



Comunidad and Umoja Scholars Program (CUSP), provided by the School of Social Work, is a leadership development and mentoring program designed to enhance the training of full-time, master-level social work students with a propensity for culturally responsive practice and leadership. CUSP targets, but is not limited to, students of color pursuing a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at Salisbury University. Applicants must identify a commitment to working with communities of color as their focus and be dedicated to seeking employment in social work practice after graduation.

Comunidad means Community in Spanish &

Umoja, the first principle of Kwanzaa, means Unity

Purpose

- Increase the number of culturally responsive social work practitioners and leaders.
- Enhance individuals' sense of belonging through the development of relationships within the School of Social Work and the larger community.
- Increase leadership capabilities to make a difference in communities of color.

Rationale

People generally strongly prefer those similar to them, with race being the most significant factor. Given this, the racial/ethnic concordance or discordance between social workers and the individuals they work can affect the working relationship. African Americans and Latinxs tend to have a higher preference for social workers of the same race/ethnicity (Hsu, Hackett, & Hinkson, 2014). African Americans are more reluctant to self-disclose to white clinicians in clinical settings (Williamson, 2012). This preference for racial/ethnic concordance may be attributed to a perceived notion that they may receive fair treatment by someone similar to themselves. Older, less educated, lower income, and less geographically mobile individuals also tend to prefer racial concordance (Hsu, Hackett, & Hinkson, 2014).

Yet, social workers often do not adequately reflect the diversity of the individuals and communities they serve, with most licensed social workers being white and serving in communities of color (Center for Health Workforce Studies & NASW Center for Workforce Studies, 2006). Moreover, some white social work students and practitioners do not feel prepared to engage in culturally responsive practice (Greeno et al., 2017), hold negative racial attitudes (Loya, 2011; Loya, 2012), practice from a problematic color-blind approach (Priester, Pitner, & Lackey, 2019), and often do not identify their race as being important in practice (Hall & Jones, 2017). Given this context, the SU School of Social Work is committed

to recruiting, mentoring, and developing culturally responsive social workers, practitioners, and leaders.

Eligibility Criteria

An applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Current or accepted MSW student in the Salisbury University School of Social Work with at least a 3.0 GPA. UMGC students are not eligible
- Must be in good academic standing, and if an incoming MSW student cannot be provisionally admitted to the MSW Program
- Targeted to, but not limited to, minority racial/ethnic groups
- Enrolled in at least nine credit hours per semester
- Must be in a field placement during the award period

General Selection Criteria

- Potential as a future social work practitioner and leader with a focus on serving racial/ethnic minority populations and communities
- Evidence of past leadership, volunteer service, life or work experiences with racial/ethnic populations
- Clearly expressed interest in developing a community-based project focused explicitly on supporting historically marginalized communities of color.
- Academic evidence of ability to achieve timely degree completion

Program Learning Objectives

The CUSP Scholars will:

- Be prepared to enter the social work workforce with knowledge and skills for culturally responsive practice
- Build effective personal and professional relationships
- Set goals for professional growth and learning
- Develop leadership skills

Program Requirements and Expectations

Scholars are expected to participate in all program requirements to remain eligible for the award.

- Must maintain a 3.0 GPA during the award period
- Serve in a field placement setting that directly serves populations of color
- Participate in the virtual leadership training seminars - summer
- Attend virtual monthly professional development seminars during fall and spring

- Meet bi-weekly with your social work mentor and one one-on-one mentoring sessions
- Develop, deliver, and conduct a presentation on a one-year leadership project
- Complete 15 hours of social work continuing education training
- Attend a national or regional conference such as the NASW – MD clinical conference, the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, or the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Conference
 - A portion of the expenses related to travel, food, and lodging will be covered by CUSP
 - Scholars will apply for a travel grant through the College of Health and Human Services.
 - If conference attendance is not feasible, the CUSP scholar may apply funds to a professional development opportunity relevant to social work with the approval of the CUSP Coordinator.

Award

- \$6000.00 per year toward graduate tuition at SU School of Social Work
- Specialized training, professional development support, and mentoring
- Duration of the award is a maximum of two years, awarded one year at a time. The award is contingent on funding availability and whether the scholar meets program requirements and maintains satisfactory progress toward a social work degree.

Deadline

The date of first consideration is **March 21, 2025, by 5:00 pm (EST)**. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis thereafter, with the final date of consideration being **May 2, 2025**.

CUSP Application Checklist

To apply, complete the application via the Salisbury University Scholarship website: <https://salisbury.academicworks.com/opportunities/3364>

___Completed application

___Resume

___Two letters of recommendation

___Unofficial undergraduate and graduate transcripts

___Personal statement

Questions, please contact Dr. Owens-King at apowens@salisbury.edu