EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL WORK HIGH IMPACT PRACTICES:
CURRICULUM MAPPING, ASSESSMENT AND ALIGNMENT WITH COMPETENCY
STANDARDS

SUMMER CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT REPORT
SUMMER 2011

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OVERVIEW

Eastern’s Social Work Program integrates four high impact practices within required courses, and three in elective courses in its nationally accredited Bachelor of Social Work Program. The social work major employs a learning community model as a central feature of student learning. Both the explicit and implicit curricula employ learning community practices. In addition, social work internships are considered social work’s signature pedagogy and as such are given equal value with classroom learning in professional education. Mid-level writing requirements are shared by three required social work courses and a senior capstone course, an upper level writing intensive course, is the culminating course of the social work major. Service learning is a component of all three internship experiences in the Social Work Program, although the primary goal of each of these field experiences is to benefit student learning. Three remaining high impact practices (research with faculty, service learning and study abroad) are all offered for elective credit in the Social Work Program. Of the 43 credits of required SWK courses in the major, 27 credits are in courses that employ high impact practices.

The Social Work Program, a major within the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). This accreditation has been ongoing throughout the period of the major’s existence at Eastern. The Program will seek reaffirmation of its accreditation during the 2012-2013 academic year, with submission of a comprehensive self study, CSWE Commission review and site visit. The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of CSWE have been revised in 2008, essentially changing standards that were based on learning inputs and outputs to student competencies.

Faculty in the Social Work Program have continuously reviewed and employed literature regarding the use of learning communities, internships and capstone classes in the development of these practices in our program. We have used assessment within the major to continuously shape our curriculum and practices. With the advent of new competency based standards for accreditation faculty have reviewed the latest literature especially about internships, and the assessment of competencies, in social work.

As expected by the summer curriculum development goals, social work faculty developed new assessment strategies of these high impact practices (as well as the entire implicit and explicit curriculum) to align our program with external accreditation standards. The new standards have been shaped by a comprehensive assessment of current trends and anticipated future competencies required for the profession.

Faculty in the Social Work Program worked during the summer of 2011 to further advance planning, curriculum development, and assessment strategies to prepare for our self study and reaffirmation review. Key outcomes of the summer effort were: (1) curriculum maps for each social work course; (2) a curriculum map which identified master assignments throughout the curriculum; and (3) a plan for the operationalization of all forty-one practice behaviors which constitute outcome competencies for the senior field internship.
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

These core competencies are expected of social workers as identified by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in its 2008 Educational Policy Statement:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.
9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
10(a)–(d). Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Each of these competencies is further refined through the identification of associated behaviors. Forty-one behaviors comprise the ten competencies. Each accredited program must operationalize each of the behaviors and assess students’ acquisition of each of these competencies in at least two ways for at least one year.

Three social work faculty met on campus and via Skype during summer 2011. We continued work that began in earnest during AY 2010-2011 to revise our program mission statement, assure that competencies were articulated as learning objectives for courses, enhance assessment mechanisms and more.

SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM MAPPING

Curriculum maps were developed for each social work course. Faculty who teach sections of the same course collaborated on the mapping. Although all course maps are not yet completed, all course maps are in process. These maps will be submitted in the social work self study to the Council on Social Work Education in summer 2012. All behaviors constituting the competencies are mapped to course curriculum content, weeks covered, and learning activities and assignments, for the entire social work curriculum.

CURRICULUM MAP AND MASTER ASSIGNMENT MATRIX

Accreditation standards dictate that all forty-one behaviors comprising the ten practice competencies must be assessed at least twice. The faculty reviewed curriculum maps for courses and identified one “master assignment” to assess each of the forty-one behaviors in the classroom. All faculty who teach these courses will be responsible for commonly collecting these data in the junior and senior
years, setting expected standards, using common rubrics for grading, and reporting results for use in the quality improvement processes and reporting in the self study. New assignments were created and others modified. Assessment rubrics for each are being refined. All faculty who teach the major courses with master assignments agree to use the common assignment. Seven of the 41 behaviors will be assessed in master assignments in the senior capstone seminar and 15 additional behaviors will be measured in internship seminars. Five more of the master assignments are in a mid-level writing course or in a community internship class. Thus two-thirds (64%) of the specific behavioral competencies we seek to assess for classroom learning will be measured in high impact course areas.

INTERNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Faculty determined that the behaviors which are assessed by all field supervisors during the senior year will constitute one assessment component for every practice behavior. Currently field faculty assess students in senior field placements four times during the academic year employing an assessment tool to measure students’ achievement of the competencies expected at four intervals. Students are ranked as below standard, meets standard or above standard. The Program now has one year of data regarding these assessments. We however sought to refine our assessment measures in the field by asking field supervisors to work to further operationalize behaviors through key indicators. Faculty developed an approach to developing this more refined rubric through group planning sessions at the first field supervisor meeting in August. This work is ongoing with the intention that indicators will be identified for the forty-one behaviors and field faculty trained to use the instrument with the intention of assuring high inter-rater reliability.

BUDGET

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<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Stipends (stipend and benefits inclusive)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret E. Martin</td>
<td>$250</td>
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