A History of the Department of Social Work

The Department of Social Work was established as a separate academic unit in June of 2007. Prior to this time, the unit was a program within the Department of Sociology. The Department of Sociology had offered courses in social work since the early 1950’s. In response to student demands, the decision was made during the 1965-1966 academic year to establish a concentration in social work within the sociology curriculum. The Department recruited Dr. Isaac A. Robinson from Fayetteville State University in the Fall of 1967 to provide leadership in developing the concentration.

After several years of teaching and course development, Dr. Robinson suggested that the Department seek accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education. This idea was not very well accepted by some members of the Department, as it was felt that a professional degree had no place in the liberal arts undergraduate curriculum. After much debate and increasing student demands, the Department decided to hire a consultant from the Council on Social Work Education to study the feasibility of the curriculum’s being accredited by the Council. The Department hired Dr. Herbert Jarrett from the University of Georgia during the spring of 1978 to complete the study. Dr. Jarett’s report was quite thorough and contained extensive recommendations, the most important of which was that the social work concentration be restructured for more autonomy from the Department of Sociology in curriculum development, administration, budget, hiring, tenure, and promotion of faculty.

In the fall of 1985 the University recruited Dr. George Conklin to chair the Department of Social Work. Dr. Conklin agreed to respond to the growing demands from students and local social service agencies for certified social workers. Dr. Robinson was appointed as coordinator of the social work concentration within the Department of Sociology. Two additional faculty members were hired holding Doctor of Social Work degrees. Dr. Patricia Ramsey was appointed to develop the clinical field education component of the curriculum, and Dr. Robert Creecy was recruited from the University of South Carolina to develop the social welfare curriculum component.

During the 1980s the social work concentration was developed into a complete major while following the guidelines of the Curriculum Policy Statement of the Council on Social Work Education. During this time, the social work faculty and students began to express concerns about issues related to graduates of the social work program not being eligible to sit for licensure exams or advanced standing in Master of Social Work degree programs. In response to these issues, Dr. Robinson initiated the process of seeking initial accreditation of the social work concentration from the Council on Social Work Education. The first accreditation self study was completed in November of 1992. In February of 1993 the Council on Social Work Education authorized an initial accreditation site visit for the Department. The site visit resulted in an extensive set of recommendations, the most important of which were that a separate major in social work be developed and that the Department be renamed the Department of Sociology and Social Work. The social work program was granted initial accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education in June of 1999.

Under the leadership of the new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Bernice Johnson, the social work program experienced tremendous growth and development during the 1990s. Dr. Isaac A. Robinson was appointed as Director of the Social Work Program in May of 1993 and subsequently appointed as Chair of the newly established Department of Social Work in 2007. The new Department added new faculty to develop needed areas of specialization. Dr. Blenda Crayton was recruited to assume the duties of Director of the Baccalaureate Degree program in August of 2007. She provided leadership in the expansion of the program’s enrollment and also the expertise needed for reaffirmation of accreditation of the BSW degree program and the initial accreditation of the new MSW degree program.

Our entrance into the twenty-first Century witnessed a new focus on graduate education within the Department of Social Work. Under the leadership of Dr. Isaac A. Robinson, the Department was granted permission by the University of North Carolina System to establish a new Master of Social Work Degree program. The inaugural class of thirty-five fulltime students was admitted in August of 2008. The Master of Social Work Degree program, in a short time span, became a high demand graduate program averaging sixty applicants per application period.

Since the 1992-1993 academic year, the Department of Social Work has produced over 300 graduates. These graduates have gone on to graduate education and positions in the social work profession throughout North Carolina and the Eastern region of the United States. Over one third of our graduates have earned Masters of Social Work Degrees from a wide selection of institutions of higher education, including Smith College, The University of Pennsylvania, The University of Illinois, The
University of Michigan, The University of Wisconsin, Howard University and Clark Atlanta University. Our graduates hold leadership positions in policy and administrative positions in governmental and private social services agencies throughout the United States.

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