

UW School of Social Work Program Review Committee Report
April 12, 2010

Committee Members:

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The Review Committee reviewed the BASW program, the MSW Day Program, the Extended Degree Program and Advanced Standing Program, and the PhD Program at the UW School of Social Work (SSW) by: examining the SSW self-study, responses to questions and discussions thereof, a site visit March 4-5, 2010 (attended by Professors Bostrom, Dowling and Ruffolo), and additional materials provided by the SSW. The materials reviewed focused on the Seattle campus programs and not the UW Tacoma programs.

The committee concludes:

- **The School of Social work is flourishing, with thriving programs, as evidenced by high demand for entrance and a strong and diverse student body at all program levels.**
- **The School has strong leadership. The teamwork by the Dean and administration is impressive.**
- **The School of Social Work faculty are national leaders in the quantity and quality of their research, and are committed to excellence and social justice. The School's productive and engaged faculty contributes to equally dynamic faculty leadership.**

The Committee commends the School and recommends a 10 year review cycle.

1. Mission, values and vision

The School of Social Work celebrates 75 years this year. The School 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 offers a BA degree in Social Welfare (BASW); a Master of Social Work (MSW) and a Doctor of Social Welfare (PhD). It is one of the few schools that provide programs at all levels. The programs support the School of Social Work's 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 promotes effective social intervention, especially with vulnerable populations; and 3) to enhance the health, wellbeing, and empowerment of disadvantaged communities and populations through public service.

Finding: The School of Social Work (SSW) is to be commended for the clarity and driving force of its goals and priorities. The School's mission, values, and vision for the future are clearly articulated, passionately shared by the members of the SSW community, and, most importantly, "lived out" in the day-to-day decisions of the SSW's leadership, faculty, students, and staff. The School's core commitment is to the promotion of economic and social justice. This commitment is unequivocally "owned" by the School's constituencies. In turn, it "drives" the design of the education, research, and service programs of the School, as well as its administrative structure, how its resources are allocated, the kinds of students it seeks to admit, the focus of the faculty's research, and even the School's response to the University's move to Activity Based Budgeting (ABB). The clarity with which the Schools mission, values, and vision are articulated and the degree to which the School's actions are closely aligned to support its vision are truly impressive and a major strength of the School.

The SSW'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 SSW 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 SSW policies, priorities, resource allocations, and day-to-day decisions flow from and support the School's values.

Opportunity/Challenge: Of note is the fact that the SSW is still in the process of deciding how the mission, values, vision, and goals will be finally expressed—a process characterized, in keeping with the School's fundamental belief in openness and inclusiveness, by extensive input from social work practitioners, the community, and other stakeholders, as well as students, faculty and staff. This process has been furthered by the discussions that have gone into the preparation of the School's self-study report and by the field's move toward competency-based education in preparation for social work practice. Although "a work in progress," the fundamental mission and values of the School have been reaffirmed, and now are being sharpened and translated into specifics. Final or not, the shared commitment to social justice and to solving social problems is deeply felt by all members of the SSW community and palpable in the culture and spirit of the School. Undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students were unequivocal in wanting the review committee to know that the School's commitment to social justice was a major factor and often the telling factor in their choice of the University of Washington. And, students emphasize their commitment to address the social problems they will face as practitioners in collaborative and culturally proficient ways, as well as their "technical" skills. Likewise, the faculty and staff who the committee met with were of one mind in their support of the SSW's mission and values and gave one example after another of how they strive to bring the value of social justice into the classroom, into their research, and into their work. The faculty expressed considerable interest in more dialogue about how to advance the teaching of cultural competency and social justice.

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. While fund-raising is always a challenge, the fund-raising efforts of the development program are creative and clearly aligned in support of the Schools vision.

2. Administration, organizational structure and teamwork

Finding: The School of Social Work's organizational structure supports collaborative work with faculty and staff and addresses the complexity of this school's current program efforts. At this time there are three Associate Deans (Academic Affairs, Research, and Professional Development & Community Partnerships); one Assistant Dean for the Office of Advancement; a Director of Finance and Administration; a Director of Human Resources and a Director of Communication. In addition, within the school, there are 9 Faculty Research Centers that are funded by grants and are interdisciplinary. The faculty takes leadership on curricular initiatives and faculty affairs through a Faculty Council model. The Faculty Council sets the agenda for faculty meetings and works closely with the administrative team and Dean. The Staff Council, which is relatively new, operates to bring the voices of staff to administration and faculty. The Student Advisory Council made up of representatives from the BASW, MSW and PhD programs is another way that the voices of students are incorporated in administrative decision-making processes. To reiterate, the Review was very impressed with the team work that was evident in our meetings.

Opportunity/Challenge: A challenge noted by the Review Committee as it relates to the current organizational structure 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.

3. Programs, curriculum, students and partners

Finding: The School is involved in a major review of the BASW and MSW programs due to a change in the Council on Social Work Education new curriculum policy statement that will be the focus of the next reaffirmation cycle for the school. The major change in the new curriculum policy statement is on moving to competency-based curriculum design and review of programs from one where a primary focus was on compliance with standards to one of demonstration of program and student outcomes.

Currently the BASW program enrolls approximately 100 junior and senior students each year and the MSW programs enroll around 350 students. A majority of the students are women in both the BASW and MSW programs (83%). The BASW program has over 50% of the students who identify as students of color. The MSW program has over 35% of students who identify as students of color. The

international students enrolled in the BASW or MSW program comprise 2% of the student body. The School's focus on maintaining a diverse study body is reflected in both programs. BASW has transformed the School by bringing in first generation scholars. The number of MSW applications has increased significantly in the past few years, which has resulted in greater diversity and academic strength in the admitted graduate students. Faculty are involved in the review of MSW applications and make the decisions on admission to the programs based on what each potential student applicant can contribute to the cohort and to the profession. This involvement provides another signal of their commitment to the program and to student professional development.

Opportunity/Challenge: The Committee encourages the School to continue its successful efforts to operationalize a social justice perspective in the BSW and MSW. This is an area that places the School as a leader for the profession and the University. Refining competencies and curricular outcomes provides an opportunity to continue to enhance the BASW and MSW programs. The school is en route to developing multiple measures of curricular outcomes, which the committee commends and encourages.

Finding: In student meetings, it was clear to the Review Committee that students are generally happy with the learning that occurs in their respective programs and that the social justice focus of the school is well integrated in the classroom and field practicum experiences.

Opportunity/Challenge: Students do 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.

Finding: The balance of tenure track instructional faculty and lecturers in the delivery of the MSW and BASW curriculum was looked at by the Review Committee. The School uses a significant number of auxiliary faculty to deliver the core curriculum. The School has begun to use more half time lecturers and full time lecturers to increase the connectedness of lecturers to the school. The school also connects new lecturers to faculty who have previously taught or are currently teaching the course to assist these new lecturers in delivering the courses in ways that meet curricular objectives.

Finding: The School of Social Work 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 SSW initiative to strengthen the capacity of social work practitioners already in the field, an effort that is clearly driven by its commitment to challenging injustice and improving the quality of life of the less fortunate. Motivated in part by the School's desire to increase the number of practicum sites available to students and to assure that students would receive effective mentoring, the SSW has extended support to

agencies and practitioners via training in the new competencies and in mentoring skills, continuing education, assistance in designing evaluation projects, and the provision of “roving” practicum supervisors to provide assistance to grassroots agencies and augment agency staff. The relationship of the School to agencies and practitioners is seen as a “two-way street.” The experience of practitioners is drawn on to inform the content of courses and research, and the School, in turn, assists practitioners in their work. The agency benefits by receiving evaluation, supervision, continuing education or training supports from the school and the school has the opportunity to place five to seven students at the agency site. These types of innovations are placing the School in a strong position with agencies throughout the region and state.

Opportunity/Challenge: There is an evolving sense that this relationship is “transformative” and that the SSW is transforming social work practice by enhancing the effectiveness of practitioners in serving the disadvantaged and in addressing social problems. In turn, the effectiveness and value of instruction and research are transformed by the demand for relevance to “real world” problems. The notion that the SSW’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.

Opportunity/Challenge: Increased interest from students seeking international field practicum placements may require additional focus and resources by the field practicum program.

Finding: Started in 1975, the School’s highly successful PhD program in Social Welfare accepts between 6 and 10 students a year; 35 have graduated since 2005; 56% of graduates from the last decade have tenure track faculty appointments, 31% are tenured associate professors, and 9% are full professors. The program brings in an impressively diverse cohort of doctoral students from a variety of academic, ethnic and racial backgrounds. This diversity and interdisciplinarity represents a real strength of the program as well as a pedagogical and mentoring challenge. The school actively engages these challenges, as reflected in: recent reorganizations of the PhD program - including new methods courses; a new social justice subcommittee of the doctoral program steering committee; and an in-process redesign of mentoring for doctoral students. Students report high satisfaction with the faculty and program overall, on the graduate school exit survey, and as reflected in discussions with the review committee.

Opportunity/Challenge: Although high faculty research productivity provides many funding opportunities for doctoral students, and doctoral students teach in the other SSW programs, funding is a constant challenge, as it is in many doctoral programs. In redesigning the mentoring process, the school has an opportunity to fill the 2nd year lacuna in a way that increases the equity and distribution of faculty involvement with doctoral students -- recognizing that it is difficult to balance these issues with the availability of funding/support linked to specific faculty and

research projects. Broadening the number of faculty who participate centrally in the teaching and mentoring of doctoral students is a goal being pursued by the head of the doctoral program.

4. Faculty and research

Finding: The SSW 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 culture, engagement, and esprit de corps of the faculty are exceptional and firmly grounded in a shared sense of community—of being members of a community of scholars committed to social justice and to advancing the body of knowledge that informs practice and policy. Inclusivity, participation, transparency, and shared responsibility for the governance and performance of the School are widely-shared values.

The faculty is comprised of 35 tenure-line faculty, 11 lecturers who do mainly classroom instruction, 7 lecturers who serve as practicum faculty, and about 40 auxiliary instructors. In addition, the SSW has 12 research faculty and 19 research scientists. All faculty members except auxiliary instructors are expected to participate in the administrative and governance affairs of the School. Recruitment, when resources permit, is not a problem; faculty openings attract excellent candidates. Retention is also not a problem, although the SSW has lost two assistant professors during the last two years for family or personal reasons. There are few disciplinary “gaps” in the faculty complement, although qualitative research was mentioned as an area where the demands of students and faculty research are pressing the resources of the several faculty members who specialize in this area.

Creating a community of scholars is always a challenge in a diverse, busy faculty. The SSW has achieved this. The faculty is engaged. Commitment and accomplishments in teaching, research, and service are exemplary. The faculty is actively engaged in the affairs of the SSW. Attendance at monthly faculty meetings is excellent. Service on School committees is nearly universal. Faculty participation in reviewing the School’s mission, evaluating its performance, and planning for the future in preparation for the graduate school review was sincere and spirited. The SSW’s faculty council is active, well-supported and effective in providing and independent voice for the faculty. More important, there is a strong spirit of collegiality—faculty enjoy, respect, and support each other.

Opportunity/Challenge: 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 School’s standards regarding research (and the challenge of obtaining external funding), coupled with the personal desire of faculty members to make a contribution and to advance in their careers, place great demands on faculty time. So, too, does the growth of the student body and the corresponding need for additional practicum sites. The faculty work very hard. Minority faculty face the addition demands of being widely sought after by students as advisors and mentors,

and by a multiple parties both within and outside the School to link the School's teaching and research to the community it is committed to serve. Finding a fit between the expertise and interests of individual faculty and the ever-broadening array of student interests is an ongoing challenge.

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. This challenge is explicitly recognized in the SSW's goal to: "Sustain and strengthen the conditions for individual and organizational "flourishing" in a vibrant, diverse school community."

Finding: The School of Social Work is a major contributor through research collaborations to the multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary mission of the University of Washington. The School of Social Work has an outstanding faculty that 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.

Opportunity/Challenge: The School faces serious space challenges, such that most research groups have been forced to locate off-site, and are far flung.

Opportunity/Challenge: It is a constant challenge to create an intellectual community of scholars. A number of people in the School would like to have more discussions around social justice. Several faculty members mentioned to the review committee that they would like to be able to spend even more time getting to know their colleagues and learning about each other's research. The demise of a School research seminar was noted by both faculty and doctoral students as a loss. Faculty also expressed interest in more dialogue about how to integrate social justice into research and service.

Finding: The Associate Dean for Research provides significant, commendable support for research development within the School of Social Work, and even for Tacoma, demonstrating personal commitment above and beyond the expected.

Opportunity/Challenge: The Associate Dean for Research can provide only patchwork support for proposal development due to constrained resources.

5. Measuring and evaluating progress

Finding: The School administrators and faculty clearly identified management information system development as a major need and one that they are actively pursuing. The current management information system does not support administrative decision-making or program and student outcome efforts. The Review Committee also found that the current management information system is inadequate to address key questions for the review without significant work on the part of administrators in order to locate and prepare the data. Some data even after

being requested were not easy to locate or were not able to be shared during the review time. The Review Committee notes that the recent employment of a new IT director should help the School in updating the management information systems.

Finding: As noted above, the School is moving to outcomes-based evaluation of curricular outcomes. During this academic year (2009-2010), SSW is finalizing the new competencies at the BASW and MSW levels and the practice behaviors linked to these competencies. The assessment of the demonstration of these competencies involves not only classroom measurements but also field practicum assessments. The Review Committee found that structures that are in place through faculty standing committees and administrative teams (including the Practicum Council) will ensure that all components of the assessment of curricular outcomes will be addressed.

Opportunity/Challenge: At this point, the movement to outcomes-based evaluation of curricular outcomes is in flux and final measures have not been identified. The advanced competencies linked to the second year specializations in the MSW program are just now being re-evaluated in light of the new CSWE policy statement.

The SSW is developing what look to be a very creative, insightful, thoughtful set of indicators by which to measure the School's performance in terms of its mission, values, vision, and goals. All indications are that the School will be a leader in this regard.

6. Strategic planning and opportunities

Finding: The School of Social Work has begun a strategic goal setting process that is focused on re-defining the School for the future. Currently five strategic goals are the centerpiece of this effort that involves faculty, students, practicum leaders and social work administrators and staff: 1) Grow and support our diverse, world-class body of students; 2) Retool our educational programs to meet future needs; 3) Reinvigorate our commitment to practice; 4) Design collaborative, sustainable, just solutions to social problems; and 5) Sustain a diverse and flourishing School community.

Opportunity/Challenge: Driven by the SSW's 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 SSW 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, and the review committee urges the SSW to pursue this leadership role.