

Indiana University School of Social Work

PRAC Annual Report

2007-2008 Academic Year

Introduction

The Indiana University School of Social Work was founded in 1911. It currently offers social work education at the Baccalaureate, Master, and Doctoral levels. The Bachelor (BSW) and the Master of Social Work (MSW) programs are both accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

In July 2008 the Division of Labor Studies merged into the School of Social Work and it is now an undergraduate degree program within the School. Labor Studies is a system wide program with offices in Bloomington, Fort Wayne, IUPUI, Kokomo, IU Northwest, and IU South Bend. It offers a Bachelor of Science, an Associate of Science, a Certificate, and a Minor in Labor Studies.

Bachelor of Social Work

1. *Child Welfare Service Learning Initiative*

Background: Some of the *Child Welfare Service Learning Initiative's* goals are to increase the educational preparation and service of students in the area of child welfare in Indiana through (1) the expansion of child welfare service learning field units used for service learning in selected courses throughout the BSW curriculum, (2) the expansion of service-learning activities and assignments in the area of child welfare within current course offerings, and (3) expanding faculty participation in service-learning opportunities,

Year:

Fall 2007 and spring 2008

Method Used:

Student, Agency, Faculty Feedback

Changes Made:

Some of the changes for Year 3 as a result of feedback from agency meetings, students, and faculty feedback in Year 2 included:

- In all courses, service learning has been moved to “optional.” Based on feedback that some students will avoid courses in the registration process if they are required to fulfill a service learning component since they perceive service learning as “more work” or difficult to juggle with the complex demands of their lives.
- Service learning opportunities are available to view via the web to all students and a web-based application process has been completed so that students in both online and traditional classes can access this information easily.
- One of the service learning agencies improved the “response time” to students applying for volunteer status.

Impact of Changes:

At the end of Year 3 of the 3-year funding of the initiative,

- we remained steady in enrollment and participation in courses with a slight increase in numbers of sections offered
- We added two new faculty members participating in Service Learning.
- we increased Summer section opportunities for service learning
- We had student/faculty participation in three online courses.

2. *Online Teaching and Learning: Update***Year:**

During academic year 2007-2008, the BSW program offered 24 courses (30 sections) online.

Method Used:

Based on course evaluations, students' request, and improvement in online teaching technologies, we have found out that several of our BSW courses can be delivered via the web.

Changes Made:

We have developed another online course "Law, Poverty, and Inequality and continue offerings those already in existence. Revisions were made to the course *Global Society: Human, Economic, Social and Political Issues*.

Impact of Changes:

The growth in the numbers of online courses has made possible for some students to take more courses and graduate at an earlier date. While online courses are not easier than face-to-face courses, students can fit them easier with other schedules. Also, the online courses provide students the opportunity to save in parking fees and gasoline.

2. Online Teaching and Learning: Update [cont.]**Year:**

During academic year 2007-2008,

Method Used:

Based on students' account regarding their struggles with different roles and time commitments as well as the positive evaluations from Labor Studies compressed courses, our *Introduction to Social Work* course was offered as a compressed course. It was the first time that we offered a compressed course in the BSW program.

Changes Made:

The course was revised for the content to fit within an eight week class period.

Impact of Changes:

This course was offered in Spring 2008 and we are still analyzing its impact.

2. *Online Teaching and Learning: Update [cont.]*

Year:

In 2007, the BSW Program had over 34 students of a class of 47 (72% of class) enrolled in the online senior seminar versus the traditional classroom offerings. This trend of over 70% of the BSW class was also the case in 2006 when online seminar was newly piloted for the senior year. Based on the overwhelming interest in the online seminar from the student registration trends, the BSW Program determined the need to pilot an online version of the junior seminar.

Method Used:

Student registration data for 2007 and 2006.

Findings:

In the first pilot of the course, the online section was full with a waiting list and students in an alternative traditional classroom seminar requested the course be offered online as well.

Impact of Findings:

In the Spring of 2008, two sections of S381 Practicum Seminar were piloted. Course evaluations and faculty feedback will be utilized to evaluate the strengths and challenges of the course to improve it for the next spring offering.

3 *Evaluation of Field Placement Opportunities*

Year:

The BSW Program had over 97 students in field placements during the 2007-2008 academic year. The program determined that additional placements in the area of juvenile and adult justice system were needed. Also, there was recognition that there was a need for paid placement opportunities.

Method Used:

Social work literature, student feedback in meetings or interviews, discussions with agency social workers, and review of Agency Rosters/Directories.

Findings

Additional placements in the area of juvenile and adult justice system were needed as well as paid placement opportunities.

Impact of Findings:

New placement sites in the juvenile and adult justice system offering paid opportunities were developed, such as Warren Township Trustees Office (offering paid practicum positions for BSW Junior students) and new practicum partnerships were developed with the Marion County Community Court, Community Corrections, and Marion County Juvenile Probation. Also, efforts to combine Federal Work Study with practicum placements are being developed to allow students with Work Study eligibility to be paid for practicum work/hours.

4 *Internationalization of the undergraduate Curriculum*

Background:

The following information reflects the global context of our BSW curriculum. The BSW Mission Statement reads: “The educational mission of the Bachelor of Social Work program of Indiana University is to prepare students for generalist social work practice with vulnerable people and prepare graduates as critical thinkers and lifelong learners, **who reflect a global perspective**, recognize strengths, enhance opportunities, create change, and contribute to the empowerment of the people they serve.” One of the primary educational goals of the BSW program states: “Prepare graduates for generalist social work **practice within a global context**”. One of the program objectives states: “Apply the knowledge, skills, and values of generalist social work practice in working with individuals, families, small groups, organizations, and communities **within a diverse and global society.**” In order to fulfill these curriculum expectations, the program is engaged in a number of projects. Two of them are as follows:

Years:

2005-2008

Introduction: The School participates in an IUPUI project funded through the U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant. The IUPUI Office of International Affairs was awarded a grant to internationalize the undergraduate curriculum in the schools of Engineering, Education, and Social Work in collaboration with the Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia.

Method Used:

As part of this project, the team members participated in an extensive training at IUPUI with the colleagues from Indonesia, the IUPUI team members have travelled to Indonesia, and in 2008 another intensive training took place in Gadjah Mada University.

Work on the development of international curriculum modules. Also, the faculty is experimenting with different technologies to simultaneously teach between the two universities.

Changes Made:

The teams are better consolidated and better informed about the cultural dimensions of professional practices in each discipline. The teams are more realistic as to the use of web technologies and the challenges of connecting students in class discussions between the two universities. International teaching modules pertinent to each discipline are emerging.

Impact of Changes:

At this point the impact has been better prepared team members to develop the international modules.

4 *Internationalization of the undergraduate Curriculum [cont.]*

Year:

Fall 2008

Method Used:

After the visit of one of our faculty members responsible for international placements to Blue Fountain, South Africa, a field placement was developed for MSW students. This new placement was assessed by our faculty member, the practicum student, and the faculty of the Free State University social work program.

Changes Made:

An undergraduate senior placement was added to the already available placement for MSW students. One of our seniors completed her senior practicum in Blue Fountain in 2007 Fall Semester.

Impact of Changes:

The student had an excellent international social work practice experience. Other students are inquiring about the possibility of participating in this placement. Also, this placement has demonstrated that we are prepared to offer international placement for undergraduate senior students since the co-requisite courses for this practicum are also offered online.

4 *Internationalization of the undergraduate Curriculum [cont.]*

Year:

During academic year, the BSW Program committee began to analyze the extent to which content on international issues/globalization was covered in the curriculum.

Method Used:

The first step was to systematically analyze all course objectives in the BSW curriculum (124 objectives) to identify those existing objectives that could serve as the guide to introduce content on international issues/globalization without having to create new objectives. Fifty-eight course objectives were identified as having the potential to “guide” the inclusion of such content in the course they belong to.

Changes Made:

Without being changes, topics have emerged that could be considered to fall under the identified objectives.

Impact of Changes:

The final changes will produce a richer curriculum in the area of international social work.

Bachelor of Science in Labor Studies

1 *Inventory of Course Objectives*

Year:

During academic year 2007-2008 the program engaged in the collection of all course objectives and identification of courses without objectives.

Method Used:

The data was gathered by searching program archives and requesting the information from fulltime faculty and associate faculty.

Changes Made:

Creation of a database with all course objectives. This database, will allow the Labor Studies Program Committee to analyze the objectives to identify levels of rigor based on Bloom's taxonomy, redundancy, and gaps in the curriculum.

Impact of Changes:

It is expected that this approach will render a more comprehensive curriculum.

2 *Common Syllabus Format*

Year:

During academic year 2007-2008: Adoption of common syllabus format.

Method Used:

Faculty discussions and agreement on a common syllabus outline.

Changes Made:

Beginning implementation of syllabus outline

Impact of Changes:

A more comprehensive and unified approach to syllabus construction. Better accountability to students.

3 *A Course/Instructor and Student Learning Assessment Instrument*

Year:

During academic year 2007-2008 the program worked in the implementation of a common end of the semester student evaluation instrument.

Method Used:

Reviewed current instrument used system-wide by the School of Social Work and made revisions to the instrument to match the realities of the program. At this point the discrete course learning objectives are not included in the instrument for students to assess.

Changes Made:

Adoption of XXX common items (CI) for all labor study courses.

Impact of Changes:

The adoption of this instrument has moved from instruments with different questions based on faculty selection of questions to a unified number of questions that provides a balanced assessment of both student's efforts and instructor's performance. As currently designed, the faculty will be able to assess their individual performances and compare to the rest of the instructors teaching other sections of the same course. This approach will also provide historical data for faculty and program.

Master of Social Work

1. *Evaluation of Master of Social Work (MSW) Curriculum*

Year:

The MSW Program had approximately 590 students who attended the IUPUI MSW Program during the 2007-2008 academic year. These students completed 60 credit hours of study to obtain an MSW. The course content is normally divided between 30 credit hours of foundation courses and 30 hours of concentration content. The MSW Program has six concentrations of study. These concentrations focus on; family therapy, mental health and addictions, health, school social work, child welfare and leadership. Students have been asked to complete survey to obtain their perception on how well the various courses have fulfilled course objectives, after completion of field, prepare them in becoming practicing MSW's.

Methods Used:

MSW students who graduated in May of 2008 were given an exit survey to complete. Also, each concentration implemented either concentration specific exit surveys or focus groups with students who attended their concentration. Furthermore, the IUSSW Dean did monthly focus groups with MSW students. The MSW Student Association completed an internet based survey of current students on needs of the students and their perception of the positives and negatives in the MSW Program. Surveys and focus groups were also done at the IUE campus to determine the need to provide a satellite MSW Program on that campus. These various methods provided quantitative and qualitative information that has been used to improve the MSW Curriculum.

Findings:

The summary of data from the surveys and focus groups at the IUE campus indicated there was a need for an MSW Program at IUE.

The end of course surveys generally indicated that courses are meeting their objectives. The MSW Exit survey also supported these findings but suggested a need for additional content on how MSW Graduates might provide supervision to others. It also indicated that students thought the courses are

adequately preparing them to be practicing MSW's upon completion of the program. There were specific findings that suggested that students desired more practical application of the course content to assist them in learning how to apply the course material. Within the leadership concentration students indicated that course content was sometimes too basic and repetitive. The faculty and student data suggested that there is a need for a specific S661, Leadership class, for the Leadership concentration. The exit survey and the previous year's field survey also indicated that there were problems in the effectiveness of the field liaison effort to link the course content with the student field experience. As in previous years, students indicated that they would like more classes taught online whenever appropriate. The data from these fact finding efforts also indicated that there may be a problems with grade inflation within the MSW Program.

The MSW Curriculum Committee also did a focus group on what would be a more effective method for holding Curriculum Committee meetings. Prior to 2007 all partner campuses, IUNW and IUSW, attended the monthly meeting via VIC. The data from the focus group suggest that the faculty from these campuses thought that the VIC process marginalized their input and it often seemed like the Curriculum Committee was an IUPUI effort only.

Impact of Findings:

Curriculum Impact

The findings from the MSW Curriculum Committee meeting format focus group resulted in significant change in how the Committee is being structured. The meetings have now been changed from monthly meeting to every other month and from two hours to 4-6 hours. The faculty from the partner campuses at IUNW and IUSB now come to IUPUI for the longer meetings and no longer attend the meetings via VIC. The initial reports from faculty at the partner campuses indicate that they no longer think their comments are marginalized as occurred due to the previous VIC process.

The results for the IUE surveys have resulted in the development of a pilot MSW Program being offered on the IUE campus. It has started in Summer II 2008. The program will be a three year part-time evening cohort model. Students will be entered into the program once every three years and the surveys and focus group data indicated that there is a need for the mental health/addictions concentration.

The data on grade inflation has result in the MSW Curriculum Committee doing additional research to determine the validity and extent of this issue. The MSW Student Service staff has provided additional data to the Curriculum Comm. on the grade distributions. This has lead to a subcommittee being appointed to do additional evaluation of this issue and also provide recommendations on potential interventions. There is the possibility that this will research will extend to the BSW Program also.

In addition to the above curriculum initiatives, the MSW faculty will continue to collaborate and review course content; focusing on reducing repetition whenever possible. The concentration specific faculty will also continue to meet on a regular basis to identify pedagogical strategies that might be used to address the learning needs of the students with extensive social work practice experience and those with limited practice experience. The MSW Curriculum Committee will continue its efforts to identify courses applicable for online learning and will work on implementation of these courses. The above evaluation processes will be implemented again during the 2007-2008 academic year.

2. *Evaluation of Master of Social Work (MSW) Field Liaison Processes*

Year:

The MSW Program had over 270 students in field placements during the 2007-2008 academic year. Each student is assigned a faculty field liaison who is responsible in ensuring curriculum content is integrated into field placements and that field placements are meeting the learning needs of MSW students and the Indiana School of Social Work. Based upon an evaluation completed during the 2006-2007 academic year, which helped to determine if the liaison process was meeting these two educational goals, liaison student assignments were reduced from 20 to 10 students per semester for full-time faculty members during the 2007-2008 academic year. Part-time contract liaisons were hired to reduce the workload for full-time faculty.

Method Used:

Surveys were completed by all field students and field instructors at the end of their field placement during the 2006-2007 academic year to gather their opinions on the efficacy of this process. Qualitative and quantitative information was obtained in these surveys. Informal qualitative information was also obtained from faculty on the efficacy of these liaison processes.

Findings:

The results from these surveys indicated that the field liaison process was varied in its effectiveness. When there was marginal effectiveness it appeared to be related to faculty being overloaded. Both faculty and students did not have a clear understanding of the liaison processes, and there was a lack of communications among faculty, students, field instructors, and field placement staff.

Impact of Findings:

In May, 2007 the Senior Field Coordinator recommended a change in the liaison process which was subsequently approved by the Dean of the School of Social Work. The new process, which was implemented during the 2007-2008 academic year, involves hiring MSW's from the community who are knowledgeable about the MSW curriculum as liaisons for 15-20 students each. The Coordinator also proposed that any full-time faculty member be liaison for no more than 10 students. The Dean supported the recommendations and during 2007-2008 the new process was implemented. It has been decided that the evaluation process will be implemented again at the end of field placements during 2008-2009 to evaluate the efficacy of the new processes.

3. *Evaluation of Master of Social Work (MSW) Field Seminars***Year:**

As noted above, the MSW Program had over 270 students in field placements during the 2007-2008 academic year. A component of the field placement process during the 2006-2007 academic year was student completion of an online field seminar. These online field seminars were initially implemented during the 2006-2007 academic year. There was a foundation seminar for students in their foundation placement and concentration seminar for students in their concentration placement. The seminars were designed to help students cross the bridge between the academic course content and the field placement. An evaluation was done to determine the efficacy of the new online seminars.

Method Used:

Surveys were done of all field students and field instructors at the end of their field placement during 2006-2007 to obtain their opinions on the efficacy of the online seminars. Qualitative and quantitative information was obtained in these surveys.

Findings:

The results from these surveys indicated that field seminars had varied effectiveness. With regards to student educational goals, the foundation seminars were surveyed as more effective than the concentration seminars. Students indicated that the concentration seminars were too basic and repetitive of content learned previously in their MSW courses. The students recommended continued use of the online seminars instead of the face to face seminars.

Impact of Findings:

In summer, 2007 the MSW Field Placement Unit evaluated the content that was presented in the concentration seminars. They met with faculty from the various concentrations and obtained input on what would be relevant material for the MSW seminars during the 2007-2008 academic year, and whether or not the seminars should continue in their original format. Field staff recommended that due to the multiple challenges presented by the online format, seminar assignments would be done in the context of the students' ongoing working relationship with their agency field instructor. It has been decided that the field seminar content evaluation process will be implemented again at the end of field placements during 2008-2009 to evaluate the efficacy of the modified approach to seminar content.

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

1. *Addition of a New Doctoral Course on International Social Development*

Year:

Throughout the 2007-2008 academic year, the PhD Committee discussed the need to “internationalize” the PhD curriculum. A number of factors converged to spark efforts to develop a doctoral course with content relevant to global social welfare issues including: an

increase in the number of international students enrolled in the program, new social work faculty with expertise in international issues and social development, and a call during the April 2008 GADE (Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education--an association of doctoral program directors in social work) Annual Meeting to enhance the international content of doctoral social work courses. Simultaneously, Dr. Carmen Luca Sugawara began discussing with Dr. Margaret Adamek, the PhD Program Director, the possibility of developing a new doctoral course on international social development. The initial development for the course took place in fall 2007. The course is based on a similar course that Dr. Luca previously taught at Catholic University. In spring 2008, a draft of the course syllabus was presented to the PhD Curriculum Committee for review and approval. Upon approval by the Committee, a "New Course Request" form was completed, signed by the Director and the Dean of the School of Social Work, and submitted to Academic Affairs for processing.

Method Used:

Dr. Carmen Luca Sugawara submitted a course proposal to the PhD Committee. The Committee made a number of recommendations which Dr. Luca incorporated into a revised syllabus. In addition, PreDoc and PhD students in Social Work were surveyed to determine their level of interest in taking such a course as an elective. A number of students expressed an interest in enrolling in the course.

Changes Made:

The newly proposed course, *International Social Development in a Global World: Globalization, Actors, and Models of Practice*, has been added to the fall 2008 course schedule. It is a 3 credit course that can be taken by either MSW or PhD students as an elective. Students from other disciplines will also be invited to enroll in the course. The course purpose and objectives follow.

- I. Course Purpose:** This course is an advanced seminar for graduate students interested in developing in-depth understanding of complex social problems in a global world. As our communities are becoming affected by increased transnational communication and

growth of socio-politic and economic linkages, our citizens, especially marginalized groups, are becoming more susceptible to global problems; thus, it is crucial for social workers to be prepared -- to understand global issues and their implications for local communities; and to design appropriate interventions to address them. Students will have the opportunity to become familiar with theories of development; critically analyze and apply international agreements; to explore and appropriately use social development models; to discuss international social development efforts at community, state, national and international levels; and to understand the future of social work within an international context.

Capturing the core values, knowledge, skills and processes that take place in the social development arena, this course is designed around four major themes:

- 1) International Social Development and Macro-Social Work Practice;
- 2) Globalization, SocioPolitical & Economic Interdependence, & Global Social Issues;
- 3) International Agreements, Models of Social Development, & Best Practices; and
- 4) International Social Work Practices at Home and Abroad.

II. Course Objectives:

1. To understand the complexity of social development arena, its actors, and the role that social work plays in this sphere of practice.
2. To understand the globalization phenomenon in all four dimensions-- socio-politic, economic, technologic, and environmental, and its implications on marginalized groups such as: women and children, youth, elderly, and internally displaced individuals.
3. To understand the consequences of globalization for the social work practice at home and abroad.
4. To increase understanding of the international agreements and policies in international social development.
5. To critically analyze current development initiatives and social policies in social development throughout the world.

6. To develop a good understanding of the relevance of international social work practices both locally and in international settings.

Impact of Changes:

Since this new course is being offered for the first time in fall 2008, it is too early yet to determine its impact. One immediate measure of impact will be the number of students who enroll in the course. The intermediate impact of the course may be shown through the end-of-semester course evaluations to be completed by students in December 2008. Longer term impacts might include graduates' decisions to pursue careers that involve international social welfare issues.

2. *Development of the Integrative Seminar-Part II*

Year:

In May 2006 the PhD Committee met off-campus for an all-day retreat as a follow-up to a series of three curriculum retreats held the previous academic year. One of the outcomes of the May 2006 retreat was a plan to launch our own social work version of an integrative seminar for our PhD students. In previous years, our PhD students enrolled in an integrative seminar (*D700*) taught by Dr. Angela McBride in the Nursing School. When Dr. McBride stopped teaching the course, our students needed an alternative integrative seminar. For about the past three years, in lieu of the nursing integrative seminar, our students have registered for 3 credits of our independent study course (*S790*) and completed 10 units of the *Preparing Future Faculty* (PFF) program. Students still have the option to complete PFF, but beginning in fall 2006 incoming students could participate in our own social work integrative seminar.

Method Used:

Through a series of discussions and ranking exercises, the faculty members of the PhD Committee identified priorities for change or enhancement in the PhD Curriculum. One of those priority areas was developing our own social work integrative seminar. A small group of faculty working on this issue identified two primary objectives: 1) socializing incoming students to the demands and rigor of doctoral education, and 2) preparing advanced students for academic and

research careers. The group proposed offering two 1.5 credit seminars—one in the fall for incoming PhD students, and one in the spring for students in their last semester of coursework. The first half of the seminar is geared toward the needs of new PhD students—helping them to learn about the resources available to them at IUPUI and in the Indianapolis community, familiarizing them with Graduate School policies and procedures, and introducing them to social work faculty and their ongoing research projects. The second half of the seminar is geared toward the needs of students completing their coursework and will cover topics such as preparing for academic job interviews, understanding the expectations for the qualifying exam, preparing a dissertation proposal, and applying for research funding.

Changes Made:

The first 1.5 credit session of the newly designed Integrative Seminar was offered to the incoming cohort of social work PhD students in fall 2006. The inaugural offering of the second half of the Integrative Seminar (the “capstone”) was offered to the same cohort of students as they completed their coursework in the spring of 2008. The course description and objectives for the capstone seminar are as follows:

I. Course Purpose

This course is intended to support Ph.D. students as they finish up doctoral coursework and prepare for their qualifying paper, dissertation, and subsequent professional career.

II. Course Objectives

Through active participation in the learning experiences and completion of the readings, assignments, and learning projects offered throughout this seminar, learners are expected to demonstrate the ability to:

1. Understand the rationale and expectations for the qualifying paper.
2. Select a topic for their qualifying paper.
3. Draft a tentative outline and bibliography for the qualifying paper.
4. Understand the steps in the dissertation process, including development of a topic, selection of the research committee, prospectus process and format, IRB approval,

- conduct of the study, working with the research committee, university guidelines for dissertation formatting, and expectations for the dissertation defense.
5. Understand the culture of academia, academic job search, and formal and informal faculty role expectations.
 6. Develop an academic curriculum vita.
 7. Understand non-academic career opportunities.
 8. Develop a tentative research agenda.

Dr. Bill Barton was the course facilitator for the initial offering of this seminar in spring 2008.

Impact of Changes:

The first cohort of students who enrolled in the capstone seminar reported to the PhD Director that the seminar was very helpful. The students were able to develop their curriculum vitae and understand how best to present their academic credentials. In addition, students worked on outlines for the qualifying papers and developed initial plans for their dissertation studies as well as long term agendas for their research. Feedback on the first offering of the capstone seminar suggests that it is meeting the goal of helping doctoral students transition from the coursework phase of the PhD program to the final stage of the program involving both the qualifying exam and dissertation. Students were also grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the process and procedures involved in academic job interviewing. As one student stated,

“It was great! It tightened my thinking and preparation for the road ahead.”

3. *Support for Students who have Completed Coursework*

Year:

In April 2008 the PhD Director requested that the PhD students in Social Work submit their annual reviews by early May. Annual reviews are requested of all full and part-time students at the end of each spring semester. The completed annual reviews are discussed by the faculty members of the PhD Committee in their last meeting of the academic year.

Method Used:

The annual review requested of all PhD students in Social Work includes an updated course audit form and narrative responses about their progress and goals in the program. Students are also invited to share their input about how the program can be modified to better meet their needs. This spring 23 of 36 current students submitted their annual reviews by the May deadline. A response rate of 64% is a major improvement from previous years when a much smaller proportion of students submitted their annual reviews. Of the 12 students who did not submit their annual reviews, 2 met with the Program Director in June to complete a course review, 8 have completed coursework, 1 just finished her first year in the program, and 1 has been inactive in the program for about 3 years. This year's annual review revealed that nearly two-thirds of the PhD students in Social Work (21 of 33 –not counting the 3 soon-to-be graduates) have completed their coursework.

When reporting on the annual reviews at the May 2008 meeting of the PhD Committee, the PhD Director noted this development and asked for ideas from the committee about how the program might offer support to this large cohort of students who have completed coursework. Ideas gathered from the committee included offering the Capstone Integrative Seminar to students who “missed” it because it was not available while they were doing their courses, encouraging students to develop informal support networks, offering an all-day workshop focusing on similar issues as the capstone seminar, or reinstating the once a month “Dissertation Forum.” The Committee recommended that the Program Director survey the students by email to determine their preferences. While the students who responded endorsed a variety of options, the most popular choice was the one day seminar or workshop to help jumpstart students and provide some guidance and structure for the tasks ahead. One student suggested that perhaps a two session workshop spread over a few weeks would be a helpful format. Even a few students who have not completed coursework and who are scheduled to take the Capstone Integrative Seminar the next time it is offered in Spring 2009 expressed interest in the one day seminar as a preview of the capstone course.

Changes Made:

The PhD Director will report on the information gathered from the student survey to the PhD Committee so that we can move ahead with planning ways to effectively support the large cohort of students who have completed coursework. This item will be on the agenda of the first PhD Committee meeting in the fall 2008 semester.

Impact of Changes:

While it is too early to assess the impact of new strategies for supporting students who have completed coursework, the responses of students to the email survey suggest that students are interested in participating in some sort of structured event designed to mentor them in completing their degree requirements beyond the coursework. At this point, it seems that some combination of strategies (including the facilitation of informal networks, the Dissertation Forum, and a one or two session workshop) would best meet the diverse needs of students who have completed their coursework. Ideally, students will be included in the planning process for the strategies we decide to pursue.