

# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL POLICY & PRACTICE

## Overview

The School of Social Policy & Practice has long been known for its dedication to social good and educating students committed to supporting marginalized individuals, families, and communities. It began in 1908 under the Children's Bureau of Philadelphia and became affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania in 1935. The School formally merged with the University in 1948 as the School of Social Work. In 2005, our name was changed to the School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2) to reflect a broader mission that today includes five top-ranked degree programs – Master of Social Work, Master of Science in Social Policy, Master of Science in Nonprofit Leadership, Doctorate in Clinical Social Work, and Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare – along with certificate programs and dual degrees. Dedicated to producing social change agents – policy makers, practitioners, educators, activists – our rigorous curriculum includes practicum placements, internships, and leadership practicums across Philadelphia and beyond.

The School has articulated a social philosophy that shapes the educational programs offered, the research undertaken, and the leadership provided. This statement of social philosophy – Penn Approach (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/who-we-are/#penn-approach>) – is first and foremost an evolving philosophy. It reflects our faculty's commitment to introduce students to a variety of perspectives related to social work practice, nonprofit leadership, social policy, research, social problems, and the nature of human behavior in the social environment.

SP2 offers a curriculum that integrates the development of practice skills with research, the study of specific social problems and social policies, theories and methods of social change, knowledge about human relationships, and individual and societal responses to institutional issues. Students will be educated in how to confront societal problems in a time of diminishing resources, to provide leadership to nonprofit organizations, and to design and facilitate real-world solutions while fostering meaningful societal change. The world needs leaders – policy makers, practitioners, educators, activists – equipped with tools to make a difference. SP2 students will be prepared to become those leaders, and to harness the power of policy and practice to make lasting positive change.

Learn more about SP2's leadership. (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/deans-message/>)

Learn more about SP2's history. (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/who-we-are/>)

## Vision

The passionate pursuit of social innovation, impact, and justice.

## Mission

The School of Social Policy & Practice contributes to the advancement of more effective, efficient, and humane human services through education, research, and civic engagement. In pursuit of this mission, our theory-based masters and doctoral programs in social work, social welfare, nonprofit leadership, and social policy encourage students to think and work across disciplinary lines and cultures as well as across national and international boundaries. The pursuit of social justice is at

the heart of the School's knowledge-building activities. Our innovative educational and research programs reinforce our vision of active student engagement in their own learning as well as that of social agencies and larger social collectivities organized at the local, national, and international levels.

## A Welcoming Community

Throughout our history, the School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2) has been committed to understanding and embracing differences.

SP2 strives to be a space of principled community, valuing differences of opinion, background, and experience and working to foster an institutional environment where we all think openly, honestly, reflectively, and deeply about the questions and ideas that both unite and divide us. The topics that we grapple with – from homelessness and discrimination to prisoner re-entry and poverty, responsible philanthropy to economic mobility, aging and child welfare – are some of the biggest in the academy and in society. They can sometimes seem intractable, but we believe that addressing them through a truly thoughtful and collaborative lens empowers us to work together to re-imagine and rebuild our social world.

As students become empowered to work for a more fair and compassionate world, we are committed to helping them learn how to have difficult conversations, listen without prejudgement, and address social problems from varied perspectives. Throughout each academic year, our "One Book, One SP2" common read facilitates cross-program dialogue.

More information. (<https://sp2.upenn.edu/a-welcoming-community/>)

## Faculty & Research

Research at SP2 upholds Penn's commitment to engage locally and globally and is led by renowned faculty who are highly respected practitioners, educators, and mentors. Internationally regarded for producing cutting-edge research, our distinguished scholars, practitioners, and policy advisors bring a broad range of real-world expertise and interdisciplinary focus to the classroom setting. The research of the SP2 faculty is transforming policy and shaping best practices while stretching across the social sciences and the humanities in ways that link nuanced methodological inquiries and important research questions to attempts at real-world problem-solving.

SP2 faculty members are readily available to our students. They are inspirational instructors and supportive mentors and advisors, helping students learn to approach problems in innovative and creative ways.

SP2 is also home to a number of transdisciplinary and collaborative research centers and initiatives. Students, faculty, and collaborators connect to further groundbreaking scholarship in areas such as philanthropy, aging, social impact, children's policy, violence and abuse, and guaranteed income. Our research centers and initiatives advance knowledge that drives social good and social innovation on international, national, and local levels.

Research Areas:

- Economic Security
- Children, Women & Family Well-Being
- Data-Driven Policy Analysis & Evidence-Based Practice
- Health Equity, Mental Health & Aging
- Mass Incarceration, Homelessness & Substance Use

- Social Innovation, Philanthropy & Nonprofit Management
- Identity, Immigration & Racism
- Climate Inequality

Learn more about the faculty. (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/standing-faculty/>)

Learn about research. (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/research-page/>)

## Outreach and Engagement

Philadelphia is a big place grappling with big challenges. It's home to nonprofits, hospitals, and social service agencies doing innovative work, and SP2 is an important part of this ecosystem; students spend a combined 250,000 hours each year making a difference in the community. All master's students hone their skills and do their part to advance the social good here in the city and beyond.

## Practicum Placement

Practicum education is an integral part of the Master of Social Work (MSW) curriculum, allowing students to encounter real-world learning experiences directly related to their classroom curriculum. By working with SP2's partner agencies, students gain the opportunity to test what they have learned as a means of evaluating their own social work practice. MSW students must complete two internships in social service. We have an ever-evolving database of over 900 agencies and strive to have varied learning opportunities for students that include, among many areas of practice, child welfare, health, and education.

Practicum education is systematically designed, supervised, and evaluated based on criteria developed in accordance with the Council on Social Work Education standards. Practicum placement provides students with:

1. Learning experiences directly related to the academic/classroom curriculum;
2. Opportunities to test what they have learned; and
3. Means of evaluating their own social work practice.

Student experiences in practicum practice are also integrated into classroom work and learning.

Learn more. (<https://sp2.upenn.edu/practicum-placement/>)

## Social Policy Internship

Students in the Master of Science in Social Policy program will hone policy analysis skills and gain valuable work experience through the required policy internship. This internship is tailored to students' interests and past social policy experiences and can be completed anywhere in the world.

During the policy internship, students have the opportunity to gain real-world experience and apply classroom learning and research skills. Internship activities may include policy analysis, data analysis, research, policy-making, advocacy, policy implementation, policy communications, and policy evaluation activities. Internships span all types of agencies and organizations, including nonprofits, research institutions, advocacy organizations, think tanks, state and local government, federal government, for-profit institutions, and private foundations.

Learn more. (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/internships/>)

## Leadership Practicum

The Leadership Practicum enhances Master of Science in Nonprofit Leadership students' understanding of leadership in nonprofits and social enterprises and fosters a commitment by nonprofit leaders to cultivate the next generation of transformative leaders. During the practicum, students witness leadership in action and benefit from individual mentoring and leadership development.

Students will either complete a placement experience, consisting of a minimum of 250 hours of practicum time, or a mentor-only experience. Practicum experiences can be in-person, hybrid, or virtual at local, national, or international organizations.

Learn more. (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/leadership-practicum/>)