

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS**  
**ACCREDITATION REPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Receive the accreditation report for the Bachelor of Arts Program in Social Work and the Master of Social Work Program at the University of Iowa.

**Executive Summary:** The Social Work Programs (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards and criteria defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The undergraduate and graduate programs received accreditation for the maximum period of eight years. A progress report was requested by August 1, 2011 to clarify or provide further information regarding eight areas of concern. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide “educational excellence and impact.”

**Background:**

◇ **Description of Programs.**

- ⊗ The *Bachelor of Arts Program in Social Work* requires a minimum of 120 semester hours, including at least 64-66 semester hours of work for the major (a minimum of 36 semester hours in social work courses, 16-18 semester hours in cognate areas, and 12 semester hours in a concentration area). This program uses culturally competent generalist social work practice to prepare students for employment in public and private social services in home and community-based settings, for informed community participation in social welfare issues, and for graduate study in social work or allied professions.
- ⊗ The Master of Social Work (MSW) requires 60 semester hours of graduate credit or 48 semester hours for students who hold an undergraduate degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Students may elect a thesis or a non-thesis option. The MSW program emphasizes family-based, community-based, and culturally-competent practice approaches in the student's training. This provides a person-in-environmental framework. All students receive a foundation level of knowledge in the advanced generalist perspective which fits well with what the graduates will need to practice in a rural state such as Iowa. The program also prepares competent professionals for autonomous practice and leadership within the professional community. MSW students also may earn a graduate certificate in aging studies.
- ⊗ As enhancements of both the Bachelor of Arts Program in Social Work and the Master of Social Work, students may earn a *certificate in aging studies* by completing 21 semester hours of approved coursework in aging studies. Also offered is a *certificate in critical cultural competence* which fosters an appreciation for the students' own cultural identities as well as understanding the differences in the cultural identity of others. One goal of this certificate is to help prepare students to serve culturally diverse populations as well as influence changes in society to guarantee equality and inclusion for all persons.

◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met state and national standards for its development and evaluation.

- ◇ Accrediting Agency. The accrediting body is the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).
- ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the two programs contained the responses to the education policies/accreditation standards of the accrediting body – program mission and goals; explicit curriculum (social work curriculum and professional practice; core competencies; generalist practice; advanced practice; signature pedagogy-field education); implicit curriculum (learning environment; diversity; student development; faculty; administrative structure; resources); and assessment.
- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In April 2010, the visiting team determined that the undergraduate and graduate programs sufficiently met the educational policies/accreditation standards to recommend re-accreditation.
- ◇ Sample Findings Identified by the Visiting Team.
  - ⊗ “BSW students offered remarkably articulate, rich and specific notions of what cultural competence means, including understanding other’s perspectives, working with diverse populations, appreciating their own privilege, providing a lens of ‘culture,’ and contributing to their own sense of self-awareness and the recognition of cultural competence as a lifelong journey.
  - ⊗ Both the faculty and students in the MSW program noted the flexibility of the program in terms of responding to individual student desires to specialize beyond the concentrations through electives and field placement choices.
  - ⊗ This is a progressive and inclusive University that exceeds the usual expectations around the Diversity standard.
  - ⊗ The field education program connects the theoretical and conceptual aspects of the program with the practice setting; the field education fosters the implementation of evidence-informed practice.
  - ⊗ The MSW Student Handbook is well-organized and comprehensive. It complements the School’s website as a receptacle of information, policies, and procedures.”
- ◇ Areas of Concern Identified by the Visiting Team. (School responses in italics.)
  - ⊗ BA Program – “Clarify curriculum content and provide evidence that course syllabi reflect the competencies and the implementation of the operational definition of each competency addressed in specific courses.”
    - *The BA faculty met to review the current course outlines for each of the required courses.*
      - 1) *Building upon the format that was established by the School, each course outline was reviewed to ensure that the academic outcomes accurately reflected the course content and that the identified assignments measured the relevant CSWE required competencies and practice behaviors.*
      - 2) *Curriculum mapping across the program was conducted to ensure that there are multiple measures for each competency/practice behavior.*
      - 3) *Signature assignments in each course were reviewed/discussed to determine if changes might be implemented to better measure the competencies/practice behaviors in the 2011-2012 academic year.*

- ⊗ MSW Program – “Clarify the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practice setting especially related to the concentration of family-centered practice.”
  - *Faculty teaching in the family-centered practice concentration met on several occasions.*
    - 1) *The response to this concern in the letter to CSWE was reviewed. The response will be strengthened by including all courses in the sequence (not just the theory and practice courses but also the advanced policy course) to more fully describe the relationship between classroom content and the advanced practicum setting.*
    - 2) *A review of the language used in the competencies and how to operationalize each competency in the practicum learning contract was reviewed with changes made to the template as needed.*
    - 3) *The Master syllabus will be reviewed and updated as necessary.*
- ⊗ Both BA and MSW programs – “Provide information which addresses how assessment data has been used to make changes to the explicit and implicit curriculum.”
  - *The Assessment Committee met consistently during the Spring 2011 semester to implement the assessment plan.*
    - 1) *A grant to implement the assessment plan identified by the School was obtained from the University. The grant focused on the BA program but strategies and procedures are relevant to the MSW program foundation courses and were applied to both programs. (The plan calls for a review of the field placement; the conduct of focus groups to receive feedback about the learning contract; the development of a rubric to assess the field experience and the achievement of competencies/practice behaviors; a review of signature assignments; and the development of a management information system for tracking data.)*
    - 2) *Curriculum mapping was conducted to identify any gaps in measurement – discussions among relevant faculty will be conducted to address gaps and identify where content is covered in courses and how it might be measured.*
    - 3) *Developed rotation of courses for review as identified in assessment plan; exploring the use of ifolios (University sponsored) to archive measures for review on rotational basis.*
- ⊗ Both BA and MSW programs – “Provide information which addresses how assessment data has been used to make changes to the explicit and implicit curriculum.”

- *Feedback received from field coordinators, students, etc. suggested that learning contracts could be refined to facilitate students measuring competencies and practice behaviors at both foundation and advanced levels – review of language in advanced competencies conducted and changes made; format of learning contract changed slightly, rubric for measuring achievement under development; focus on cultural diversity – diversity committee developed method of ‘advertising’ future activities in University/community that relate to developing cult competence and mechanism to report on resources.*
  
- ⊗ Both BA and MSW programs – “Provide one year of summary data linked to specific competencies.”
  - *The summary data is collected and is being formatted and analyzed.*
  
- ◇ Accreditation Status. In October 2010, the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education reaffirmed the accreditation of the Bachelor of Arts Program in Social Work and the Master of Social Work Program for the maximum period of eight years, ending October 2018, with a progress report to be submitted no later than August 1, 2011 and reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation.