

# leadership ladders:

STEPS TO A GREAT CAREER IN SOCIAL WORK

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## the value of dual degrees

Social workers who are interested in moving into positions with more responsibility and greater leadership potential may benefit from holding dual degrees. Dual degree programs are designed to provide social work students with two degrees upon graduation. These are separate and distinct degrees, and the recipients may market themselves as having both a social work and other degree, such as law, public health, business, public administration, and divinity. (Jayaratne, S. 2008).

### WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW WHEN APPLYING TO A DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM?

Even though MSW dual degree programs have existed for at least a couple of decades, it has only been within the past three to four years that data about these programs has been collected. Recent data collected by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), identifies at least seventy eight MSW programs nationwide that offer dual degrees (Reardon, C., 2009). The most likely MSW dual degree programs pair a social work degree with degrees in law, public health, divinity, and business administration. However, there is

dual degree programs offered at major universities that includes MSW with urban planning degree or a master of science in information degree; these are only a few examples of the expanding MSW dual degree options (Reardon, C., 2009).

There has been an increase in dual degree programs in social work graduate programs. These programs are open to qualified students who simultaneously matriculate in a graduate school social work program and another graduate degree area. Some common elements of dual degree programs are:

- » They offer two degrees simultaneously.



National Association of Social Workers

National Association of Social Workers  
750 First Street NE, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20002-4241



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- » They reduce the time needed to earn both degrees, compared with independent enrollment in two separate degree programs.
- » They count some subset of coursework typically toward both degrees.
- » They reduce the cost of education by virtue of a reduction in terms enrolled.
- » Students are admitted to both programs, thus having to meet the admission requirements of both programs.
- » Students take courses in both programs (Jayaratne, S. (2008).

#### **WHY DO PEOPLE WANT DUAL DEGREES?**

- » Dual degrees increase flexibility and choices in the job market.
- » Dual degrees contribute to a more competitive résumé.
- » Individuals and their employers benefit from the multiple skills and knowledge provided by two degrees (Miller, S., Hopkins, K., Grief, G., (2008).

#### **WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING AT DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS?**

- » Carefully consider career goals before beginning a program. How will a dual degrees affect those goals?
- » Do the research related to your career goals, such as talking to faculty, students, and alumni of the dual degree program that interests you. These same contacts may be possible mentors.
- » Make an accurate financial plan to cover the costs of a dual degree program.

- » Access personal time management skills. There is more information to absorb in a dual degree program.

#### **WHAT ARE JOB POSSIBILITIES?**

Graduates of dual degree programs, such as social work and law, business, public administration, public health are often in leadership positions in the public and not-for-profit sectors. They also hold management positions, such as executive director, vice president, director, in their employment settings

#### **REFERENCES**

- Jayaratne, S. (2008). Dual degree programs. In T. Mizrahi & L.E. Davis (Eds.-in-Chief), *Encyclopedia of social work* (20th ed., Vol.2, pp. 85-89). Washington, DC and New York: NASW Press and Oxford University Press.
- Miller, S., Hopkins, K., Grief, G., (2008). Dual degree social work programs: where are the programs and where are the graduates? *Advances in Social Work*, 9, 29-43.

Reardon, C., (2009). Dual Degree Programs – *Connecting social work with other disciplines*, *Social Work Today*. Retrieved, March 21, 2011, from [www.socialworktoday.com/archive/092109p16.shtml](http://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/092109p16.shtml).

#### **RESOURCE**

**Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) at [www.cswe.org/](http://www.cswe.org/)**

CSWE accredits schools of social work programs throughout the nation and maintains data on social work education and programs.