Introduction

Under the auspices of the Department of Social Work Advisory Council, a Student Survey was conducted in February 2004 to gather students’ views on the department. This report was prepared to share with students the results of the student survey and the response of the faculty to the issues raised in the survey. The report also relates the spring student survey with the areas needing improvement identified by the fall student focus groups.

A Subcommittee of the Advisory Council was formed to prepare and carry out the Student Survey. The members consisted of Cheryl Theriault, Debbie Ginsberg and Stacy Gunter (student representatives), Margaret Seagroves, and Susie Mallard Barnes.

On April 7, three of these members, Cheryl Theriault, Stacy Gunter, and Susie Mallard Barnes met with the faculty to discuss the results of the survey and to have the faculty respond on the emerging issues.

Survey

A survey was distributed in classrooms and collected by student volunteers during a three-week period in February 2004. On the Student Survey, students answered first seven closed-ended questions and then four open-ended questions and a final item requesting “other comments.”

In order to maintain confidentiality, the student responses were then typed up by the departmental administrative assistant’s designee (a work study student). Faculty, thus, never saw the responses in a hand-written form. The quantitative responses were tabulated and averages taken.

In all 69 students completed the survey. The number of social work majors at the time was 95. The lack of response from some students can be attributed to the survey not being distributed in two classes. Students who completed the survey identified themselves primarily as Juniors and Seniors.
Closed-Ended Questions

In responding to the seven closed-ended questions, students were asked to score the program on a scale with 4 as excellent, 3 as good, 2 as fair, and 1 as poor. Thus, a higher score was a more positive score. Nearly all students answered each of the seven closed-ended questions. Their responses are summarized in the table below.

The highest rating went to the availability of Social Work faculty to students. On average, students rated favorably faculty’s availability, responsiveness, communication, and advising with students. They also rated positively the quality of the social work courses. Somewhat lower scores were given to the scheduling of social work courses and the variety of social work course offered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>AVERAGE SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Quality of Social Work Courses</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Quality of Social Work Advising</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Availability of Social Work Faculty to Students</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Responsiveness of Social Work Faculty to Students</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communication between Social Work Faculty and Students</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Variety of Social Work Classes Offered</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dates &amp; Times at which Social Work Classes Are Offered</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The students’ written responses can be summarized under two main headings: strengths of the program and points of concern.

Strengths of the Program

The strengths of the program were many and strong. The main themes are listed below as well as some examples of students’ comments on these areas:

- Excellent program and reputation of the program
  
  Student response: “Diverse curriculum. Knowledgeable in the fields.”

- Positive relationships among faculty and students
  
  Student response: “It is a very student friendly environment, the faculty is friendly and personal.”

- The quality of the faculty
  
  Student response: “Variety of classes, many spectrums covered, the instructors have a lot of experience in the field of SW.”
- Good class size
  
  Student response: “Care about students, small and personal.” “Get to know students well.”

- Helpful volunteer and field placements for experiencing social work in the community
  
  Student response: “Many volunteer placements and hands on work experience give practical examples about working with and for people.” “Caring professors, research opportunities, community relationships.”

- Positive outcomes for students
  
  Student response: “Very well prepared and have a lot of experience by the time you graduate”

  Student response: “Offers good basic education to build on.”

- Relationships with other students
  
  Student response: “The social work students themselves have created a strong bond with each other and a positive learning experience.”

On reviewing this positive feedback, the faculty expressed pleasure in seeing substantial student satisfaction with the department.

**Some Points of Concern**

Although overall students were satisfied with their program, the weaknesses and concerns about the program and the areas students would like to see changed were discussed. A difference this year was that the student representatives, Debbie Ginsberg and Stacy Gunter had a Student Forum in November 2003 asking students for input so that they might better represent the students on the Social Work Advisory Council as their student representatives. A summary of the student concerns was presented to the faculty, staff members, and Advisory Council members. As a result, several areas of concern were already being actively worked on when the Student Survey was distributed in February. The response of the faculty to student concerns will reflect the work already done in those areas and will be so indicated. The main themes and faculty responses follow:

- **The days and times that classes are scheduled present difficulties for the students.** The students expressed concern that there are too many three-hour seminars. The students noted that the days and times that the Social Work courses are scheduled can make it difficult for them to register in courses in other subjects. The faculty understood the student concerns and have, beginning this
semester, changed the block classes to late morning and afternoon times. (A response to the Student Forum in the fall)

- **The wait list is confusing and difficult.** The wait list has been eliminated. (This in response to Student Forum in the fall).

- **Matriculation can be confusing.** A faculty committee is working on making this clearer and simpler. The changes will be implemented next semester. The application to matriculate is also being revised. (A response to the Student Forum in the fall).

- **There is redundancy and repetitiveness in courses.** The faculty report that some of this intentional. Their intention is to expand critical thinking by framing certain issues in the context of a particular course and then reframing in the context of a different course. In addition, in response to the Student Forum, professors are meeting to examine sequencing of courses and content of courses with the goal of eliminating unintended redundancy. This type of coordinated effort will be ongoing.

- **More advertising and support of student organizations is needed.** The faculty report that the organizations are more active this year and are providing some excellent service projects to the community. Faculty provide advising and support for each of the organizations.