Smith College School for Social Work

Academic Adviser

The Smith College School for Social Work SCSSW was founded in 1918 for the express purpose of preparing social workers to provide mental health services to traumatized soldiers and their families at the end of World War I. Building on this history and its reputation for excellence in clinical education, the School’s pedagogical mission remains focused on developing clinical social workers firmly grounded in a synthesis of psychological and social theories. With its intensive block program structure and immersive internship experiences, the MSW curriculum is designed to educate students for the provision of effective clinical social work services in diverse settings and populations. The PhD program, established in 1964, prepares advanced clinical practitioners for leadership positions in social work education, research, and practice. In both programs, the School aims to produce generative clinical social workers adept in relationally-based, culturally responsive social work practices, well-prepared to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing field and to help shape clinical social work for future generations.

The School’s commitment to becoming an anti-racism institution infuses all aspects of its programs; all faculty members are expected to actively contribute to this commitment in all aspects of their work.

Smith College is part of a five college consortium centrally located in the Northeast corridor between Boston and New York in an academically engaged and demographically diverse area.

PRIMARY FUNCTIONS:

The Academic Adviser plays a critical educational role for students in the Smith system. As the student’s Adviser and the faculty’s point-person, the Academic Adviser is in the role to help the student anticipate and prevent unnecessary educational challenges and in supporting the student and the faculty in problem solving when an educational issue does arise.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Academic Adviser enquires about students’ educational and professional goals and needs and helps students plan to achieve their goals in the program. The Academic Adviser provides students with information on educational issues such as program expectations, problem-solving procedures, professional expectations in class and in the field, and the resources available to help the student succeed. First year students are required to meet with their Academic Adviser at least one time in their first summer. Second year students are not required to, yet are encouraged to meet with their Academic Adviser during their second summer. Similarly, third year students are assigned an adviser, who they may choose to access over the course of the summer, but are not required to attend advising.

The Academic Adviser will support the student in trouble-shooting foreseeable challenges, or problem-solving emerging educational issues as needed. This includes being in touch with the student’s other instructors to determine the extent of a particular problem and to help the student/school address the emerging issue as well as meeting with the student to address ongoing issues that other instructors have not been able to resolve with the student. These issues can range from: specific learning challenges, to behavioral issues, to the need for skills development in a particular area, to preparing for field. Other faculty may reach out to a student’s Academic
Adviser to discuss concerns regarding the student’s academic and/or professional performance. The Academic Adviser will check in with these students and help them plan to address the identified issues. A number of meetings may be required to help students in difficulty. The Academic Adviser will follow the Smith College School for Social Work Problem Solving Process as outlined in the Student Handbook. See https://www.smith.edu/ssw/academics/msw-program/msw-handbook-list/masters-program-handbook-a18/procedures-problem-solving-a18 for important information. The Academic Adviser will seek consultation from the Course Coordinator, and/or the Chair of the Practice Sequence as needed and keep the Chair informed of student concerns as they develop. The Academic Adviser will serve an instrumental role in a consultation or review of a student experiencing academic issues warranting a consultation or review.

The Academic Adviser will share salient information with other faculty members and administrators to assist students in challenging situations. When applicable, the Academic Adviser, will work with the Course Coordinator or the Chair of the sequence to determine when an informal problem-solving process is not sufficient to help the student address a particular concern, and the issue should be brought forward to the Associate Dean for consideration for a consultation or a review. In these circumstances, the Academic Adviser will: Gather relevant information from the students’ instructors; Write a brief summary of the issue, outlining the problem-solving steps that have been taken, and detailing the immediate ongoing concerns; and present this information in the consultation or review.

The Academic Adviser will focus on the educational aspect of the role by learning about and helping students to address the concrete challenges they face and how these challenges may be affecting their learning. Additionally, the Academic Adviser will refer students with mental health issues for confidential counseling at the Schacht Center of Smith College as indicated.

The Academic Adviser should become familiar with student support resources on campus and help students utilize the supports provided as needed. These include but are not limited to: the Office of Disability Services, the Writing Center, the Learning Specialist, the Consultation service at the Schacht Center, The Sotomayor fellow, the spiritual support director etc.

The Academic Adviser will receive information, with the student’s informed consent, about advisees who are registered with the Office of Disability Services for accommodations. Depending on the issue the student brings forward for support, the adviser may need to consider the particular accommodations provided to help the student come up with a workable plan to meet their needs. The Office of Disability Services is also available to consult with advisers who are working to support students in solving specific problems as needed.

The Academic Adviser will support students in implementing any educational plan coming out of a consultation or review for the duration of the summer term.

QUALIFICATIONS
An MSW from an accredited school of social work is preferred; master level degrees from a closely related profession with direct relevance to social work will be considered. Two years applied post-master’s experience is strongly preferred in most areas of teaching. Candidates should have a demonstrated trajectory of successful teaching excellence.