Introduction

Under the auspices of the Department of Social Work Advisory Council, a Student Survey was conducted in February 2005 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.

A Subcommittee of the Advisory Council was formed to prepare and carry out the Student Survey. The members consisted of Lori Finch and April Atkinson (student representatives), Melanie Cogdell, Reta Johnson, Margaret Seagroves, and Susie Mallard Barnes (chair of the Survey Subcommittee).

On April 6, all of these members 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 two-week period in February 2005. 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 designate (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 93 students completed the survey. The number of social work majors at the time was 106. The committee was very pleased with this response rate, and thanks the faculty for their assistance in distributing the surveys.

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. The most students
answered each of the seven closed-ended questions. Their responses are summarized in the table below.

The highest rating went to the responsiveness of social work faculty to students. On average, students rated favorably faculty’s availability and communication with students, as well as the quality of social work courses. Somewhat lower scores were given to the variety of social work courses, and the quality of social work advising. The lowest score went to the scheduling of courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
<th>AVG SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Quality of Social Work Courses</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Quality of Social Work Advising</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Availability of Social Work Faculty to Students</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Responsiveness of Social Work Faculty to Students</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communication between Social Work Faculty and Students</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Variety of Social Work Classes Offered</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dates &amp; Times at which Social Work Classes Are Offered</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

- **The quality of the faculty and staff**

  Student responses:

  “Faculty is knowledgeable and excited about what they teach.”

  “Professors are willing to help students in a variety of ways.”

  “Professors are empathetic and caring.”

  “Staff/ faculty work very hard to help students.”
➢ A sense of community

Student responses:

“Close-knit so that everyone knows everyone so things get done.”

“Being a small group so you know the instructors well.”

➢ The quality of the courses

Student responses:

“Practical based learning and good curriculum.”

“Courses and faculty seem to be competent in understanding the needs of students while having a strong theoretical knowledge base.”

The faculty was very pleased with the overall positive feedback, and most appreciative of the strong praise for the faculty and staff.

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. The main themes and faculty responses follow:

➢ Advising is a concern for many students. The prevailing concern is with faculty sometimes being unable to provide immediate answers. The faculty recognized that this can be frustrating and confusing. While some of this is unavoidable, due to yearly changes at the college level, steps have already been taken within the department to address these concerns. Since the survey, Nehal Outlaw has taken the newly created Coordinator of Advising position. Clarification has been provided to faculty in regards to requesting information from the Dean’s Office. Anne White has developed a “Steps to Graduation” page on the website, as well as inserting it into a new Student Handbook. In response to these student concerns, faculty members are also planning to add a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section to the website, and to repeat the Advising Workshop for faculty in the fall. Consideration is also being given to developing an orientation for transfer students.

➢ There are not enough evening classes AND more social work electives are needed. All social work electives will be dual-level, meaning that they will be available to BSW and MSW students. In the
past, there have not been as many electives, because we are a small department, and a minimum enrollment is required for a class to make the cut. Because the department has made a commitment to offer most of the MSW courses in the late afternoons, evenings, and eventually Saturdays, these courses should also meet the needs of our non-traditional BSW students.

- **Too many three-hour block courses are offered.** Students vary on their preference for three-hour blocks, with non-traditional students preferring this scheduling and traditional students preferring smaller time periods. Faculty have scheduled three-hour blocks at the same time on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to help students with enrolling in classes.

- **Students want more information about the MSW program.** There are over 400 individuals registered on the MSW database, and they have been receiving weekly updates about the program. An information session was advertised on the website and attended by over 100 interested students. The application is now on the website, and the faculty members are currently working on the MSW Student Handbook. Although Advanced Standing will not be offered initially, there are plans to develop this option in the future.

**Thank You!**

The Advisory Council wishes to thank students for their participation and candid, constructive feedback. We also thank Anne White and Shameika Gardner for their help in compiling and typing the responses in order to preserve student confidentiality.