

School of Social Work, University of Washington, 10 Year Review
March 15, 2023

The 10-year program review of the School of Social Work was conducted on February 9-10, 2023. The review committee consisted of:

- Dr. Carol Ann Davis, Ed.D. Professor and Associate Dean of Research, College of Education, University of Washington (Committee Chair)
- Dr. Christina Fong, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, Foster School of Business, University of Washington
- Dr. Mimi Chapman, Professor and Associate Dean of Doctoral Education, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- Dr. Sandra Momper, Associate Professor Emerita, University of Michigan

The School of Social Work (SSW) at the University of Washington is a nationally ranked (#2) program serving undergraduate and graduate students. The school is a leader in workforce development and has 16 Research and Innovation Centers. The Dean has served the school for 17 years and will step down at the end of 2023. The leadership team consists of eight Associate Deans, Assistant Deans, and Directors.

The charge was to assess the quality of the degree programs in the School of Social Work and provide constructive suggestions for strengthening programs. The report is organized by a summary of each meeting followed by recommendations. In addition, we considered the unit-defined questions which are integrated into the summaries of meetings and recommendations.

School of Social Work Leadership

The review committee met with several members of the senior leadership team including Associate Deans, Assistant Deans, and the Interim Dean. Overall, the sentiment about the SSW was optimistic and positive. A common theme in our conversation was the strength of the culture of the school, characterized by a spirit of collaboration, embracing of change, and shared values around compassionate care for the community. Many senior leaders have arrived at UW after long and illustrious careers at other institutions, and the support and culture of the school is a main driver of their commitment to the school. Other strengths include strong fiscal management, shared values and support of research (particularly from research centers), and strong ties to the community.

The group acknowledged that the school is at an important inflection point, having recently been re-accredited and with a current Dean search underway. In the next few years, the school will face challenges and opportunities to meet the changing needs of students, grow its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice, and react to changes in faculty title changes. The leadership team is confident that the school's strong culture, values-based

leadership, and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion will help weather the upcoming changes.

Finance and Administration

Overall, the financial health and administrative functions of the SSW are strong. HR and IT have made many strategic investments to meet the growing needs of staff, centers, and students. The school should be commended for both its strong IT reputation and responsible fiscal management, having never run a deficit in 15 years. The school recognizes that the Research and Innovation Centers are a financial engine and have invested in infrastructure to help steward post award processes; investing in pre-application support would likely be helpful as well. We also share concerns with the finance team regarding the school's inability to meet targeted reserves and would encourage the school to explore opportunities to grow new revenue streams to meet this need.

The SSW currently engages in evaluating several aspects of the student experience, general curriculum, climate, advising, and field evaluations, however, it was evident this data is not currently used to make shifts in programs. Faculty and students expressed a need for a database or infrastructure support for synthesizing and using this data to support program direction.

Student Support

The Student Support Office is led by a Director and Program Support Supervisor and also employs several advisors. The staff acknowledged growth in the student population over the last 10 years has resulted in a growth in student services and complexity (mixed fee based and tuition based). This growth and the pandemic have led them to move many services online.

Student support from staff is evident for BASW, MSW, and doctoral students. Students were very complimentary of workers in these offices, referring to several individuals who were active in recruiting and retaining students, in particular BASW students. Interviews also revealed strong support for transitioning to work (i.e., LinkedIn, interviewing, and resume support). Most notable was the prioritization of hiring a mental health specialist to provide support for students. While currently half-time, this position demonstrates the school's commitment to student needs and wellbeing.

BASW Students

The BASW is a strong tentpole for the School of Social Work and they should be commended for their strong reputation, progressive education, and commitment to community and underserved populations. In particular, students remarked upon the strength of the cohort model, inclusive pedagogical practices, and robust student services support. In terms of future areas for growth, students identified the need for stronger integration of field work into the classroom curriculum and to increase their skills-based learning. They also would like more clarity and transparency about how practicum opportunities are shared and assigned equitably

to students. Also, students felt their experiences would be improved if classroom facilities were improved and if more scholarship support was available.

MSW Students

Current students in the MSW program chose to apply and attend because of the reputation and in-state tuition of the program. Students spoke of having higher expectations about the program in three areas: curriculum coherence and appropriateness, infrastructure related to course offerings and fieldwork opportunities, and faculty engagement.

In general, the students would like the curriculum to be more integrated and less redundant. As will be discussed later in the report, the school is highly dependent on adjunct instructors and there is considerable turnover among this group. This can result in instructors not being adequately prepared and unaware of what material is being covered in other courses. Students discussed the lack of connection between the course content and the licensing exam. Students also expressed their disappointment with how social justice was approached within the school. All students voiced concerns about the introductory course (504) content and instructional personnel. The course did not address the racial diversity of the student population causing harm to BIPOC students as they re-lived harms as a part of this course.

Attention to infrastructure for course offerings and fieldwork also needs to be provided. Students reflected on the difficulties of planning courses of study due to not knowing course offerings more than 1-2 days prior to registration, limited student enrollment capacity within courses, and basic support obtaining fieldwork placements. While students appreciated the peer networks created, they asked for more support in creating community. They did make reference to support of some faculty, but sensed many did not feel they had the social capital to make change.

Doctoral Students

The doctoral program is in considerable flux and needs attention. Students are funded for four years without guaranteed summer funding. The students are unionized meaning that stipends are considerable, relatively speaking. This makes it hard for students to be funded on faculty grants, although this does happen to some degree. There have been 5 program directors in 7 years. Combined with the pandemic, this has led to a neglect of basic processes and information sharing that is causing considerable distress among the doctoral students we spoke with. Specifically, the students report that the doctoral handbook has not been updated for the last four years. Because the program is highly interdisciplinary, students take many courses across campus but there is not a central repository for information about what courses best meet student needs. They describe difficulties in equitable mentoring with some students having very good experiences and others having very little mentoring. They request more consistency around mentoring practices and knowledge of what they can expect.

The doctoral students report perceiving the school as a hierarchical place in which their emails are regularly ignored by their mentors and they are not seen as adults with ideas and expertise.

They believe there is often a mismatch between faculty who have funding and those who are strong mentors. There is a sense that the PhD program is not valued by the larger school and is forgotten.

However, the students report a very supportive and positive peer culture in which there is information sharing and knowledge passed among students about how to get things done. Their suggestions include assessing how students get access to needed software, examining policies around paid family leave, considering having some sort of childcare space within the school and/or child care subsidies. There is a multi-year professional seminar that they believe becomes less useful as they progress through the program. They believe it is helpful in the first year.

Field Education

This meeting was well attended by Directors as well as Assistant and Associate Teaching Professors. The Field Education office has a team of ten who work on seeking traditional and non-traditional practicum placements for students. There is strong cohesion amongst team members as they enjoy their peers, the students, and the community organization connections. Practicum experience for the students is of utmost importance to them and they are extremely aware that their work is vital for the students to gain practical clinical and other social work experiences external to the academic setting. Of utmost importance to them is that students demonstrate the capacity to do social work and develop antiracist practices. Students have recently been interested in environmental justice and anti-racist educational opportunities leading to the increase in non-traditional placements. There is an awareness by the group that they too need to increase their knowledge of anti-racist social work practice.

Of note is the existence of opportunities for Interprofessional Education (IPE) for both the Field Faculty and the students. They are proud that they are the leaders in the University of Washington in terms of IPE work as it highlights the activities of the School of Social Work as well as focuses on health equity issues. This is a student-led practicum where students build the curriculum and facilitate workshops in the Health Sciences Department. Additionally, they provide practicum experiences with two noteworthy programs at the School of Social Work: The Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program (CWTAP) as well as the Behavioral Workforce Development Initiative (WDI). The CWTAP program provides financial support and specialized training opportunities for students who commit to working in child welfare upon graduation. Additionally, the WDI program is a partnership with 13 universities, 20 graduate programs, and 100 state-wide and Tribal community behavioral health centers. Not only is this a tuition assistance program for students, it is also a statewide initiative for workforce development as staff at the centers are also encouraged to attend the School of Social Work. The mention of these programs is important as Field Faculty, some whose experience is in child welfare and/or community behavioral health centers, are the liaisons with the other participants in these initiatives. It was evident that they work closely with Field Instructors at practicums to promote anti-racist values, strengths-based assessments, family engagement, and challenge and attempt to bridge the gaps that exist between the curriculum and the field

work. They are also involved in advocating to obtain more support, like stipends, for Field Instructors and tangible support for the agencies involved.

Faculty surfaced a few challenges. The University wide title and role change from “Lecturer” to “Assistant or Associate Teaching Professors” with a new expectation to be involved in research activities is a challenge. Faculty also discussed the disconnect between the fieldwork curriculum and the curriculum in the classroom. To better inform Tenure Track Faculty of their work, the Field Faculty have positions on the Faculty Council and Tenure and Promotion committee, and this has been beneficial.

The Field Faculty again reiterated that they are engaged in looking at the structure of their department to create a structure that the larger school understands. They are better aligned and comfortable as liaisons and teams, enjoy their peers, and recognize the impact they have on the students and the field of social work.

Instructional Faculty

There are two types of non-tenured instructional faculty within the school: part-time instructors (adjuncts) and Teaching professors. Teaching professors, of which there are now three, are a relatively new type of position. Most of these individuals have doctorates or will be going forward. They are hired competitively in national searches. The primary responsibility of these positions is teaching and they are full-time positions. As this track grows, it will likely address some concerns referenced earlier in the document and later in this section regarding part-time faculty. However, there are a series of unknown questions about this track and the faculty we met with believe that additional clarity is needed. Specifically, at this time, promotion policies have not been clearly defined for this group. It is unclear what their rights and responsibilities are regarding voting on faculty governance matters.

There is a large contingent of part-time instructors (n=36), on which the school is highly dependent for teaching. These individuals are working outside of the academy and bring their practice lives into the classroom which students highly value. However, little attention is paid to preparing this group to teach, meaning that some are successful because of prior training, experience, or natural ability, while others could benefit from more guidance.

Currently there is a three hour on-boarding workshop for new part-time faculty, but considering the difficult conversations that these part-time faculty are asked to navigate in the classroom, this on-boarding is not sufficient. Likewise, because they are teaching out of their practice experience, they may not be teaching the most current or evidenced-based intervention models. Further, it is sometimes challenging for part-time instructors to get the information that they need such as previous syllabi, training in how to use Canvas, and basic course management activities. All of these dimensions, combined with low pay for part-time instructors, mean that many individuals turnover and do not continue to teach these courses thus perpetuating a cycle of part-time teachers with less experience in the classroom.

Overall, there is a concern that the teaching mission of the school is not as highly valued as the research mission. Students choose the University of Washington because of its highly regarded and productive tenure track faculty; yet they say their interaction with these individuals is minimal. There is also a recognition that teaching is becoming more complex as student needs and concerns are changing.

Assistant Professors

The assistant professors group described the school as a healthy environment in which to start their research careers. They believe it is a “non-toxic” environment particularly for people of color. However, there are challenges living in Seattle for reasons such as housing prices and being far away from family and friends in other parts of the country. Gentrification in Seattle has meant that there are fewer, in town, thriving Black communities and this is challenging for individuals coming from areas of the country where Black communities are more plentiful.

The assistant professors are very pleased with start-up packages and other supports they received coming in. They describe some unevenness in mentoring and not knowing exactly how to access mentors when needed. Mentoring matches don’t always work, either because of work styles, personality considerations, or lack of response. The assistant professors feel ill at ease when this happens and unsure of how to remedy it. Black assistant professors pointed to a cross-campus group of faculty facilitated by Alexis Harris that has been a huge support to them.

The assistant professors would like more specific guidance around preparation of tenure materials. They appreciate the yearly review structure with the academic deans. They also talked about their enjoyment of the student body which they described as composed of bright, curious, and highly engaged students.

Associate & Full Professors

Our time with the tenured professors was a chance to clarify some elements of other meetings as well as learning additional information. They explained more about the different teaching tracks and provided specifics around expectations for new assistant professors, teaching expectations more generally, and research buy-out policies.

All faculty are expected to teach one class no matter how much research buyout they have. Junior faculty are well-protected with no teaching in the first year and only one class in the second year. After that, everyone is expected to teach five, although active publishing leads to a reduction of that expectation to four courses per academic year. The buy-out rate is 25% which is high. The school’s faculty council is considering this at the moment.

The ecosystem of research centers connected to the school provides opportunities for tenured professors to have leadership opportunities within the centers and the school itself. There are leadership development opportunities within the larger University. There is strong camaraderie within the faculty and good relationships between faculty and staff. Questions center around

how service is valued within the school, particularly for associate professors who are planning for promotion to full. Likewise, there is a focus on engaged scholarship and associates would benefit from additional clarity around how to characterize that work in promotion portfolios.

As the School is changing and incorporating new types of non-tenured faculty lines, there is a recognition that the role of tenure track faculty may change. As non-tenured lines proliferate, the school culture should be closely monitored in order to maintain the highly supportive and collegial nature of the school. While beneficial to the teaching mission of the school, these divisions can set up tensions between those who are tenured or have the capacity to be and those who are not.

Faculty and Staff of Color

A large group of faculty of color participated in the discussion, including two that returned to work in the school. One former student, now faculty, was impressed that two faculty of color are still here. Strengths were discussed as well as challenges and opportunities for change.

There is a culture of family here with faculty of color and this helps retention. Leadership and staff are diverse and staff are comfortable here, but would like more representation. Leadership has been committed to increasing BIPOC faculty, for example Indigenous faculty, and this creates a cohort and a place of safety and retreat for those faculty. It was generally felt that this is a healthy environment and that diversity is thriving and microaggressions are decreasing. Others felt it is important that Black faculty stay as they can support the new cohorts via mentorship. Overall, they are aware of and are inspired by the role they play in the Seattle community.

A discussion ensued around possible reasons for the underrepresentation of BIPOC, especially Black faculty, leaving, or not being hired or retained. The general feeling was there were more Black faculty 30 years ago who have since left for various reasons, one reason given was that there was a glass ceiling. Cohort hiring for their group of faculty helped immensely. There are few Black male faculty, which is characteristic of other social work schools, but it leads to increased pressure and visibility for those faculty. And presently there is a need to hire more Latinx faculty to support the growing Latinx community in Seattle.

Historically the Seattle Black community was multigenerational in the 80s and a sense of community existed. Also, gentrification has occurred as large companies are locating here and impacting the economy as in increased expenses. Presently there is a need to acknowledge the diversity within the racial and ethnic communities as well as within group differences and intersectionality. A suggestion was made to have a more nuanced discussion of this in relation to the BIPOC term which can be monolithic, for example distinctions need to be made between Black in America and continental Africans or Africans in America.

A challenge for field faculty is the issue of salary compression as it leads to salary inequities, especially for those who have been here for years. Field faculty are more people of color, are

the liaison between the community and the students, and spend more time with students in affinity groups without additional compensation.

As in other schools, there is a continued need to recruit more faculty of color as well as Black and Brown students, (less than 3-4 % Black). Increasingly students are choosing the clinical tract and asking for more skills based clinical knowledge in the classroom setting as they want to work in direct practice and in communities. This is especially important to the Black students.

There is a belief that leveraging the collective power of teaching and tenure track faculty of color would be powerful. And, that this is a healthy working environment and that is why they stay.

Research and Innovation Centers

The School of Social Work has many highly visible centers. It is clear the scholarly impact the school has on the field and community. These Centers appear to serve as a landing pad for some faculty whose research does not fall neatly into one home or center. Faculty spoke of a cross fertilization across the centers, but also suggested the need to meet as a whole group to explore some infrastructure characteristics that could be shared (e.g., data sources, support for doctoral students). The research centers provide research practicums (required for students) and field work opportunities but are challenged by the cost and constraints of doctoral student workers. For those faculty not associated or connected to centers, some formalized assistance would be helpful. In particular, suggestions for help in the area of pre-award, building contracts and MOUs.

Faculty spoke highly of the Assistant Dean of Finance and Administration. Faculty also indicated that more support staff were needed across the life cycle of a grant. Ongoing support during the post award phases were “deprioritized” which might put the school at-risk for damaging relationships with funders.

Advancement & Community Partnerships

The Assistant Dean for Advancement, the Associate Dean for Social Service Innovation and Partnerships, and the Interim Dean of the School of Social Work shared that the Seattle community is a key stakeholder in their endeavors and a goal is to strengthen these community bonds and extend connections beyond field placements. They are in the process of gathering new groups of constituents, for example, Tribal communities, to inform them of opportunities that exist at the school. Marketing their program is important to them as it leads to increased enrollment as well as partnerships that involve recruitment of students, scholarship and employment opportunities. During the last UW fundraising campaign 24 million of funding (of 75.8 million) was allocated to the school, 22 million went for student scholarships. The school is presently in the second phase of fundraising and 10 million will be allocated for student recruitment and support.

At present the Dean sets the priorities for the school by following macro trends and always has a particular focus on student scholarships. Other fundraising priorities focus on interdisciplinary work. Priorities now are behavioral health, juvenile justice, and child welfare, and increasing behavioral health practitioners and clinicians of color (CWTAP and WDI). They position and prioritize based on these issues, and sometimes priorities are donor driven via private philanthropy funds. For example, they have a partnership with the Ballmer group focused on workforce development (WDI) and the school is leveraging the state legislature for overlap funds.

The WDI program is innovative in that they recruit BASW students from low-income communities of color into their program, create field placements there, as well as recruit employees into the program. This is a statewide partnership with 13 Universities offering 415 scholarships, 125 of which are in this school. One hundred Community behavioral health agencies throughout the state participate in this partnership. It is important that programs such as this prepare students but also the environments that they will work in. To ensure fair allocation of funds across agencies and other IHEs, the WDI has an advisory committee composed of leaders, foundation executives, and advocacy groups in the field. The WDI allocation committee's role is the allocation of resources like student scholarships and the assigning the number of open slots for each field agency site.

Funds are also being sought to support the Communities in Action program that emphasizes training for parents, youth, juvenile justice, police, educators, and public health professionals. It enhanced young people's skills by pairing them with role models with high standards to decrease delinquency and unhealthy behaviors. Participants numbered 200 hundred per year. This was previously supported by PEMCO.

During the former fundraising campaign, the SSW had an advisory committee composed of alumni and community leaders, but it no longer exists. Some of the centers and the programs have advisory committees, but there is no overarching advisory board.

The group talked about the need for continued fundraising for student support such as: licensing exam costs for underrepresented students, PhD student funding, and student research partnerships.

Overall this team is very successful in raising funds and is also acutely aware of the need to address certain issues and is discussing strategic activities to alleviate some of these challenges and that is a strength of the school.

Recommendations

The committee recommends that all degree programs for the SSW be granted continuing status with a subsequent review in 10 years. The committee was asked to answer three questions from the Graduate School.

1. Are the unit's degree programs of high quality? Do they meet the university's expectations of quality and reputation? [answer: Yes]

The School of Social Work has a top ten (most recently # 3) ranked program which in 2022 completed a review of their programs by the CSWE accreditation commission. The committee also found the programs to be of high quality with a committed faculty focused on engaging in social equity work.

2. How does the unit compare with that of peer and aspirational institutions in terms of education programs and scholarship?

When compared to Schools of Social Work in peer institutions, the SSW at the UW has a strong reputation. External reviewers agreed that the faculty, staff, and students at the SSW were strong leaders in the field.

3. How can the unit improve the quality of its educational program and scholarship? See recommendations below:

The SSW has a strong relational culture with caring environments producing a culture of safety. However, throughout the course of the review a consistent theme was a lack of infrastructure in processes (where to go for what?) and who is updating information. This lack of attention to processes and detail will, over time, lead to an environment that is not conducive to school faculty, staff, and students staying active and maintaining the high quality known at the UW. Given the deep care expressed during the review, the school will need to commit to ensuring basic information to students and staff is provided and accessible.

- Develop a new strategic plan. Throughout the meetings, people referred to the lack of direction, in part due to the need for a new strategic plan. The SSW is going through many changes currently (i.e., back to in-person learning, searching for a new dean, retiring of a dean who has been there 15 years) and once some of these transitions conclude, it will provide time for new visioning of the direction of the school.
- Doctoral program needs sustained leadership and coordination to ensure all students have access to the necessary opportunities to fulfill the needs of the next generation of researchers, teachers, and practitioners. The number of transitions in leadership experienced by students seems to be high and has affected students' understanding of the program and the opportunities available to them. Ensure leadership, in collaboration with faculty and students, is revising a handbook, mentoring guidelines, research opportunities, etc.
- The curricular content and infrastructure in the MSW program needs attention. Teaching associates (adjuncts) are a wonderful asset to the program by providing rigorous and practice informed courses but lack of infrastructure to produce a well coordinated and cohesive curriculum across classes. Specifically, the school should:
 - redesign SOWO 504 in collaboration with students of color.

- engage in program specific curricular planning to ensure the range of faculty (adjunct, part-time and full-time teaching faculty, field faculty) are coordinated in content. Develop mechanisms to compensate part-time faculty to participate in this work which might go beyond what is expected in teaching a course.
- continue to strengthen the Teaching Professor track by adding additional positions like this and creating a clear promotion and reward structure for them. As this track is growing, create more supports and rewards for the part-time contingent including mechanisms for training around teaching basics.
- long term curricular planning to prevent courses being canceled or not offered when expected.
- explore the tensions between the theory and practice by including faculty in the fieldwork area in discussions of the curriculum. These relationships could foster a more informed view of their work, the importance of it, and the need to foster relationships that can pedagogically inform the curriculum.
- Create paths for explicit mentorship. The SSW has new tenure-line and teaching faculty, each needing mentorship for successful promotion and reappointment. In some cases, the SSW should consider supports that may go beyond the walls of the university. Consider research and writing for funding mentorship for faculty not associated with a center. Consider mentorship opportunities for the various faculty titles (tenure-line, teaching, fieldwork) which will build a stronger curriculum.
- Attention to the faculty title transitions. The transition of some faculty from the lecturer track to the Teaching Professor track has created some confusion and threatens the trust of some voting faculty. As this transition continues, attention should be paid to equality in relation to title, compensation, etc. As the UW brings on a new Vice Provost of the Office of Academic Personnel, the SSW might consider other academic titles for faculty whose role includes not only instruction but field supervision (e.g., Professor of Practice)
- Technology and online learning; facilities: As student needs and preferences crystallize, there may be an opportunity to leverage technology and new pedagogical approaches to reach a wider diversity of students and provide new ways of learning. Exploring these new opportunities might yield increased revenues that could fund student support and facilities improvements.

In conclusion, we appreciated the chance to be involved in this review. The University of Washington School of Social Work has long been a leading program and is key to providing leadership for the profession. Although the time of transition the SSW is in is challenging, the connectedness, competence, and creativity of the faculty and staff give us great confidence that this school will continue to be an important leader in the field of social work and an important change-maker for communities both local and global. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of the school's growth and renewal.