

May 5, 2016

Dr. James Fielder
Director of Academic Affairs
Maryland Higher Education Commission
839 Bestgate Rd.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Dr. Fielder,

Salisbury University objects to the proposal by the Morgan State University to offer a distance education offering of the existing Master of Social Work (MSW) degree program in Maryland. As noted under Education Article § 11-206 of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Code of Maryland Regulations 13B.02.03.25, area #4, we believe this action will cause “unreasonable program duplication which would cause demonstrable harm to another institution.” Below we present two possible resolutions.

In 2014, The Maryland Higher Education Commission approved Salisbury University’s substantial modification of the existing Master of Social Work (M.S.W.) by offering a distance education option. As part of this approval, we were given several conditions:

1. Students in Salisbury University’s online M.S.W. program, field placements must be targeted to areas of the State that currently are not served, or are underserved, by existing M.S.W. programs.
2. M.S.W. field placements for students in the online program may be arranged in Western Maryland, Central Maryland, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore.
3. These field placements may not be made in Baltimore City or in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, or Prince George's counties.
4. Additionally, Salisbury University may not target marketing, advertising, or recruitment for the online M.S.W. program in the jurisdictions listed above. Salisbury University shall publicize the field placement conditions associated with this program approval on the institution's website and in its catalog.

We are requesting that Morgan State University’s online offering of the MSW degree receive comparable restrictions. First, field placements can be arranged in Baltimore City, or in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, or Prince George’s counties. Second, field placements should not be in Western Maryland, Central Maryland, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore. In addition, we request that Morgan State not be permitted to target marketing, advertising, or recruitment for the online M.S.W. program Western Maryland, Central Maryland, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore.

We have an alternate proposal which involves the removal of all restrictions placed on Salisbury University’s online MSW program. Salisbury University’s Director of Online Field Education, is developing a working collaboration with MSU’s Field Director. The field placement directors met while attending a Social Work Distance Education conference this past spring. This collaboration assists both institutions. Restrictions on field placements only limit options for students at both universities and worse they potentially limit options for the families and individuals seeking social services.

We see this removal of restrictions on field placements as reasonable given differences in our program mission statements. MSU's statement includes a focus on more urban populations: "To fully prepare **urban** social work leaders who are committed to the alleviation of human suffering, social justice, and the improvement of the quality of life for **diverse urban populations**". Moreover, MSU's vision is that "The Social Work Program at Morgan State University endeavors to become a significant educational and professional labor force resource in the **City of Baltimore, Maryland and other urban areas in the state of Maryland** and nationally in addressing the **human needs of urban individuals**, families, organizations, and communities through the **preparation of competent urban social workers**, social work educators, policy advocates, and social work researchers". Salisbury University's mission statement does not have this metropolitan focus.

In closing, Salisbury University objects to the proposal by the Morgan State University to offer a distance education version of the existing MSW degree program. In this letter we offer two resolutions. The first option entails MHEC putting equivalent restrictions on MSU's online MSW program similar to those placed on Salisbury University in 2014. The second option is the removal of the 2014 restrictions placed on Salisbury University online program. Both propositions are reasonable as they involve equitable treatment for both institutions.

Sincerely,



Diane D. Allen, Ed.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President
for Academic Affairs

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cc: file
T. Hollander