Introduction

Under the auspices of the Social Work Program Advisory Council, a Student Survey was conducted in March 2001 to gather students’ views on the Social Work Program. 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.

On March 19th, four members of the Advisory Council met with the faculty to discuss the results of the survey. These members included the chair Margaret Seagroves, a council member Mary Constantinou, and the two student representatives Gwen Menton and Yolanda Outlaw. At the meeting, it was agreed that the response of the faculty would be shared with students through this report.

Survey Format

In past years, the Advisory Council held meetings in order to give students an opportunity to express their views of the program. In order to encourage full expression by students, faculty were not present at these meetings and the names of participating students were not shared with faculty. For scheduling reasons, however, students found that it was difficult to attend the meetings.

As a result, this year it was agreed that another format would be used to gather student views. A survey was distributed by student representatives to classes where students completed the survey. In order to maintain confidentiality, the student responses were then typed up by a student representative Gwen Menton. Faculty, thus, never saw the responses in a hand-written form. The quantitative responses were tabulated and averages taken.

Survey Participants

In all 60 students completed the survey over a one-week period in March 2001. This meant that approximately half the student body responded. This was a much higher response rate than in past years when the group meeting format called the “Student Forum” was employed. For instance, in the past year 2000, only four students took part in the Student Forum.

Students who completed the survey identified themselves primarily Juniors and Seniors, and just over half (34) indicated that they were affiliated with a Social Work student association.
Survey Questions

On the Student Survey, students answered first six closed-ended questions and then four open-ended questions and a final item questing “other comments.”

Closed-Ended Questions

In responding to the six 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 six closed-ended questions. Their responses are summarized in the table below. On each question the range of scores was from 1 to 4 but with the predominance of scores in the higher range except for Question # 6. The average scores for the items relating to faculty and student relationships were predominantly between the good (3) to excellent (4) range. On average students rated favorably faculty’s advising, availability, responsiveness, and communication work with students. The averages were lower in regards to the variety of classes offered and particularly lower in regards to scheduling of classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th># OF RESPONSES</th>
<th>AVERAGE SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Social Work Advising</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Social Work Faculty to Students</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness of Social Work Faculty to Students</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between Social Work Faculty and Students</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of Social Work classes offered</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates and Times at which Social Work classes are offered</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Their written responses can be summarized under two main headings: strengths of the program and points of concern.

Strengths of the Program

The survey responses highlighted strengths of the program. In particular, students expressed satisfaction with:

$\quad$ the friendly atmosphere,

$\quad$ sense of student connectedness with faculty,

$\quad$ improved communications,

$\quad$ attention to diversity issues, and
quality of the volunteer placements.

On reading these comments, the faculty expressed appreciation for this “pat on the back” and noted that over the past five years student satisfaction with the program had steadily risen.

Some Points of Concern

Although overall students were satisfied with their program, they raised some points of concern and faculty proposed some solutions:

Class Schedule

A number of students expressed dissatisfaction with the three-hour-block class sessions and reported difficulty in staying engaged over such a lengthy period. In the discussion with faculty, it was noted the three-hour blocks were helpful for part-time students and non-traditional older students who live at a distance. Thus, the students are divided among themselves on what they would prefer in regards to class scheduling. It was also noted that some part-time faculty who provide excellent instruction are only available to teach for one session per week. Another hurdle is that the Social Work Program does not have designated classroom space at NC State and, thus, cannot control the scheduling of all courses. Faculty also noted that practice courses, in particular, required a three-hour block in order to carry out interactional learning exercises.

Given the diversity among the student body, the faculty proposed that if two sections (of non-practice courses) are being offered, an effort would be made to try to schedule one as a block section and one as a two or three periods section.

Class Content

Some students reported the need for more clinical classes. The faculty noted that all accredited BSW programs in the United States are expected to deliver a generalist practice program. According to the accrediting body (the Council on Social Work Education), specialization in clinical work is expected to occur during graduate rather than undergraduate social work education.

Students noted that some materials were duplicated across courses. Some of the repetition, the faculty explained, was because the accrediting body expected content such as values and ethics to be diffused throughout the curriculum. At the same time, the faculty acknowledged the need to be more aware of what is happening in other classes. Because the faculty are currently carrying out a review of the program, this process should help to make them more cognizant of what is happening in other classes.

More Full-Time Faculty

Students noted the need for more full-time faculty. The faculty heartily agreed with the students. Currently the Social Work Program has requested from the university of addition of two more full-time faculty lines. The faculty, however, also stressed that the Social Work Program was
enriched by the participation of their very strong pool of part-time faculty, who bring extensive practice experience and provide diversity.

**More Variety of Course Offerings**

Students expressed the wish for more on Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Disabilities. The faculty noted that they have made Substance Abuse one of the regular electives and that Mental Health and Disabilities were two areas into which they would want to expand the elective offerings.

**Unpaid Internships**

Some students expressed the wish to have paid internships. The faculty noted that field placements were primarily an educational experience and that normally in the United States students were not paid for their work as an intern. They noted that if a student was accepted into the Child Welfare Education Collaborative Scholars program, they would receive a service award (stipend). They also stated their plan to move forward with seeking course credit for volunteer placements.

**Gatekeeping**

Some students voiced the concern that they thought some of their classmates were not ready to major in social work and raised questions about gatekeeping processes. The faculty responded that gatekeeping was a difficult but important function that faculty needed to perform. They described how students were not only “admitted” to the Social Work Program but how they had be “matriculated” into the Program prior to taking practice and field courses. To matriculate into the Program, students needed to fulfill certain course requirements, prepare a self-statement, and on the decision of faculty, be interviewed.

**Wait List**

Some students observed that it was difficult to be on a waitlist rather than immediately admitted to the Social Work Program. The faculty explained that according to their accrediting body, they are to maintain a ratio of 1 faculty member to 25 social work majors. This ratio is important for providing students with academic and professional advising. The Social Work Program is the only degree-granting unit at NC State to maintain a waitlist. The waitlist makes it possible for students to identify their interest in joining the Social Work Program and to receive group advising from the Academic Coordinator.