

Simply put, we want to continue our program.

We want to continue an accredited program. We have been accredited since 1982.

The degree is worth little to students if not from an accredited program. Only students who graduate from an accredited program are eligible to apply for advanced standing in Master of Social Work programs and/ or licensure. Many states require a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited program to be eligible for any social work job whether in the public or private sector.

We are willing to work with university administrators to make the continuation of an accredited program happen.

We were not given that opportunity. We were never informed that our program was under threat and given an opportunity to respond before the proposal to discontinue CESW was made. I was called to a meeting to discuss curricular efficiencies and told our program was being proposed by the Provost to be shut down. I was also told we were considered a relic.

In fact, all previous indications were that our program would continue. We were given back in January a tenure track position that we had lost and told to search for two tenure-track faculty. One person was offered a position but declined as she got an offer at a university with research support.

In February we interviewed, and recommended two candidates with excellent credentials (One a PH.D. from William and Mary and the other a Ph.D. from UCLA) be offered a contract. Our searches were shut down and we were given no information about why our candidates were not acceptable.

This program has great value to the university. In 2008 we were renamed the Department of Community Engagement and Social Work. We have been engaged with the surrounding community and beyond since our inception. We have students

in social work courses who, this semester alone, are performing more than 7,000 hours of service. Last summer 15 students in a social work human rights course performed approximately 750 hours of service in Costa Rica.

We were instrumental in the design of social entrepreneurship minor; two of the four core courses are social work courses as well as some elective courses.

We believe in, and support, the liberal learning core. We teach ULLC classes and offer several A of I classes. Our students participate fully in the liberal arts education offered here and receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work. Some may have the impression that social work program may not belong in a liberal arts college. Our accrediting body stipulates a liberal arts foundation. We are not alone as a liberal arts university in offering social work. There are 8 top tier liberal arts universities in the U.S. News and World Report ranking who also have a social work program.

Our students excel academically. From 2007-2009 over 40% of our students have gone on, or will be going to graduate school. Five of the five students from the class of 2009 who applied to the highly competitive advanced standing program at VCU have been accepted. We were recently sent this e-mail by a professor who conducted the required two hour interview for admission with one of our students:

*I am not in the habit of doing this, in fact this is the first time I have given this kind of feedback, but I thought you might appreciate it. This morning I had the pleasure of interviewing Brianna for the advanced standing MSW program and quite honestly, she blew me away! Simply put, she is the best applicant I have ever seen in almost 15 years at VCU--her breadth and depth of knowledge and her ability to critically apply it was well beyond what I have seen with many graduate students at the END of the program, much less in a BSW senior halfway through the senior year! She is obviously bright, but she has also had the advantage of professors and mentors and a program that have challenged her and brought out the best in her!*

*Congratulations!*

This student and the others will go directly into the second year of the program, having shown that they mastered the first year curriculum in their undergraduate program.

Our students are highly employable. Almost 50% of our 2009 graduates have already been offered employment. The social work education at CNU is well-regarded by area organizations and beyond. The Bureau of Labor statistics reports the need for social workers will continue to grow.

Our students participate in research. Two social work students presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate research in 2008. One student won one of the two prizes for poster presentation at Paidea last year. Another has a research article in press.

Our students reflect social work values and the values of the university in their lives and their work. They are very distressed at the thought of the program being lost. So are we.

We are admittedly a small program. We currently have 64 declared majors with several others who wish to declare but cannot because of the moratorium on new majors in social work imposed by the Provost's office. We are distressed that all prospective freshmen (35 at last count) and transfer students will be notified, at best, that they will likely not be able to major in social work. The original plan was to notify them that social work was being discontinued. We have been advised not to attend any of the coming open houses for prospective and accepted students. We feel that this is "cutting us off at our knees."

No other major at CNU is being cut. We must maintain accreditation standards and the integrity of our students' education but we will work with the administration to "streamline," as some other programs were given the opportunity to do, without being cut. We were given four days after the return from spring break to respond to the Provost's proposal. We have composed our response and have emphasized our

commitment to the liberal learning emphasis at CNU. We have made some suggestions for streamlining the departmental offerings. We will work with them if they offer us an opportunity to make changes to prevent our closure.

We do not want our university, our students and our community to lose the benefits of the strengths of this department.