



**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**  

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**UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON**

**MEMORANDUM**

To: School of Social Work Program Review Committee  
Ann Bostrom  
Larry E. Davis  
Bill Dowling  
Mary Ruffolo

From: Marcia K. Meyers, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
UW School of Social Work

Date: July 2, 2010

Subject: Response to UW Program Review Committee Report

On behalf of the faculty, staff and administrators at the School of Social Work I would like to thank you for the very insightful and thorough Program Review Committee Report. Many of my colleagues commented on the quality of the review and the perceptiveness of the final report. The Committee obviously listened carefully to many and diverse voices and the findings and recommendations in the report resonate well with our own perceptions about the School.

In this memo we respond to each of the findings and statements of opportunity/challenge within the six sections of the report: 1) Mission, values, and vision, 2) Administration, organizational structure and teamwork, 3) Programs, curriculum, students and partners, 4) Faculty and research, 5) Measuring and evaluating progress, 6) Strategic planning and opportunities.

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM REVIEW  
RESPONSE TO REPORT  
July 2, 2010**

**1. MISSION, VALUES AND VISION**

FINDING:

We appreciate the Committee's comments regarding the "clarity and driving force" of the School's goals and priorities, the "degree to which the School's actions are closely aligned to support its vision" and the resulting sense of "unity, coherence and community" in the School. It was very helpful to hear that the values and commitments of the School are widely shared and incorporated into the teaching, scholarship and service activities of the school.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:

As noted in the report, we are continuing to operationalize these values and priorities as we respond to new budgetary, external funding and curricular challenges, and to the emerging needs of and opportunities for our students. As the Committee reported, one particular area of focus will be faculty's desire for more and deeper dialogue about issues of social justice that are central to our mission. One of our greatest challenges in advancing this dialogue is the size and diversity of our faculty, which includes more than 100 classroom instructors and nearly 300 field-based Practicum Instructors. The Dean and Associate Deans are working this summer to complete a matrix for faculty development activities, to be launched next year, which will systematically identify training and dialogue opportunities for colleagues with a variety of appointments in the school.

**2. ADMINISTRATION, ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TEAMWORK**

FINDING:

We agree with the Committee's description of our governance and administrative structures and appreciate the observation that this structure functions well to support the school's activities and mission.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:

The Committee notes the challenge of coordinating various faculty affairs processes within an apparently dispersed structure for responsibility. The School has taken several steps in recent years to clarify these responsibilities. The recently created Retention, Review, Promotion and Tenure (RRPT) Committee is providing oversight for faculty affairs policies, and has recently conducted thorough reviews of tenure and promotion guidelines, policies for instructional lecturers, and policies and procedures for merit

reviews. We have also clarified the responsibility of the Dean and each of the Associate Deans for oversight of recruitment and annual reviews of faculty in tenure-track, research, practicum coordination and instructional appointments. To be certain that newly appointed faculty are well supported in this process we appoint a small committee of faculty to serve as mentors for their teaching, research and service activities. As noted above, we are in the process of clarifying and expanding our faculty development activities, with a particular emphasis on extending these opportunities for part-time and off-site instructors.

### **3. PROGRAMS, CURRICULUM, STUDENTS AND PARTNERS**

#### **FINDING:**

We agree with the Committee's description of our programs and appreciate the observations about the School's success in recruiting a strong and diverse student body in each of its programs.

#### **RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:**

As noted, we are in the process of developing a multi-measure assessment of student competence in the BASW and MSW programs. We hope that this will contribute to both our reaffirmation process, with the Council on Social Work Education, and to our internal curriculum planning processes.

The Foundation Competencies for the BASW and MSW curricula have been approved by the respective Steering Committees and the Advanced Competencies for the MSW curriculum will be reviewed and approved next academic year. This summer we are incorporating these into revised student and field evaluation instruments that will be fielded with in the incoming cohorts of BASW and MSW students in the fall.

#### **FINDING:**

The Committee concludes that the students are generally happy with their experience at the School and that they recognize the importance of infusing our mission and values into the curriculum and learning experiences.

#### **RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:**

Our commitment to addressing issues of social justice, oppression, culturally competent practice, and professional self-reflection can create challenging and difficult moments in classrooms, field settings, and other School activities. As noted, our students look to the faculty to create 'safe spaces' for these conversations. Providing training and support for classroom and field education faculty on these issues and instructional techniques is one of the top priorities for our emerging faculty development plan.

FINDING:

The Committee notes that the School uses a significant number of auxiliary faculty as classroom instructors and has systems in place to connect part-time and off-site faculty more closely to the school. *(No Opportunity/Challenge noted).*

FINDING:

We appreciate the Committee's recognition of efforts by the Associate Dean for Professional Development and Community Partnerships to strengthen Practicum education by increasing the capacity of field placement agencies. They note in particular our pilot program to develop Field Learning Centers that will provide additional support to agencies supervising groups of 5 to 7 first year MSW students.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:

As the Committee notes, the increase in support, training and mentoring for Practicum Instructors has the potential to improve both learning opportunities for our students and services for the populations served by these agencies. One of our primary challenges will be the expansion of this support to more agencies providing a diversity of services and interventions at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.

The Committee also notes that student interest in international placements may create new resource demands. We have noted an increase in the number of entering students who have experience and interest in practice outside the US. Although we have arranged international practicum placements on a case-by-case basis, this approach has not always provided consistent, high quality supervision for students. The School's resources for international placements are extremely limited. We are experimenting with a new model in two countries, Kenya and England, which will place students with partner institutions that have worked directly with School faculty. We will evaluate this model and consider other partnerships as part of our ongoing efforts to respond to student interests in this area.

FINDING:

We agree with the Committee's description about the strength of our Doctoral training program, the diversity and success of our doctoral students, and recent efforts to improve curricular offerings and mentoring in the program.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:

The Committee observes that funding is an ongoing challenge for our students and that our redesign of the mentoring process will provide opportunities to involve a broader representation of faculty in the doctoral program. We are responding to the funding issues by continuing our active pursuit of funded fellowships and research opportunities for students. Broadening the involvement of faculty in the program is important for both

workload equity and student training, and we are addressing this by expanding the faculty who teach in the required curriculum, by doing more intentional matching of applicants to initial faculty mentors, and by formalizing faculty responsibilities for mentoring students' progress through the program.

#### **4. FACULTY AND RESEARCH**

##### **FINDING:**

We appreciate the Committee's observation that our faculty are dedicated to excellence in teaching, scholarship, and leadership in local and national service. We are particularly pleased to hear that the Committee observed a shared sense of community, collegiality and commitment to our core values among the faculty,

##### **RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:**

As the Committee notes, our desire to sustain and increase opportunities for individual and organizational flourishing are constrained primarily by resources, particularly time. We are continuing an internal evaluation of our committee and governance structures to identify any inefficiencies and reduce unnecessary demands on faculty and staff, and to and increase opportunities for meaningful interactions within the school community. As one example of the latter, the School hosted several events last year in celebration of our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including a highly successful lecture series that showcased the work of our endowed professors for mixed audiences of faculty, students, staff and community members.

##### **FINDING:**

We could not agree more that the School's faculty are productive, influential and highly collaborative in their scholarly work. We are encouraged by the Committee's observation that this characterizes faculty at all ranks, including our junior colleagues.

##### **RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:**

We also could not agree more that the School is severely hampered by a lack of space. Research groups have been forced to move off campus, double and triple the number of staff sharing workspace, and ask project members to work remotely. As the Committee notes, the dispersal of faculty and research staff greatly reduces opportunities for cross-disciplinary and cross-project interactions, and for students to learn about faculty research. We hope to continue activities, such as the lecture series described above, that bring faculty, research staff and students together to learn about each other's work. Other opportunities for interaction and dialogue will be created through the emerging faculty development plan, which will include research faculty and staff as one of the target groups.

FINDING:

As the Committee notes, the Associate Dean for Research provides significant support to tenure-track and research faculty in the School, and to faculty at the Tacoma campus as well. We would add that in addition to his work within the School, the Associate Dean creates many opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate outside the School through his appointment to the Sociology faculty, his involvement in several campus-wide committees, and his active participation in national research and scholarship associations.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:

Although the Associate Dean and his staff work hard to support faculty's research development, they do so with limited resources. The School provides extensive support for the development, submission and monitoring of external grants. The Associate Dean prioritizes support for junior faculty. As noted, however, the School cannot provide as much support for proposal development as we might wish to.

**5. MEASURING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS**

FINDING:

We fully agree that the school's management information systems are inadequate, which hampers our ability to track student outcomes and to inform administrative and curricular decisions.

FINDING:

The Committee observes that we are in the process of revising our student-level outcome measures – using the CSWE competencies – and notes that we have review and governance systems in place to review and respond to information provided by these new measures when data collection comes on line next year.

RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:

The School is continuing the process, launched last year, of developing a new information management system. We hope that this system will eventually integrate data from multiple sources, including student-level outcome data from classroom, survey and practicum evaluations; human resources and faculty activity data; historical and current curriculum and workload planning information; and budget data. We are also continuing the development of specific performance measures for the School that will address our threefold mission to advance social work education, social welfare scholarship, and local, national and global service. We hope that elements of this system will be in place by fall 2010.

## **6. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **FINDING:**

The Committee report recognizes the five strategic goals that the Dean has outlined for “re-defining” the School for the future.

### **RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITY/CHALLENGE:**

The self-study conducted in advance of this review was very useful for our articulation of the strategic goals of the School. We appreciate the reflection, in the Committee’s report, of the appropriateness of these goals and their congruence with the shared values and vision of the School community. We agree with the Committee that the School is poised to provide significant leadership for the University in addressing social issues and problems. We have already developed several “solution-focused partnerships” that link the School’s faculty and researchers with powerful public, nonprofit, philanthropic and community partners to advance social work practice and social welfare knowledge. For example, the School is taking the lead on developing a University of Washington and Department of Social and Health Services “Summit on Vulnerable Populations” to define a joint research agenda on critical social, economic and health issues in the state. We are also collaborating with the Schools of Nursing and Pharmacy on a Healthy Aging Initiative for the state of Washington.