Council on Social Work Education
Commission on Accreditation

Site Visit Report

Program Visited Name: University of Arkansas Monticello
Program Visited State: Arkansas
Program Level visited: BSW
Date of Site Visit: 14 April 2014

Site Visitor: Dr. Stephen P. Wernet
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University of Houston-Downtown
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1. Include a copy of the site visit schedule or a list of people who met with the site visitor(s) during the visit (e.g.: groups and individuals from the program and institution).

   A scanned copy of the Site Visit Schedule is attached to this report.

   Faculty with whom I met included Judith Howard, Ph.D., Program Director and Donna Taylor, MSW, Assistant Professor. Marie Walker, MSW, Assistant Professor and Field Education Director was absent due to a family death.

   I met with 13 social work majors. They included Priscilla Hughes, Sabrina Smith, Rex Davis, Jennifer Nicholson, Adrianne Jones, Tami Holland, Talanea Miller, Sheila Narion, Taylor Holland, Ashely Smith, Jessica Wall, Kayley Williams, and ShaNeikqua Stewart.

   I met with 4 practitioners who spanned the roles of field practica supervisors and Community Advisor Board members. They included: Deanna Doherty (Drew County Developmental Disabilities), Leslie Vestal (CASA), Stacy McKeown (Options Domestic Violence Center), and Andre Lewis (Delta Counseling Association – a community mental health center).

2. Write a brief summary of the conversation on general questions regarding: program mission and goals (AS 1.0), diversity (AS 3.1), and assessment (AS 4.0).

   a. program mission and goals (AS 1.0):
      how the program’s mission and goals relate to the level of practice it prepares students

      All stakeholders were able to articulate the mission, goals and objectives of the program. The students understood the generalist model of social work practice. Community field supervisors felt the students were well prepared as generalist practitioners. Because of the rural nature of practice, community agencies felt that a bit more work was necessary to prepare students for dual relationships and the ethical dilemmas that accompany them. Community agencies also suggested attaching a microskills lab to the practice courses as a means of enhancing the integration of knowledge and skills in preparation for students’ field practica. Other than these minor comments, everyone was complimentary of the program’s student preparation for generalist practice.

   b. assessment (AS 4.0):
      if it gained any insight from the assessment of student outcomes.
The program works diligently to conduct and use assessment processes and data. The faculty uses 5 measures of assessment: 3 student level assessments and 2 program level assessments. The faculty collects employer feedback from members of the Community Advisory Board. Data is collected from graduates and Alumni on an as-available basis.

The faculty uses a continuous quality improvement (CQI) approach to assessment. They constantly review and reflect upon the program and its impact on students learning and competencies. This process has led to changes in both the explicit curriculum as well as the assessment processes themselves.

The CQI approach and several other assessment processes are generally conducting in an informal manner. Decisions are made but the processes surrounding them are not always documented clearly. The decisions also need to be more clearly tied to data. The assessment process is present but needs to be institutionalized or formalized so everyone understands and can see the process.

c. diversity (AS 3.1):
explore the challenges and achievements the program has experienced in making specific and continuous efforts to provide a learning context in which respect for all persons and understanding of diversity are practiced.

The faculty works diligently to address diversity within both the explicit and implicit curriculum. There is constant attention to University activities that expose students to differences in culture and people. The faculty aids students to understand and appreciate the position of “the Other” through the use of role playing in the cultural diversity class. There also is attention to professional and personal values especially in the ethics course and attention to the NASW Professional Ethics Code.

Faculty is concerned with its composition – 3 white females from outside the local community. Although the student body and the community advisory board were complimentary, the faculty is concerned about its homogeneity. Issues concerning faculty weaknesses, discussed later in the report, are likely to make this a perennial challenge for the program and the university.

Overall, the program is attentive to diversity in both the explicit and implicit curriculum.

3. List each accreditation standard and question raised by the COA in its Letter of Instructions with a thorough discussion of findings for each.

**Accreditation Standard ASB2.0.5:**

[The ten core competencies are used to design the professional curriculum. The program] describes and explains how its curriculum content (knowledge, values and skills) implements the operational definition of each of its competencies.

**Instructions**
Concern: Human rights is not discussed in the curriculum.
CLARIFY with the program how human rights is discussed in the curriculum.

**Site Visit Findings**
The approach to Human Rights is both a strength and a weakness for the program. The strength is its infusion throughout the curriculum. This approach is much like the program’s approach to ethics.

According to the students, human rights is pervasive in every course. It does not reside in any one place rather it is everywhere and throughout the curriculum.

In working with the faculty, we identified numerous places where human rights is covered in the explicit curriculum: Social Policy 1, Social Policy 2, Introduction to Social Work, Research Methods and Cultural Diversity.

Social Policy 1: A handout on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is distributed and used in class. Human Rights appears in weeks 4 & 5: Forces Shaping Policy, Policies of Policy Practice and Advocating for Justice (pg. 493) and again in week 7: Ethics – use of role playing of a hospital review panel.

Social Policy 2: A handout on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is distributed and used in class. In week 3: Growing Inequality; in week 4: Labor policy & Unions; in week 7, civil rights. (pg 546); week 11 the use of a video (live58.org/survive125 discusses broadening the notion of rights beyond US borders (pg. 548).


Cultural Diversity: in the class discussion on diversity and human rights. The content is linked with social work ethics and discussion of the dignity and work of individuals.

Introduction to Social Work – Students mentioned this but time did not permit us to comb through the course syllabus.

Infusion is a weakness in that the program needs to make explicit its approach to addressing human rights. When explicating its infusion approach, the program needs to make human rights visible where and how it appears in the various courses, especially its definition of human rights. Everyone can identify its presence and where the content appears throughout the curriculum. It needs to be made explicit.

**Accreditation Standard AS3.2.7:**
The program spells out how it informs students of its criteria for evaluating their academic and professional performance, including policies and procedures for grievance.

**Instructions**
Concern: The program provides some information about a formal grievance process and refers to the University catalog as a reference. The college catalog was not provided and the grievance policy is only generally articulated in the student handbook and narrative. CLARIFY with the program how it provides specific information to students on policies and procedures for grievance.

**Site Visit Findings**
The program addresses this standard in both its explicit and implicit curriculum. Students verbalized the appeal processes available to them both inside and outside of the social
work program. Students shared that faculty regularly inform them of their rights to appeal grades and other issues through oral means. Students also said these rights and processes appear in course syllabi but we could not verify these statements in document reviews.

In the implicit curriculum, students are informed of rights and grievance procedures in numerous ways. First, students are informed of these rights and procedures by the Dean of Enrollment Management, or her staff, in the University’s New Student Orientation. (The Dean shared content outlines with me and will be forwarded to CSWE by the Program.) Second, in the annual Social Work student orientation, students are informed of these rights and procedures. Third, several documents contain the appeals processes for students. The University Catalog pg 53, column 2, para 2 discusses academic regulations, academic standing and suspensions. (This material was shared with me and will be forwarded to CSWE by the Program.) The UAM Student Handbook (URL) discusses academic appeals and outlines the appeals of course grades and appeals of suspensions. (This material was shared with me and will be forwarded to CSWE by the Program.) In the Social Work Student Handbook, page 6 there is discussion of process for appealing and grieving. Fourth, The Social Work Student Association serves an as avenue for funneling student concerns and grievances to the faculty and program director. Finally, a Dropbox is maintained in the social work offices for student written feedback to the program director.

**Accreditation Standard AS3.3.5:**
Faculty demonstrate ongoing professional development as teachers, scholars, and practitioners through dissemination of research and scholarship, exchanges with external constituencies such as practitioners and agencies, and through other professionally relevant creative activities that support the achievement of institutional priorities and the program’s mission and goals.

**Instructions**
CONCERN: The narrative reports anticipated budgetary constraints for professional development will limit the opportunity for continuous professional development and limit scholarship dissemination.

CLARIFY with the program that the level of support demonstrates ongoing professional development as teachers, scholars, and practitioners through dissemination of research and scholarship, exchanges with external constituencies such as practitioners and agencies, and through other professionally relevant creative activities that support the achievement of institutional priorities and the program’s mission and goals.

**Site Visit Findings**
There are both strengths and weaknesses in this area. The strengths are the relationships that exist between the program faculty and the local community. These ongoing relationships place the faculty in strong positions for continuous professional development. Faculty’s engagement provides access to practice settings and practice issues which they bring back into the classroom to inform students’ preparation and bring the theory into the practice setting. All parties - students, community and faculty - recognize this interaction as beneficial for everyone.

Faculty is engaged in scholarly activities supported by available university research money. Efforts are being made to continue support for faculty scholastic work.
One of the master’s-trained faculty is investigating doctoral education. Her interest is being supported by administration and colleagues.

A major weakness is the availability of financial support for continuous faculty scholarship. This is readily acknowledged by all parties – central administration, college administration and the faculty. This is a university-wide challenge exacerbated by the levels of system support and tuition support. The newly appointed, permanent Dean of the College is working to allocate faculty development money for everyone in the College. The Chancellor also shared the policy of allowing faculty to rollover development money thereby enabling faculty to build resources for attending more expensive conferences or pursuing projects requiring extensive resources. This will continue to be a challenge for the University given its place in the University of Arkansas System as well as its geographic location.

There are two additional strengths and weaknesses germane to this standard. A major strength is the faculty. None of the 3 faculty are tenured. In particular, the two tenure track faculty have been in place for nearly 4 years, but neither is doctorally-prepared. University administrators were unconcerned about the tenureability of the two assistant professors and felt they were on track for tenure. The stability of these faculty is crucial for the program’s stability.

A major weakness and concern is the instability in the program director’s position. The current director who is the 10th director in approximately 11 years is leaving at the end of the current academic year. Part of the challenge is salary for the position. Another challenge is attractiveness of the university’s geographic location. University administrators spoke frankly about the university-wide challenge of attracting and retaining qualified faculty. Nonetheless, the issue of salary is a major obstacle to attracting and retaining qualified social work faculty and program director.

**Accreditation Standard AS4.0.1**

The program presents its plan to assess the attainment of each of its competencies. The plan specifies procedures, multiple measures of each practice behavior, and benchmarks employed to assess the attainment of each of the program’s competencies (ASB2.0.3: ASM2.0.4).

**Instructions**

CONCERN: The program presents an integrative paper as a measure for each competency. The rubric for grading the integrative paper to measure each competency is not clear. CLARIFY with the program how it measures each competency as stated in the assessment summary document.

**Site Visit Findings**

The program provided the grading rubric to me during the Site Visit. In the course of discussion, the faculty and director mentioned they had inadvertently failed to include the rubric in the Self Study document. The 12 page rubric links practice competencies to particular sections of the Integrative paper. The rubric was shared with me and a copy will be sent to CSWE.

During discussion with the faculty, it was identified that the rubric requires further refinement associating the criteria utilized for evaluating the paper to levels of student
proficiency and command of the competencies. This continues as a work in progress for the program.