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To: Mary E. Lidstrom, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

From: Gerald J. Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean
James S. Antony, Associate Vice Provost and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the School of Social Work

This memo outlines the recommendations from the review of the School of Social Work and its degree programs. The School offers the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social Welfare, the Master of Social Work (MSW), and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Detailed comments on the School and its programs can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (June 5, 2009)
- School of Social Work self-study (November, 2009)
- Site visit (March 4-5, 2010)
- Graduate and Professional Student Senate Report (April 1, 2010)
- Review committee report (April 12, 2010)
- Social Work response to the review committee report (July 2, 2010)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (December 9, 2010)

The review committee consisted of:

Ann Bostrom, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, UW Evans School of Public Affairs
(Committee Chair)

William Dowling, Professor, UW Health Services

Larry E. Davis, Dean and Professor, School of Social Work, University of Pittsburgh

Mary C. Ruffolo, Associate Dean and Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Michigan

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on December 9, 2010. The Council commended the School of Social

Work faculty, staff, and students for using this review process as an occasion to build organizational solidarity and consensus about the School's role in the university and the community. The Council recognized the outstanding strength and future potential for the School in its many activities. After discussion, Council recommended continuing status for the School's degree programs, with the next review to be scheduled for the 2019-2020 academic year. Specific comments and recommendations regarding the School and its degree programs include the following:

Program Strengths

- The School of Social Work's programs are thriving, as evidenced by high demand for entrance and a strong, diverse student body at all program levels. The School, in its 75th year, is ranked consistently as one of the top programs in social work in the nation and is the largest social work program in the Pacific Northwest. It is one of the few schools that provide programs at all levels.
- The School's successful efforts to operationalize a social justice perspective in the BA and MSW place it as a leader for the profession and the University.
- The School's programs support its three prong mission: 1) to educate effective social work leaders, practitioners and educators with a strong focus on promoting social justice; 2) to contribute to research efforts that add to understanding of complex social problems and that promote effective social intervention, especially with vulnerable populations; and 3) to enhance the health, wellbeing, and empowerment of disadvantaged communities and populations through public service.
- Students are generally happy with the learning that occurs in their respective programs, and the social justice focus of the School is well integrated in the classroom and field practicum experiences. Doctoral students report high satisfaction with the faculty and program overall.
- The School has strong leadership. The teamwork by the Dean, administration, and faculty is impressive. Inclusivity, participation, transparency, and shared responsibility for the governance and performance of the School are widely-shared values.
- The School has an outstanding faculty—dedicated to excellence in teaching, nationally renowned in research, and leaders in both the academic and professional aspects of social work and social welfare policy and practice. The faculty has been successful in securing over \$22 million dollars in research funds in 2009. The faculty is highly productive and publishes in top discipline-specific as well as interdisciplinary journals. This strength is evident across ranks, in assistant professors as well as senior scholars.
- The School's organizational structure supports the collaborative work of faculty and staff and addresses the complexity of the School's current program efforts.
- The School's mission, values, and vision for the future are clearly articulated, passionately shared by the members of the School of Social Work community, and, most importantly, "lived out" in the day-to-day decisions of leadership, faculty, students, and staff.
- The School's mission, values, and vision clearly reflect the personal values of the Dean, and she is enthusiastic, forceful, and tireless in communicating and promoting them. Equally impressive, however, is the extent to which all members of the School of Social Work community share and are guided by these values. The result is a sense of unity, coherence, and community rather unique among academic institutions. Also, there is a

sense of alignment whereby the School's policies, priorities, resource allocations, and day-to-day decisions flow from and support the School's values.

- The School is taking a leadership role in building innovative partnerships with practicum sites and expanding the ways that the school connects with a range of field practicum sites. Particularly noteworthy is the School's initiative to strengthen the capacity of social work practitioners already in the field. The notion that the School's outreach to the field of practice has the potential to be transformational can be likened to the efforts of the UW School of Medicine in the early days of the WAMI program to upgrade the practice of primary care throughout the region to assure high quality clinical clerkship and residency training.
- The School is a major contributor through research collaborations to the multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary mission of the University of Washington. Driven by a commitment to solving social problems, the School is evolving a vision of its role as a leader within the greater University in marshalling the interests and resources of other schools and departments interested in solving major social problems. The School sees itself in the role of convening and mobilizing "solution-focused partnerships" with others both inside and outside the University that leverage the expertise and research of the participants to design and execute initiatives to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. This concept has great potential to contribute to the University's leadership in serving disadvantaged populations that are dependent on public services.

Challenges & Risks

- The School faces serious space challenges, such that most research groups have been forced to locate off-site, and are far flung.
- A challenge related to the current organizational structure of the School is that it is not clear how faculty development, recruitment, promotion, mentoring, and other faculty affairs issues are handled. It appears that these areas are dispersed throughout the organizational structure. This approach apparently is working for the School but may benefit from better articulation in the organizational structure.
- The budget cuts that were forced by the University's budget situation, although painful, were handled well and the negative consequences minimized by the ability to relate the available financial resources to a clear sense of goals and priorities.
- The challenge to moving to an even higher level of collegiality and community and to meeting the many demands on the faculty is time, not desire. The challenge for the future will be to build on the engagement and good will of the School's extremely talented faculty, administrative leadership, staff, and students to provide an even more rewarding and stimulating intellectual and service environment.
- The School administrators and faculty, as well as the review committee, clearly identified management information system development as a major need and one that the School is actively pursuing. The current management information system does not support administrative decision-making or program and student outcome efforts. The recent employment of a new IT director should help the School in updating the management information systems.
- Given the large faculty size, including instructors and mentors, the School faces a challenge in responding to faculty's desire for more and deeper dialogue around the School's goals and priorities. With 100 classroom instructors and 300 "field-based

Practicum Instructors” the unit’s leadership has committed to systematically identify the training and dialogue opportunities for colleagues with a variety of appointments in the School.

- Students experience at times some levels of discomfort when addressing issues of social injustice and look to the faculty to provide additional support and places of safety to discuss their emerging awareness of social injustices. Creating these safe spaces can be challenging for faculty and lecturers and may require additional faculty and lecturer training and development.
- The Graduate School Council acknowledged that the review committee described students as “generally happy.” The Council also noted that the GPSS report, while making a broad suggestion for the School to continue working on culture found, “for the most part, students seemed satisfied with the program” and, “overall, the students seemed to feel their academic programming was strong.”

Areas of Concurrence and/or Disagreement

In general the School of Social Work concurred with the review committee. There were no substantive disagreements.

- In particular, both the School and the review committee highlighted the clarity of the School’s mission and the high degree of commitment by different members of the School’s community to fulfilling the mission. In the broadest sense, this mission is to direct research and teaching about social work towards improving social outcomes in the region, rather than just policy compliance.
- Both the School of Social Work and the review committee felt the self study and review process was valid, and the documentation fit the narratives that were presented in committee meetings.
- Both the School of Social Work and the review committee concurred that the process of developing the bachelor program transformed the School in positive ways, particularly in helping the School define curricular goals at all levels of instruction. Using the language of “learning objectives” for planning undergraduate classes helped improve the quality of offerings at the graduate level.

We concur with the Council’s comments and recommendations.

cc: John D. Sahr, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs
Edwina Uehara, Dean and Professor, School of Social Work
Marcia Meyers, Associate Dean and Associate Professor, School of Social Work
Graduate School Council Members
Members of the School of Social Work Review Committee
David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School
GPSS President