Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM IN BACHELOR OF ARTS IN HUMAN SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Committee Action Requested: Recommend to the Board approval of the request for a new program in Bachelor of Arts in Human Services in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Northern Iowa.

The Council of Provosts and Board office staff reviewed the proposal and recommend approval.

Description of Proposed Program: The human service program will train students to work in human and social service fields. Upon completion of the degree, students will have knowledge of typical and atypical development, family dynamics and functioning, services provided to individuals and families, and the policies that govern these services. The human services major is multi-disciplinary and utilizes courses from across the social sciences.

Previously, this program was an exploratory major within the Bachelor of Liberal Studies program. Given the strong student interest, with approximately 100 students currently enrolled, we are now putting it through the formal curricular process to become a stand-alone major within the Department of Family, Aging and Counseling. By moving the program from Online and Distance Education to the Department of Family, Aging and Counseling, the program will be more visible to students while putting them in closer proximity to their professors and advisors. The Human Services BA will continue to be an entirely online program, serving place-bound students interested in working within the human services fields.

Academic Objectives: Upon completion of this major, students will:

- Understand typical and atypical development across the lifespan for individuals and families.
- Be able to identify appropriate services for individuals in the field of human services.
- Assist individuals and families in improving the quality of their lives through programs and interventions.
- Understand the policies that broadly govern human service programs and organizations.

The culminating course of the human services program is a three-hour internship in an experience related to human services. This experience allows students to receive mentoring from a professional in the field and often leads to employment at the location where the student did the internship. This experience is completed at a distance so that students are engaging with their local communities.

Need for Program: There is a shortage of bachelor's-level human/social services workers in the state of Iowa (Projections Central, 2020), specifically in rural areas. However, many of the potential candidates for these jobs are place-bound (Projections Central, 2020). As a result, an online human services program allows individuals to train for these positions. Student interest has grown strongly over the past four years as an exploratory major, reaching a current enrollment of roughly 100 students. Students contacting UNI about the program have also increased. UNI has collected data on student inquiries about the human services independent study program since January 1st, 2024. In the 2024 cycle, 101 students contacted UNI about the program, and in the 2025 cycle (the most recent completed cycle), 201 students contacted UNI about the program.

Resources Needed for Program: There are no needed reallocations, equipment or personnel for this program. It currently uses existing courses across multiple programs, with the core coming from family services and gerontology courses. It has been in existence as an exploratory major for four years and is resource-neutral. In addition, the program is solely online and, as a result, does not require facility resources beyond what is already required for the multi-disciplinary courses it utilizes. Additional faculty will be added only as a result of a significant enrollment increase.

Funding Sources: The program uses existing courses from the curriculum across the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. In addition, the Department of Family, Aging and Counseling will provide programmatic oversight. As a result, no additional costs are anticipated.

Workforce Demand: In 2020, Iowa had around 44,410 direct/human service jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). By 2028, an additional 9,000 job openings are projected (Projections Central, 2020). This is largely due to the growing older adult population (Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 2021). Given the aging population, projections indicate that around 63,000 direct/human services jobs will need to be filled in the next decade (Projections Central, 2020). Many of these jobs are filled by employees who leave and re-enter the workforce to care for their families, which also increases the need for workers in this field (Projections Central, 2020).

A bachelor's degree in human services gives potential graduates access to a broad range of career options across diverse fields within the “helping professions.” As of late July 2026, there were over 1,000 active listings for a position in “human services” that requires a bachelor's degree (Indeed.com search). Though the list of potential employers is broad, they generally can be grouped into the following areas (Indeed.com, 2026):

- Nonprofit and community organizations, such as community outreach and community foundations
- Healthcare and clinical facilities, such as hospitals, substance abuse clinics, nursing homes, long-term care centers and adult day-centers
- Government and public sector, such as child welfare departments, state and local social service agencies, local, state, and federal correctional, probation and rehabilitation systems
- Educational settings, such as schools, after-school care programs and student/support services

Student Demand: As an exploratory major, enrollment grew quickly over the four years it has existed, now averaging roughly 100 students each year. Based on demand, the university anticipates this number will remain stable and may climb, as the program will gain visibility once it resides in a permanent academic department and in the university catalog. This program provides a pathway for place-bound students with work and family obligations to complete a UNI degree in human and social services.

Enrollment Projections:

	Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**
Majors	100	100	105	105	110
Non-majors	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Relationship to Existing Programs at Other Universities:

Bachelor's degree programs:

- The University of Iowa, BA in Interdepartmental Studies with applied human services track
- Upper Iowa University: Provides a flexible human services bachelor's degree with strong employment outcomes.
- Grand View University: Features an on-campus human services major utilizing the Des Moines area for field experience and internships.
- Buena Vista University: Offers a fully online human services degree covering addiction counseling and agency management

Associate degree programs:

- Hawkeye Community College: Offers a two-year human and family services transfer major AA degree designed to transition into bachelor's degree programs
- Kirkwood Community College: Provides a hands-on human services AAS degree along with liberal arts transfer options.
- DMACC: Features a local human services program focused on direct client interaction and agency work.
- Iowa Central Community College, Iowa Western Community College, Northeast Iowa Community College, and Iowa Lakes Community College offer statewide human and family services transfer paths.

The program plans to pursue articulations with community colleges that provide a human services associate degree.

In comparison with programs offered at private institutions, the proposed program is more affordable. The Grand View program is focused on the Des Moines region and the Buena Vista program focuses on addiction counseling and agency management.

The UI applied human services track within the Interdepartmental Studies program has a similar tuition cost as the proposed UNI program. Its core curriculum is more focused on psychology in comparison to the proposed UNI program that is more focused on family and lifespan development. Through the consultation discussion, it also became clear that the UI program and the UNI program target different pools of students. The UNI program is entirely online, meant to target place-bound students across the state. The UI program is a residential program aimed at retaining current UI students who are seeking an interdisciplinary pathway to completing a bachelor's degree. The two programs do not draw from or compete for the same pool of students, serving different educational needs.

Accreditation: No additional accreditation steps are necessary.

Date of Implementation: August 2027.