

**Council on Social Work Education**  
**Commission on Accreditation**

**Site Visit Report**

Program Visited Name: Department of social work and Gerontology, Weber State University

Program Visited State: Utah

Program Level(s) Visited: Baccalaureate

Date of Site Visit: February 24, 2017

Site Visitor(s) Names: Randy H. Magen

1. Include a copy of the site visit schedule or a list of people who met with the site visitor(s) during the visit (e.g. groups and individuals from the program and institution).

A copy of the site visit schedule is appended to the end of this letter. In addition, copies of sign-in sheets from every meeting have been sent to CSWE via U.S. mail.

A 113-page document titled, *Addendum to Self-Study Report for Reaffirmation of Accreditation, Program Response to COA Questions, Spring 2017*, was provided to this site visitor in the first meeting with the program director. The director was instructed to send copies of this document to CSWE.

2. Write a brief summary of the conversation on general questions regarding: program mission and goals (AS 1.0), diversity (AS 3.1), and assessment (AS4.0).

Program mission and goals (AS 1.0)

The Program mission and goals were discussed with faculty, program director, students, agency field instructors and senior administrators at the University (Provost, and Dean of the College).

There was a uniform and consistent message that the Department of Social Work prepares social workers for practice that is relevant to the needs of the population, particularly the population in Northern Utah and Ogden in particular. Both the faculty and University administration pointed out that the student body are local, they primarily live in the three counties adjacent to the University. Graduates will likely continue to reside locally. As a result, the portion of the mission statement that reads, “special focus on the unique needs of individuals, families, and communities in northern Utah and the broader intermountain region” is relevant to the students served by the program and well as the students’ future clients

Some of the unique aspects of the program mission identified in meetings were: growing population, increased Latino/Latina population, rural population, and the Latter Day Saints

(Mormon) religion and culture. Students provided examples of how this unique focus plays out in the curriculum. Field instructors mentioned that students come to the agency knowing about the demographics of the region; they have learned in class about the local populations at risk and the resources available in the community

The connection between aspects of the mission and coursework may not be explicit throughout the curriculum, but they may not have to be. Numerous examples were offered of how assignments and speakers provide education on the unique geographic context of the program.

Students and faculty also provided examples of how the program mission's emphasis on service (i.e. "The program also emphasizes an underlying value of service") plays out in classes as well as connects with the University's Center for Community Engagement and Learning, the University's Carnegie classification as an engaged university and the University mission. As one faculty member put it, "service is medium to learn the other social work values."

### Diversity (AS 3.1)

The self-study provides a clear explanation of efforts that have been undertaken university-wide by the current University President as well as his predecessor to explicitly focus on diversity. The University has several initiatives to raise awareness and develop resources to provide a supportive and inclusive learning context.

Across meetings and groups there was a clear and consistent message about how the Weber State BSW program educates students about diversity. This education takes place in both the explicit curriculum and implicit curriculum. At university level there are regular events sponsored by the diversity office that provide contact, exposure, and information about diverse cultures and groups.

Students provided numerous examples of how their beliefs and biases are challenged and questioned (e.g. change maker project, privilege walk). One student remarked that this learning was "hard but eye opening." Another student, who identified herself as having been raised in a conservative LDS religious household, stated, "coming into the program is difficult," she added, "it was challenging to keep my beliefs" [the instructors helped me to find a balance]. We can keep our beliefs yet respect and understand others"

Field instructors reported that "dignity and respect are drilled into" students. Another stated that when hiring workers it is clear that "Weber State [social work] students are so much better prepared than the average student – even compared to interns/graduates from other [nearby social work programs]."

The Utah political, religious and cultural environment present some challenges to educating students about dealing with diversity. As one faculty member put it, "lots of people with the same lens come to college here." However the students, faculty, and field instructors recognized and directly addressed these challenges (predominantly white population with little or no exposure to difference). Another challenge is figuring out how to assist 1<sup>st</sup> generation Latino/Latina students whose first language is not English. These students are valued in the program but may have writing difficulties, while there is some assistance on campus (e.g. Trio)

but not necessarily for the writing. A faculty member stated that they want these students in social work, yet they do not want to set them up for failure as a result of the emphasis on writing in the curriculum and in particular for the senior capstone project.

The faculty and administrators I spoke with were proud to point out the multiple aspects of diversity that are reflected in the Social Work faculty.

#### Assessment (4.0)

Program assessment was discussed with the faculty and in a separate meeting with the program director and field education director. Students were very aware that the capstone project was part of the program's assessment. According to students, the Capstone "shows that we can apply what we learn in the class to an agency" and "We leave feeling competent."

One example of how the program assessment information lead to changes in the program related to the competency and practice behaviors associated with social policy. The data lead to a change in the textbook as well as specific training in this competency and practice behavior for field instructors.

3. List each accreditation standard and question raised by the COA in its Letter of Instruction with a thorough discussion of findings for each.

**Accreditation Standard B2.1.2** *The program discusses how its field education program provides generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate the core competencies.*

**Instructions:** The program discussed how it assesses competency attainment through its field evaluation. However, the program did not discuss what it does to ensure generalist practice opportunities are provided for students to demonstrate the competencies.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program how its field education program provides generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate the competencies.

#### Site Visit Findings:

The field approval process (agency application and field instructor application) is explicit in the number of opportunities agencies must offer to students (6 opportunities for case management, 4 family interventions, 2 educational groups, 1 community organization project and 1 administrative project). These projects encompass generalist social work practice opportunities across system levels. In addition, students' learning contracts and the addendum document (pages 5-7) show how and when a student engages and completes each of the required projects. Progress on each project is reviewed between the student and field instructor at 50, 75, 150 hours of field practicum; at 50 and 100 hours between the student and Field Education Director, and at 100, 200, and 400 hours between the student, field instructor and field education director.

The Field Education Director and students provided examples in different meetings of how agencies have worked with students to provide generalist practice opportunities. Field instructors

provided numerous examples of how generalist opportunities are provide in their agency, even when the agency is primarily micro focused.

**Accreditation Standard 2.1.5** *The program discusses how its field education program specifies policies, criteria, and procedures for selecting field settings; placing and monitoring students; maintaining field liaison contacts with field education settings; and evaluating student learning and field setting effectiveness congruent with the program's competencies.*

**Instructions:** The program discussed its policies, criteria, and procedures for selecting field settings; placing and monitoring students; and maintaining field liaison contacts with field education settings. However, the program did not specify how its field education program evaluates student learning and field setting effectiveness congruent with the program's competencies.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program how its field education program evaluates student learning and field setting effectiveness congruent with the program's competencies.

Site Visit Findings:

The field practicum evaluation form (10/2015 p. 45 of addendum to self study) and field evaluation of student for practicum SW 4860 and 4861 forms are explicitly linked to competencies and practice behaviors.

**Accreditation Standard 2.1.8** *The program discusses how its field education program develops policies regarding field placements in an organization in which the student is also employed. To ensure the role of student as learner, student assignments and field education are not the same as those of the student's employment.*

**Instructions:** The program stated that student assignments and field education supervision are not he same as those of the student's employment for field placements in organizations in which the student is also employed. However, the program did specify clear policies for ensuring the student assignments and field education supervision are not the same as those of the student's employment for placements in organizations in which the student is also employed.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program its policies for ensuring that student assignments and field education supervision are not the same as those of the student's employment for field placements in organizations in which the student is also employed.

Site Visit Findings:

The policy has been rewritten and is in the addendum to the self study (see page 21-22). According to the field education director practicum at place of employment is a rare occurrence. In addition, the field education director, students, and field instructors in separate meetings

described that when a student has a field practicum at their place of employment there are separate schedules, different work supervisor from field instructor, and different job descriptions that do not overlap job responsibilities.

**Accreditation Standard 3.2.9** *The program describes its policies and procedures specifying students' rights and responsibilities to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs.*

**Instructions:** The program provided some policies and procedures specifying students' rights and responsibilities. However, the program did not describe student participation in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program its policies and procedure specifying students' rights and responsibilities to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs.

#### Site Visit Findings:

The program director reported that an exit interview at the end of the program provides feedback and leads to change in policies affecting academic and student affairs. This exit interview is an online open-ended survey that goes to directly to the Department chair. In addition, students reported that the Social Work club, through the faculty advisor, provides feedback and has identified issues affecting academic and student affairs. Students and faculty reported that they learn and get/give input based on learning from being involved with other social work programs through NASW Utah. Finally, the addendum contains a revised narrative (pages 24-27) that makes explicit mechanisms students can engage in to participate in formulating and modifying policies affecting academic and student affairs.

- (SEE ADDENDUM and add information).

**Accreditation Standard B3.4.4 (b)** *The program provides documentation that the director has a full-time appointment to the social work program.*

**Instructions:** It is not clear from the narrative if the director has a full-time appointment to the social work program.

The site visitor is asked to obtain documentation from the program that the director has full-time appointment to the social work program.

#### Site Visit Findings:

Both the Dean of the College and the Department Chair of the program stated that the Director has a full-time appointment to the School of Social Work. The current Department Chair, Dr. Mark Bigler is a tenured faculty member in the school of social work. The site visitor requested a letter from the Dean confirming the information that was relayed orally during the site visit.

This letter will be provided to CSWE by the program. In addition, the addendum is explicit in stating (page 27) that Dr. Bigler has a full-time appointment to the social work program.

**Accreditation Standard B3.4.4(c)** *The program describes the procedures for determining the program director's assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. To carry out the administrative functions of the program, a minimum of 25% assigned time is required at the baccalaureate level. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.*

**Instructions:** The program described the institutions' procedures for determining the program director's assigned time and demonstrated a minimum of 25% assigned time at the baccalaureate level. However, the program did not describe the sufficiency of this assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program the sufficiency of the program director's assigned time to carry out educational and administrative leadership to the program.

#### Site Visit Findings:

Both the Dean and the Department Chair stated that the typical workload for a tenure-track faculty member is 12 credits per semester (equivalent to a 4/4 workload). The standard released time for a department chair at Weber State University, including the chair of the Department of Social Work and Gerontology, is 6 credits per semester (2 courses). Thus, the social work director has 50% of his time devoted to carry out the educational and administrative leadership of the program. Both the Dean and the Department Chair stated that the 50% release time was adequate and sufficient to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. In addition, the addendum is explicit in stating (page 28) that Dr. Bigler has 50% release time as well as an additional month appointment.

**Accreditation Standard 3.4.5(c)** *The program describes the procedures for determining the field director's assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education. To carry out the administrative functions of the field at least 25% assigned time is required for baccalaureate programs. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.*

**Instructions:** The program described the institution's procedures for determining the field director's assigned time and demonstrated a minimum of 25% assigned time at the baccalaureate level. However, the program did not describe the sufficiency of this assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program the sufficiency of the field education director's assigned time to carry out educational and administrative leadership for field education.

#### Site Visit Findings:

The field director is full-time and has (11 month) contract with Weber State University Department of Social Work and Gerontology. The field education director stated he has adequate and sufficient time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the field education program. The field director's workload is 10 credit hours each fall, spring and summer. This is two field courses (47860 & 4861) and senior seminar. The field seminars do not meet every week thus this is a reduced workload from a 15-week course. The addendum (pages 29-30) shows how this workload translates to provide the field director at least 25% time to carry out the administrative functions of field education.

**Accreditation Standard 4.0.3** *The program describes the procedures it employs to evaluate the outcomes and their implications for program renewal. It discusses specific changes it has made in the program based on specific assessment outcomes.*

**Instructions:** The program discussed specific changes it has made in the program based on specific assessment outcomes. However, it did not describe the procedures employed to evaluate the outcomes and their implications for program renewal.

The site visitor is asked to review with the program its procedures employed to evaluate the outcomes and their implications for program renewal.

#### Site Visit Findings:

Field instructors reported on being included in dissemination of program assessment information. Each area assessed is color coded as green (no issues), yellow (some concern), or red (concern). In addition, field instructors were able to provide their own interpretations of the assessment data to the program. Further dissemination of program assessment data is made to the department faculty; one faculty meeting is devoted to discussion of the program assessment and follow-up tasks based on the results are given to individual faculty members. Finally, program assessment information is also shared with a University office devoted to assessment; this office is able to assist the program in interpretation, dissemination, and program renewal.

**Accreditation Standard 4.0.4** *The program uses Form AS 4(B) and/or Form AS 4(M) to reports its most recent assessment outcomes to constituents and the public on its website and routinely up-dates (minimally every 2 years) these postings.*

**Instructions:** The program did not provide a copy of Form AS 4(B) or a link to the form on its website to report its most recent assessment outcomes.

The site visitor is asked to request from the program a copy of Form AS 4(B) and verify that the form is available on its website.

#### Site Visit Findings:

- Form AS4 (B) is in the addendum to self-study (p. 103) and on the school's website.

Site Visit Planning

Dr. Randy Magen

Weber State University

February 24, 2017

<b>TIME</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
February 23, 2017			
By 6 pm		Arrival	
Early evening		Meeting with Chair Bigler	Dinner; Meeting with Chair Bigler to discuss last minute changes and arrangements.
February 24, 2017			
8:00 – 8:30	30 minutes	President Wright’s designee(s): Provost Madonne Miner and Dean Frank Harrold	Explanation of accreditation process and procedures. Learn about central administration’s view of the Department
8:40 – 9:20	40 minutes	Chair Bigler and Field Director	AS B2.1.2 (generalist practice opportunities), B2.1.5 (field policies), B2.1.8 (placement where employed); AS 3.4.4 b & c (Director’s appointment and time); 3.4.5(c) (Field Director’s time)
9:30-10:20	50 minutes	BSW Students	Discussion of AS 1 (Mission, goals, objectives) 3.1(Nondiscrimination and human diversity); AS 3.2.9 (students’ rights)
10:30-11:20	50 minutes	Program/Field Advisory Board and Field Instructors	AS 1 (Mission, goals, objectives), AS B2.1.2 (generalist practice opportunities), B2.1.5 (field policies), B2.1.8 (placement where employed); AS 3.1 (Nondiscrimination and human diversity); AS 4 (program assessment)
11:30 – 1:30	2 hours (working lunch)	Meeting with social work faculty and Chair Bigler	Introductions; give an overview of the process and procedures of the site visit.



			Discussion of AS 1 (Mission, goals, objectives); 3.1(Nondiscrimination and human diversity); AS 3.2.9 (students' rights); AS 4 (program assessment), 4.0.3 (changes based on evaluation), 4.0.4 (posting of assessment outcomes)
1:30-2:00	30 minutes	Break	Break or buffer time in case meetings run long
2:00-3:00	1 hour	Break	Preparation of initial version of final report
3:00-4:00	1 hour	Faculty and Chair Bigler	Exit interview; presentation of what will be in the final report to the Commission.  Opportunity to comment and correct site team report
4:15-4:45	30 minutes	President Wright's designee(s): Provost Madonne Miner and Dean Frank Harrold	Exit interview; presentation of what will be in the final report to the Commission