



Academic Program Review: June 1, 2004–May 31, 2005

Unit: Department of Social Work

Part III Academic Program Review

Instructions:

Complete this section for the Program Review Committee recommendations not achieved prior to June 2004, as reported in Table I.C of previous annual assessment reports.

Undergraduate Program: Social Work

Program Review Committee Recommendations (Numbering corresponds to original numbering in PRC Report)	Responses to Recommendations (Describe changes or improvements.)
<p>3. Develop and implement strategies for retaining students in the Undergraduate Social Work Program and that the effectiveness of the strategies be documented on a regular basis.</p>	<p>The major retention strategy used for pre-social work majors is intensive advisement by the BSW program director, who uses the social work degree plan and admissions application to orient each student about the program's curriculum and to encourage the student to focus on meeting the requirements for admission into the BSW program. Other strategies include: 1) the careful selection of instructors for the introduction class, SOCW 1313, which requires reviewing student evaluations for that class; and 2) periodic discussions with the Chair of the STC Health and Human Services Department where several sections of the course are taught every semester. Pre-social work majors are systematically required to volunteer in social work settings and organizations through the introduction class. They are also encouraged to attend departmental events and conferences that further expose them to the field of social work.</p> <p>The effectiveness of these strategies is documented through the receipt and approval of BSW applications each year.</p> <p>Retention strategies used for social work majors include: 1) ensuring that students receive advisement every semester by requiring the faculty to advise the student before giving them their RAC#, and 2) creating opportunities for students to participate in departmental committees and extracurricular activities, such as Social Work Student Association activities, the Phi Alpha Social Work</p>

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	<p>Honor Society, Student Legislative Day activities, Field Education Fairs and mini-conferences, and community events in which department faculty are involved. A student mentoring program using practitioner mentors will be implemented beginning in AY 2005-2006.</p> <p>The effectiveness of these strategies is documented through data indicating graduation rates and the number of years to graduation.</p>
<p>4. Develop strategies for recruiting students and plan for the implementation and review of the strategies.</p>	<p>The department participates regularly in recruitment activities designed by the COHSHS' Recruitment Committee. In addition, during the past four years, recruitment efforts have included targeted recruitment of Family Support Service Workers employed by the Hidalgo County Head Start Program and STC students enrolled in courses in its Health and Human Services Department. In keeping with this recruitment effort, a BSW program faculty member serves on that department's advisory committee, which meets quarterly. In addition, we have worked with STC to develop and include its new Associate of Science in Social Work degree in the university's Articulation Agreement. This will facilitate and ensure recruitment of those students to our program. The BSW program will consider contact with career day activities in local high schools if the need for additional recruitment activities should arise.</p> <p>We have experienced a steady stream of students into our program during the past five years. A review of our strategies indicates that they have been effective and that we should continue these activities on a regular basis.</p>
<p>5. Develop and implement a procedure for the periodic evaluation of the orientation processes in the undergraduate program and document how the results of the evaluations are used to improve orientation efforts.</p>	<p>Student orientation is conducted 1) through group meetings with pre-social work majors, 2) through presentations by the BSW Director in the introduction courses offered both here and at STC, 3) through the transfer orientations and UNIV 1301 course offered by the COHSHS, and 4) through individual advisement of students. The Department evaluates the orientation processes once every semester through BSW Program Committee meetings, seeking to make improvements. The BSW Committee has been generally satisfied with the processes, but has also discussed the need for holding general orientation sessions for all students during the first week of every Fall semester. Orientation efforts have largely been improved through the process of conducting regular advisement training for faculty.</p>
<p>6. Develop and implement measures for training faculty advisors and for evaluating and documenting the effectiveness of the advising process in the Undergraduate Social Work Program.</p>	<p>The BSW Director conducts training of faculty advisors every semester. A training session is organized every semester and all faculty members who advise students (currently all except the Chair and MSSW Program Director) receive a training packet that contains examples of documents used in the</p>

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	<p>advising process. Individual training sessions are conducted for faculty members who request it. Special attention is paid to advisement training for new faculty. Faculty members are welcome to sit in while more experienced faculty advisors advise students. At least three faculty members have chosen to do this during the past year. Faculty are asked to apprise the BSW Director of problems or issues that come up in advising so that these may be addressed in the training session the following semester. After review and adoption by the BSW Program Committee, advisement evaluation forms will be issued to all faculty members who advise pre-social work and social work majors. If problems are identified through this process, the BSW Director will: 1) work with individual faculty member to resolve them, or 2) address general concerns through the BSW Program Committee.</p>
<p>8. Document the results of the ongoing evaluation of the Undergraduate Social Work Program curriculum.</p>	<p>Ongoing evaluation of our curriculum is required by our accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The BSW program has a curriculum committee for each curriculum area (Practice, Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE), Policy, and Research). The Committees meet at least once every semester. Proposed changes are brought to the full faculty at monthly faculty meetings. Changes are documented through committee or departmental minutes. Examples of curriculum changes during the last five years include: 1) changes in content of our HBSE courses from a focus on human behavior throughout the lifespan to a more generalized micro/macro perspective of human behavior; 2) revisions in the content of the research courses to achieve consistency between BSW and MSSW Foundation courses; and 3) examination and restructuring of support course requirements.</p>
<p>10. Determine the cause of the extended time some majors experience before graduating and take steps to work with the departments offering support courses to minimize the delay of the SOCW majors' graduation.</p>	<p>To minimize delay of graduation, the program has revised the BSW degree plan twice during the past four years. The current degree plan allows students many more choices in terms of social work support courses. Accordingly, delays based on scheduling problems related to support courses were obviated.</p>
<p>11. Investigate the sources of student dissatisfaction, then develop and implement a plan to improve the environment for learning within the Undergraduate Social Work Program.</p>	<p>The faculty discussed sources of student dissatisfaction related to quality of teaching based on the ETS student survey results and instituted several measures for addressing student dissatisfaction: 1) a student lounge was located and furnished in the midst of faculty offices to facilitate student communication among students and with faculty; 2) faculty advisors for the Social Work Student Association have taken a more active role in the association; 3) curriculum committees began to meet regularly to review course content and teaching assignments; 4) students were recruited to participate on all departmental committees; 5) both new and more senior department faculty have continued to participate with students in extracurricular and other learning</p>

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	activities, such as attendance at social work conferences, Student Lobby Day in the legislature and trips to Mexico; 6) faculty became more cognizant of posting and keeping regular office hours, especially during the periods designated for advising; 7) students are involved in the search and interview process for new faculty; and 8) new faculty orientation and mentoring assists new faculty in acclimating to the student population and stresses the importance of accessibility to students.
12. Develop and implement a plan that would reduce or eliminate overloads and free faculty members in the Undergraduate Social Work program to perform their released-time duties.	The department has requested and filled faculty positions pursuant to the review committee's recommendations. For the past five years, department faculty members have not had overloads.
13. Investigate the degree of accessibility of the faculty to students and develop and implement a plan to increase communication between faculty members and students and the accessibility of the faculty for advising, counseling, and other faculty concerns.	To increase communication between faculty and students, as well as faculty accessibility for advising, counseling and other concerns, the Department has instituted all of the measures described in Item #11 above.
16. Systematically document the improvements in teaching effectiveness that have resulted from the evaluations of instruction in the undergraduate program.	During the annual merit evaluation process, the department faculty members, most of whom teach in the BSW program, address their teaching evaluations and at that time explain how they may have used student evaluations to change how they teach. The BSW Program Director will use this process to systematically document improvements. If this process should change, and in the interest of encouraging faculty members to improve their teaching effectiveness, the BSW Director will request this information directly from individual faculty members to maintain documentation of faculty use of the evaluations. Item #11 on the evaluation form will also be reviewed systematically to assess the faculty members' improvement in teaching effectiveness.

Graduate Program:

(The **graduate social work program** did not meet the criteria in the Academic Program Review Policy for review in the first cycle.)