

School of Social Work
Assessment Update 2009

The School of Social Work employs multiple formal mechanisms to measure program outcomes on an ongoing basis. We believe we have an effective and ongoing process through which we recognize the strengths of our programs, analyze areas that require attention, and continuously affirm and improve our educational program. Formal mechanisms include the Outcome Study, student evaluation of courses, the Job Placement Survey, and licensure pass rates employed in the professional programs. There are also informal mechanisms as well which are especially employed in the Ph.D. Program. Students, staff, instructors, and community professionals all provide feedback on the extent to which we are achieving our program objectives. Results of these efforts are reported back to these vital program constituents.

A powerful example of how we use assessment information for program improvement is illustrated from our Professional Programs' (MSW and BSW programs) Outcomes Study. Our professional programs' curricular theoretical underpinnings require that students have knowledge and skills in micro, mezzo and macro practice. Yet, Outcome Study data revealed student scores below benchmark in the area of macro-level social work practice. This result drove a) curriculum revision of our professional foundation practice course sequence to include a discrete course in practice at the organization and community levels and the addition of a required advanced macro level practice course for advance year of master's program; b) the field committee to assure there were concomitant reinforcing objectives in the field and integrative seminars and internship assignments; and c) hiring decisions relative to macro practice expertise as a priority for new faculty hires.

Another example illustrating the utility of assessment information emerged from our course evaluation data. Course evaluations suggested there was an issue of content overlap in professional foundation the social work practice course sequence (a three-course sequence). Under the auspices of the curriculum committee, practice course instructors conducted an "overlap" survey of students completing the three courses and the field course. While some amount of overlap is good because it reinforces critical concepts survey data suggest that there are more serious overlap concerns between content of the Practice I and Practice II courses. Faculty who teach these specific courses now meet regularly to reduce the redundancy while reinforcing concepts from other courses.