



Grand Challenges of Social Work Western Consortium History

The Grand Challenges

"Grand Challenges" have been adopted by disciplines, professions and major organizations in the United States for over 100 years. They are defined as deeply significant problems which, if solved, will fundamentally improve society or human knowledge. Most grand challenges have a ten-fifteen-year time horizon and assume that some progress has already been made toward problem reduction. An underlying expectation is that they will draw on science as a part of achieving major advances.

The Grand Challenges for Social Work in 2016

The American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare launched the [12 Grand Challenges](#) for social work in January 2016. Since that time, there has been a flurry of activity by universities, scholars, and others interested in this aspiring social agenda. *However, the role of schools with a teaching or service mission, smaller institutions, and programs with a limited budget has not been well defined.* These programs together with community practitioners are special stakeholders in the full implementation of our Grand Challenges, bringing an essential array of fresh perspectives.

The Western Consortium

In 2016, the University of Washington at Seattle, the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, and Portland State University in Oregon led the formation of a Western Social Work Consortium to address the Grand Challenges. There are approximately 61 accredited departments and schools in the western United States. These programs would form the nucleus of the Consortium. This 2024 Consortium will mark the 4th convening of these groups.

The purpose of the Consortium would be to establish a collaborative network based on the Grand Challenges across these Western states. The Consortium would identify and implement creative initiatives involving teaching innovation, new community practices in field, scholarly professional learning networks, and fresh concepts of community service. Awards, recognitions and roles for students would be proposed. Strategies for identifying resources to support these efforts would be outlined, perhaps on a regional basis and with a distinctive Western character.