

Indiana University  
School of Social Work

**PRAC Annual Report  
2002-2003 Academic Year**

**Introduction**

The Indiana University School of Social Work (IUSSW) has made an impact on the Indianapolis community since its creation in 1911 when the Department of Social Services was established. Through the years, the School developed a master's in social work (1923), a baccalaureate program in social work (1975), and a doctoral degree in social work (1994).

The School's contributions extend beyond the city of Indianapolis to include the State of Indiana. Social work faculty, students, and graduates have contributed to the well-being of community residents and human service agencies for more than ninety years through teaching, service, scholarship, internships, and practice.

Throughout the years, our approach to assessment has evolved from conceptualizing assessment as a requirement from our accrediting body and a way to measure student satisfaction to viewing assessment as an integral component of what we do. Our immediate goal is to create an assessment road map that, as described by Palomba and Banta (1999), is linked to "decision making about the curriculum, is owned by faculty, leads to reflection and action by faculty, staff, and students, and allows for continuity, flexibility, and improvement in assessment" (p.16), among others.

In prior years, we have reported on the six dimensions of the Planning for Learning and Assessment grid as provided by the PRAC committee. For this year's report, we have focused on the Changes Based on Assessment Findings at IUPUI. From the materials presented in previous years, it is evident that our search for comprehensive approaches to assessment of learning is based on data collected over a certain period of time. While faculty may change some areas of the teaching/learning process based on data collected during a given semester, major changes take place based

on data collected over an extended period of time. This report reflects both major as well as minor changes.

The School of Social Work has identified outcomes for the entire School and each of its educational programs. The School outcomes focus on educating students to be effective and knowledgeable professionals, to engage in scholarly activities, and conduct service that promotes the welfare of all segments of society and enhances social and economic justice.

The general outcomes sought by the School of Social Work are articulated in the goals and objectives of each of its three degree programs, BSW, MSW, and Ph.D. The goals of the Baccalaureate Social Work program (BSW) can be summarized as preparing graduates for generalist social work practice that promotes social and economic justice and well-being. The Master Degree in Social Work has as its main goal to prepare graduates with a generalist perspective and the knowledge, values, and skills in advanced practice in a field of practice or leadership. Finally, the primary goal of the Ph.D. program is to develop scholars who, through the conduct of original research and the generation of theory, will contribute to the knowledge base of professional social work.

Furthermore, each one of the academic programs has identified learning objectives. The BSW program has identified 19 learning objectives, the MSW program 14 learning objectives, and the Ph.D. program 13 learning objectives. The academic programs derive their goals and objectives directly from the mission statement and goals of the School, professional social work codes of ethics, and the missions, visions, and aspirations of IUPUI, and Indiana University. They are also informed by the 2001 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards set forth by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2001) and the Group for Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) Quality Guidelines.

The curriculum of each degree program has been carefully developed to promote the program's goals and objectives. In addition to classroom courses, each curriculum includes field practica or internships designed to provide hands-on application of knowledge, skills and values cultivated in the classroom. We will not reproduce the entire curricula here, but they are available upon request, and may be found in the School Web site <http://socialwork.iu.edu>.

## **Improvements Made Based on Assessment Findings**

Under this heading we will respond to the question What Improvements Have Been Made Based on Assessment Findings? by academic programs following the PRAC outline that includes the year, methods used, changes made, and impact of changes.

The School of Social Work underwent a program review during the 1998-99 academic year as requested by the IUPUI Program Review and Assessment Committee and the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Improvement. The School prepared a self-study encompassing all three of its degree programs as well as addressing overall areas of administration and planning. A Site Team consisting of two faculty from other Schools of Social Work, two IUPUI faculty from other units, and one member of the local practice community visited the School in April 1999. As a result of this process, the School has made several changes in its organizational structure, policies, programs and deployment of resources to enhance organizational efficiency, enhance its research capacity, and improve its academic programs. Some of the changes mentioned below are still based on some of the data and recommendations from that extensive self study.

### **Baccalaureate Social Work Program**

The main revisions to the BSW program took place prior to the program review mentioned above. Subsequent changes are as follows.

#### *Online Teaching and Learning*

**Year:** The BSW program has begun to develop and implement online courses since 2001.

**Method Used:** In order to assess the impact of new technologies on the delivery of courses, several faculty members did extensive literature reviews on the subject, participated in technology and assessment conferences, and held focus groups with BSW

students. As a result of these undertakings, an agenda was developed for teaching social work courses online.

**Changes Made:** Five online social work courses have been developed and two other courses are in the process of being adapted for online teaching.

**Impact of Changes:** We have become part of the IUPUI Online and in doing so, we are assisting the campus to reach its goals in the technology area. We have more students taking the introductory social work course which translates to the equivalent of one more section of this course each semester. We have also increased the number of students taking the introductory course in case management. We have created more flexibility in the curriculum for all students but particularly for those students who have to work full-time and/or have other personal commitments to fulfill while attending school. The impact of these changes can be exemplified by the voices of some of the students taking online courses:

“I just recently decided to declare my major as Social Work. I have been a student here at Columbus for 2 ½ years. I have met almost all of my general education requirements. I wanted to be able to apply to the School of Social Work for Fall 2003, therefore, I needed to complete this course to be able to apply. With my schedule of classes, this course, via the internet, worked the best for me”.

“I am taking this course online because of the flexibility it brings. I am able to study and complete assignments on a more flexible note. .... Plus this allows me to only be at school two days a week and I can be home with my children more”.

I am taking this course online mainly because of the season (winter). I must use hand controls to drive my car, and it can be very frightening during the winter. Taking a course online is also more convenient for me. I am a real homebody too; and I feel especially comfortable learning here.”

*Admission Requirements.*

**Year:** In 2002-03 we changed one of the BSW program admissions requirements.

**Method Used:** This change was informed by the literature review on recruitment, retention, and student socialization.

**Changes Made:** We changed the eligibility criterion of 26 credit hours in order to apply to the program to 12 credit hours.

**Impact of Change:** The impact of this change cannot yet be fully appreciated because the newness of this change. However, in the admissions process for academic year 2003-2004 we had four students who applied with less than 26 credits.

*Practicum hours for S381 Social Work Practicum I*

**Year:** In 2002, we changed the contact hours that students spend in a human service agency in their junior practicum and the credit hours for that course.

**Method Used:** This change was made based on agency and student feedback as well as the judgment of the program field coordinators and faculty.

**Changes Made:** The field practicum hours were changed from a total of 192 course hours to 240 hours (including agency internship and seminar) and the credit hours from three to four.

**Impact of Change:** Students have more time to achieve the course objectives and provide more services to clients. Agencies are in a position to assign more cases to students and have more opportunities to assess student performance in the agency.

*Implementing the Baccalaureate Education Assessment Project (BEAP)*

**Year:** As of academic year 2002-2003 we have begun to implement BEAP.

**Method Used:** We have developed a plan to implement the various phases of this assessment project.

**Changes Made:** We have made changes in our newly admitted student orientation to provide students with sufficient time to complete the demographic information form and the social work values inventory form. We have made accommodations for graduating students to complete again the social work values inventory form and the exit survey prior to graduation to assess students' experience while in the program.

**Impact of Changes:** The impact of relying on BEAP as one of our main methods to program evaluation is still to be assessed. For certain, we know that it will give us the opportunity to compare our program with national data from other BSW programs.

*Development of an Elective Course*

**Year:** In the Spring 2003, we created a new elective course on global social welfare issues.

**Method Used:** Globalization, imposed structural changes in third world countries, the events of September 11, 2001, and other world-wide events have created profound transformations in the domestic arena and in the way we understand the world. In order to prepare graduates for the realities of an interconnected world, the faculty have seen the need to increase curriculum content on international issues and globalization as well as their implications for social welfare and social work practice. This elective is one of the responses to address such need.

**Changes Made:** One of the revisions to the curriculum has been the creation of an elective course on global issues. This course is being taught this summer for the first time.

**Impact of changes:** The expected impact of this change is a more knowledgeable student body in the area of global interconnections. The actual impact is to be seen given the newness of this change.

### **Master in Social Work Program**

#### *MSW Curriculum Revision*

**Year: 2001-2003**

**Method Used:** focus groups with students and community members, faculty analysis of needs, student surveys.

**Changes Made:** The entire sixty credits of the MSW Curriculum have been changed, with implementation to begin Summer II, 2003. The curriculum has moved from two to at least five concentrations, with opportunities for students to design individualized concentrations. The foundation content has been condensed and an intermediate bridge developed between foundation and concentration content. Classes have been designed to reduce redundancy.

**Impact of Changes:** So far, feedback has been quite positive from community members and students. Evaluation will be ongoing.

#### *Change in MSW New Student Orientation*

**Year: 2002-2003**

**Method Used:** Student evaluation of the 2002 orientation and faculty feedback.

**Changes Made:** The orientation for all incoming students has been changed to two orientations, one for Advanced Standing students, who already have one social work degree and one for all other incoming students.

**Impact of Changes:** Still in process – outcome not yet known.

### **Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work**

#### *Addition of Course on Scholarly Writing, S721*

**Year:** In Spring 2001 we added an elective course on scholarly writing to the doctoral curriculum. Students may take this course to fulfill their research prerequisites.

**Method Used:** The addition of this course was based on faculty input and discussion about the wide range of writing skills noted among incoming doctoral students. Having a course specifically focused on scholarly writing was expected to enhance students' performance in other courses and in other aspects of their doctoral education.

**Changes Made:** S721 was initially offered in Spring 2001 as a special topics course. The course was developed with support from the Office of Professional Development and received final approval from the Graduate School in March 2001. In order to make the course available to incoming students, the course schedule was subsequently changed to be offered each Fall. It was offered again in Fall 2001 and Fall 2002.

**Impact of Changes:** S721 has been one of the most subscribed courses in the doctoral program though technically it is an elective. A book chapter (“Dispelling the Mystique of Disciplinary Discourse: Strategies for Enhancing Graduate Students’ Writing”) was written by the course instructor, Dr. Margaret Adamek and was published in 2002 in the book *Writing in the Arts, Sciences, and Professional Schools at IUPUI*, edited by Sharon

J. Hamilton, Director of Campus Writing. The chapter describes the course rationale, structure, process and outcomes. Students' success at overcoming particular fears and obstacles to writing as a result of taking the course is evidenced in part by some students further developing papers that were initially started in S721 into publications, proposals, and conference presentations. Several specific student comments about the course are included in the book chapter.

### *Addition of Two-Course Statistics Sequence*

**Year:** In Summer 2002 we initiated a two-course in-house statistics sequence for our graduate students.

**Method Used:** Previously, our doctoral students had to meet their two course minimum statistics requirements by taking courses in a variety of other departments. While there are some solid statistics courses being taught by other departments, there was wide variability in the available courses and none were taught from a social work perspective or using social work examples. Courses also varied in whether or not students were exposed to hands-on learning about statistical packages commonly used in social work research, namely SPSS. Consequently, there was a lack of consistency in how well prepared our students were to launch into quantitative analyses in social work.

**Changes Made:** A two course statistics sequence (S600 Intermediate Statistics for Social Work, and S728 Advanced Statistics for Social Work) that is open to both masters and doctoral students was launched in Sum 2002. The courses include both didactic teaching about the theory underlying the use of various statistical techniques and hands-on instruction in the use of SPSS.

**Impact of Changes:** Our graduate students now have the opportunity to learn statistics from a social work researcher whose area of expertise is quantitative analysis. Students are able to more readily apply their developing statistical knowledge and skills to their own research projects. They also now have the opportunity to develop a mentoring

relationship with a social work instructor who is available to consult with them on future projects, including their dissertation research.

### *Creation of Monthly Doctoral Exchange*

**Year:** In Fall 2001 the new PhD Program Director initiated a monthly brown bag discussion known as the *Doctoral Exchange* primarily as a way for students at different stages in the program to keep informed about important policies and procedures relevant to completing a doctorate.

**Method Used:** This change came about in response to student input that greater communication and advising was needed to help students become and remain aware of policies, procedures, and expectations relevant to different stages of doctoral education.

**Changes Made:** An informal monthly meeting open to all predoc and doctoral students was established to provide a forum for sharing information about key topics such as qualifying exams, IRB approval, grant-writing, external minors, and teaching opportunities. The doctoral program director is available to students at each session to provide information, share ideas, and address questions and concerns.

**Impact of Changes:** Students have expressed appreciation for this opportunity to become better informed and thus better prepared for negotiating different phases of the doctoral program such as the external minor, the qualifying exam, and the IRB approval process.

### **Summary**

In addition to the changes mentioned above, the School has launched a new Web site and is currently developing new documents, brochures, and other materials to promote its mission and educate the public about social work education at Indiana University. Four new student scholarships have been created with the support of our alumni and faculty,

and several grants have been received in areas of child welfare, educational technology, gerontology, and community mobilization.

In sum, we believe the School is steadily pursuing outcomes that as mentioned earlier focus on educating students to be effective and knowledgeable professionals, to engage in scholarly activities, and conduct service that promotes the welfare of all segments of society and enhances social and economic justice. Our aim is to make progress in the achievement of our outcomes by using assessment data, involving our multiple constituencies, and following a systematic road map.

### **References**

- Council on Social Work Education (2001). Educational policy and accreditation standards. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Palomba, C. A., & Banta, T. W. (1999). Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.