

UW-Milwaukee Microcredential Proposal

- 1. Microcredential name:** Peer Support Specialist
- 2. Brief description of microcredential cluster, including the competency it confers:**

The three-course, 9-credit microcredential will contribute to a federally funded project that expands the number of well-prepared certified peer specialists in Wisconsin. Titled Advancing Peer Education, Employment, and Recovery Services or A-PEERS, the project helps build and sustain Wisconsin's paraprofessional behavioral health workforce via advanced education and training along with job placement. Its ultimate aim is to increase access to behavioral services for socially and economically vulnerable patient and client groups. The A-PEERS project is a partnership between the Center for Innovative Transition, Education & Employment (CITEE) at UWM along with the Social Work Department at UWM, both of which operate under the auspices of UWM's College of Community Engagement and Professions.

Undergraduates, non-degree students, and special students will participate in the A-PEERS project. All will complete the microcredential during an education and training period that will include experiential field training or apprenticeship and results in state certification. The microcredential entails three undergraduate social courses:

SOC WRK 100: Introduction to Social Work

SOC WRK 260: Introduction to Case Management

SOC WRK 599: Independent Reading: Classroom and Experiential Field Training

SOC WRK 100 provides a foundation of knowledge about the social work profession and social service systems. For instance, it introduces students the principles and practices of working within interdisciplinary teams. SOC WRK 260 explores the role of the social worker, and in this instance the peer support specialist or certified peer specialist, as a facilitator, advocate and capacity builder. Students learn how to write complete "case" notes and build a resource toolkit for use in their community. Overseen by the Social Work Department Chair, Professor Dimitri Topitzes, and taught in combination with designated state trainers, SOC WRK 599 covers core competencies of certified peer specialists: values, in-depth knowledge of recovery, roles and responsibilities, applied skills, and code of ethics. Each of these reflect certain foundational principles identified by members of the mental health consumer and substance use disorder recovery communities, with an emphasis on the role of family and lived experiences. The competencies are also anchored in the values of recovery-oriented, Person-centered, Voluntary, Relationship-focused, Trauma-informed, and cultural competencies. In sum, the microcredential helps equip completers with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide ethical, competent, effective peer support services.

3. Timeline for implementation (first semester of availability):

Summer 2026

4. Time to completion:

Two to three semesters

5. Undergraduate or Graduate

6. Identification of eligibility (select all that apply):

Current UWM students in degree or certificate programs

Non-degree or special students enrolling at UWM solely for a credit-bearing microcredential

7. Additional admissions or eligibility requirements for:

a. UWM students already enrolled in another degree or certificate program (such as minimum UWM GPA)

Student in good standing.

b. Non-degree or special students enrolling in credit-bearing microcredentials (such as prior educational attainment, prior GPA)

Accepted as a non-degree or special student.

8. List of required courses and eligible elective courses to complete the microcredential cluster:

SOC WRK 100, SOC WRK 260, SOC WRK 599

9. Statement of educational or career opportunities that the microcredential will support:

Successful completion of the microcredential will qualify students for the Wisconsin Certified Peer Specialist registered apprenticeship and for the state Certified Peer Specialist Exam. In turn, successful completion of both the apprenticeship and exam will result in state certification as a peer specialist. Students will also have the option to complete additional field experience and apply for a Certified Peer Specialist-Supervisor designation. Moreover, with the help of HRSA funding, A-PEERS will facilitate job placement opportunities for all microcredential completers.

10. Identification of [Career Readiness](#) skills that the cluster will provide, as defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (select all that apply):

- Career and Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity and Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

11. Statement of whether the microcredential satisfies any accreditation or professional licensure requirements:

Yes, the microcredential helps satisfy the state designations of Certified Peer Specialist or Certified Peer Specialist-Supervisor.

12. Name, position, and email of the person responsible for answering questions from prospective students about the microcredential, for admitting students to it, and for advising those admitted:

Elizabeth Watson: watsonea@uwm.edu

Jessica Smith: smit3962@uwm.edu

13. Names and email addresses of current staff or faculty responsible for website updates and overseeing the governance approval process:

Dimitri Topitzes: topitzes@uwm.edu

Matt Steigerwald: steiger2@uwm.edu