

## GRANT FINAL REPORT

### Project Title:

Examining the viability of an online BSW degree cohort  
Through the review of the IU School of Social Work BSW Program's  
Four-year online course history, student experiences, and impact

Submitted and Completed by:

Ivette Barbosa, MSW

Carolyn Gentle-Genitty, PhD

IU School of Social Work

902 West New York Street

## PRAC REPORT

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**Project Dates:** November 15, 2013 - October 31, 2014

### Executive Summary

The Bachelors of Social Work (BSW) is a two-year (Junior/Senior) curriculum-driven program accredited by the Council on Social Work (CSWE) and assessed through 10 Education and Policy Assessment Standards (EPAS) Competencies, demonstrated in the field. Students are trained to be generalist practitioners in social work arenas spanning individual, family, group, and community practice.

Expected student learning outcomes include...

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.  
 2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.  
 3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.  
 4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.  
 5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.  
 7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.  
 8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social services.  
 9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.  
 10. Engage, Assess, Intervene, and Evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities.

The PRAC assessment was organized to purposefully examine three factors

- 1) What IUSSW BSW have been doing in our online course delivery,  
**How:** With help from Institutional Research Office (IRO), we gathered Historical records from 2002-2013: tracked course sections, and courses)
- 2) Whether IUSSW BSW is competently preparing social work student for competent practice via the current online offerings and  
**How:** Used two methods: online survey and dataset  
 Used dataset generated by IRO and compared GPA for students with 8 or more online courses to those with 8 or more face-to-face courses. We also conducted an online survey. The 31-item survey constructed using an Effectiveness scale (0 not effective to 5 very effective), measure the Program 10 competencies as articulated through 28 practice behaviors.
- 3) Whether IUSSW BSW is ready to expand and offer a fully online BSW degree  
**How:** Used a benchmark of three or higher on effectiveness.

### ASSESSMENT METHODS:

We used comparative analysis of both quantitative and qualitative measures and content analysis. Information was gathered from databases, online records of course completion, and cumulative student records.

## FINDINGS/OUTCOMES:

The intended outcomes for the project was the development of an instrument on student outcomes, assessment of comparative information between online and face-to-face cohorts at least for the last four years or older. Use the results to guide decision making for a fully online BSW. After the assessment process, we found the following, which served as impetus for the preparation of an application for a fully online BSW Program. On average, the students rated their competence as a three or higher with an average score of 3.2 on a scale of 0-5. Comparatively GPA assessments suggest that the two cohorts online and face-to-face for those taking eight or more courses averaged the same at a 3.31 versus a 3.30 for online.

Our rationale for a fully online Bachelors of Social Work rests on four central factors. These factors, together, help demonstrate our history with and investment in an online program.

- 1) Beginning in 2002, the BSW Program, on the Indianapolis campus, began offering online courses. By 2013, we had offered over 217 courses in 309 sections. Just over 6,000 students took one or more of these courses.
- 2) From 2002-2010 we had successfully placed over 99% of our curriculum online, offering one section of each required face-to-face course, online.
- 3) As of 2013, we surveyed 125 students in University College, with social work as their declared major. This group normally comprises anywhere from 200 to 300 students. Of the 125, 78 students completed the survey (62% response rate). Of the 78 students, 65% reported they would be interested in an Online BSW Program. They states "This would help students who work full-time"; "would be a plus for me on completing classes and less stress as I have to commute"; and "I am already in my last year, however, I would have explore it had it been an option when I initially joined the program in 2010."
- 4) The changing context of the demographics of those exploring social work degrees and persons seeking first degrees has changed. They now actively balance work, family, service, and school. The online BSW program expands degree completion opportunities for all Indiana residents and beyond while addressing our growing campus concern for physical space as our own program grows.  
Together, these factors help contextualize the need and outline the right fit for a BSW program online, at this time.

## CHALLENGES

Much of the process was completed. However, we response rates were low; many of the students had graduated and did not have additional information even after working with Alumni office. Scheduled three (to face-to-face [lunch, evening] and one online focus groups and got participation of only two students. Comparative analysis of course quality and instructor course evaluations were unavailable as the data was not gathered anywhere in aggregate form. Much of the PULs overlapped with the 10 competencies, rather than lengthening the survey, the questions were lumped together to determine student outcomes.