As part of St. Ambrose University’s commitment to social justice and service to others, we have developed a special academic pathway that allows students interested in four areas of undergraduate study—Psychology, Sociology, Theology, and Women and Gender Studies—to earn both their bachelor’s degree and a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree in just five years.

The roots of social justice practice at St. Ambrose University run deep and have often been expressed through action inside and outside the classroom. From the rights of labor and migrant workers in the 1930s, to Catholic Action and civil rights in the 1950s, to the issues of economic and racial inequality today, St. Ambrose students, alumni, and faculty have a rich history of being engaged with the big issues, and being willing to take action to make our world a better place.

We still shape the character of a St. Ambrose education through an emphasis on social justice and empowerment. The Master of Social Work program has been at the forefront of those academic programs since it was established in 1997. The MSW program, which offers a concentration in Advanced Empowerment Practice, prepares graduate social work professionals to enrich lives and advocate for a just society.

Many of our Psychology, Sociology, Theology, and Women and Gender Studies students know that their career plans and passion for making a difference will lead to work in the social work field. Many of our own alumni from these areas have fulfilling careers in human services. In this field, the MSW is the desired degree for maximum career flexibility.

The U.S. Department of Labor Statistics estimates the need for social work professionals will grow 19 percent by 2022, with high demand in healthcare and social services related fields.

The new BA-MSW program means that undergraduate students interested in ultimately going on for graduate studies in social work will have a clear plan for earning both degrees in only five years; thereby saving at least a year’s worth of time and cost (potentially saving several thousands of dollars; less tuition equals less debt), plus they can start their career a year earlier (gaining opportunity cost of a year’s wages and experience).
BA–MSW Program

four pathways, two degrees, five years

What is your undergraduate interest and why might you think about combining that with a Master of Social Work degree? How can an MSW benefit students interested in social services, human services, counseling, or other fields that may lead to social work related employment?

The St. Ambrose combined BA–MSW degree may be especially appealing to students who are motivated to help others, who pursue making connections to enact change, who have a strong drive to ask “what can I do to make a difference?” Such students may think first about helping at an individual level, but often come to think in terms of wanting to learn how to change society.

When you major in Psychology, Sociology, Theology, or Women and Gender Studies, and chose the BA–MSW pathway, you’ll have a well-integrated program that wraps your major into a career.

> **Psychology** Psychology majors benefit from unique coursework on mental health, developmental and social influences on human behavior, and how the brain functions. This provides a solid foundation for developing skills that social workers need when assessing and counseling clients, and offers extra insight into client issues and motivations. Psychology’s roots in conducting scientific research prepares social workers to understand and design research in their field to use best practices with clients and organizations. This pairing of Psychology and Social Work, as well as the completion of an internship, can help students stand out in job interviews.

> **Sociology** The sociology major equips students with the ability to demonstrate respect and empathy for persons from diverse cultures and backgrounds, and to propose solutions to social problems reflecting principles of equality and social justice. Social workers meet people where they are in life, and a background in sociology provides powerful tools for understanding the social forces that can shape personal behavior and social circumstances. The MSW is a great fit for students interested in social justice and how to affect change in someone’s life in order to avoid previous difficult situations.

> **Theology** Students majoring in theology engage biblical and religious traditions through a lens of social justice and compassion. A theology degree partnered with the MSW enables students to identify areas of need in our contemporary world and ways to enact change based upon Catholic Social Teachings and biblical principles of justice and liberation. This path is ideal for students interested in an occupation that enables them to put their faith in action.

> **Women and Gender Studies** Individuals interested in justice, counseling and community activism find that the Women and Gender Studies major provides a framework for supporting human rights by working with people, locally and globally, and for being strong social justice advocates, which resonates strongly with the mission of social work. The empowerment model is a hallmark of the St. Ambrose MSW program, and helps students gain broader perspectives on the human condition preparing them to be advocates for justice in a rapidly changing global society.

BA-MSW Program Features

> Students pursuing this track will apply to the MSW program in the second semester of their sophomore year.

> The junior and senior year of the undergraduate major will overlap with what has traditionally been the first year of the MSW program.

> All requirements of the undergraduate major will be met, as well as General Education requirements. Thirty credits of the MSW will count toward the undergraduate degree.

> Internship and field experience opportunities will allow students to apply, refine, and integrate knowledge acquired in the classroom with experiences in social agencies.

> The first cohort for the BA-MSW program will begin in fall 2016.