



Building Tomorrow Together

VISION 2030



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



From the Dean

I am incredibly pleased to share our strategic vision for the School of Social Work, “Building Tomorrow Together,” created to align with the University of Michigan’s priorities. Our vision represents over a year of collective engagement and features the voices of our broad social work community, including hours of participatory sessions with undergraduate and graduate students, staff, faculty, field instructors, community members, and alumni. Through multiple workshops, interactive activities, small group discussions, and reflection events, we worked together to craft a vision for the School of Social Work’s future.

The title intentionally reflects the need for all of our community—students, alumni, supporters, community partners, staff, and faculty—to work together to achieve our vision. The act of building tomorrow asks all of us to see ourselves as creators and participants in building the future of the School.

The vision is meant to be a compass rather than a detailed map or a specific blueprint and will help guide annual planning efforts at the school level. Throughout the planning sessions, several themes emerged that became the Strategic Vision:



Education: Providing Dynamic and Life-Changing Education to Prepare Future Social Work and Social Justice Leaders



Research: Promoting Dynamic and Innovative Research to Address Complex Social Issues



Action: Advancing and Accelerating Action for Public Good



School Culture: Fostering a Vibrant and Inclusive Community

I would like to thank the School’s Strategic Vision Advisory Task Force for their work in guiding the process, with a special thanks to its leader, Katie Richards-Schuster, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Strategic Initiatives.

For over 100 years, the School of Social Work has been a leader in reaching out, raising hope, and changing society. Now more than ever, our School has an important role to play in shaping the future. We hope you will join us as we shape the future and build tomorrow together.

Go Blue!

Beth Angell

Dean and Phillip Fellin Collegiate Professor of Social Work

Opening

For over 100 years, the University of Michigan's School of Social Work has been a leader in elevating the field of social work. Throughout our history, we have developed cutting-edge educational programs, discovered critical interventions to transform practice, and led efforts to contribute to social change.

Our graduates have gone on to lead organizations, serve in policy roles, and create change in local and global communities. Together, our world-class staff and faculty provide the foundation for the School's work and accomplishments. The School of Social Work will be a driving force in solving society's challenges.

Our School of Social Work is uniquely positioned to lead in developing solutions that benefit the public good. We want our work in research, teaching, and service to make a real difference, offering students, staff and faculty opportunities to advance their efforts in creating change in society.

Our vision provides a guiding direction for the future, and with this vision, we aim to shape the future of social work to "reach out, raise hope, and change society" and to build tomorrow together.

Our Vision

The School of Social Work is building synergy by promoting collaboration across our education, research, action and school culture.





Education

Providing Dynamic and Life-Changing Education to Prepare Future Social Work and Social Justice Leaders

The School of Social Work fosters a creative and transformative approach to education that reimagines social work training for the complex challenges of our time. By developing innovative teaching methods and a forward-thinking curriculum, the School is committed to preparing leaders equipped with essential skills like empathy, critical thinking, and the ability to bridge diverse perspectives. This educational vision goes beyond traditional learning models, focusing on creating accessible, inclusive programs that not only teach social work principles but also empower students to drive meaningful social change across various professional landscapes.

Building together, we will:



Develop new educational programs and pedagogies to meet pressing needs

We will create new educational degrees and opportunities, broadening the reach of social work values into new settings and interdisciplinary and interprofessional fields.



Expand cutting-edge, dynamic, and life-changing educational opportunities

We will expand opportunities for students to identify and develop solutions and build the skills needed to engage in pressing social issues. Through action-focused course experiences, expanded field placement opportunities, and new educational methods and technologies, we will enable students to meet the challenges facing today's world.



Make degree and non-degree programs more inclusive and accessible for all

We will work to develop creative approaches to address the cost of social work education and to increase access to all learners. This will include seeking alternative funding structures and continuing to innovate programs to make a Michigan social work education feasible for all students. We will also explore new models for academic advising and holistic support to enhance student success.



Underway

- Proposing a 30-credit MA in Social Impact Leadership
- Leading a state-wide consortium of universities to provide Title IV-E funding to support the costs of education for child welfare practitioners



Research

Promoting Dynamic and Innovative Research to Address Complex Social Issues

The School of Social Work has long been a leader in research excellence that aims to address challenging social issues and create solutions to enhance the lives of people and the communities in which they live. Our faculty are leading ground-breaking research in communities locally and globally to tackle issues including poverty, mental health access, health equity, family well-being, and organizational and community change. Our faculty collaborate with community, agency, and policy partners to develop knowledge and drive new approaches. As we look to the future, we will build on this rich tradition and harness opportunities for pushing the limits of what social work research can achieve. We will continue to lead in dynamic, interdisciplinary and boundary-spanning research that tackles complex social issues.

Building together, we will:



Elevate key areas of expertise and push into new social work research frontiers

We will build on and elevate current research expertise to contribute to evidence-based solutions while also examining new and emerging areas of social work. We will support research in new and underexplored areas, including emerging domains such as climate change, AI and technology, among others.



Deepen and expand interdisciplinary collaborations and research partnerships

We will strengthen interdisciplinary collaborations to tackle critical issues. This includes building research partnerships with fields like information science, business, engineering, environmental justice, and the arts. Key to this is deepening partnerships with communities, organizations and policymakers in implementing collaborative research.



Foster internal research synergy and connections

We will foster collaborative efforts within our research community by creating opportunities to learn from each other, share resources and leverage our collective knowledge to create impactful research projects.



Underway

- Monthly “Social Work Grand Rounds” speaker series addressing cutting-edge topics in social work research
- New faculty hires expanding key areas of social work, such as community-based intervention, computational data science, health equity and disability justice



Action

Advancing and Accelerating Action for Public Good

The School of Social Work will be a leader in collaborating with communities to transform academic potential into tangible, real-world impact by actively working for social change. By strategically connecting teaching, research and service, the school will offer a dynamic ecosystem where students, staff, faculty and alumni can partner with the community to create powerful solutions to address pressing societal challenges.

Building together, we will:



Deepen community partnerships

We will create and strengthen partnerships with community and policy leaders to tackle critical issues at the local, state, national, and global levels. This will include deepening relationships with alumni, field agencies, the social sector and other community partners.



Expand opportunities for community engagement and public good

We will provide leadership, on the U-M campus and in the broader community, on initiatives that bring faculty, students, and staff together in collaboration with community partners to provide solutions to on-the-ground issues. We will lead public convenings around important topics and increase our involvement in university, community and policy leadership efforts aimed at creating change.



Translate knowledge into action to create meaningful community change

We will boost the impact of our research and practice models by ensuring findings are accessible to a non-academic audience. We will create resources that transform social work, influence policy and share best practices with a wider audience. This will include disseminating knowledge through open source and public forums, opinion pieces, policy briefs, continuing education, and toolkits, among others.



Underway

- Piloting a community and policy action hub to translate and communicate research findings to inform policy and community actions
- Continuing with initiatives such as the Democracy is Social Work events which brought together students, staff and faculty to engage in get-out-the-vote events on campus and in the community



School Culture

Fostering a Vibrant and Inclusive Community

Our culture is the environment through which all ideas will be nurtured. This vision seeks to build a true sense of belonging where every member—students, staff and faculty—can contribute authentically and feel genuinely supported in their professional and personal development.

By prioritizing a culture of mutual respect and collaborative growth, the School of Social Work will transform traditional academic environments into dynamic spaces where differences are actively appreciated as sources of innovation and understanding.

Building together, we will:



Value our people, foster authentic and meaningful relationships

We will create a community where everyone is appreciated for their unique contributions—one that fosters relationships, belonging, and teamwork. We will actively support work-life balance and professional development, promote wellness and celebrate achievements. We will strive for a culture where all members can flourish.



Embrace differences and unique perspectives

A diverse community does not always agree. Embracing differences and challenging ideas leads to growth. We will be a community that recognizes the importance of listening to understand and adopting a “both/and” culture that recognizes there is not always one correct approach or one right solution.



Build trust through transparency and open communication

We will create new opportunities for information sharing by soliciting feedback and open dialogue. We will promote an environment that embraces and engages in productive conversations, even if those discussions may be challenging, and we will embed these practices into all aspects of our work. Throughout, we will examine our policies, practices and structures to advance transparency and efficiency.



Underway

- Staff Engagement Committee organizes events to bring the community together and celebrate staff contributions
- Community Conversations supports students, staff and faculty in developing skills for dialogue with others on challenging topics and critical issues

Building Tomorrow Together

Our Commitments



As we pursue these priorities, we recognize we will be the most successful when we:



Commit to Social Justice: Focus on working toward a more just society through challenging injustice and empowering individuals and communities.



Foster Respect & Integrity: Continue to foster a community where people feel valued, and practice integrity and respect in how we engage with one another, especially across our differences.



Promote Communication, Connection, Community, & Collaboration: Build community by recognizing we are stronger together when we use our collective strengths and share ideas to solve complex problems. We seek to strengthen communication and elevate our work to promote greater impact.



Encourage Creativity & Solution-Focused Innovation: Push boundaries and explore new approaches to find solutions.



Take Action for the Public Good: Bridge the gap between academics and practice to inform decisions, promote policy, develop programs and create change.



Foster a Vibrant and Inclusive School Community: Ensure access to opportunities and promote a culture of belonging for everyone.

Strategic Vision Advisory Committee Members

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