

May 4, 2012

## **Dean's Response to the Program Review of the Social Work Program**

I appreciate the thought and effort that went into the Program Review Team's report, and the Social Work faculty's self-study and response to the report.

The Review Team found that the Social Work Program has considerable strengths. The Team's report emphasized the Program's clear mission statement, solid curriculum, clear student learning outcomes, effective advising, skilled and dedicated faculty, and productive external partnerships. The reports did identify a number of challenges faced by the Program, and made consequent recommendations, to which the faculty were responsive in their answering document.

**Mission:** In response to a recommendation, the Social Work faculty will hold discussions this summer to modify the statement to indicate that objectives are monitored and measured – and, more broadly, to address a shift in emphasis on CSWE program evaluation standards. I appreciate their timely response to a changing accreditation environment.

**Learning outcomes and assessment:** The Team report noted that, though field supervisors report that student requirements are well-defined, the self-study did not make this clear. Also, reported measures do not give a clear picture of student learning. The faculty response indicates that work on improving assessment will begin in the summer, and that a faculty member has been assigned to lead the effort. I encourage the faculty to consult with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness on this issue.

**Advising:** The report found that advising was quite effective. It did suggest that workload stress on faculty members could be eased by the hire of a non-faculty, program-specific advisor. The faculty responded that they are concerned that assigning advising to one person could potentially distance students from faculty and thus be counterproductive. I will discuss with the chair whether there is a way that College resources could be applied to help in this situation.

**Faculty:** The Team's report concludes, and the faculty response agrees, that the Program's faculty are overworked, and recommends that the vacant position in the Program be filled. I concur that faculty workloads are considerable, and that it is desirable to fill the position, one of several in the College that are vacant due to budget cuts in recent years. The situation is aggravated by the departure over the years of two Gerontology faculty members from the department, who taught some Social Work courses in addition to Gerontology. The Social Work faculty has continued to offer the Gerontology major, another source of strain on resources. The impending elimination of the Gerontology major should ease the strain to some extent. But the

need remains, and as resources become available, the Social Work vacancy will have a high priority in the College for being filled.

**Community Partnerships:** The report has high praise for the quality of the Program's partnerships with community agencies. It does suggest more interagency collaboration, and program-sponsored continuing education opportunities for community partners. The faculty concur, and have begun work on these initiatives.

I believe that the Review Team report correctly identified and stressed the considerable strengths of the Social Work Program, while making a number of valuable recommendations. I support the positive responses of the Program's faculty to these suggestions.

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