

**Site Visit Report**

**California State University – Fullerton**

**California**

**Master of Social Work Program**

**September 18, 2014**

**Dr. Kevin Marett, Site Visitor**

1. Include a copy of the site visit schedule or a list of people who met with the site visitor(s) during the visit (e.g.: groups and individuals from the program and institution).



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**REAFFIRMATION SITE VISIT SCHEDULE**

*Thursday, September 18, 2014*

<b>W E D N E S D A Y , S E P T E M B E R 1 7 , 2 0 1 4</b>			
<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>ATTENDEES</b>
LAX 4:00 p.m.	Arrival	Fullerton Marriott TBA	
6:30 p.m. TBA	Dinner/Planning Mtg	Marriott Cafe	Dr. Dave Chenot Dr. Kevin Marett
<b>T H U R S D A Y , S E P T E M B E R 1 8 , 2 0 1 4</b>			
9:00 – 9:30 a.m.	Initial Meeting with Provost	CP -1060-06A	Dr. José Cruz Dr. Sherie McMann Dr. Marett
10:00 – 10:30 a.m.	Meeting with Dean	EC-607	Dr. Jessie Jones Dr. Marett
10:30 – 11:00 a.m.	Meeting with Community Advisory Board	EC-605	Dr. Marett CAD Members
11:00 – 11:30 a.m.	Meeting with Field Director, Faculty, Supervisors	EC-605	Dr. Marett Field Director Field Instructors / Site Supervisors
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch Meeting with Faculty	EC-605	Dr. Marett Faculty

<b>1:00 – 1:30 p.m.</b>	Meeting with Assessment Team	EC-605	Dr. Marett Dr. Cherin Dr. Ji
<b>1:30 – 2:00 p.m.</b>	Meeting with Department Chair	EC-605	Dr. Marett Dr. Chenot
<b>2:30 – 3:30 p.m.</b>	Meeting with Students	UH-252 (University Hall)	Dr. Marett Social Work Students from both campuses, all year groups
<b>3:30 – 4:30 p.m.</b>	TBA		
<b>4:30 – 5:00 p.m.</b>	Exit Meeting with Provost	CP 1060-06A	Dr. Cruz Dr. McMann Dr. Marett
<b>5:30 p.m.</b>	Exit Meeting with Faculty	EC-605	Dr. Marett Faculty

**2. Write a brief summary of the conversation on general questions regarding: program mission and goals (AS 1.0), diversity (AS 3.1), and assessment (AS 4.0).**

The program's mission and goals are in line with the university mission and goals and both are committed to providing a quality education for people of diversity, specifically targeting the ethnic populations in the region. They have identified four "threshold languages" that represent the four largest ethnic minorities in the region and have focused on creating "bilingual scholars" that are able to meet the needs of these populations. There are several scholarships available for Hispanic social work students as part of a federal/state initiative to provide help for underserved populations who will be serving those populations upon graduation. There is a noticeable focus on appreciating the diverse nature of the students in the program, where about 40% of the social work students are of diverse ethnic backgrounds. In meeting with the students, there were numerous comments regarding the unique contributions of the different minorities based on ethnicity, gender, age, sexual preferences and religion.

The assessment tools have been designed to provide feedback in their three areas of concentration, allowing them to monitor the competency of students as they prepare to serve the disadvantaged populations in these three areas. The faculty admitted the assessment tools were providing useful information but were still a work in progress as they explored different ways of interpreting the data to improve their program. As will be discussed later, the assessment tool used in field uses a different logic to assess the differences between foundation and advanced practice behaviors, which are the same behaviors for both years.

**3. List each accreditation standard and question raised by the COA in its *Letter of Instruction* with a thorough discussion of findings for each.**

**CSWE COA questions:**

*ASM 2.0.4 [The program] provides an operational definition for each of the competencies used in its curriculum design and its assessment [EP2.1 through 2.1.10(d), EP M2.2]*

Concern: Foundation: One required research practice behavior is not reflected, “use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry.” Advanced practice behaviors do not differentiate between their three areas of concentration. The narrative states that practice behaviors are measured uniquely in each concentration and the Cal SWEC field evaluation incorporates specific language per concentration. It is not clear from reading the practice behaviors how this unique assessment measures concentration specific knowledge and skills.

Instruction: The site visitor is directed to ask the program to provide an operational definition of each of the competencies used for its curriculum design and its assessment. The program is asked to clarify how the foundation research practice behaviors relate to the use of practice experience to inform scientific inquiry. The program is also asked to clarify how the program specifies their operational definitions for each of their three concentrations.

**Site Visit Findings:**

The faculty stated the operational definitions of each of the competencies used throughout their curriculum more clearly than articulated in the self study. The program distinguishes between foundation and advanced practice behaviors for each of the competencies, and they have a process for assessing each. They did not distinguish different practice behaviors for the different concentrations, stating that the three concentrations incorporated the same practice behaviors at the advanced level, but were measured differently. Even though each of the practice behaviors for each of the three concentrations were the same, each was taught and measured differently so each could be assessed independently of the others when it came to determining a specific competency. The explanation was that the advanced level practice behaviors, different than the foundation level practice behaviors, established a common level of greater competence that could then be used to springboard into a specific concentration.

Various faculty gave numerous examples of how research was used to guide practice related learning experiences which were used to shape further research questions which were then used to guide practice in a continuous loop, such as the “box city” project where the research helped to formulate the plan for how to help the homeless and what services were needed, and the actual experience became a study on how to further help the homeless. The examples were numerous

enough and detailed enough to present a clear picture of how the program's foundation research practice behaviors guide practice experience to inform scientific inquiry.

**CSWE COA Questions:**

*ASM2.0.6: [The program] describes and explains how its curriculum content (relevant theories and conceptual frameworks, values, and skills) implements the operational definition of each of its competencies.*

Area of Concern: It is not clear how human rights is specifically addressed in the curriculum.

Instruction: The site visitor is directed to ask the program to describe how human rights is operationalized in its curriculum and how it is implemented in its competencies.

**Site Visit Findings:**

The practice behaviors are operationalized under EPAS 2.1.5 and were explained in great detail by faculty, again, much clearer than what was written in the self study. Human rights was perhaps the most commented on aspect of the program as they had just completed a project where students advocated for the homeless by building a “box city” and sleeping in it overnight to raise both awareness and funds for the local homeless shelter. The project started out simple enough but took on a life of its own and the advocating grew to include micro, mezzo and macro interventions. It became a microcosm of social work and social work education involving all aspects of each, e.g. human behavior in the social environment, policy, practice, field, research, social and economic injustice, etc. All constituents with whom I talked commented on the success and impact this event had on the students, the program, the university, the community and the homeless agency and their clients. And there were numerous other examples given of how the practice behaviors regarding human rights were implemented throughout the curriculum.

**CSWE COA Questions:**

*AS M2.1.2: [The program discusses how its field education program] provides advanced practice opportunities for students to demonstrate the program's competencies.*

Area of Concern: The narrative describes practice opportunities but does not connect these opportunities for demonstrating core competencies. The advanced CALSWEC concentration field evaluations include concentration specific language, but this language is not specified in the advanced year practice behaviors.

Instruction: The site visitor is directed to ask the program to discuss how its field education program provides advanced opportunities for students to demonstrate the program's competencies.

**Site Visit Findings:**

The field director and associated faculty related several examples of how students were receiving advanced opportunities for their field experiences. There seems to be a clear distinction between what is expected in the foundation year and what is expected in the advanced year as manifest by the respective practice behaviors. Students in the foundation year were in placements that included a more generalist experience, like working with the homeless, whereas the advanced placements were made relative to the students' selected concentration, e.g. those in the Child Welfare concentration going to placements working with children like the David and Margaret Youth and Family Services. The *demonstration* of student competencies seemed to be in order. What is not clear is how those competencies are actually assessed. The assessment instrument used in field uses the same practice behaviors for both the foundation and advanced levels of practice, attempting to assess those same behaviors more rigorously the advanced year than the foundation year. The field program is set up so that students are rated on a 1 – 4 scale for their field work. The expectation is that first semester field students will get primarily "1" rankings, second semester students "2" rankings, third semester students "3" rankings, and last semester students "4" rankings, and that rankings of "3" and "4" will only be given during the advanced year and will require a greater demonstration of the practice behaviors associated with each competency. This concern relates to the next response and involves the rationale for the assessment instrument rather than the actual practice. The program appears to have different practice behaviors for the foundation year and the advanced year, and students in the field get two levels of experience and two different opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the practice behaviors for each competency, but the assessment doesn't fully capitalize on these two different experiences choosing to use one set of behaviors to assess both experiences, focusing instead on the differences in rigor required for the two different levels rather than the two different experiences.



**CSWE COA Questions:**

*AS 2.1.4 The program discusses how its field education program admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education.*

Concern: The program states that students must have successfully completed their foundation-year fieldwork and their foundation academic courses in order to advance to second-year field placement. However, the program does not define what successful completion entails.

Instruction: The site visitor is asked to clarify how the field education program admits only those students who have met the program's specified criteria for field education.

**Site Visit Findings:**

Although it is not clear from the written reports what successful completion of first year field work entails, it was made clear from discussions with the field director, field faculty, field instructors and students. In addition to a required number of hours, the field program is set up so that student are rated on a 1 – 4 scale for their field work. The expectation is that first semester field students will get primarily “1” rankings, second semester students “2” rankings, third semester students “3” rankings, and last semester students “4” rankings, with the understanding that students must have completed the first semester with “1” rankings and then the second semester with rankings of “2” with the required number of hours to move on to the advanced field placement, which by all reports was working well.

**CSWE COA Questions:**

*AS3.3.2: The program discusses how faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offerings in class and field; class size; number of students; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities. To carry out the ongoing functions of the program, the full-time equivalent faculty-to-student ratio is usually 1:25 for baccalaureate programs and 1:12 for master's programs.*

Concern: FTE Faculty to student ratio is reported as 1:14 with plan to decrease ratio to 1:13 in fall 2014. The full time equivalent faculty to student ration is usually 1:12 for Masters programs.

Instruction: The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offerings in class and field; class size; number of students; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities. The site visitor is asked to collect additional information on the programs plans to reach the 1:12 FTE to student ratio.

**Site Visit Findings:**

As detailed by faculty and Dean Jessie Jones, the program admitted too many students last year at the time the self study was written and resulted in a ratio of 14-15:1. They have since reduced the number admitted this year as they look to find the range of admissions that will keep them within the requisite faculty:student ratio. With the reduction in students the ration is now at 12-13:1. Additionally, two new faculty have been approved for hire which will further reduce the ratio. Admitting fewer students and hiring more faculty should bring them within the recommended student to faculty ratio and allow the faculty to meet the necessary teaching, research and service responsibilities.

**CSWE COA Questions:**

*ASM3.4.5(c): The program describes the procedures for determining the field director's assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education. To carry out the administrative functions of the field at least 50% assigned time is required for master's programs. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.*

Concern: Narrative does not comment on whether the 50% time is sufficient

Instruction: The site visitor is directed to ask the program to demonstrate that this time is sufficient.

**Site Visit Findings:**

The Director assured me that the Field Director had at least a 50% reduction from academic responsibilities, which was sufficient to meet the requirements of her field responsibilities. He also stated that the Field Director had received an additional course reduction this semester.

**CSWE COA Questions:**

*AS 4.0.1 The program presents its plan to assess the attainment of its competencies. The plan specifies procedures, multiple measures, and benchmarks to assess the attainment of each of the program's competencies.*

Concern: Program presents a detailed plan of its assessment. However, it is unclear from the matrix provided what course assignments are measuring exactly what practice behaviors. It is unclear if each assignment in each box measures the two practice behaviors alongside of it. It is unclear what multiple measures are assessing each practice behavior within the competencies.

The competency benchmarks on the overall chart of competencies reports the benchmarks as 3.0 or higher on a 4-point scale but on the matrix of competencies and benchmarks, a mean score of 3.2 is often stated as a benchmark.

Instruction: The site visitor is asked to clarify with the program its plan to assess the attainment of its competencies. The plan should specify procedures, multiple measures, and benchmarks to assess the attainment of each of the program's competencies.

**Site Visit Findings:**

After discussing the above concern with the Director, the faculty, and the specific faculty assigned to oversee assessment, it would seem they have a rather interesting combination of assessment tools. They utilize an entrance and exit exam of 70 questions which are used to determine change from the beginning of the program to the end. That is included in the self study and was articulated by the faculty. They also utilize a method where each practice behavior from each competency is measured by at least one or two specific assignments in specific courses. Each of these assignments is tabulated to produce a mean, and then the means of all the assignments measuring the practice behaviors for a specific competency are calculated to produce another mean for that particular competency, one mean for each foundation year competency and one mean for each advanced year competency. And although it does not appear in the documentation provided by the program, the faculty and assessment team assured me that this data is broken down by concentration in the advanced year, with each concentration measured by different assignments resulting in a different mean for each competency in each concentration. They said the issue is not a lack of data, but rather trying to fit too much data into a table without making it confusing, leaving out some parts that were explained in the narrative.

One faculty is assigned the task of tabulating all these means into a summary of each competency based on the year level and concentration. This is done each semester. They then look to see what needs or concerns are manifest. Originally they determined that the bench mark

should require 70% of students to attain a mean of 3.0 (or higher) on a 4.0 scale. After almost 100% of the students met the 3.0 benchmark, the faculty decided a higher benchmark would be more appropriate and raised it, leaving some earlier data using the 3.0 mean and more recent data using the 3.2 mean.

Another assessment measure used is the Comprehensive Skills Evaluation (CSE) used as part of the field evaluation. This measure is used by seven other social work programs in the Los Angeles area (e.g. USC, CSU-Long Beach, etc.) in an attempt to keep internships fair and to prevent biased selection by students based on potential variances in grading. This measure uses the same practice behaviors for both years, grading the advanced year more rigorously than the foundation year. Students are expected to get “1” and “2” on the CSE the foundation year and “3” and “4” the advanced year, which is all clearly spelled out for the students. The faculty were unable to explain why they would use the same practice behaviors for both years in this specific instance other than wanting to comply with what the consortium of eight schools had agreed upon.

Although not used as one of the formalized assessment measures, the program also requires a capstone portfolio which is a compilation of the assignments required by different courses organized by competency. Students commented this was a more practical measure of their competencies than the other measures and that they used the portfolio for interviews.

**CSWE COA Questions:**

*AS 4.0.2 The program provides summary data and outcomes for the assessment of each of its competencies, identifying the percentage of students achieving each benchmark.*

Concern: The evaluation data summary form states that it is for foundation year but it appears to also have data for concentrations included. Details of findings for the practice behaviors within the concentrations is not provided.

It is unclear how the means for practice behaviors were calculated. Although numerous embedded course assignments were identified, it is unclear where or how the data for the field evaluation and exit surveys were incorporated and reported. Field evaluation measures and exit survey were listed in Volume III as assessment instruments.

Instruction: The site visitor is asked to discuss with the program how various measures are used to assess each practice behavior for foundation and each of its concentrations. The program is asked to clarify how the data for foundation and advanced practice behaviors from the various measures were combined.

**Site Visit Findings:**

At the time the self study was written, only one semester's worth of data had been collected and it was assembled in an unclear fashion. With more time having passed since the self study was written, more data was available and more thought had been put into the presentation, separating out foundation from advanced but not separating out by concentration. The program presented the data in a clearer fashion than stated in the self study but still has some ambiguities which were addressed in the previous Site Visit Findings, AS 4.0.1.