include a market analysis or review of trends at other universities. Include reference to relevant competitors' programs and characteristics of the proposed program that will make it attractive to students in light of this competition.

There are currently 16 practicing Doctoral (DSW) programs across the country recognized by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Only three of these programs are located on the West Coast: USC, Loma Linda University, and Walla Walla University.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS) highlights a sharp trajectory in demand, with degree conferrals across reporting practice doctorate programs rising from 220 in 2023 to 419 in 2025. This represents a **90.5% increase over a two-year period**, demonstrating robust candidate demand that is currently constrained by a limited regional supply of degree-granting institutions.

Future labor market projections further reinforce this demand trajectory. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment across advanced social work and human services leadership roles is projected to grow by approximately **10% over the next decade**. For context, this is more than **triple the national average growth rate** (3%) projected for all U.S. occupations, signaling a long-term labor market pull for advanced clinical and administrative practice credentials.

We also surveyed our current MSW students about their interest in pursuing a DSW degree. While our MSW numbers are still relatively low, the survey responses indicated that there is interest among our master's students to continue on with graduate work. Fifteen MSW students responded, and 66.7% (n=10) responded that they were either very interested (46.7%) or somewhat interested (20%) in a DSW program at PLU. A summary of comments on why they wanted to pursue a DSW includes:

- Academic and Career Advancement: Pursue leadership roles, career advancement, higher pay, and professional development, alongside expanding public policy impact and clinical leadership or supervision pathways.
- Education and Teaching: Become a professor and fulfill a desire for continued learning and education.

- Research and Expertise: Conduct clinical research, publish works, master clinical skills, and deepen professional expertise.

b. Identify the target audience for the program.

The students the DSW program will attract are people who have graduated with an MSW degree and who have been practicing at least two years post-graduation. These are people who are leaders in the service community, either in clinical or community roles, who are looking to expand their clinical, supervision, leadership, and community-based research skills. These are professionals who are in positions to make systematic change through advocacy, research and legislative leadership. We expect to attract not only local professionals but people who are regional and national.

While it is likely that we will receive applications from a variety of social worker practitioners, we anticipate that a majority of applications will come from individuals who:

- Are engaged in direct practice or have extensive work histories that include direct practice;
- Have 5-10 years of post-MSW practice experience;
- Are emerging subject-matter experts, with little-to-no experience producing scholarship;
- Have health and/or mental health work backgrounds;
- Have a professional license;
- Are not currently considering leaving their jobs but considering future possibilities
- Are place-bound but willing to travel (if not too frequently).

c. Explain why this is the right time for the university to add this program.

As noted in PLU's 2026-2027 call for renewal, a DSW program is particularly fitting for the renewal through growth tactic. The academic-related area for growth focuses on "create[ing] a culture of continuous innovation and establish effective change management processes to ensure that all aspects of the university's business model remain nimble and adaptive to student needs and market demands." Considering the long-range plan of the University, adding a DSW program is timely. PLU can be instrumental in educating social work graduate students to meet the labor market demands and the needs of individuals, families, communities, and healthcare service providers in our region, state, and country.

d. Explain how this program might compete with other programs currently offered at PLU.

It is not anticipated that the DSW program will compete with other programs currently offered at PLU.

e. Identify which academic units might be affected by this program, and how.

The DSW program will not affect other academic units.

f. Will approval of this program mean the termination of another program? If so, what is the timeline for the proposed elimination?

N/A

7. Marketing strategies:

a. Provide a marketing and advertising plan for the initial roll-out of the program, including a timeline.

social media, direct marketing to social service agencies, popular peer-reviewed journals, PLU, and regional schools of social work that don't offer doctoral degrees.

The program budget includes funds allocated for marketing start-up. If approved by faculty assembly, PLU Board of Regents, and NWCCU, marketing would initially begin in the fall of 2027.. The budget also includes a full-time administrative faculty position whose duties will be focused primarily on recruiting and admissions. Marketing will focus on these areas:

1. Direct marketing to current PLU students and graduates in the MSW program (who have been practicing for several years). We will also market to MSW graduates throughout the State of Washington, bordering states, and nationally. We will also advertise at local and national conferences (e.g., NASW, WMHCA, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work) where practitioners are the main audience.

2. Tuition rates and program costs will be utilized to market the DSW program. The proposed PLU MSW tuition rate is competitive with most of the DSW programs regionally and nationally. The DSW program will charge $855/credit for a total of $51,300 for 60 credits.

DSW Program	**Credits/Tuition**
Simmons	48/$60,720
Walla Walla	52/$51,500
USC	42/$97,524

3. Scholarships will also be utilized as part of marketing efforts to attract DSW applicants. In instances where cost comparison with other programs is a deciding factor for applicants, institutional scholarships may be utilized in an effort to attract applicants and secure students.

4. Digital marketing will focus on social media advertising and search engine optimization. Passive marketing will take place with our current partners. PLU and the Department of Social Work program at PLU have a long-term relationship with community partners and social service agencies, where recruitment will be important. Through print and digital content, we will advertise the new DSW program with these sources. The State of Washington is taking efforts to promote careers in behavioral health (e.g., advertising on social media). When people explore the advertised content, they are linked to graduate programs in the State that provide pathways to careers in behavioral health. We will work with the State to ensure that PLU and the DSW program are included. Finally, CSWE provides a list of all accredited programs on their website to aid students in exploring DSW options; PLU will be included on this source.

b. Identify longer-term plans for marketing and advertising.

The DSW program budget also includes funds for long-term marketing. The DSW program will work with the Graduate Admissions Office and PLU MARCOM to develop long-term marketing strategies based on what we learn from initial marketing efforts.

8. External funding sources: Describe any plans for the development of funding sources for this program that are external to the university, including projected amounts of funding for each.

a. Fundraising: None planned.

b. Grants: The MSW program has been successful in securing federal funding for students. Should a notice of funding opportunity be available that is appropriate for DSW students, our department has the capacity to apply for funding.

c. Other: Dr. David Ward has requested $100,000 from the Opportunity Fund to help support the launch of the DSW program.

9. Faculty, Staff and Administration:

a. Describe the qualifications needed by faculty who will teach in the program.

In accordance with CSWE accreditation requirements, all faculty who teach in the DSW program must have doctoral degrees and the majority of the faculty also have a master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and two or more years of post-master's social work degree practice experience in social work.

b. Identify the number and type (contingent, tenure-track) of faculty members necessary to deliver the program.

In alignment with CSWE accreditation requirements, the DSW program must have no fewer than two full-time faculty members, with a full-time appointment in social work, whose principal assignment is to the DSW program.

c. Will any current faculty serve in the proposed program? If so, how will this new commitment be accommodated in their teaching load?

All current faculty members in the Department of Social Work are qualified to serve in the DSW program. Currently, all faculty members teach across the BSW and MSW programs and will be able to add DSW courses to their teaching load if desired. With two faculty members primarily assigned to the DSW program, staffing for courses will be sufficient.

d. Identify the number and type (contingent, tenure-track) of *new* faculty necessary to deliver the program.

To be in alignment with CSWE accreditation standards, two new faculty members will be needed to staff the DSW program. One of these faculty members will serve as director of the program.

e. If new faculty are required, provide a recruitment plan and timeline, including comments addressing the challenges of filling positions with small hiring pools or where market premia might be required.

Two new faculty members will be recruited to staff the DSW program. The first member to be recruited will serve as the program director. This search will occur in AY 2026-2027, with a start date of fall 2027. The director will be responsible for completing the development of the program, student recruitment, and starting the accreditation process by applying for candidacy and beginning the first of three benchmark requirements. The second faculty member will be recruited in AY 2027-2028, with a start date of fall 2028.

f. Describe plans for providing administrative support for the program. Identify any new administrative positions or organizational rearrangements in staff needed to accommodate the new program.

Currently, the department has a full-time senior administrative assistant who supports the BSW and MSW programs. With the addition of the DSW program, we anticipate needing a half-time administrative assistant. This position can also help with BSW and MSW support, which is difficult for one full-time position. Further, CSWE accreditation for the DSW program requires that the program demonstrate that

administrative support is sufficient, which will be difficult to do with only one full-time position to support three programs.

10. **Facility and Technology Needs** – Includes but not limited to classroom, office, studio, laboratory, storage, technology, and computer labs.

    a. Describe any new construction or facility renovations necessary to launch or maintain the program and the associated expenses.

       N/A

    b. Describe any furniture and/or equipment necessary to launch or maintain the program.

       Two computers will be needed for two new faculty members. A computer will be needed for an additional administrative assistant.

    c. Explain any special security considerations associated with the program.

       No security concerns.

    d. Identify possible health and safety concerns associated with the program.

       No safety concerns.

11. **Library Resources**:

    a. Describe library resources needed to support the program, including print books, electronic materials, and other library resources.

       Existing resources available through the PLU library are sufficient for the DSW program.

    b. Does the new program require access to library resources not already available? Are these mandated by any program accreditation?

       N/A

    c. If program is fully online or blended, describe how library resources will be delivered to students. Include expenses for postage, photocopying, etc.

       For the hybrid model, it is anticipated that DSW students will generally access library resources (e.g.; social work and other scholarly journals) online. We do not anticipate expenses related to items such as postage or photocopying.

12. **Student Services**—Are there any changes in existing student services needed to accommodate the program? Will adding the program result in changes in service provision to the rest of the student body? Where might additional resources be necessary, and what are the projected expenses for those resources?

    a. Financial aid

       No changes needed. Students will secure program funding through loans and other means outside of PLU.

    b. Registration

The DSW program will be delivered in a cohort model allowing for individual and group advising for required course registration. The DSW program director will provide support to DSW students with registration processes.

c. Center for Student Success (advising, tutoring)

N/A, no changes needed.

d. Other

N/A

13. Budget. Use information from the questions above to complete the table. Please see footnotes for additional information.

Year	Year Zero	Academic Year 1	Academic Year 2	Academic Year 3	Academic Year 4
# Students in Program[i]		10	22	34	36
# Faculty FTE to Deliver Program[ii]	0.5	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
# *New* Faculty FTE to Deliver Program[iii]	0.5	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Average Faculty Salary in unit[iv]	76000	76,000	76,000	76,000	76,000
# Administrators or Staff[v]		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
# *New* Administrators or Staff[vi]		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Average Administrator or Staff Salary[vii]		45,000	45,000	45,000	45,000
Services & Purchases[viii]	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Facility and Technology[ix]					
Library Resources[x]					
Student Services[xi]					
Net	-103,800	-37,250	70,650	296,000	363,000

i. Identify the projected number of students *declared* in the new program for each of the first four years of the program.

ii. Identify projected faculty FTE for each of the first four years of the program.

iii. Identify the number of additional (new) faculty FTE (whether new or contingent) necessary to add in each of the first four years of the program.

iv. Identify average faculty salary in the proposed program in consultation with the Provost's Office.

v. Indicate the projected staff/administrator FTE for each of the first four years of the program.

vi. Identify the number of additional (new) staff/administrator FTE necessary to add in each of the first four years of the program.

vii. Indicate the average staff/administrator salary.

viii. Indicate the annual services and purchases budget required for each of the first four years of the program, including any projected expenditures required for start-up expenses. *Itemize these expenses in an attached narrative*.

ix. Estimate facilities and technology expenses for each of the first four years of the program.

x. Estimate library expenses for each of the first four years of the program.

xi. Estimate student services expenses

14. **Risk management -** Describe the major risk considerations of the plan and the steps that could be taken to mitigate or minimize the risk and still implement a successful plan. For example, if applicable, the plan may encounter problems associated with items such as negotiating a lease contract, obtaining city or government approvals, obtaining accreditation approval, etc.

    The most significant risks associated with implementing a new DSW program is obtaining accreditation approval from CSWE. However, having existing undergraduate and graduate programs that have successfully been CSWE accredited (the BSW program since 1975) mitigates this risk because PLU is well known to CSWE and well-versed in the CSWE educational standards and accreditation process. CSWE provides a supportive and consultative approach with partners during the new program development process. In addition to providing support during the planning phase, CSWE provides virtual and on-site visits at specific benchmark points throughout the new DSW program start-up period. Consultation and feedback that result from visits are a proactive effort to identify and address any issues that may negatively affect the final DSW accreditation outcome.

15. **Accountability and Exit Strategy:**

    a. Outline the steps that will be taken to review whether the program is meeting its enrollment and revenue targets, including the timeline for such review. For new undergraduate programs, provide a 5-year timeline; for new graduate programs, provide a 3-year timeline.

       Enrollment targets for years 1-3 are presented in the MSW Program Budget. The following content addresses items a and b in this section.

       Year 0 (2027-28): This year is designated for DSW program start-up and preparing to launch the program with the first cohort of students in Fall 2028. The DSW Director, whose duties will be focused on recruitment and admissions, will be secured (search start up fall 2026 with a start date of June 1, 2027). The DSW Director has a start date of June 1 to allow time to write accreditation documents, which are due 12/1/2027. The director will oversee the first accreditation site visit.

       In alignment with CSWE standards, primary activities during this year will include recruitment and hiring of the second DSW faculty members (2 total) and half-time administrative assistant; marketing the new DSW program; reviewing applications of potential DSW students; and writing and submitting documents for benchmark 1 for CSWE accreditation. In anticipation of a fall 2028 DSW launch date, if the enrollment target is not met, marketing and recruitment efforts will continue beyond the proposed application window. In an effort to increase enrollment, the application and admission deadlines will be extended/adjusted to allow for later admissions.

Year 1 (2028-29): The first cohort of regular standing full-time students will enter (fall 2028 start). If enrollment targets for the first cohort of regular standing students are not met, in consultation with CSWE, the target date for onboarding the new faculty member may be adjusted. To meet teaching load needs in the interim, consideration may be given to hiring contingent faculty. Additionally, marketing strategies will be assessed and adjustments made in an effort to increase program interest. The DSW Director will continue writing and submitting accreditation documents (benchmark 2) and overseeing the site visit for benchmark 2.

Year 2 (2029-30): The second cohort of DSW students will enter (fall 2029 start). If enrollment targets are not met, in consultation with CSWE, the target date for onboarding the new faculty member may be adjusted. To meet teaching load needs in the interim, consideration may be given to hiring contingent faculty. Additionally, marketing strategies will be assessed and adjustments made in an effort to increase program interest.

Year 3 (2030-31) and exit strategy: The DSW program is projected to be fully operational with the third cohort admitted this year. If the program is not meeting minimum enrollment targets, stated program objectives and/or has not received full CSWE accreditation, two options will be considered: Reduction in overall program size (number of students and number of faculty) and termination of the program. Consultation with CSWE will be crucial. If it is deemed that an DSW program with fewer students is financially viable, consideration will be given to reducing the target enrollment numbers and adjusting the numbers of faculty accordingly. If it is deemed that the program will end, marketing efforts will cease and no new applications will be accepted. If no new students are accepted to begin the program in year 3, the teach out for existing regular standing and advanced students will take one full year. With the termination of the DSW program, the Department of Social Work will be reduced to the capacity needed to operate the BSW and MSW social work programs.

b. Provide an exit strategy, including a general timeline for deciding whether to terminate or continue the program and a plan for teaching out the program.

See item a above.

c. Identify who will be responsible for providing accountability and oversight for the program meeting its enrollment and revenue targets.

The DSW Director and the Dean of the College of Health Professions
Depending on the structure of the College of Health Professions, enrollment reports would be generated by the Dean of Health Professions in consultation with the DSW Program Director and Chairs of the BSW and MSW Programs. The Office of the Provost & Graduate Programs, along with the Dean and DSW Director, will be responsible for assessing DSW program accountability and enrollment and revenue targets.

16. Communications Checklist. The persons/offices listed below should be consulted as the proposal is prepared.

	Signature	**Date**	**<u>Level of Support</u>:** ● **Support** ● **Undecided** ● **Do not support**
Academic Unit Head	Anissa Rogers	10/6/26	Support
College Dean	David Ward	10/7/26	Support

Vice Provost for Student Success & Academics	Bridget Yaden	10/8/26	Support
Accreditation Liaison Officer	Karen McConnell	10/12/26	Support
Dean of the Library	Joe Toth	10/12/26	Support
Dean of Enrollment Management & Student Financial Services	Mike Frechette	10/13/26	Support
Dean of Admission	Melody Ferguson	10/12/26	Support
Executive Director Center for Student Success	Kris Plaehn	10/10/26	Support
Vice President for Administrative Services and Chief Operating Officer	Shalita Myrick	10/14/26	Support
Chief Analytics Officer	Craig Chamberlain	10/8/26	Support

August 2026

Educational Policies Committee

Curriculum Change Template

Current Courses*	Current Hours*	Proposed Courses	Proposed Hours
		Doctor of Social Work (DSW)	**54 hrs**
		SOCW 701	4 hrs
		SOCW 702	4 hrs
		SOCW 703	4 hrs
		SOCW 704	4 hrs
		SOCW 705	4 hrs
		SOCW 706	4 hrs
		SOCW 720	4 hrs
		SOCW 725	4 hrs
		SOCW 730	4 hrs
		SOCW 735	4 hrs
		SOCW 740	4 hrs
		SOCW 745	4 hrs
		SOCW 750	4 hrs
		SOCW 755	4 hrs
		SOCW 769	4 hrs

* These columns may be left blank for new concentrations, degrees, majors, and minors.