

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK ANNUAL REPORT 2006

I. Research

Accomplishments

Books: Two social work faculty, Sherraden and Segal are in the process of completing books, one will be published this year, the other has just been completed. Three faculty, Johnson, Pickard and Saleeby have funded research projects. Two faculty, Johnson and Pierce were involved in writing a three campus Health Disparities Center proposal, Pierce as PI.

Guo led an exploratory project in China sponsored by the Brown School Center for Social Development. She worked with farmers in rural China to determine if Individual Development Accounts, specialized savings accounts, would be accepted in rural areas. Her work was reported in the Beijing newspaper.

Faculty have been active in a number of international meetings and conferences:

Johnson was invited to speak to a conference in China on HIV- AIDS in African Americans.

Sherraden was invited to present her work on international volunteer services as the keynote speaker at a conference in New Delhi, India and organized an international conference on the same subject held in London.

Segal presented her work on immigration to the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy in Athens, Greece and represented CSWE at the German Marshall Fund 2006 Transatlantic Policy Research Program

Pierce presented a paper on research done in South Africa on children and community violence at a conference in Cape Town, South Africa.

Other accomplishments:

Segal continues to serve as editor of the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*. Other faculty members serve on editorial boards and all serve as reviewers for journal articles.

Incorporating research into teaching. All faculty use their research in their teaching. Porterfield and Pierce use their experience conducting evaluation projects in the program evaluation course, sharing examples that make research more accessible to students. Johnson uses her research on African Americans in her research course and her course on minority health, helping students to become more engaged in the courses. Pickard's research on elders guides his lectures in a human behavior course and a course on social work practice with the aged. Sherraden organizes her undergraduate policy course to encourage student research. The result has been student projects that are selected for UM Research

Day at the Capitol each year she teaches. Because social work faculty frequently engage in community-based research, their experiences become important components of each course making courses more relevant to the student's learning.

Planning

Each tenure track faculty member is actively engaged in research and almost all have externally funded projects. Funders include NIMH, the Susan G. Koman Foundation, the Hartford Foundation and other national and international funders. A major proposal for a Center on Health Disparities has been submitted to NIH. Although the School is small, research work groups are encouraged. These may include faculty from other units or other universities. Social work faculty members have begun to work together on research articles, alternating lead author with the topic. This approach has been successful for several faculty.

Senior faculty, when possible, include junior faculty on research projects and faculty from other units have provided mentoring to social work faculty. A recent hire at the associate level will provide mentoring to a newly hired faculty member and to another assistant professor.

When faculty are hired, they are told they need a minimum of 10 articles published or accepted by the time they go up for tenure. To meet this goal, we hire new faculty who have already begun publishing, then encourage them to write. New faculty members have a two course prep load and are not expected to participate in campus service until it is evident that they have a solidly established research agenda. Some community service is encouraged because community contacts lead to research opportunities. Each annual review provides feedback and direction on what is needed for tenure.

This process has resulted in senior faculty who are nationally and internationally recognized for their expertise, demonstrated by the earlier list of faculty who have been invited to speak at international conferences.

Social work research focuses on practice and policy. Faculty who engage in research on practice also provide recommendations for policy change. Johnson and Pickard are included in this group. Other faculty either use large data sets to analyze policy or pursue a micro approach by interviewing subjects to determine how policy works. Porterfield and Guo use data sets, Sherraden uses qualitative research to understand how policy affects individuals. Each approach has resulted in policy change.

Future plans include funding for faculty to attend at least one research conference or training session a year, encouraging NTT faculty present research on teaching at conferences they attend, continuing to hire faculty who are engaged in research,

and continuing to encourage faculty to include course buyouts in research proposals to allow them time to fully engage in their research.

II. Teaching

Student Learning

- *Meeting learning outcomes.* The Social Work program has seven goals that guide the BSW and MSW programs. These objectives are used as the learning objectives for students' practicum. Students must describe the practicum activities they will engage in, how they will be evaluated on their learning and specifically what they will learn to indicate they have mastered that objective. For example, in the MSW program, students must demonstrate that they are able to use theory to guide their practice. They do this by indicating which theories are appropriate to understand the problems they are treating. An outcome might be that they are able to use behavior theory to help foster parents understand how to respond appropriately to the children in their care.

Student learning is evaluated during a faculty member's visit to the agency which occurs at least once each semester. During the visit the learning contract is reviewed. Practicum supervisors also submit a mid-term and final evaluation form. If students do not have an opportunity to engage in each learning objective, the agency is asked to find additional assignments for the student or the student is moved to another agency.

- *Evaluating course objectives.* Each course in the Social Work program has course objectives stated on the syllabus, and these are assessed in several ways. Tests and papers allow professors to determine that course objectives are being met. The undergraduate program uses a nationally normed exit exam to determine if students have mastered required content in the eight areas required by the Council on Social Work Education. The MSW program uses the Program Evaluation course as a capstone course. Students must demonstrate their understanding of research and social service programs by evaluating a program at their practicum agency.

Student evaluations include questions about the course learning objectives. Faculty members frequently change their courses in response to student feedback and evaluations. Course assignments are changed, method of instruction varied and new material is used. If the national exam indicates students are doing poorly in a particular area, faculty are asked to re-evaluate their approach. Most often lower scores are related to adjuncts or new faculty.

- *Intellectual rigor.* Each social work course requires research and writing. In introductory courses, students write a paper on an area of social work or a social policy. As the courses progress, longer papers that make use of journal articles are required. By their senior year, students should have some understanding of research and be able to critically evaluate written material.

Courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs differ in that undergrad courses teach students the generalist perspective or how to use micro and macro systems to intervene when individuals, families or communities have problems. Graduates of the BSW program understand case management and how to advocate for clients. They are able to critically evaluate services and to use professional literature to stay current in their practice. Life-long learning is encouraged.

In the MSW program, students apply generalist knowledge to a specific practice area or group. MSW courses go into more depth and students specialize through concentrations. Students learn to critically evaluate the literature and to use evidence-based practice approaches. They are able to evaluate their own practice and agency programs. They are taught practice without evaluation and use of current information is professionally unethical, and therefore unacceptable. After graduation from the MSW program, students qualify to apply for state licensing.

The difference between BSW and MSW courses is readily evident when syllabi are compared.

- *Theses supervision.* Although social work does not require a thesis, it does require an internship/practicum. Intern supervisors must have two years post masters experience, must attend an orientation session sponsored by UM-St. Louis, St Louis University and the Brown School at Washington University. After being certified as an intern supervisor, a person must continue to attend a specified number of training sessions each year. Finally, supervisors are evaluated by faculty when they visit internship sites.
- *Community engagement.* The School has more than 100 students placed in community social service agencies most semesters. These range from state agencies to major non-profit agencies. Students have been placed with the Special School District, with Jennings School District, with Parents as Teachers administration, with Family Resource Center, the Veterans' Administration, the International Institute, and Community Alternatives.
- *Significant student accomplishments.* Ann Chisholm was selected for one of the Trailblazer Awards sponsored by the campus.
- *Changes to program curriculum.* This year we have added electives to the program, based on students' requests. Courses are tweaked each year after student evaluations are analyzed, but content does not vary because of accreditation requirements, which also require that content be current.

Planning

- The School has been using a strategic plan to guide program decisions. This plan was updated in November and the focus this year has been on improving writing skills, engaging alumni, increasing continuing education courses, and becoming more visible in the community to improve enrollments.

Enrollments have remained fairly steady, although the School has added a second application deadline for the fall and one for the spring semester. This allows the School to fill all possible slots in the MSW program. The MSW cohort at Mineral Area College is nearing completion and planning has begun for a new cohort. Because Mizzou also offers courses at MAC, we compete with them for our BSW students. We are allowed to graduate 40 MSW students each year and have come close to that this year. Additional recruiting is planned for the St. Louis BSW program.

The BSW will continue to start a new cohort at Mineral Area College every two years. We now have a faculty member who lives near the College and will begin recruiting for both the MSW and BSW programs at MAC. She plans to participate on radio talk shows and visit social service agencies in the area. We are also exploring the possibility of offering courses at Jefferson County College. As we expand our course offerings, we are increasing the number of ITV courses offered and exploring the use of online courses.

- *New programs.* Although it is not a new program, Gerontology joined the School this year and a new director was hired. The new director will be working with community agencies to recruit additional students to the program.

III. Service

- Major contributions to campus. Faculty serve on several Senate committees and campus search committees as appropriate.
- Contributions to the profession. Sherraden, Segal and Saleeby serve on national committees for the Council on Social Work Education. All faculty serve as reviewers for professional journals and Segal edits the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*. Sherraden took the lead in organizing an international conference this year.
- Contributions to the community. Each faculty member in the School serves on one or more community agency Boards. In fact, faculty have on-going relationships with approximately 25 community agencies. Several faculty members chair agency boards—Pierce does this year—others chair board committees. Faculty also consult with community agencies. Sherraden's Social and Economic Development course worked with Beyond Housing—several student groups took on different planning projects for the agency.

IV. Economic Development

- As described above, Sherraden's course worked with Beyond Housing in Pagedale to consult on social and economic development projects in the area. Beyond Housing works with clients to provide housing and the services necessary to become economically independent. Sherraden finished her funded evaluation of a project, written up in the *Wall Street Journal*, teaching young children and their parents to save.

V. Continuous Improvement

- The School continues to review and revise its Strategic Plan. As a result of this plan, the Social Work Alumni Association has produced two continuing education events this year and is planning more.
- The School has worked with Dean Walker de Felix and members of the Gerontology program to transfer that program into the School of Social Work. A new director was hired for the program and planning is being done to increase enrollments.
- When visiting field agencies, faculty members ask field supervisors and students if there are courses or content that would have increased the students' competence in the field. Using that feedback and feedback from other contacts with students, new elective courses are being added to the curriculum.
- This past year, working with the English Department, the School was able to offer junior level writing courses specific to social work as a means to improve students' writing skills.
- The last accreditation team from the Council on Social Work Education strongly recommended that two new faculty members be added, that funds be added to the School's E & E account and that space large enough to accommodate all faculty and students be found. As of this fall, all of these will have been accomplished.
- Feedback from the PCAT, a nationally standardized assessment exam given to all graduating BSW students, provides information on whether or not students are learning content required by the Council on Social Education, compared to its national sample of students. If student scores fall below the 50th percentile, changes in the curriculum are evaluated. This year scores increased and there was no need for immediate change.
- The School of Social uses a multi-method assessment plan approved by the CSWE site team to evaluate its program on a continuing basis. Continuous improvement is assumed under this plan.