

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Consent Item:

Western Kentucky University Program Approval: School Social Worker

Staff Recommendation:

The Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) should approve Western Kentucky University's School Social Work Certificate program as recommended by the Program Review Committee.

Rationale:

The submitted programs have demonstrated compliance with the EPSB regulations for admission and standards alignment. The proposed educator preparation programs follow the appropriate regulations (16 KAR 5:010; 16 KAR 2:010; 16 KAR 2:070) outlining program requirements for program approval as established by the EPSB. The programs have completed the review process and received a recommendation for approval from the Program Review Committee

Applicable Statutes and Regulation:

KRS 161.028, KRS 161.030, 16 KAR 5:010, 16 KAR 5:020, 16 KAR 2:010, 16 KAR 2:070

Action Question:

Should the EPSB approve the School Social Work Graduate Certificate program submitted by Western Kentucky University?

History/Background:

Existing Policy: KRS 161.028 and KRS 161.030 require the EPSB to establish curricula for educator preparation programs in Kentucky and approve such programs for Educator Preparation Providers. The Educator Preparation Branch and the Program Review Committee evaluated the program review documents submitted for approval against performance-based program certification guidelines established by the EPSB. The program proposal meets all the requirements set forth by the EPSB.

Summary: Western Kentucky University is seeking approval for a School Social Work Graduate Certificate Program. This program is an advanced generalist program designed to prepare students to work across all levels of practice, emphasizing practice with diverse rural populations. Mental health concerns are on the rise among youth, contributing to a greater need for mental health services in schools. The mental health shortage is especially prevalent in rural communities, a shortage expected to double in Kentucky as nearly half of Kentucky counselors retire by 2028. Research indicates that between 18-20 percent of students have mental health issues significant enough to cause impairment to major life functions. Both State and Federal legislation is supportive of increasing equitable access to school-based mental health supports, so students can learn and thrive.

Budget Impact: There is no budgetary impact.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

OELE staff and the Program Review Committee have reviewed this program proposal and determined that the program meets the requirements for approval. The program has completed the review process and received a recommendation for approval from the Program Review Committee per 16 KAR 5:010.

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