



May 24, 2006

To: Suzanne Ortega
University of Washington
Vice Provost and Dean, The Graduate School

Melissa A. Austin
Associate Dean for Academic Programs

From: Marcie Lazzari
Director and Professor, Social Work Program
University of Washington, Tacoma

Re: Response to The Graduate School Review Committee Report

We take this opportunity to thank the members of the Review Committee and The Graduate School staff for their time and effort on our behalf. We appreciate their thorough and thoughtful review as well as their helpful feedback.

The Review Committee's Report was received on May 8, 2006 and was subsequently forwarded to all constituencies for feedback. These include faculty (full time and adjuncts), staff and students; alums; members of our Advisory Council; and practicum instructors for both the BASW and MSW students. All of these groups had the opportunity to provide input into our Program Review document before it was finalized in summer 2005 and submitted to The Graduate School.

To date, we have received minimal response to the Review Committee's report, hearing from one BASW senior, one MSW alumnus and member of this year's Faculty Search Committee, one MSW alumnus and member of our Advisory Council, and one adjunct professor. All stated that, based upon their experiences and observations, the Review Committee's report appeared accurate to them. Members of the Management Team, as well as other faculty members, concurred with this response to the Review Committee's report.

We will comment as needed on each section of the report. Therefore, lack of comment regarding a particular section means we are in agreement with the content as written.

Executive Summary (p. 1)

We are pleased with the recommendations made by the Review Committee and will speak in depth to concerns later in our response. Overall, we agree that our program is “at the tipping point;” however, it would likely not collapse but, rather, maintaining the high quality of our program would be in jeopardy.

Strengths (pp. 3-6)

We take great pride in our program and thank the Review Committee for their many positive statements.

Quality of Curriculum and Support Services (p. 5)

In this section it is noted that our undergraduate students won a national award two years in a row. This it is accurate; however, our national accrediting body does not sponsor this award. The Influencing State Policy National Contest group (representing faculty from social work programs in every state in the United States and seven other countries as well) sponsors this highly competitive, national award. The award is presented yearly at a national social work conference, but not necessarily at the Council on Social Work Education’s Annual Program Meeting.

Diversity Issues (p. 6)

While we are aware of the pressures placed upon our one faculty member of color and concur that we need to increase our numbers of ethnically diverse faculty, we have over the years hired one ethnically diverse adjunct faculty member who taught several courses for us. Also, the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program Manager who holds a Teaching Associate appointment in our program is Chinese American. Finally, our faculty member of color, at her request, has not taught our diversity courses.

Also, our broad and inclusive view of diversity includes, in addition to ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, class etc., and we teach how various aspects of diversity intersect, with some changing over time and others remaining constant. This approach appears to be effective as it allows all people to understand their own diversities as well as those of others. Certainly the context of culture and our societal environment places greater value on some and views others as liabilities. Through acknowledgement and respect for all people, those who are more privileged are better able to grapple with the realities of those who are more oppressed and vice versa. We view this process as a lifelong endeavor and try to instill this view among our students.

System of Governance and Community Advisory Board (p.6)

We will continue to strive to include more students on our decision-making committees and Advisory Board. The one area where we have been successful is the inclusion of both BASW and MSW students are on faculty search committees. They have taken an active role in all of our faculty searches.

Challenges (p. 7)

Difficulties Due to Joint Accreditation with Seattle SW (pp. 7-8)

We strongly concur with the observations of the Review Committee and believe that our program needs to be given autonomy over our current and future operations if we are to continue to thrive. While our initial connection with the School of Social Work (SSW) and our recent shared re-accreditation efforts proved beneficial for all, there is high likelihood that we will become liabilities for one another the next time we face re-accreditation.

This relates to the fact that the SSW has already made curricular decisions since our re-accreditation process, with another major curriculum review pending, which is not relevant for our program at this point in time. The onus to stay connected to what is occurring at the SSW falls upon us. The time and resources it takes to travel to Seattle for curriculum meetings places a burden on our faculty who are already overextended. We are then faced with how to include the curricular changes being made in Seattle. This process does not serve us well.

Given current requirements of the CSWE, we will need to launch a small, full-time MSW program to gain independent accreditation. Additional staff and faculty resources will be needed to accomplish this goal.

Demands on Faculty and Staff: Overenrolled, Under-Resourced (pp. 8-9)

- Demands on faculty in teaching. The Review Committee's comments about the field liaison role are well taken and will be considered as we move forward. Observations regarding the number of course preparations are likewise accurate, and the addition of a full-time MSW program would provide some relief.
- Lack of infrastructure support for research. The social work program faculty members are now better positioned to provide mentoring for new faculty. We have two professors and three associate professors. Since the time of this review, two assistant professors resigned to pursue other professional opportunities.
- Determination of qualification parameters for future faculty searches. The Review Committee suggests we attempt to search for new faculty with an established research record. During this review period, we were in the midst of a search. We are grateful that the faculty members who are leaving informed us of their plans so we could hire two individuals as part of the process. We brought five candidates to campus, all assistant professors except for one associate professor. Two were ethnically diverse. The Review Committee is correct that the current teaching load served as a deterrent to some of our faculty candidates. As a result of the search process, we hired two assistant professors, both from the University of Washington, Seattle SSW. Both individuals already have established research records, and one, in particular, is well positioned to secure grant monies. Unfortunately, neither is ethnically diverse but they bring age diversity to our

faculty. We are excited about the new energy and expertise these individuals will bring to our program. Additionally, we hired one of our adjunct professors (a graduate of our MSW program who has taught with us since winter quarter 2002) as a full-time lecturer to continue teaching and to assume responsibility for undergraduate practicum placements.

- Practicum oversight and development. As noted above, our full time lecturer will assume responsibility for undergraduate field beginning in autumn 2006. This will provide some relief for our Practicum Coordinator. Moving to a full time MSW program will necessitate further resources to support field education.
- Staff load. There is one correction; we currently have 3.25 FTE staff members, not 2.5. Our need for additional staff is well documented. The most recent request for adding staff resources was addressed to our Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs on May 15, 2006. A campus Budget Committee has been recently formed to address allocations for the remainder of this year. We have no information as to whether or not our request is being put forth.
- Ongoing quality. We again thank the Review Committee for their positive comments and wholeheartedly agree that maintaining our excellence is being compromised by lack of adequate resources.

Problems Meeting Current and Future Growth Needs (p. 9)

As the Review Committee noted, we have appropriate courses to offer to freshmen and sophomores but we cannot do so without placing even greater strain upon faculty. Appropriate funding for our program and for others as well is a campus issue that can only be addressed and resolved by the highest level of administration. We believe we have done all within our power to document need, and our over enrollment since the inception of both the MSW and BASW programs speaks for itself.

We received approval from the Graduate School to launch a small (12 students maximum), part-time Advanced Standing MSW program that will start in winter quarter 2007. We can maintain this program with current faculty staffing levels. However, it will require preparing for a new course and greater coordination among all faculty members as they support this transition course prior to Advanced Standing students joining those in the three-year program. The addition of this program option will provide a valuable resource for qualified students who are place bound. We thank the Graduate School, as well as the SSW, for their support of this initiative (which has also been approved by the Council on Social Work Education).

What Can the University Do To Assist? (p. 10)

We agree with all suggestions as written. Specifically, we have a mentoring plan in place for the two new faculty members who will join us in the fall. One of our Associate Professors has volunteered to meet formally, on an on-going basis with them to focus upon moving toward promotion and tenure from the start. Additionally, both have mentoring support from the SSW and others at UW Seattle. Likewise, we intend to

provide mentoring around teaching as neither person has extensive experience in this arena. When possible, we will make teaching assignments that partner an experienced faculty member with one of the new faculty members.

Conclusion (p. 10)

Again, we thank the Review Team for their thoroughness and for listening to and hearing us. We take your concerns seriously and will continue to do whatever possible to maintain our excellence. We take great pride in our program and all of its constituencies.