



September 27, 2023

To: Michael Spencer, Ballmer Endowed Dean, School of Social Work

From: Joy Williamson-Lott, Dean
Kima Cargill, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the School of Social Work (2022 – 2023)

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School's final recommendations from the School of Social Work academic program review. Detailed comments on the review can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (April 6, 2022)
- Self-Study (December 16, 2022)
- Site visit (February 9-10, 2023)
- Review committee report (March 15, 2023)
- School of Social Work response to the report (May 5, 2023)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 18, 2023)

The review committee consisted of:

- **Carol Davis**, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor, College of Education, University of Washington (Committee Chair)
- **Christina Fong**, Professor, UW Department of Organization and Management; Associate Dean of Inclusion and Diversity, Michael G. Foster School of Business, University of Washington
- **Sandra Momper**, Associate Professor of Social Work and Faculty Associate Native American Studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, University of Michigan
- **Mimi Chapman**, Frank A. Daniels Distinguished Professor for Human Service Policy Information, Associate Dean for Doctoral Education, School of Social Work, Chair of the Faculty, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The School of Social Work offers the following degree programs:

- Bachelor of Arts in Social Welfare (BASW)
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

On May 18, 2023, then-Acting Dean Michael Spencer and Associate Dean Kalei Kanuha of the School of Social Work attended a Graduate School Council meeting to discuss outcomes from the review. The Council reviewed all documents from the review prior to the meeting. A summary of the review documents and the Graduate School Council discussion are attached to this memo.

Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends the School of Social Work on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. After discussion, the Council recommended the following:

- Full academic program review in 10 years (2032-2033)

We concur with the Council's recommendations.

cc: Tricia Serio, Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Provost
Michael Spencer, Ballmer Endowed Dean, School of Social Work
Review Committee Members
GPSS President

Attachment

University of Washington | Graduate Council

Summary of the review of the School of Social Work

Summary prepared by the Graduate School Director of Academic Program Review

Site visit date: February 9-10, 2023

Degrees/Certificates included in the review:

- Bachelor of Arts in Social Welfare (BASW)
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

Overall Review Committee Recommendation: Continuing status for all degree programs with a subsequent review in 10 years.

Summary of Review Committee Report

The review committee prefaced its report with an acknowledgement that the School of Social Work (SSW) is a nationally ranked (#2) program serving undergraduate and graduate students. The school is a leader in workforce development and has 16 research and innovations centers.

School of Social Work Leadership

The dean has served for 17 years and will step down at the end of 2023. The leadership team consists of 8 associate deans, assistant deans, and directors.

- The review committee described the overall sentiment as optimistic and positive, highlighting the strength of the culture of the school, characterized by a spirit of collaboration, embracing change, and shared values.
- The committee observed that the school is at an important inflection point with a new dean search and having recently been re-accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) until 2030.
- The review committee found the financial health and administrative functions of the school to be strong but noted the school's inability to meet targeted reserves and encouraged exploration of growing new revenue streams.
- The committee noted that the school evaluates several aspects of the student experience, general curriculum, climate, advising, and field evaluations, however, they found it was evident this data is not used to make shifts in programs.

Student Support

- The committee found that the demand for student services has grown in size and complexity over the past 10 years because of increased enrollment and the mixed fee based and tuition-based programs.
- The committee noted that students in all programs were complimentary of the staff. The recent hiring of a half-time mental health specialist was highlighted.

BASW Students

- The committee found that undergraduate students remarked upon the strength the cohort model and inclusive pedagogical practices.
- Based on conversations with students, the committee identified a few areas for growth, including stronger integration between field work and classroom curriculum, transparency about practicum placement, improved classroom facilities, and more scholarship support.

MSW Students

- The committee found that masters students spoke of having high expectations but noted improvements were needed in these areas:
 - integration and redundancy in the curriculum
 - concerns about the introductory course (504) in content and instruction, as the course “did not address the racial diversity of the student population causing harm to BIPOC students as they re-lived harms as a part of this course”
 - challenges relating to course planning and basic support to obtain fieldwork placements

Doctoral Students

- The committee noted that the doctoral program is in considerable flux and needs attention. The program has had 5 directors in 7 years. Combined with the pandemic, this has led to neglect of basic processes and information sharing that is causing considerable distress among students.
- Specifically, the committee noted improvements were needed in these areas:
 - update the doctoral handbook, especially the list of courses across campus that meet student’s needs for this highly interdisciplinary program
 - improve the mentoring practices of faculty to be more equitable and consistent
 - assess how students get access to software
 - exam policies around paid family leave, childcare subsidies, and childcare spaces within the school

Field Education

- The Field Education office has a team of ten who work on seeking traditional and non-traditional practicum placements for students.
- The committee highlighted the importance of the practicum experience, as this is when students learn to do social work and develop antiracist practices.
- The committee found challenges with this group of faculty as their titles have recently changed from lecturer to assistant or associate teaching professor, with questions regarding new expectations for research.
- The committee noted that there is a disconnect between field work curriculum and classroom curriculum, but that it has been beneficial that field faculty have positions on the faculty council and the promotion and tenure committee.

Instructional Faculty

- There are two types of non-tenured instructional faculty within the school: part-time instructors (adjuncts) and teaching professors.
- The committee noted that more clarity is needed for teaching professors, specifically the promotion policies and their rights and responsibilities regarding faculty governance.
- The committee highlighted the school's dependence on part-time instructors (n=36) who work outside of the academy and bring their practice to the classroom, while stating that on-boarding for this group is not sufficient and results in challenges and high turnover. The committee suggested that overall, there is a concern that the teaching mission of the school is not as highly valued as the research mission – students indicate minimal interaction with the highly regarded tenure track faculty.

Assistant Professors

- The review committee found that the assistant professors described the school as healthy and “non-toxic,” particularly for people of color.
- The committee noted that these faculty are pleased with their start-up packages, but described some unevenness in mentoring and a need for more specific guidance around preparing tenure materials.

Associate & Full Professors

- The committee found a strong camaraderie within the faculty, and good relations between faculty and staff. The ecosystem of research centers has provided tenured professors leadership opportunities within the centers and the school itself.
- The committee noted that the school will be changing with the new non-tenured faculty lines, and that the school culture should be monitored to maintain the collegial nature.

Faculty of Color

- The committee highlighted the school's culture, and leadership's commitment to increasing BIPOC faculty.
- However, the committee noted that there is a general feeling that there were more Black faculty 30 years ago, and that they left for various reasons including the perception of a glass ceiling. The increased gentrification of historically Black Seattle neighborhoods was also noted.
- The committee noted that the field faculty are more people of color, some who have been here for years, they spend more time with students in affinity groups without additional compensation, which can lead to salary compression and salary inequality.

Research and Innovation Centers

- The committee found highly visible centers, with clear scholarly impact in the school and in the field. The faculty associated with these centers spoke highly of the Assistant Dean of Finance and Administration
- The committee noted faculty not associated with the centers could use some formalized assistance with grants, and there could be greater cross fertilization across centers.

Advancement & Community Partnerships

- The committee found that the advancement and community partnerships team is very successful in raising funds, and the dean is aware of the need to address challenges and strengthen the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a new strategic plan, especially once some of the transitions conclude (back to in-person learning, dean search completed)
- Improve the doctoral program with sustained leadership and coordination. Revise handbook, mentoring guidelines, and research opportunities, etc..
- Improve the curricular content and infrastructure for the masters program in numerous ways, including redesign of SOWO 504 in collaboration with students of color, engaging in curricular planning, involving part-time faculty in the work and more.
- Create paths for explicit mentorship for successful promotion and reappointment for various faculty titles (tenure-line, teaching, fieldwork). Consider supports that go beyond the walls of the university.
- The faculty title transition has created some confusions and threatens the trust of some voting faculty. As the transition continues, the school should pay attention to equality in terms of title, compression, etc... Consider other academic titles for faculty with field supervision such as "Professor of Practice".

- As student's needs crystalize, there may be an opportunity to leverage technology and new pedagogical approaches to reach a wider diversity of students. These new opportunities might yield increased revenues and support student and facilities improvements.

School Of Social Work Unit Response:

The school addressed recommendations from the committee, as summarized below:

Strategic Plan

- The school has recently completed its previous strategic plan, but was waiting to start the new planning process until a new dean search concluded. Professor Michael Spencer has now been hired to be the new dean, beginning July 2023.
- The school plans to use strategic stakeholder listening sessions, and analysis of recent student and faculty feedback, hopes to have a draft by January 2024 to be finalized by that spring.

Academic Unit Infrastructure

- The school acknowledges the leadership transitions and vacancies over the past 2 years has made updating infrastructure a challenge, but expressed a commitment to prioritize it in the new strategic plan, with a major focus on communication of clear policies and procedures to support faculty, staff, and students, prospective students, and public stakeholders.
- The school stated this work has already begun and is working to hire new MSW director and new assistant dean and director of field education. The school has also hired a new MARCOMM director and plans to hire a web specialist, and digital media specialist.

Technology and Online Learning

- The school notes it has been working over the past 2 years to assess diverse stakeholder needs and workflows in relation to student learning, however more attention is needed.
- The school highlighted several initiatives, including replacing the student and alumni information management system and reimaging its website and intranet to better meet the needs of SSW stakeholders.
- The school stated it has already begun exploration of new pedagogical approaches to reach more first-generation, BIPOC and rural students, including online, part-time, and hybrid instruction. A preliminary plan for an online MSW has been developed.

Teaching Faculty

- The school noted that it is closely tracking considerations around faculty titles, and believes that some of the confusion about assessment and promotion may be transitory.

- The school clarified that median pay by rank for tenure-line faculty is higher than pay for research faculty, and considerably higher than teaching faculty. The school leadership noted a need to balance national market forces with their commitment to pay equity.
- The school noted that the title “Professor of Practice” would not be appropriate, as this is a non-voting title, that is not eligible for promotion or emeritus status. The UW Faculty Senate is currently contemplating a “Professor of Clinical Practice”, which may be more aligned.

Faculty Mentorship

- The school agrees with the review committee’s recommendation to formalize mentorship plans, particularly for teaching and junior faculty.
- The dean or dean’s representatives will focus on mentorship needs for the 2023-2024 academic year, including assistance for pre-awards development and post award phases.

Doctoral Program

- The school strongly concurred with the statement the “doctoral program needs sustained leadership and coordination to ensure all students have access to the necessary opportunities to fulfill the needs of the next generation of researchers, teachers and practitioners.”
- The school committed to improvements, including appointing a new PhD program director and assistant director and updating program policy and manuals.

MSW Program

- The school clarified its existing curricular structure and mentorship of new teaching faculty, emphasizing that significant efforts already exist to plan and evaluate curriculum. The school acknowledged that efforts could be strengthened, which would require additional compensation for the faculty members.
- The school agrees that SOC W 504 is in significant need of restructuring, and the work has already begun Fall 2022 with the MSW program director engaging in an entirely new structure that addresses long standing student concerns.
- The school will convene a working group of MSW students to advise in the revisioning of the course, which will change from a 3-credit course in the fall, to a course proposed to extend the entire first year of the program.

Resource Requirements

- The school fully supports the finding regarding facilities, and noted the Research Commons will be remodeled to support non-sequential physical and virtual teaching

beginning August 2023.

- The school notes however the issue of space is a growing concern for:
 - community members with disabilities and accessibility needs
 - increased student enrollment
 - increased office space for research and innovation centers
 - critical childcare needs for doctoral students
- The school believes that improving the learning infrastructure is vital, however they do not currently have the fiscal resources and would need additional support from UW capital projects office to explore renovation options.
- The school will explore childcare subsidies, paid family leave, and childcare space policies with other UW academic units as part of the strategic planning process.

Summary of Graduate School Council Meeting on May 18, 2023

The Graduate School Council discussion of this review included the following key topics:

- *Funding and reserves:* A Council member asked for comment on the review committee observation about challenges meeting targeted reserves. The School of Social Work noted that it has various revenue sources. Further, the school commented that while enrollment in its fee-based programs is healthy, the school prides itself on affordability. According to school leadership, the School of Social Work is very highly ranked but its pricing is lower compared to peers.
- *Engagement with indigenous communities:* A Council member commented on the School of Social Work's relationships with indigenous communities and asked how that translates to representation among its students. The School of Social Work referenced a long, concrete commitment to addressing indigenous issues as well as representation through indigenous students and faculty. Examples include partnerships with indigenous organizations for workforce development initiative sites and improving tribal community accessibility to degree programs. The school is proud of its work in this area but knows it can do better and is committed to doing so.