

Subject: [col-sw-stu-MSW] GSSW Fall Updates and Next Steps

Date: Monday, May 10, 2021 at 9:23:41 AM Mountain Daylight Time

From: GSSW Academic Affairs

To: Leslie Hasche

Key points from this email:

- **Reviews efforts and share results from faculty and student surveys** about course duration and planning for Fall Quarter.
- **Updates fall Denver Campus courses to 2 hours**, with some extended to 2 hours and 50 minutes, per faculty guidance and student input.
- Invites students to join GSSW Deans and Faculty on **May 19, 2021 at 4:00 pm MT for a virtual discussion** of our planning process and next steps. Please RSVP [here](#).

Dear GSSW Denver Campus Students,

We write with several updates about Fall Quarter 2021, prior to registration on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

Students Letters to Express Concerns

We thank the students who organized and shared feedback about the plans for Fall Quarter. On April 30, 2021, we received a request from 74 Denver Campus MSW Students, including foundation and concentration year students, to:

1. Extend class time to our pre-pandemic schedule of Denver Campus courses running for 2 hours and 50 minutes in-person,
2. Involve students in our schedule planning by surveying about class duration specifically,
3. Offer transparency by sharing with students the survey results, and
4. Engage collectively with a town hall meeting to review survey results and to hear students' concerns.

Actions to Date to Gather GSSW Community Feedback

GSSW Deans, Program Directors, and all full-time appointed faculty greatly value a collective approach that involves student voice in our planning efforts for courses. Here is a summary of efforts we have taken and how students have been involved or asked to be involved throughout:

- In April 2020, we established a special GSSW Task Force that involved faculty, staff, and a student representative, that has met monthly to offer guidance to Academic Affairs, Field, and Student Services.
- Additionally, we have student representatives who join our monthly MSW Curriculum Committee meetings where we discuss courses and schedule plans.
- We surveyed students by in-person program: Denver Campus in May 202, Western Colorado in June 2020, and Four Corners in February 2021. These survey results were presented in meetings with students that were recorded. The prior Denver Campus recording is located on the [GSSW Student Resource Portal](#).

- In March 2021, we collected the following faculty and student data specifically about length of courses, across all MSW programs:
 - All GSSW full-time appointed, and adjunct faculty were invited to complete an Annual Teaching Interest Survey that asked about preferred course length for next year based on pedagogy of the given course(s) and public health guidance. Faculty were also surveyed regarding supports needed to address concerns. Results from the 141 faculty responses on course length(1) were:
 - 62% (n = 87) requested that we keep the 90 minutes sync with 90 minutes of async materials
 - 30% (n = 42) requested that we offer classes in 2 hours sync with 1 hour of async materials
 - 8% (n = 12) requested to return to full 3 hours of sync live class times
 - All GSSW students who took courses in Winter 2021 Quarter were asked to complete course evaluations, which had added questions regarding student feedback on course modality and length to inform our schedule for Fall 2021.
 - We share this [full spreadsheet](#) that provides section specific results and course summary findings.
 - The general themes were that the courses were effective as they are, and that in-person modality was preferred for Denver Campus.
 - Ratings indicated students *agreed more than disagreed* that courses should have *extended class time beyond the 90 minutes* (2).
 - By asking these items within the course evaluations, we were able to gather specific feedback by course. This feedback was shared with the instructor of record, as well as the lead full-time appointed faculty responsible for the course content and syllabus, the program directors, the task force, and the deans.
 - Throughout the year, we have invited students to share their concerns with us through the following opportunities:
 - Quarterly Conversations with the Deans, which are advertised through The Student Advocate and via the student portal. The most recent event was held on April 21, 2021, and no students attended.
 - Bi-weekly virtual office hours with Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Leslie Hasche, and Denver Campus MSW Program Director, Kate Ross, on Mondays and Thursdays, 11:00 am - 12:00 noon.
 - GSSW Graduate Student Association (GSA) and other student group leaders meet regularly with the Assistant Dean for Students, Deana Ahmad, who helps coordinate student involvement in GSSW committees.
 - Invitations to meet with the GSSW Deans and Program Directors, as needed.
 - Associate Dean for Academic Affairs reviews all mid-quarter and final course evaluations to assess for themes to improve the program, training and support offered to faculty, and to intervene on specific concerns.

The student letter and requests were shared with GSSW full time appointed faculty at a meeting on May 5, 2021, so they could consider these students' requests for longer class times for the next academic year. During this meeting, faculty discussed DU and public health guidance for course planning:

- DU vaccine requirement will allow for loosening of campus protocols, but the specifics are not known yet (i.e., some discussion of 3-foot versus no physical distancing requirements).

- GSSW class sizes and capacity in the building will be expanded. Classes will have approximately 18 students, which matches our pre-pandemic offerings where classes averaged around 20 students.
- The length of class time is informed by the contact requirement per credit hour (50 minutes per credit hour) through synchronous / asynchronous learning activities. Homework and required readings are in addition to the contact hour, as established by federal regulations for higher education.
- That we also received individual outreach from students through emails and attendance in office hours. Here, several students expressed concerns about longer course duration and stated their preference that courses keep to 90 minutes of synchronous contact. Some students expressed concerns for the impact of longer synchronous sessions on their ability to manage their course load, field internships, mental health, self-care, and personal and family responsibilities.
- Per university and accreditation guidelines, full-time appointed faculty are responsible for the MSW curriculum, including the length of a course based on the best pedagogy for course content and modality.
 - For example, MSW@Denver online courses have always been in a flipped learning format that is effective for online learning with 90 minutes of synchronous and 90 minutes of asynchronous learning activities.
 - As another example, *SOWK 4020: Integrated SW Practice for Social Justice*, and *SOWK 4007: Community / Macro SW Theory & Practice*, are designed as 4 credit courses that have consistently had a structure of 2 hours and 50 minutes of synchronous class time and 50 minutes of asynchronous learning activities.
- As a professional, graduate education, faculty draw from adult learning science that underscores the effectiveness of asynchronous or 'flipped' pedagogy and how learning which is self-directed improves learner engagement and outcomes.
 - The pre-thinking offered by asynchronous learning activities helps students come better prepared to dive deeper into discussion, application, and critical dialogue around the course content during the live synchronous class time.
 - Additionally, the use of asynchronous learning activities allows the adult learner to have more flexibility in when and how they engage in the content.

GSSW Response and Next Steps

Given the faculty survey data, the student course evaluations, the student petition, individual student outreach and finally, the faculty input and guidance, we offer this updated plan for Fall Quarter:

- **We will update course times to a default of 2 hours, with some options for courses to run at 2 hours and 50 minutes.**
- **We do not plan to survey students again, given that registration is this week, and we have existing data.**
- **We offer these results and descriptions of our decision process in this email in the spirit of transparency.**
- **We invite Denver Campus MSW Students to a virtual meeting on May 19, 2021 from 4:00 - 5:00 pm** with the GSSW Deans, Program Directors, and Full-time Appointed Faculty. Please use this [registration link](#), where you can also enter comments or questions to be answered. During this session, we will review the survey results and decision-making process, and then hear from students about these plans for Fall 2021 or other concerns.

We conclude by saying thank you. It is important that we consider all student and faculty feedback as we move forward in planning for how GSSW will schedule courses during this transition period related to the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding public health guidance. Given some of the uncertainties beyond our control and our desire to be intentional, collective, and transparent in our scheduling planning process, we will continue these conversations and course-specific survey items within the evaluation system throughout the 2021-2022 academic year.

We look forward to your continued participation in this process and to you joining us on May 19 so that we can dialogue with students about this process.

Sincerely,

Kate Ross, Denver Campus MSW Program Director

Aneesha Bhrawani, Assistant Dean for Field Education

Deana Ahmad, Assistant Dean for Students

Leslie Hasche, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Amanda Moore McBride, GSSW Dean

1 - Faculty Teaching Survey Question: GSSW modified course modalities and times for the pandemic. We anticipate that we will continue to have these modalities in place for some of next year. With that, what do you recommend for the length of the synchronous live session time, whether in-person or online?

2 - Questions on Student Winter 2021 Evaluations (Rated as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = disagree, more than agree, 4 = agree more than disagree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree):

1. The course is effective in online learning modality.
2. This course should be prioritized for in-person modality.
3. This course should have extended 'live session' synchronous learning time beyond 90 minutes.

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