

**Student Learning Goals, Objectives, and  
Outcomes Assessment Report: FY 2014**



**School of Social Work  
University of Pittsburgh  
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## **I. Overview**

The mission of the School of Social Work (SSW) is to advance knowledge for the fulfillment of human potential through the prevention and amelioration of social problems. The School is committed to promoting the principles of social and economic justice. Recognizing the complexities of contemporary society, the School advocates for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities through its educational, research, and public service activities. The School offers the following degree programs: (a) Bachelor of Arts in Social Work (BASW); (b) Master of Social Work (MSW); and (c) Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Work. In addition to the traditional degree programs, the SSW also offers joint degree programs with the Graduate Schools of Public and International Affairs, Public Health, School of Law, and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Beyond the Oakland campus, the SSW has MSW programs at the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown (UPJ) and the University of Pittsburgh-Bradford (UPB).

The SSW currently ranks: (a) eleventh among over 200 graduate schools of social work in the nation; (b) first among Pennsylvania institutions (ahead of the University of Pennsylvania); and (c) sixth among public institutions in the nation (US News and World Report, 2012).

### **A. CSWE accreditation through reaffirmation**

Starting in 2009, the SSW implemented modified BASW and MSW curricula in reference to the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) issued by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (2008). The SSW has reviewed, modified, and implemented all BASW and MSW curricula (over 20 BASW and 40 MSW courses, plus field practicum of both degree programs) by: (a) specifying practice behaviors connected to specific courses and their objectives; (b) identifying how it is implemented (via assignments and projects); and (c) clarifying how students' demonstrations of competencies are measured. These progressions were accomplished through an intensive collaboration among our program directors, full-time and part-time adjunct faculty members, field practicum instructors, and student representatives. An estimated 2,100 aggregate hours were expended on the curricula modification, implementation assistance, assessment, and evaluation.

Finally, in 2012, the SSW's BASW and MSW accreditation reports were well received and fully approved without revision for the next eight years by CSWE. They were especially impressed with the School's explicit and implicit quality of curriculum, Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP), quality of faculty scholarship, overall academic support of students, collaboration work with local, state, and federal agencies, and the adoption of advanced and comprehensive learning outcome assessment strategies.

### **B. Description of the process through which assessment plans are developed and reviewed**

The SSW's assessment plan is developed by a school-wide working group called the Learning Outcome Assessment Committee (LOAC), which consists of all degree program directors and two associate deans (for academic affairs and research). Additionally, three major

school-wide committees (i.e., Quality Assurance, Strategic Plan, and Budget) also work collaboratively to help generate optimal educational outcomes through evidence-based (1) deficit management, (2) asset management, and (3) momentum maintenance processes. Based on the assessment findings, the SSW administers reinforcements based on targeted or distributive processes to continually optimize the outcome performance.

The SSW learning outcome plan is developed by the LOAC, reviewed by the Dean's Office and then shared with all full-time faculty members for their suggestions for further refinement and modifications. The SSW's learning outcome plan document is also shared with student representatives (for all three degree programs), adjunct faculty members, the SSW's executive advisory board, and the board of visitors for their review and comments.

The SSW's learning outcome plan is analyzed during the annual faculty and staff retreat meeting, which is designed to generate a variety of strategic ideas for the continual improvement of learning outcomes, such as making further modifications to curriculum and changes in academic policies, procedures, and resource allocation. The SSW retreat meeting is held during the early part of the Fall semester as a think-tank session in search of new ideas and purging ineffective old strategies. Thus, the SSW learning outcome plan remains a forever-working document, which is continually modified and refined based on evidence-based outcome findings and their implications. Practicing an inclusive collaborative process among major stakeholders of the SSW further strengthens this process.

### **C. Global competence**

The SSW is well aware of the needs associated with BASW and MSW students' understanding of other countries and cultures. In addition to long standing learning goals and objectives as reported in previous years, the SSW would like to invest in internationalization to significantly improve the global competence of our students. The anticipated impact of this effort aligns directly with the University's goals. Through a targeted effort to increase global competence, SSW students will be able to:

- a. respect and appreciate the diversity of societies and cultural differences;
- b. make informed and fact-based social-economic comparisons across cultures and regions; and
- c. understand how to adapt social work to the norms of differing cultures by comprehending the international dimensions of the social work profession.

The SSW has a designated faculty member in charge of establishing global competence as a key learning component of our degree programs. However, additional resources are needed for constructive improvement and strengthening the curriculum contents. Future steps also include determining the methods and standards in which to evaluate targeted learning outcomes.

## II. SSW Quality Assurance System

During the last six years, we have continually refined and expanded the school-wide quality assurance system with three unique processes: (a) analyses of multiple sample data sets; (b) institution of a benefit equity assessment; and (c) incorporation of a triangulation method.

### A. Analyses of multiple sample data sets

The SSW has developed the overall evaluation design consisting of seven major categories of assessment areas covering various explicit (#1 through #5) and implicit (#6 through #8) components of each of the degree programs as follows:

1. **An adequacy of explicit curriculum assessment** has been conducted by BASW and MSW directors and faculty members, as well as the SSW CSWE committee, which examined the extent to which required courses, as a group, are designed to meet the explicit curriculum goals through specific competencies, practice behaviors, implementation techniques, and measurements of student achievement (e.g., capstone, class assignments and projects involving selected organizations, communities, and interventions).
2. **Assessments based on our alumni** include surveys of recent graduates of all degree programs. The alumni survey is designed to solicit alumni evaluations of the SSW in reference to the degree program goals, EPAS competencies (for BASW and MSW graduates), and information related to their current job positions, subscription to additional educational training, and social work licensure achievement among MSW graduates. The alumni survey assessment is conducted every two years.
3. **The employer survey** is a survey that consists of employers' evaluative assessments of work performance adequacy of recently hired SSW BASW and MSW graduates in reference to core EPAS competencies (as specified by CSWE). The employer survey assessments are conducted every two years (the next report is to be completed by February 2013).
4. **Field instruction based assessment** offers a unique opportunity of having social work professionals assess our students. Currently, the SSW collaborates with approximately 450 qualified field instructors who supervise our BASW and MSW students for 600 and 1080 hours, respectively. Thus, they are able to evaluate our students' performance in reference to the core competencies of the social work profession, as well as representative practice behaviors of the competencies. The SSW's field-based assessment consists of four components: (1) field instructors' evaluation of the field office and adequacy of practicum curriculum; (2) field instructors' evaluation of practicum students based on selected practice behaviors; and (3) student evaluation of field experiences and learning adequacy. This set of assessments is conducted annually.
5. **The educational culture, environment, and student satisfaction assessment** includes quality assurance and advisement adequacy surveys of all degree program students. The

quality assurance survey includes student ratings of the quality of classroom learning, field placement experiences, adequacy of the library, use of technology in classrooms, learning environments, advisor accessibility, value of advising, and assistance. This set of assessments is conducted annually.

6. **Scholastic performance among our faculty members** is being compared against faculty members of the nationally ranked top ten schools of social work, as part of the SSW strategic plan and implicit quality assurance component of social work education. Also, refereed journal articles and national conference presentations by our faculty members are tracked and evaluated against the rates of faculty members from the following top ten social work schools in the country: University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Chicago, Columbia University, University of Washington, University of California Berkeley, University of Texas at Austin, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Boston College, and Case Western Reserve University. This set of assessments is conducted every two years (to review the most recent reports on scholastic performance among SSW faculty members, see Appendix B).
7. **The student exit survey** is designed to assess various practice behavior factors related to the explicit components of our degree programs. As stipulated by the CSWE, the social work competencies are to be represented by selected and measurable practice behaviors that correspond to the core competencies. Furthermore, it is stipulated that each degree program generate two or more separate assessments of the practice behaviors in order to verify the utility of the major findings. Thus, the BASW and MSW programs have selected to utilize the exit survey as second source of practice behavior assessment. The assessment findings information is shared with student representatives for their comments, questions, and suggestions toward continual optimization (for additional information regarding BASW and MSW student exit survey findings, see Appendix A).

## **B. Benefit equity assessment**

As noted in previous reports, the SSW Quality Assurance System is uniquely designed to reveal the extent of benefit equity distribution patterns among subgroups of the student population. This assessment is based on analyses of whether the desirable explicit and implicit impacts are undesirably correlating with students' major demographic attributes (e.g., gender, race, full-time/part-time status, concentration/major, and main/regional campus students). The criterion of benefit equity is closely related to ethical principles of educational institutions—fidelity to individual rights, social justice, and beneficence. A given program may be superior in its overall effectiveness; however, such a program may still fall short of ethical accountability and excellence if it produces an undesirable inequity of benefits among subgroups of students.

## **C. Triangulation**

One of the ultimate goals of the quality assurance system is to design an evaluation procedure to minimize potential biases—a system that incorporates strong internal, external, convergent, and theoretical validity, as well as multiple perspectives and procedures. Thus, the SSW Learning Outcome Assessment Committee has advised the incorporation of a triangulation

method. Triangulation is an evaluative analysis based on the combination of two or more unique data sources, methodological approaches, and theoretical paradigms within the research process. Meanwhile, the SSW also considered the practicality and cost-efficiency of the overall evaluation process. Thus, the SSW quality assurance system is based on a relatively low cost assessment system with multiple sets of surveys targeting uniquely different sample groups with varying perspectives (e.g., current students, field practicum instructors, alumni, and employers of graduates).

### **III. Overview of Learning Objectives and Use of Assessment Outcomes**

#### **A. BASW Program**

The goals of the BASW Program are to prepare graduates to engage in evidenced-based social work practice (with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations within a multicultural society) utilizing available technologies, and to continue formal education in either graduate social work programs or other graduate disciplines. The BASW outcome assessment status (in-process versus completed) is as follows:

BASW graduates will be:

- a. ready for employment in entry-level social work practice (completed).
- b. able to evaluate social work practice intervention (completed).
- c. ready for advanced graduate or professional education (completed).
- d. able to demonstrate explicit curriculum goal achievement (completed).

#### **1. Overall assessment findings**

Overall assessment findings indicate that the BASW is meeting or exceeding the measurable criteria for achievement in all of the above objectives (for more detailed learning outcome assessment findings, see Appendix A). In addition, there were no significant issues related to benefit equity across student subgroups (e.g., age group, gender, race, and junior versus senior grade level).

#### **2. BASW program update on overall curricular changes that have resulted based on the assessment findings**

The BASW program committee, consisting of full-time and adjunct faculty members, field staff, and a BASW student representative met on a monthly basis to discuss goals and objectives for the 2012-2013 academic year. In order to maintain the desirable outcome momentum, the following changes were made to the BASW program based on outcome findings discussions:

- Increased the minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) for admission to the BASW program from 2.0 to 2.5. This will include a provisional admission policy for students with a GPA below 2.5.

- The full implementation of the Behavioral Health Case Management Certificate, in partnership with the Psychology Department, has added a third targeted training program for BASW students. In addition to the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) and Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education (HPPAE), students are provided with specific pathways to employment in entry-level social work practice that respond to employer demands.
- The Browne Leadership Fellows Program has implemented its inaugural class with students beginning the fellowship in Spring 2013. The students in the Browne Fellowship are non-social work students, seeking to further integrate the principles that define the profession of social work into their own (i.e. economics, engineering, English literature, etc.). The Browne Leadership Fellows Program is an interdisciplinary fellowship aimed at preparing students to be engaged civic leaders working for economic and social justice. Through service, research, and advocacy, Browne Leadership Fellows will have an opportunity to explore the root causes of social issues, and engage in identifying effective mechanisms to create lasting change. These students represent the next generation of public problem solvers and civic leaders.
- The “Pathway to Pitt” program has been initiated, providing training stipends to students from Butler County Community College who enroll in Pitt’s BASW program. This year, we provided seven students with \$1,000 each to assist them in defraying the cost of commuting to the Pitt campus.

## **B. MSW Program**

The goal of the MSW Program is to provide an outstanding graduate degree program that prepares MSW graduates with the specialized knowledge and skills needed to engage in empirically-supported and culturally-competent advanced social work practice that reflects the social work profession’s values, traditions, and philosophy. The MSW program includes dual concentrations: (1) direct practice; and (2) community organization and social administration (COSA). The MSW learning outcome objectives to be evaluated are as follows:

- a. To be able to utilize social work practice theories and methods with individuals, families, and small groups—for direct practice majors (completed).
- b. To be able to utilize social work practice theories and methods with community organization and social administration—for COSA majors (completed).
- c. To be able to utilize values and ethics of social work practice with diverse and vulnerable populations (completed).
- d. To be able to conduct evidence-based evaluation of social work practice (completed).
- e. To be able to demonstrate explicit competency- based goal achievement (completed).

## **1. Overall assessment findings**

Overall assessment findings indicate that the MSW is meeting or exceeding the measurable criteria for achievement of all of the above objectives (for more detailed learning outcome assessment findings, see Appendix A). During previous years, several ratings by COSA students showed unsatisfactory ratings as a group. Thus, based on the COSA committee assessment with student representatives, the COSA curriculum was completely revised in accordance with CSWE mandates. Subsequent comparative assessments show that COSA students are exhibiting slightly higher satisfaction ratings and competency achievements. Ratings for the direct practice students met or exceeded the measurable criteria.

As noted in the previous year's report, there were several significant relationships between the quality assurance ratings of the above objectives and student attributes (e.g., gender, race, main versus regional campus, and full- and part-time status). For example, part-time and regional campus students issued slightly higher positive ratings.

## **2. MSW program update on overall curricular changes that have resulted based on the assessment findings**

We are reassured that overall the MSW program learning outcomes are very strong. As a consequence, the CSWE reaccreditation site visit went very well and the preliminary report submitted by the site visitors spoke highly of the overall strength of the SSW learning environment. However, we continue to examine our curriculum in order to be responsive to the university mission and the changing climate of the professional practice environment.

In order to maintain overall positive MSW learning outcomes, the following new program changes and initiatives have been implemented:

- Enhanced formatting of all MSW syllabi based on new CSWE educational standards and MSW practice behavior goals continues with elective courses.
- 
- Foundation faculty members are reviewing new competency-based textbooks that include social justice and global social work content. Eventually, the MSW program will infuse global content into the majority of social work courses; this process will begin with the foundation curriculum (still in process).
- 
- Foundation faculty has compiled a list of “Helpful Hints for the Classroom” that focuses on successful strategies to integrate international students.
- 
- Foundation field staff members are working on identifying agencies and field instructors that are culturally competent to work with incoming international students. The Field Office will develop additional training for all agencies on cultural competency, with an additional required component for foundation agencies that have been identified for international students.

- A Student Support Services Coordinator position has been added for a second year MSW student to facilitate the smooth transition of out-of-region, -state and -country students that relocate to attend the MSW program. This position is to begin on June 1, 2013.
- An online Mandated Reporter training is being piloting for students entering the Foundation Field this summer. The School intends to require this training to be completed before all incoming MSW students enter their first field placement beginning Fall 2013.
- The “Social Policy in Cuba” course and trip (over Spring Break 2013) now runs annually and took nine MSW students to Cuba.
- Curriculum committees are to begin meeting within and across content areas to further ensure consistent preparation for advanced competency.
- The MSW program is preparing to develop more general elective courses that will enhance “crossover” skills for both COSA and DP students, for example: “Advocacy and Lobbying,” offered Spring 2013 as a “Special Topic.”

The MSW Direct Practice (DP) curriculum continues to meet and exceed the program-wide targets for learning outcomes and satisfaction. This has been a strong positive validation of the MSW program's collective efforts to continually seek feedback and modify our direct practice curriculum accordingly. The DP Advisory Board, composed of a diverse group of local community practitioners, meets twice a year to provide input to faculty regarding practice trends and recommendations for the curriculum to best prepare students for professional practice. The reaccreditation process provided a more extensive study of our overall curriculum, and, as a result, the MSW program is now looking at developing a few new elective courses to address practice skills that are not currently covered in our curriculum. Courses currently under development and/or consideration include the following:

- An advanced elective on social work and spirituality.
- An advanced elective on trauma-informed care.
- Making the existing Social Work Practice with Groups course mandatory for DP students.
- The Direct Practice Committee has spent the year reviewing family courses for redundancy and content updates.
- The healthcare specialization curriculum will implement new content in the policy course and an advanced elective that was developed by the CSWE Task Force on Integrated Healthcare, Fall 2013.

The SSW COSA Committee reviewed and discussed the initial Student/Program Assessment process and findings. Several ratings – especially student self-ratings – were below

the desired 85% goal we have set. While this is early data and preliminary results are based on just our December graduating students, areas such as “larger community context,” “policy practice,” and “human behavior” merited further discussion. We have begun the first stage of creating a feedback loop on this assessment data to our COSA curriculum. Although this is preliminary, the MSW committee has agreed on several actions from these meetings beyond the initial review and discussion on this assessment data:

- The MSW program will continue to monitor this assessment and its multiple data sets over the next three iterations to see if any of the issues of concern (competency areas with ratings below 85%, the gap between student self-ratings (lower) and field instructor ratings (higher) of student competency) improve based on current efforts.
- The MSW program will map assessment ratings on particular competencies in relation to courses where faculty can look to enhance knowledge and skills on the key practice behaviors informing those competencies and fine-tune the curriculum to maximize student outcomes.
- The MSW program agreed to explore implicit curriculum that can support and enhance our explicit curriculum through such activities as speakers, student dialogues and initiatives (e.g., Civil Action Movement), service projects, and alumni mentoring, among others.
- The MSW program will assess additional curriculum development, in dialogue with our field faculty and alums, that can strengthen student competencies in key knowledge and skills for critical practice behaviors in the COSA practice arena. We have begun to do this with discussions around skill modules such as: 1) advocacy and lobbying skills (including voter registration) to better impact policy and funding, as we discussed relative to the demise of Hull House; 2) communication, marketing, and public relations; 3) technology and social media; and 4) board and governance.

The COSA committee will be focused on the development of curriculum for potential instruction in the above skill areas – communications, marketing, and public relations already exists – particularly in a new modular format of one-credit skills courses. COSA will present to relevant committees and faculty ~~committee~~ a pilot special topics course using three five-week course modules from the above areas. Special attention will be given to advocacy and lobbying skill development, not only in courses, but also in encouraging and supporting student implicit learning. The emerging Civil Action Movement student group presents a rich opportunity for implicit learning as students seek to tackle issues.

As previously practiced, COSA will continue to work with its community and nonprofit executive leaders on both the COSA committee and through such memberships as the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnerships and the Mon Valley Providers Council that maintain active advocacy and lobby initiatives for the nonprofit sector and for community human services. In this way COSA can continue to support both explicit and implicit learning on time issues and essential skills.

### **C. Doctoral Program**

Graduates of doctoral degree programs in social work should have an in-depth knowledge of social work as a profession and a discipline. New knowledge developed and disseminated by Ph.D. stewards of the discipline should be contextualized within the mission, philosophical values, skills, and the most important findings that constitute the profession of social work. Students should bring solid foundational knowledge to deepen, expand, and build—relative to theory, research, and knowledge development—during the Ph.D. matriculation process (GADE, 2012).

The goal of our doctoral program includes providing students with advanced research skills in design, methods, and policy analysis training based on a core foundation of social science theory, social welfare history, and social policy. These competencies should enable students to conduct scholarly research in a variety of social problem areas, which build and/or further develop the social work knowledge base. Through their publications in peer refereed journals, national conference presentations, and book chapters, students are expected to disseminate new knowledge to researchers, practitioners, educators, and policymakers. The doctoral program's overall learning outcome objectives to be evaluated are as follows:

- a. To be able to design data collection and analytic methods to conduct quantitative research investigations (completed).
- b. To be able to assess the design, data collection, and analytic methods of qualitative research (completed).
- c. To learn at least one substantive area in the field of social work for scholarly research, such as poverty, gerontology, juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, drug or alcohol abuse, etc. (completed).
- d. To be able to develop and complete a scholarly dissertation that results in refereed journal or book chapter publications (ongoing).
- e. To prepare, submit, and have a minimum of two publications prior to graduating from the doctoral program. These publications can be solo-authored and/or have collaborative authorship (ongoing).
- f. To submit a least one grant for external funding during the pre-dissertation and/or the dissertation stage of their program (ongoing).
- g. At least 90% of those who initially enroll graduate with a Ph.D. within four to six years as an established timeframe (ongoing).
- h. The average (mean) time to earn a degree when admitted with an MSW is four to five years for full time students; for students with a master's degree in a related area that are enrolled in our MSW/Ph.D. program, the time to earn a degree is five to six years (ongoing).
- i. Dissertations are successfully completed within two to three years of the comprehensive exam defense (ongoing).

Overall assessment findings indicate that the doctoral program is progressing toward exceeding the measurable criteria for achievement of the above objectives. The doctoral curriculum is clearly articulated and the path toward program completion is well laid-out to

students. Some elements of the curriculum may merit further consideration (see below), but it is nonetheless clear what program milestones look like and how these should be achieved.

One of the greatest strengths of the doctoral program is the diversity of its student body. We have been enormously successful engaging a highly diverse collection of doctoral students in the program. In addition, students' perceptions of the doctoral program's goals and strengths align with those of faculty; they point to the strong emphasis on research, the generous financial package, accessible faculty, a useful work space, pleasant peers, and thoughtful academic mentoring and guidance from the program director.

The program's learning outcome objectives in Research, Scholarship, and Teaching to be evaluated are as follows:

### RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

#### **Graduates should be able to:**

- Understand what makes a significant, meaningful, and new contribution to social work research.
- Critically evaluate and review published work in a selected area of expertise.
- Conduct theory-driven research.
- Understand both the technical aspects and conceptual underpinnings of a broad range of methodological and statistical techniques.
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge in the selection and application of the most feasible and appropriate methodological and data analysis approach(es) for selected research question(s).
- Proactively and consistently implement plans for the responsible and ethical conduction of research.
- Understand and implement procedures for data collection.
- Develop research and funding proposals, both independently and in collaboration with others.
- Participate in an interdisciplinary research team.

### TEACHING

#### **Graduates should be able to:**

- Design and teach a course in a social work curriculum at the BASW or MSW levels.
- Create a classroom learning environment and climate that is inclusive of both a diverse student population, as well as diverse learning styles.
- Address ethical dilemmas that arise in teaching.
- Understand the location of social work education within the larger context of higher education.
- Engage students using a variety of instructional strategies, i.e. state-of-the-art instructional technology and strategies.
- Understand CSWE accreditation issues and processes.
- Develop a written teaching philosophy.

## 1. Doctoral program evaluation

The SSW doctoral program formed a subcommittee for evaluation to take a leadership in the implementation of the comprehensive evaluation plan. The subcommittee adopted a structure for the evaluation, which is shown in the matrix. Such a comprehensive in-house assessment of the doctoral program is scheduled to occur every seven to ten years. The committee jointly developed strategies for completing each aspect of the report during the year 2010. In addition, an external review of the doctoral program was conducted.

**Doctoral Program Evaluation Matrix**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Assessment Questions</b>	<b>Data Source and Evaluation Strategy</b>
A. Program Goals	<p>Educational excellence</p> <p>Affirmative action goals, and how these are related to the School and the University Long Range Plan</p> <p>How goals have been achieved, and how they have evolved, responding to changing directions of the discipline, needs of society, and available resources and workload</p>	<p>School's policy analysis and supporting evidence</p> <p>School's policy analysis and supporting evidence</p> <p>School's policy analysis and supporting evidence</p>
B. Faculty Profile	<p>Number of faculty tenured, in the tenure stream, and outside of the tenure stream, including part-time and adjunct faculty</p> <p>Educational profile, research productivity, and other evidence of creativity</p> <p>Quality of teaching of the faculty</p> <p>Impact of the faculty on their discipline and the profession</p>	<p>School's tenure record and faculty profile</p> <p>Publication record</p> <p>Teaching evaluations</p> <p>Publications and national conference presentations, awards, prizes, commissions, and fellowships</p>
C. Students	<p>Demographic and academic characteristics of the student population</p> <p>Progress towards meeting affirmative action goals</p> <p>Financial assistance available to graduate students</p> <p>Attrition rate, amount of time to complete degree, graduation rate</p> <p>Student morale</p> <p>Success in placement of graduates and career achievements</p>	<p>Student profile analysis</p> <p>Analysis of policy on admission of students and description of resources and strategies used for recruitment</p> <p>Financial record assessment</p> <p>Student database assessment</p> <p>Quality assurance survey; extent of student participation in development and evaluation</p> <p>Alumni survey</p>

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Assessment Questions</b>	<b>Data Source and Evaluation Strategy</b>
D. Physical Facilities and Other Resources	Adequacy of classrooms and other instructional rooms	Student QA survey and exit IW; description of facilities
	Computer facilities and support	Student QA survey and exit IW; description of facilities
	Library and information retrieval resources	Student QA survey and exit IW; description of facilities
E. Program Budget	Financial support from externally funded grants, endowments, and University funds	School's financial record analysis
	Adequacy of support	Student QA survey
F. Curricula and Teaching Effectiveness	Adequacy of curricula and course objectives	Curricula matrix assessment
	Teaching quality and effectiveness	Assessment of teaching by students and peers
	Methods of evaluating student performance	Description of curriculum
	Numbers, types, and sizes of classes taught by tenure-stream, tenured, and other faculty, and by TAs/TFs	<i>Need to plan</i>
	Quality of doctoral dissertations	Joint faculty-student publications and presentations
G. Interrelatedness of the Program with Other Programs	Adequacy of curricula and course objectives	Curricula matrix assessment
	Student satisfaction	Quality assurance survey
H. Comparison to Similar Programs at Other Leading Universities	Faculty scholarship comparison	Benchmark assessment from strategic planning
	Student profile comparison	Benchmark assessment from strategic planning
	Ratings by accrediting agencies, professional organizations, or others	Benchmark assessment from strategic planning
	Faculty size and number of students	Benchmark assessment from strategic planning
I. Strategies for Strengthening the Program	Self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the program	School's strategic planning data
	Description of ways to strengthen the program	School's excellence committee assessments

## **2. Doctoral program update on overall challenges resulted from a formal external program assessment**

In Fall 2013, a formal external review was conducted on the doctoral program. This review, invited by Dean Davis and Dr. Copeland, was undertaken to examine the programmatic strengths and areas for continued growth in doctoral studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Valire Copeland has served as Ph.D. Program Director for six years and will be leaving her position at the end of this academic year. Her departure offers an opportunity for strategic visioning about the future of the program. Professors Lorraine Gutierrez, professor at the University of Michigan School of Social Work, and Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, professor at the University of California-Berkley School of Social Work, each spent a day at the School of Social Work engaged in meetings with a wide range of stakeholders, including: (1) the Dean; (2) the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies; (3) the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; (4) doctoral students; (5) the doctoral committee; (6) other doctoral faculty; (7) the Director of Finance and

Business; (8) the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs; (9) the Associate Dean for Research; and (10) the Ph.D. Program Director. Sharing their findings, Gutierrez and Berrick discovered significant overlap in their perspectives on program strengths and opportunities (for additional information, see Appendix D).

### **Program Challenges**

- The four-year expectation for program completion was identified as leading most students to do research that involves secondary analysis, rather than original research on their own or as part of a faculty research team. This type of research may prevent some students from learning a broader range of research skills.

The doctoral program is clearly in a much better position than it was a decade ago and there are many signals that suggest the program is likely to continue to improve in the near future, assuming that the new program director can take leadership in attending to some program adjustments. What follows are our recommendations for program improvements based upon data collected during the site visits and the reviewer's understanding of a doctoral education in a national context:

### **Recruitment**

- The doctoral program at Pitt has a very small number of doctoral applicants (less than forty), which means that the admissions committee may not be as selective as they might like to be in identifying the strongest students for the program. In addition to their limited applicant numbers, Pitt must compete against other doctoral programs in the region that may offer a curriculum or community that draws students elsewhere.
- Many doctoral programs in the country are developing doctoral recruitment days (or weekends) where applicants who have been accepted into the program are invited to the university for a day. These expense-paid trips allow students to meet other doctoral peers, to get to know their doctoral mentor, and to enjoy the surrounding community. Given that Pittsburgh is both an affordable and enjoyable city, the benefits of the city and the University might become clearer to applicants considering other alternatives. There is some evidence from other programs that this investment in engaging admitted students can increase the likelihood that they will accept the admissions offer.
- The larger the ratio between the number of students admitted to the program and the total number of applicants, the greater the chances that any program will compromise quality. Because the number of applicants is so very small, we recommend reconsidering the number of annual admitted students from six to five. This would not only address issues of quality but it would also allow the program to expand its financial aid package to 4.5 or five years, rather than four.

### **Student Funding**

- Our funding package appears to be relatively generous. As such, our recruitment materials should highlight the generous funding packages. If summer funding is likely to be available to most students, this too should be highlighted in recruitment materials.
- Because some are graduating with substantial debt, it may be prudent to review students' needs for financial aid in comparison to the financial aid package provided. As the cost of living continues to rise, the value of the current financial aid package against current costs should be reconsidered on a regular basis to determine whether the package is keeping pace with costs.
- The current funding package requires students to work as a research or teaching assistant for all four years. The program should consider changing the first and final semesters or years to "fellowship" terms when students are not required to work and can focus on their studies and adjustment to the program or the job search. This may ease some pressure that students experience when arriving in the program and give them more time to begin engaging in research. A final fellowship year or semester can allow students to give more time to dissertation writing, publications, and seeking academic positions.

During this Fall term, our doctoral committee will continue focusing on how to maintain the positive momentum on the rates of students' refereed journal publications and national conference presentations, as well as consider challenges identified in the formal review.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the doctoral program committee agreed to generate specific strategies for infusing social, economic, and political justice into the doctoral program curriculum. Our goal is to prepare doctoral students to be able to promote social, economic, and political justice in a multicultural and global society. This infusion process is planned to take place at all levels of the core curriculum, i.e. social welfare history, social policy, social science theory, and social research.

#### **Doctoral Curriculum**

- The doctoral curriculum may be overly proscriptive and over-full. The number of required courses and activities for students is extremely high, yet it is not entirely clear how all of these course requirements necessarily relate to students' future roles as faculty. Therefore, a review of all required courses will be undertaken to determine whether some can be offered as electives rather than required courses. As such, students would have more opportunities to pursue their individual intellectual paths within the context of the program.

#### **IV. Learning Outcome Matrix**

Based on the learning objectives of the SSW degree programs, the matrix tables on the following pages further delineate the learning outcomes, standards of comparison, interpretation of results, and action plan.

# ASSESSMENT MATRIX



<b>PROGRAM OR SCHOOL</b>	<b>BASW Program</b>		
<b>Assessment Coordinator for Program or School</b>	<b>Name:</b> Keith Caldwell	<b>E-mail:</b> kjc45@pitt.edu	<b>Phone:</b> 8-3921
<b>Program or School Mission Statement</b>	The mission of the School of Social Work is to advance knowledge and to apply that knowledge for the fulfillment of human potential through the prevention and amelioration of social problems. The School is committed to promoting the principals of social and economic justice. Recognizing the complexities of contemporary society, the School advocates for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities through its educational, research, and public service activities.		
<b>Program or School Goals</b>	The BASW Program: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepares graduates to engage in evidenced-based social work practice (with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations within a multicultural society) utilizing available technologies.</li> <li>2. Prepares students for continuing formal education in either graduate social work education or other graduate disciplines.</li> </ol>		

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Methods</b>	<b>Standards of Comparison</b>	<b>Interpretation of Results</b>	<b>Use of Results/Action Plan</b>
a. Students are prepared for employment in entry-level social work practice.	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct an annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW employer survey of hired staff members every two years.</p> <p>3. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW Alumni Survey every two years.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of BASW students will agree that they are being adequately educated for employment in entry-level social work practice.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of employers who hired BASW students will rate that they are adequately educated for employment in entry-level social work practice.</p> <p>3a. At a minimum, 75% of BASW graduates will secure employment in social work.</p> <p>3b. A majority of BASW graduates will attain employment on average within six months after graduation.</p>	<p>1. The 2012 BASW quality assurance survey (N=46) shows that a high majority (95.1%) agreed that they are adequately to well educated for employment in entry-level social work practice—a slight decline from the 2010 finding (97.8%).</p> <p>2. The 2012 BASW employer survey finding (N=15) shows that 90.9% of respondents agreed that hired BASW graduates are adequately to well educated for employment in entry-level social work practice—a slight decline from the 2011 finding (100%).</p> <p>3a. The 2012 BASW alumni survey finding (N=38) shows that 81.1% have secured employment in the social work field—a slight decline from the 2011 finding (86.3%).</p> <p>3b. According to the 2012 BASW alumni survey findings, graduates were employed, on average, within 4.2 months after graduation—a slightly longer time than the 2010 finding (2.9 months).</p>	<p>1 and 2. Consistent positive findings based on the triangulated assessment method induced new initiatives to not only keep meeting the outcome goal, but to compete towards top undergraduate social work programs in the country through intensive quality assurance monitoring. Maintaining positive outcomes is often more difficult than anticipated.</p> <p>3a and 3b. In view of the recent trend of national recession and cutbacks on state and federally supported human service programs, the SSW is offering a more concentrated employment service to BASW graduates (e.g., offering job fair programs, a job search website for social work with continually updated employment opportunity information, assessment of available new job positions among local social service providers, and meeting with any alumni expressing additional information regarding employment).</p>

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Standards of Comparison	Interpretation of Results	Use of Results/Action Plan
<p>b. Students will be able to evaluate and apply research methods, research findings, and related tools to evaluate practice intervention.</p>	<p>1. BASW seniors will complete a capstone assessment of practice project (annually this data will be gathered by the director of the BASW program).</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>3. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW employer survey of hired staff members every two years.</p> <p>4. d. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW Alumni Survey.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of BASW senior’s capstone projects will be approved for the Research Poster Session, and demonstrate applied research knowledge.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of BASW students will agree that they are adequately being educated.</p> <p>3. At a minimum, 85% of employers will indicate that the hired graduates are adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>4. At a minimum, 85% of alumni will indicate that they were adequately educated in this area.</p>	<p>1. All class members who took the second required research class successfully presented in the Research Poster Session in April 2012.</p> <p>2. The 2012 BASW quality assurance survey finding shows that a high majority (95.1%) agreed that they are being adequately to well educated to evaluate practice intervention—a slight decline from the 2010 finding (97.7%).</p> <p>3. The 2012 BASW employer survey finding shows that a high majority of respondents (90.9%) agreed that employed BASW graduates are adequately to well educated in this area—a slight decline from 2011 (100%).</p> <p>4. The BASW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that 97% indicate that they are able to evaluate practice intervention—a slight increase from 2011 (92.4%).</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, and 4. Based on consistent findings regarding the positive achievement of this goal (convergent validity), the BASW program director and quality assurance committee have analyzed and identified potential factors associated with such an achievement (i.e., exceptionally high quality teaching and enhanced opportunity for learning application). Nationally, it is a well-known phenomenon that social work students generally dislike and achieve accordingly in research classes.</p>
<p>c. Students will be prepared for advanced graduate or professional education.</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW Alumni Survey every two years.</p> <p>3. c. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW employer survey of hired staff members every two years.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of BASW students will agree that they are adequately being educated for advanced graduate or professional education.</p> <p>2. Within five years after graduation, at a minimum, 75% of BASW alumni will have attained a professional certificate, or be enrolled in graduate school.</p> <p>3. At a minimum, 85% of BASW employers will agree that hired graduates are adequately being educated for advanced graduate or professional education.</p>	<p>1. The 2012 BASW quality assurance survey finding shows that a majority (97.5%) indicated that they are adequately being prepared in this area—in agreement with the 2010 finding (97.5%).</p> <p>2. The 2012 BASW alumni survey indicates that 36.8% of the BASW graduates have attained a professional certificate or admission to graduate school within three years after graduation—a decrease from 48.8% in 2011. This decrease may be related to recent economic conditions.</p> <p>3. The 2012 employer survey finding shows that a majority (87.5%) agreed that their hired BASW staff members are adequately educated for advanced graduate or professional education—a decline from the 2011 finding (97.5%).</p>	<p>1, 2, and 3. Although we have attained consistent positive findings regarding achievement of this goal, other than overall quality of the BASW program, we are not sure exactly what specific sets of factors contribute to the individuals’ decision to subscribe to further advance educational credential. Thus, the BASW Program Director and faculty will explore this question by beginning with a focus group session involving near-graduation students. Information generated by such an assessment will help us to be targeted and nurture and capitalize on the contributing factors.</p>

<p>d. BASW students will be able to achieve explicit curriculum goals.</p>	<p>1. The BASW director, faculty members, and SSW CSWE committee will examine the extent to which required BASW courses are designed to meet the explicit curriculum goals through a matrix assessment method and review of course syllabi.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW Alumni Survey in reference to the achievement of explicit curriculum goals.</p> <p>3. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the BASW employer survey in reference to the achievement of explicit curriculum goals.</p>	<p>1. All of the CSWE explicit curriculum goals will be met by the required BASW courses as a group.</p> <p>2. On average, 85% of BASW seniors (Exit Survey) will agree that the practice behavior based explicit curriculum goals as a group were achieved.</p> <p>3. On average, 85% of employers of the BASW graduates will agree that the explicit curriculum goals as a group were achieved.</p>	<p>1. Reviews by the BASW director, faculty members, and SSW CSWE committee affirm that 100% of CSWE explicit curriculum goals are being met by the required BASW courses as a group.</p> <p>2. The 2012 BASW Exit Survey finding shows that on average 92.4% of respondents agree that the explicit curriculum goals as a group were achieved.</p> <p>3. The 2012 BASW employer survey finding shows that a majority of respondents (92.3%) agreed that the ten explicit competency goals as a group were achieved—a slight decline from 2011 (98.9%).</p>	<p>1. All BASW required courses will continually be surveyed in reference to the students' evaluative rating of the extent to which course objectives were actually achieved in order to further improve the adequacy and quality of the curriculum content and teaching effectiveness.</p> <p>2 and 3. The explicit curriculum goal, with the previous year's rating of 82.5%, has been enhanced to 91.8% during 2011 through the BASW Program Director and faculty members' targeted interventions (i.e., engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective direct practice social work services). Thus, this rating will continue to be monitored in order to maintain the momentum.</p>
<p>e. BASW students will be able to apply knowledge gained through required Liberal Arts courses (i.e., Statistics and Seminar in English Composition).</p>	<p>1. Selected courses for this year's evaluation are Statistics (STAT 0200/0800) and English Composition (ENGCMP 0200). The BASW senior class will be challenged to implement capstone projects involving research questions, research design, data collection, and use of statistics to describe research findings in the Research Poster Session.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of BASW senior's capstone projects will be approved for Research Poster Session, and will demonstrate applied use of writing skills and statistics to describe research design and findings.</p>	<p>1. All class members who took the required research class successfully presented in the Research Poster Session in April 2012, and demonstrated applied knowledge in English Composition and Statistics. Various faculty members and students who attended the research poster session were quite impressed with students' ability to generate graphs and charts and interpret data findings based on statistical methods.</p>	<p>1. No changes related to the BASW requirement of the English Composition and Statistics courses are anticipated.</p>

# ASSESSMENT MATRIX



<b>PROGRAM OR SCHOOL</b>	<b>MSW Program</b>		
<b>Assessment Coordinator for Program or School</b>	<b>Name:</b> Lynn Coghill	<b>Email:</b> lcpitt@pitt.edu	<b>Phone:</b> 412-624-6854
<b>Program or School Mission Statement</b>	The mission of the School of Social Work is to advance knowledge and to apply that knowledge for the fulfillment of human potential through the prevention and amelioration of social problems. The School is committed to promoting the principals of social and economic justice. Recognizing the complexities of contemporary society, the School advocates for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities through its educational, research, and public service activities.		
<b>Program or School Goals</b>	The goal of the MSW program is to prepare graduates with the specialized knowledge and skills needed to engage in empirically-supported and culturally-competent advanced social work practice – either direct practice with individuals, families, and small groups, or community organization and social administration – that reflects the social work profession’s values, traditions, and philosophy.		

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Methods</b>	<b>Standards of Comparison</b>	<b>Interpretation of Results</b>	<b>Use of Results/Action Plan</b>
a. To be able to utilize social work practice theories and methods with individuals, families, and small groups (for Direct Practice majors).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct an annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</li> <li>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW Alumni Survey.</li> <li>3. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW employer survey of hired staff members every two years.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At a minimum, 85% of MSW students will agree that they are adequately educated in this area.</li> <li>2. At a minimum, 85% of alumni will indicate that they were adequately educated in this area.</li> <li>3. At a minimum, 85% of MSW employers will indicate that the hired staff members are adequately educated in this area.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The SSW quality assurance survey finding (2010) shows that a high majority (96.1%) agreed that they are being adequately educated in this area.</li> <li>2. The MSW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that a majority (94.5%) indicated that they were adequately to well educated in this area.</li> <li>3. The employer survey finding (2011) shows that a majority (97.8%) agreed that they are adequately to well educated in this area.</li> </ol>	1, 2, and 3. The consistent positive finding based on the triangulated assessment method reassured the integrity of the process for achieving this goal. However, as noted previously, maintaining the positive outcome is challenging. Thus, we (Associate Deans, the Program Director, and DP faculty members) will continue to monitor and stay focused on generating new enhancement ideas (as reported in the earlier section of this document).

<p>b. To be able to utilize social work practice theories and methods with community organization and social administration (for COSA majors).</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct an annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW employer survey of hired staff members every two years.</p> <p>3. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW Alumni Survey (which is implemented every two years).</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of MSW students will agree that they are adequately being educated in this area.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of MSW employers will indicate that their hired staff members are adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>3. At a minimum, 85% of alumni will indicate that they were adequately educated in this area.</p>	<p>1. The SSW quality assurance survey finding (2010) shows that a majority (91.1%) agreed that they are being adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>2. A majority of MSW employers (98.4%) indicated that their hired graduates are adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>3. The MSW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that a majority (89.6%) agreed that they were adequately too well educated in this area. The rating has increased by 8.2% from the 81.4% level in 2007.</p>	<p>1, 2, and 3. Under the leadership of the Chair, the COSA committee has completely revised the COSA curriculum, and this major revision is indeed generating positive results. Thus, we have shifted to a momentum maintenance mode—generating “out-of-the-box” ideas and strategies. The Associate Dean will continually monitor the fidelity of the revision plan for Academic Affairs and the COSA Committee. The outcome assessments will continue for establishment of consistency and stability of desirable performance—momentum maintenance.</p>
<p>c. To be able to utilize values and ethics of social work practice with diverse and vulnerable populations.</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will conduct the MSW Alumni Survey (which is implemented every two years).</p> <p>3. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW employer survey of hired staff members every two years.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of MSW students will agree that they are adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of alumni will indicate that they were adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>3. At a minimum, 85% of MSW employers will indicate that their hired graduates are adequately to well educated in this area.</p>	<p>1. The SSW quality assurance survey finding (2010) shows that a high majority (97.8%) agreed that they are being adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>2. The MSW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that a majority (94.6%) agreed that they were adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>3. The MSW employer survey (2011) indicates that a majority (99.2%) agreed that their hired staff members are adequately to well educated in this area.</p>	<p>1, 2, and 3. The consistent positive findings based on the triangulation method reassured the integrity of the findings in support of achieving this goal. Thus, we will maintain the momentum. However, maintaining the positive outcome can be challenging—often more difficult than deficit management. Thus, the Associate Deans, Program Director, and MSW faculty members will continue to generate new ideas for enhancement. We realize that all educational interventions tend to have their own outcome life cycle (i.e., ascendance, stabilization, and decendance) without an incorporation of “out-of-the-box” enhancement strategies—doing more of same things will not be sufficient.</p>
<p>d. To be able to conduct evidence based evaluation of social work practice.</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW Alumni Survey.</p> <p>3. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW employer survey of hired staff members.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of MSW students will agree that they are adequately being educated in this area.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of alumni will indicate that they were adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>3. At a minimum, 85% of MSW employers will indicate that the hired graduates are adequately educated in this area.</p>	<p>1. The SSW quality assurance survey finding (2010) shows that a high majority (90.6%) agreed that they are being adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>2. The MSW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that a lower than anticipated level of majority (85.5%) agreed that they were adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>3. MSW employers survey (2011) indicates that a majority (96.3%) agreed that students are adequately to well educated in this area.</p>	<p>1, 2, and 3. Due to a contradictory lower than anticipated level of the alumni agreement regarding the adequacy of the educational training in this area, the Associate Deans, Program Director, and MSW faculty will further investigate this component. Preliminary evaluation data on each research course will be assessed for the generation of solutions by the Associate Deans, Director of MSW Program, and DP and COSA concentration committees.</p>

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods	Standards of Comparison	Interpretation of Results	Use of Results/Action Plan
<p>e. MSW students will be able to achieve explicit competency goals.</p>	<p>1. The MSW director, faculty members, and SSW CSWE committee will examine the extent to which required MSW courses as a group are designed to meet the explicit curriculum goals.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW Alumni Survey in reference to explicit curriculum goals.</p> <p>3. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW employer survey in reference explicit curriculum goals.</p> <p>4. <del>Director of MSW</del>The Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct pre- and post-examinations of all of required MSW courses.</p> <p>5. Pass/fail rates among those who took the social work licensure exam after graduation.</p>	<p>1. All of the CSWE explicit curriculum goals will be met by the required MSW courses as a group.</p> <p>2. On average, 85% of MSW alumni will agree that the explicit curriculum goals as a group were achieved.</p> <p>3. On average, 85% of employers of the MSW graduates will agree that the explicit curriculum goals as a group were achieved.</p> <p>4. On average MSW students will exhibit statistically significant improvement scores between pre- and post-tests.</p> <p>5. On average, 85% of MSW graduates who took social work licensure examination will successfully secure a LSW license.</p>	<p>1. Review by the MSW director, faculty members, and SSW CSWE committee affirms that 100% of CSWE explicit curriculum goals are being met by the required MSW courses as a group.</p> <p>2. The MSW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that on average 91.9% of respondents agree that the explicit curriculum goals as a group were achieved. An exception is the rating on research (84.5% affirmation).</p> <p>3. The employer survey finding (2011) shows that a high majority of respondents (97.8%) agreed that the explicit competency goals as a group were achieved.</p> <p>4. Preliminary pre- and post-data will be examined during summer of 2011.</p> <p>5. The MSW alumni survey finding (2011) shows that 91.1% of those who took the test successfully passed the exam and secured a LSW licensure.</p>	<p>1, 2, and 3. The SSW will continue to examine the curricula impact for assessments of consistency and stability of findings. The curricula objective with a slightly lower rating than the others (i.e., Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research: 84.5%) will continually be monitored. Associate Deans, the Program Director, and MSW faculty will further specify factors associated with successful outcomes in the area of social work research application.</p> <p>4. The Associate Dean for Research will take leadership in the evaluation of each MSW Research course in order to help specify areas in need of improvement by December 2011.</p> <p>5. The SSW will continue to offer competency based curricula and prepare students to be able to pass the licensure examination.</p>

# ASSESSMENT MATRIX



<b>PROGRAM OR SCHOOL</b>	<b>Doctoral Program</b>		
<b>Assessment Coordinator for Program or School</b>	<b>Name:</b> Valire Carr-Copeland	<b>Email:</b> sswvcc@pitt.edu	<b>Phone:</b> 412-624-6324
<b>Program or School Mission Statement</b>	The mission of the School of Social Work is to advance knowledge and to apply that knowledge for the fulfillment of human potential through the prevention and amelioration of social problems. The School is committed to promoting the principals of social and economic justice. Recognizing the complexities of contemporary society, the School advocates for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities through its educational, research, and public service activities.		
<b>Program or School Goals</b>	Doctoral program goals include provision of students with advanced research and policy skills based on a foundation of social science theory and social welfare, enabling them to conduct research on social welfare and policy, and disseminate knowledge to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.		

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment Methods</b>	<b>Standards of Comparison</b>	<b>Interpretation of Results</b>	<b>Use of Results/Action Plan</b>
a. To be able to design data collection and employ analytic methods of quantitative research.	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the Doctoral Alumni Survey (which is implemented every two years).</p> <p>3. By their candidacy achievement, doctoral students will have at least one quantitative journal article accepted by refereed journals.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of doctoral students will agree that they are adequately being educated in this area.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of Alumni will indicate that they were adequately educated in this area.</p> <p>3. All doctoral candidates who were admitted since 2005 will generate accepted refereed journal articles based on quantitative methods.</p>	<p>1. The 2012 doctoral quality assurance survey finding (N=14) shows that all respondents (100%) agreed that they are being adequately to well educated in this area—up from the 2010 assessment rating (93.7%).</p> <p>2. The 2012 doctoral alumni survey finding shows that all alumni sampled (100%) agreed that they that they were adequately educated in this area—same as the 2011 survey finding (100%).</p> <p>3. All (100%) of the doctoral candidates (as of December 2012) succeeded in achieving accepted refereed journal articles based on quantitative methods.</p>	1, 2, and 3. The Associate Deans for Academic Affairs and Research and the Director of Doctoral Program reviewed the positive findings. They plan to discuss this outcome finding with the doctoral committee and students.

<p>b. To learn design data collection and analytic methods of qualitative research.</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the MSW Alumni Survey (which is implemented every two years).</p> <p>3. Completed dissertations with a qualitative focus will be annually reviewed for their adequacy of design and incorporated analytic methods by the Associate Dean for Research and selected doctoral research faculty.</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of doctoral students will agree that they are being adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>2. At a minimum, 85% of Doctoral alumni will indicate that they were adequately to well educated in this area.</p> <p>3. All qualitative dissertations will attain adequate to excellent ratings on qualitative research design and incorporated analytic strategies.</p>	<p>1. The 2012 doctoral quality assurance survey finding (N=14) shows that a majority (90.9%) agreed that they are being adequately to well educated in this area—a noticeable increase from the 2010 assessment rating (75%).</p> <p>2. The 2012 doctoral alumni survey finding (N=14) shows that all respondents (100%) agreed that they were adequately educated in this area—same as the 2011 assessment rating (100%).</p> <p>3. Only one dissertation during the past twelve months is based on qualitative assessment.</p>	<p>1 and 2. The Associate Deans for Academic Affairs and Research and the Director of Doctoral Program reviewed the findings. They plan to discuss this contradictory finding with the doctoral committee in our next monthly meeting. A doctoral program retreat will focus on reviewing the findings, discussing enhancement strategies, and developing an implementation plan.</p> <p>3. The adequacy assessment of the dissertation with a qualitative assessment will be completed by June 2010 (Year???)</p>
<p>c. Train students on how to develop journal articles and national conference presentations.</p>	<p>1. The doctoral program will keep track of student publication and national conference presentation rates. The Associate Dean for Research will verify this information.</p>	<p>1. By graduation, all students must have at least one peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter in-press as well as a national conference presentation.</p>	<p>1. During 2012, all (100%) of the doctoral candidates succeeded in achieving accepted refereed journal articles based on a substantive area in the field of social work and presented at one and/or both national conferences (i.e., Council on Social Work Education and Society for Social Work Research).</p>	<p>1. The doctoral program will keep its focus on training students to develop journal articles and national conference presentations by involving them in faculty research studies, offering manuscript critiques, and conducting a continual brownbag lunch program on research and collaboration opportunities.</p>
<p>d. To be educated to develop and complete a scholarly dissertation that results in refereed journal or book chapter publication.</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the annual SSW Quality Assurance Survey.</p> <p>2. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the Alumni Survey (which is implemented every two years).</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of doctoral students will agree that they are adequately being educated on how to use their dissertation to publish articles in refereed journals or as book chapters.</p> <p>2a. At a minimum, 85% of doctoral alumni on tenure-track positions will indicate that they were adequately educated to accomplish this goal.</p> <p>2b. At a minimum, 85% of doctoral graduates employed in tenure-track positions will successfully attain publication acceptance by peer-reviewed journals or book chapters based on their dissertation work.</p>	<p>1. The 2012 doctoral quality assurance survey finding shows that all respondents (100%) agreed that they are being adequately to well educated in this area—same as the 2010 assessment rate (100%).</p> <p>2a. The 2012 doctoral alumni survey finding shows that a majority of respondents 83.3% agreed that they were educated to accomplish this goal—a slightly lower assessment rating compared to 2011 (85.7%).</p> <p>2b. The 2012 doctoral alumni survey finding shows that 80% of respondents successfully published content(s) of their dissertation—a slight reduction from 2011's finding (85.7%).</p>	<p>1. Associate Deans and the Director of the Doctoral Program reviewed the findings. They plan to discuss this finding with the doctoral committee during the Fall term.</p> <p>2a. The Associate Deans for Academic Affairs and Research and the Director of the Doctoral Program reviewed the findings. They plan to discuss this finding with the doctoral committee.</p> <p>2b. The doctoral program reviewed the findings. They plan to discuss this finding with the doctoral committee on how to further improve the publication rate based on dissertation work.</p>

<p>e. To be educated to secure external funding for research, educational training, or service projects after graduation.</p>	<p>1. The SSW Office of the Associate Dean for Research will conduct the Alumni Survey (which is implemented every two years).</p>	<p>1. At a minimum, 85% of doctoral graduates employed on tenure-track positions will successfully attain external funding within two to three years after graduation.</p>	<p>1. The 2012 doctoral alumni survey finding shows that 80% of respondents successfully secured external funding since graduation—up from the 2011 finding (71.4%).</p>	<p>1. The Director of the Doctoral Program reviewed the findings and plans to discuss this with the doctoral committee on how to further improve the teaching and training on securing external funding support.</p>
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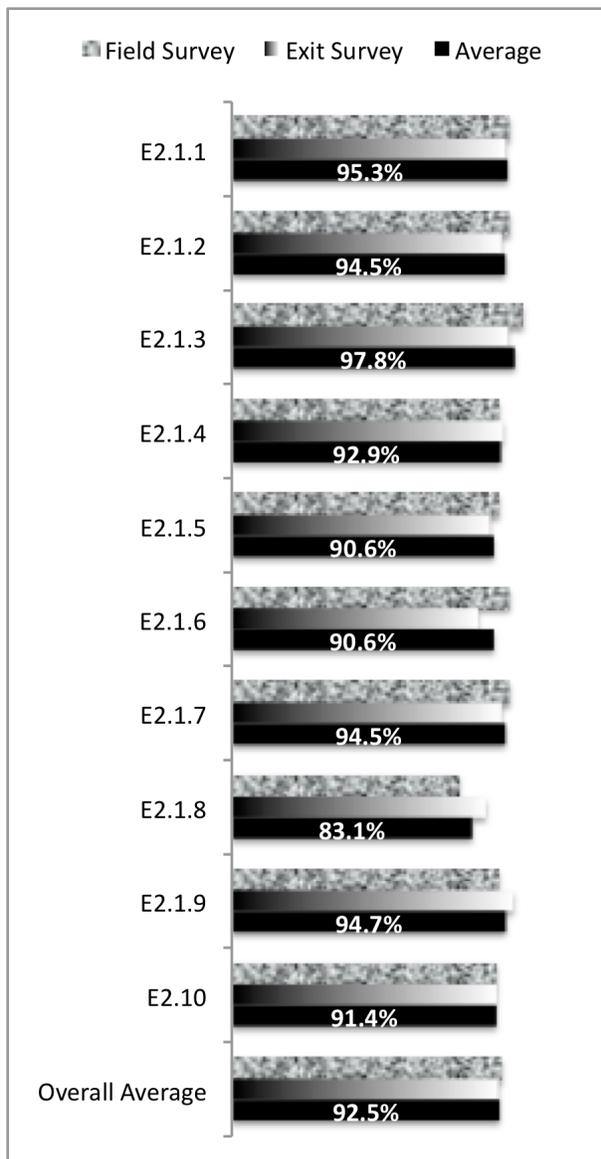
### III. Appendix

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## Appendix A: Practice Behavior assessment results (year 2012) based on CSWE educational policy and accreditation standards

As following three charts indicate, BASW, MSW-DP and MSW-COSA students' overall average practice ratings (based on ten major CSWE educational policy and accreditation standards) are meeting the benchmark ratings. An area in need of further improving among BASW and MSW- COSA students is engaging in policy practice to advance well-being and deliver services (see Charts 1 thru 3).

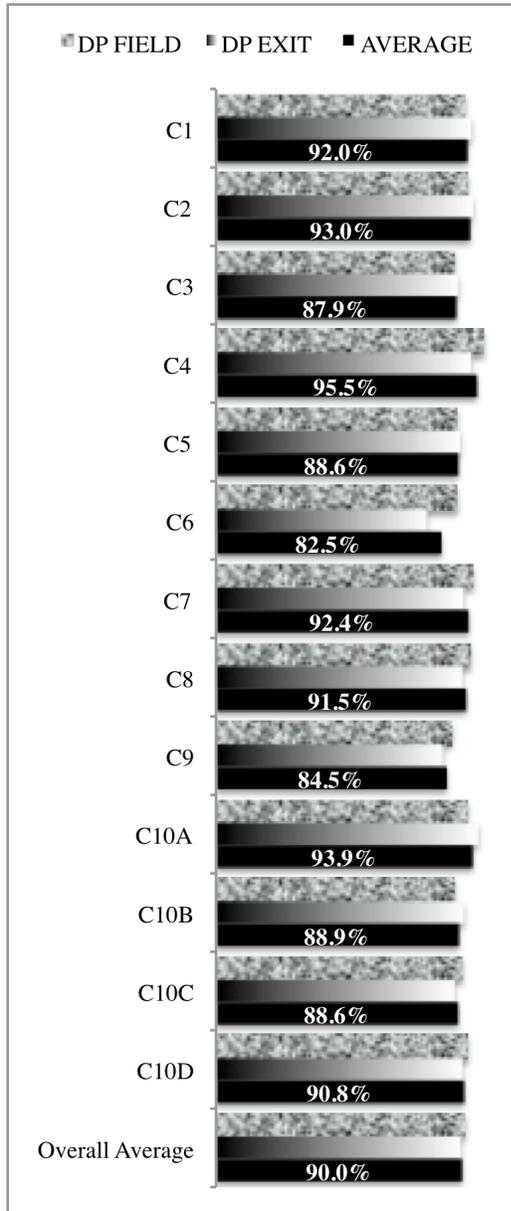
Chart 1: BASW practice behavior assessment ratings  
(% of those indicating competent or proficient by field instructors and exit survey of graduating students)



### Code:

- EP 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly
- EP 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice
- EP 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
- EP 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice
- EP 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice
- EP 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
- EP 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
- EP 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance well-being and deliver services
- EP 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice
- EP 2.1.10— Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Chart 2: Practice behavior assessment ratings- MSW Direct Practice  
 (% of those indicating competent or proficient by  
 field instructors and exit survey of graduating students)



**Code:**

C1= EP 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly

C2= EP 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice

C3= EP 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments

C4= EP 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice

C5= EP 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice

C6= EP 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research

C7= EP 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment

C8= EP 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance well-being and deliver services

C9= EP 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice

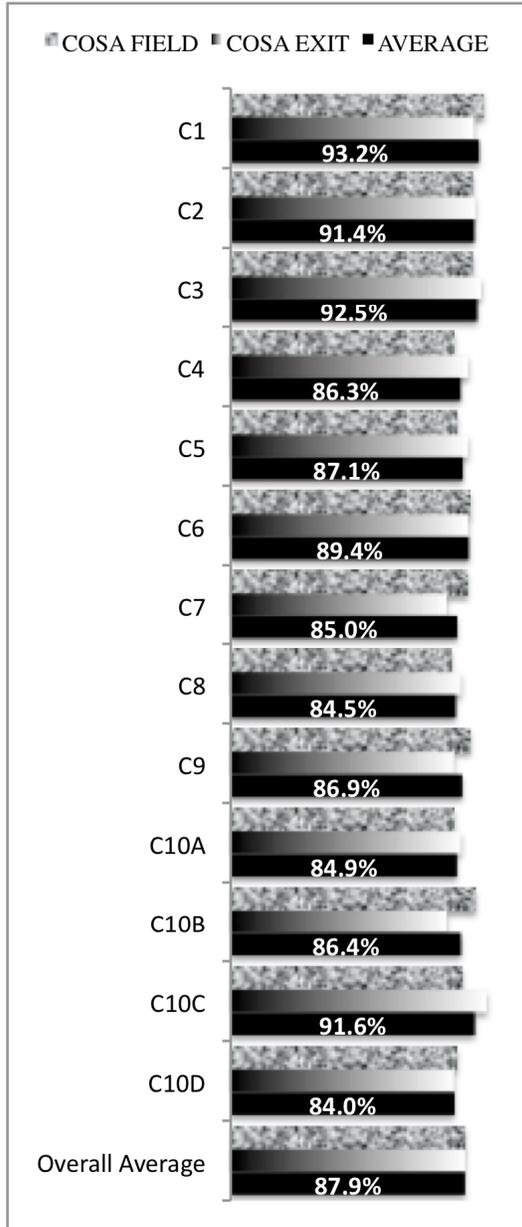
C10A= EP 2.1.10(a)—Engagement

C10B=EP 2.1.10(b) Assessment

C10C= EP 2.1.10(c) Intervention

C10D= EP 2.1.10(d) Evaluation

Chart 3: Practice behavior assessment ratings- MSW COSA  
 (% of those indicating competent or proficient by  
 field instructors and exit survey of graduating students)

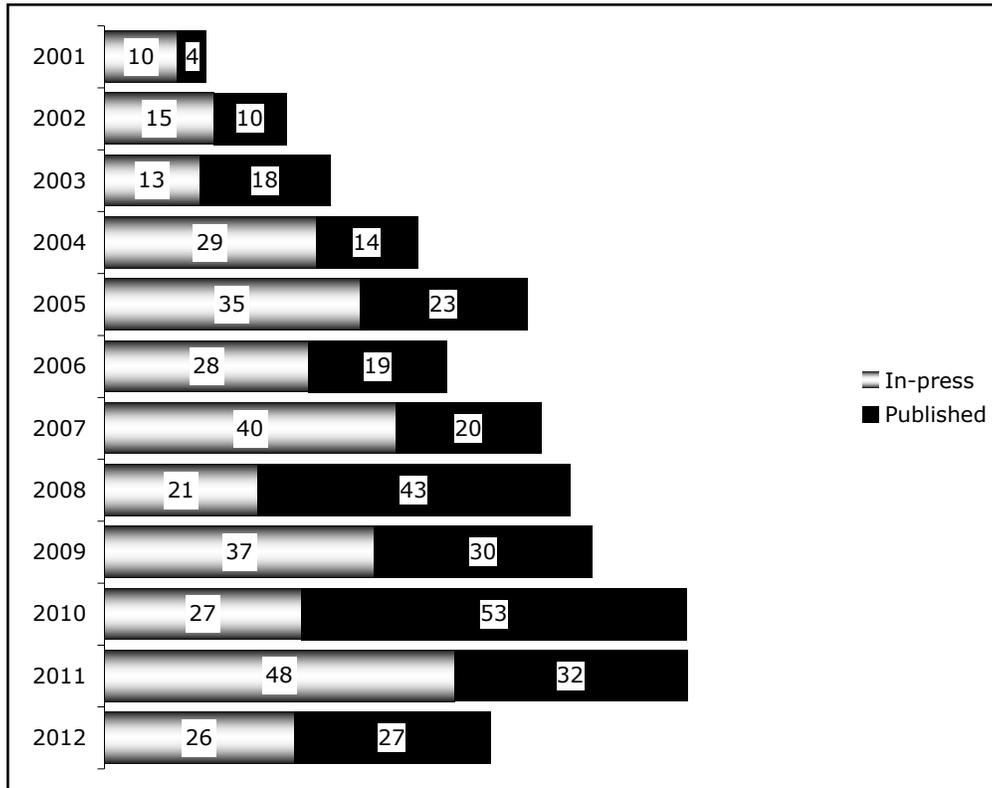


**Code:**

- C1= EP 2.1.1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly
- C2= EP 2.1.2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice
- C3= EP 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
- C4= EP 2.1.4—Engage diversity and difference in practice
- C5= EP 2.1.5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice
- C6= EP 2.1.6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
- C7= EP 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
- C8= EP 2.1.8—Engage in policy practice to advance well-being and deliver services
- C9= EP 2.1.9—Respond to contexts that shape practice
- C10A= EP 2.1.10(a)Engagement
- C10B=EP 2.1.10(b)- Assessment
- C10C= EP 2.1.10(c) - Intervention
- C10D= EP 2.1.10(d)- Evaluation

**Appendix B: SSW Historical Comparison of Refereed Journal Publications (from 2001 to 2012) reflective of the School’s implicit educational environment.**

Chart 4: Historical comparison of refereed journal publications (unduplicated count) by full-time faculty members (from 2001 to 2012)



As Chart 4 shows, the SSW has been steadily increasing the publication rate since the baseline year of 2001. The 2012 publication rate was affected by recent loss of full-time tenure stream faculty members. However, during 2012, the SSW was ranked 4th in the nation for average number of refereed journal publications from tenured faculty members—only Washington University-St. Louis, University of Chicago, and Columbia University are ahead of the Pitt SSW by a slight margin.

**Appendix C: Pitt School of Social Work compared to the top ten nationally ranked social work schools—additional areas reflecting the School’s implicit educational environment.**



**November 2012**

Prepared by the Office of Social Work Education and Research

**Customized Peer Group for Comparison**

**Profiles of Customized Peer Group**

<b>Customized Peer Group</b>	<b>Auspice</b>	<b>Carnegie Classification</b>	<b>Institutional Ethnicity/Gender</b>	<b>Setting</b>
Boston College	Private-Religion Affiliated	RU/H	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Suburban
Case Western Reserve University	Private-Other	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
Columbia University	Private-Other	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
University of California-Berkeley	Public	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
University of Chicago	Private-Other	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	Public	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Suburban
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill	Public	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
University of Texas-Austin	Public	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
University of Washington	Public	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
Washington University-St. Louis	Private-Other	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban
<b>University of Pittsburgh</b>	Public	RU/VH	Non-Ethnic, Coeducational	Urban

## Faculty

When reporting demographic distributions by gender, the number of individuals in the category of “unknown gender” is omitted from computation. When reporting demographic distributions by age group, the total number of individuals is used, including those respondents in the category of “unknown age.” When reporting “historically underrepresented” individuals, the categories of African American/Other Black, Chicano/Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Other Latino/Hispanic, American Indian/Native American, Asian American/Other Asian, Pacific Islander, and Other are used.

### Demographic Characteristics of Full-Time Faculty, 2011 Annual Survey

Demographic Category	RU/VH Peers (%)	Customized Peer Group (%)	University of Pittsburgh (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	33.2	38.7	37.1
Female	66.8	61.3	62.9
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identification</b>			
White (non-Hispanic)	68.8	70.3	71.4
African American/Other Black	12.7	12.4	22.9
Chicano/Mexican American	1.3	1.3	0
Puerto Rican	1.1	*	0
Other Latino/Hispanic	4.1	3.7	0
American Indian/Native American	1.1	1.3	0
Asian American/Other Asian	7.2	7.6	5.7
Pacific Islander	0.6	*	0
Other	0.5	*	0
Multiple Race/Ethnicity	1.1	1.3	0
Unknown	1.5	*	0
<b>Proportion Identifying with Historically Underrepresented Groups</b>	28.6	27.4	28.6

\* Excluded because the number of individuals in the category was less than five.

### Demographic Characteristics of Part-Time Faculty, 2011 Annual Survey

Demographic Category	RU/VH Peers (%)	Customized Peer Group (%)	University of Pittsburgh (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	30.0	29.7	31.9
Female	70.0	70.3	68.1
<b>Racial/Ethnic Identification</b>			
White (non-Hispanic)	72.5	57.6	70.2
African American/Other Black	10.6	6.9	27.7
Chicano/Mexican American	0.3	*	0
Puerto Rican	*	*	0
Other Latino/Hispanic	3.6	2.8	0
American Indian/Native American	0.3	*	0
Asian American/Other Asian	3.1	3.0	2.1
Pacific Islander	0.3	*	0
Other	0.3	*	0
Multiple Race/Ethnicity	0.4	*	0
Unknown	8.4	27.9	0
<b>Proportion Identifying With Historically Underrepresented Groups</b>	18.7	14.0	29.8

\* Excluded because the number of individuals in the category was less than five.

**Type and Mean Number of Publications That Full-Time Faculty Participated in During Academic Year 2009-2010 (2010 Annual Survey)**

<b>Type of Publication</b>	<b>RU/VH Peers</b>	<b>Customized Peer Group</b>	<b>University of Pittsburgh</b>
<b>As Primary Author</b>			
Refereed Articles	0.74	0.68	1.52
Books	0.07	0.06	0.09
Book Chapters	0.24	0.27	0.27
Book Reviews	0.06	0.04	0
External Reports/Monographs	0.16	0.09	0.24
<b>As Co-Author</b>			
Refereed Articles	0.96	1.18	1.39
Books	0.06	0.06	0.03
Book Chapters	0.14	0.17	0.21
Book Reviews	0.01	0	0.03
External Reports/Monographs	0.11	0.15	0.06

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## **Appendix D: Findings and Recommendations from an External Review of Doctoral Program (February 2013)**

Jill Duerr Berrick, Ph.D. (University of California-Berkeley)  
Lorraine Gutierrez, Ph.D. (University of Michigan)

### **Introduction and Background**

This review, invited by Dean Larry Davis, was undertaken to examine the programmatic strengths and areas for continued growth in doctoral studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Valire Carr-Copeland has served as Director of Doctoral Studies for several years and will be leaving her position at the end of this academic year. Her departure offers an opportunity for strategic visioning about the future of the program. Professors Gutierrez and Berrick each spent a day at the School of Social Work engaged in meetings with a wide range of stakeholders including: (1) the Dean; (2) the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies; (3) the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; (4) doctoral students; (5) the doctoral committee; (6) other doctoral faculty; (7) the Director of Finance and Business; (8) the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs; (9) the Associate Dean for Research; and (10) the Director of the Doctoral Program. Sharing their findings, Gutierrez and Berrick discovered significant overlap in their perspectives on program strengths and opportunities.

Before Larry Davis took his position as Dean, the doctoral program included a large number of part-time students, many of whom stayed in the program a very long time, and who completed the degree to return to practice positions in the local community. Upon assuming the role of Dean, Davis set several goals: (1) to invest more resources in the program and reduce the number of students; (2) to make the program a full-time experience; (3) to give students teaching opportunities to prepare for faculty positions; (4) to give students research opportunities to prepare for faculty positions; and (5) to give the program more structure, transparency, and policy guidelines.

### **Program Strengths**

The School has met several of Dean Davis' strategic goals for the doctoral program. Today, there are approximately 25 full-time students in the program. Funding from central campus provides four years of support so that students have significant incentives to complete the program in a timely manner, and all students have opportunities to teach and conduct research during their studies. Dr. Carr-Copeland has developed a handbook that provides a policy context to the program, and the expectations for student progress are clear. The doctoral program director's dedication to the program is evident. Students rely on Dr. Carr-Copeland for program and career navigation and faculty see her as a strong program leader who has shaped the current curriculum approach. She is deeply knowledgeable about all students in the program, both past and present, and serves as an important role model for students pursuing a career in the academy.

During our conversations with faculty, it was clear that there is strong support for the doctoral program. All faculty with whom we spoke shared a common perspective that the program had strengthened considerably in recent years under the leadership and stewardship of Davis and Carr-Copeland. The faculty's investment in the continued development of the doctoral program was apparent.

The School's program is well supported financially from central campus resources. All doctoral admits are offered a four-year package of generous financial support (MSW/Ph.D. students are offered 4.5 years of financial support). Additional funding is also available for summer stipends for most students. Students are provided generous, full health benefits, similar to the benefit package received by faculty and staff at Pitt.

Additional funding is available through five small endowments (totaling approximately \$2,500 - \$4,000) that can be made available to students on an as-needed basis to allow for additional dissertation support or other needs as they come to light. And the Dean's fund of approximately \$15,000 is available for community building activities and for student conference attendance. Given the cost of living in Pittsburgh, the financial aid package is competitive with other tier-one doctoral programs in the country.

The resources provided from central campus allow for approximately six new doctoral admits each year. This natural cap of approximately 24-25 students in the program is considered appropriate by the faculty given their time and resources.

Additional funding from central campus supports the Center on Race and Social Problems. All students are actively engaged in the intellectual life of the Center and the Center provides important opportunities for networking with faculty from multiple disciplines across campus.

In addition to the financial support offered by central campus, it is clear that the School enjoys the respect and appreciation of central campus officials. Dean Davis' leadership and strategic thinking are admired and the School is seen as an asset to the University as a whole.

Expectations for student achievement in the program have shifted over time; today, students are expected to present at a national conference prior to graduation and to have published two articles. Students are also being acculturated into the academy more intentionally, primarily through the doctoral seminar, the lecture series, and the course on teaching. Faculty indicate that they are regularly involved with doctoral students – an improvement from the past – and that they care deeply about their students, showing their concern in myriad of ways. Pitt faculty appear to be focusing more of their research in areas relating to urban problems, race, and macro-organizing; more partnerships in the area of health would bring certain strategic advantages as well.

The doctoral curriculum is clearly articulated and the path toward program completion is well laid-out to students. Some elements of the curriculum may merit further

consideration (see below), but it is nonetheless clear what program milestones look like, and how these should be achieved.

One of the greatest strengths of the University of Pittsburgh doctoral program is the diversity of its student body. Pitt has been enormously successful engaging a highly diverse collection of doctoral students in its program. In addition, students' perceptions of the doctoral program's goals and strengths align with those of faculty; they point to the strong emphasis on research, the generous financial package, accessible faculty, a useful work space, pleasant peers, and thoughtful academic mentoring and guidance from the program director. Although students raised some issues for further consideration (see below), their overall regard for the program was very positive.

### **Program Challenges**

Our conversations with administrators, faculty, and students suggest that these very positive changes in the program have also contributed to some challenges. Some of these challenges are common within Ph.D. programs, but others may reflect "growing pains" as the program has changed in major ways.

Both students and faculty members identified the four-year funding commitment as having a negative impact on some students. Students who are in the combined MSW/Ph.D. program need to meet MSW requirements, including a field placement, during that time period. These students are also in need of post-MSW social work practice experience. It is very challenging, and often not possible, for students to meet all program deadlines with these additional requirements. The four-year expectation for program completion was also identified as leading most students to do research that involves secondary analysis, rather than original research on their own or as part of a faculty research team. This type of research may prevent some students from learning a broader range of research skills.

Faculty advising and mentoring were also described as creating some challenges. Some students have been admitted to the program without any faculty who share their interests. These students find it hard to identify good research advisors. Both faculty members and students observed that advising and mentoring practices varied widely among faculty members, and that some students desired and needed more ongoing faculty support.

The program could put more effort into matriculating the students that they want. More resources could go toward recruitment and encouraging admitted students to accept offers of admission. Making better matches between students' interests and faculty strengths could also lead to more admitted students attending.

### **Recommendations for Consideration**

The doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh is clearly in a much better position than it was a decade ago and there are many signals that suggest the program is likely to continue to improve in the near future, assuming that the new program director can take

leadership in attending to some program adjustments. What follows are our recommendations for program improvements based upon data collected during our site visits and our understanding of doctoral education in a national context:

### ***Recruitment***

The doctoral program at Pitt has a very small number of doctoral applicants (less than forty), which means that the admissions committee may not be as selective as they might like to be in identifying the strongest students for the program. In addition to their limited applicant numbers, Pitt must compete against other doctoral programs in the region that may offer a curriculum or community that draws students elsewhere.

Many doctoral programs in the country are developing doctoral recruitment days (or weekends) where applicants who have been accepted into the program are invited to the university for a day. These expense-paid trips allow students to meet other doctoral peers, to get to know their doctoral mentor, and to enjoy the surrounding community. Given that Pittsburgh is both an affordable and enjoyable city, the benefits of the city and the University might become clearer to applicants considering other alternatives. There is some evidence from other programs that this investment in engaging admitted students can increase the likelihood that they will accept the admissions offer.

Some faculty indicated that they sometimes identify students in the Pitt MSW program who show promise as potential doctoral students. Currently, however, there is no structure or written policy to guide consideration of these students for possible admission into the doctoral program. We do not anticipate that the majority of doctoral students will likely come from the Pitt MSW program, but we caution against systematically excluding these students who could become important assets to the doctoral program. Creating a pipeline from the BASW or MSW to the Ph.D. program could also be a way of ensuring a good “fit” between applicants and the program.

Doctoral recruitment materials (e.g., the brochure and program materials we reviewed) could be revised to better highlight the unique aspects of the Pitt program (see below relating to the Center on Race and Social Problems) and to highlight the program’s aims to prepare students for faculty lines in Research-1 universities.

The larger the ratio between the number of students admitted to the program and the total number of applicants, the greater the chances that any program will compromise quality. Because the number of applicants is so very small, we recommend reconsidering the number of annual admitted students from six to five. This would not only address issues of quality but it would also allow the program to expand its financial aid package to 4.5 or five years, rather than four.

The University of Pittsburgh has a strong undergraduate Honors program, an undergraduate research program, and a McNair program. These students may have academic and research interests related to social work and would be excellent prospective applicants to the Ph.D. program. Communication and outreach to these programs could grow the applicant pool. Providing more research internships for McNair and

undergraduate research students could expose them to the possibilities in social work research.

Finally, because a good number of doctoral admits decline admission to Pitt, we recommend that the doctoral program director develop a database to track where applicants go if they decline Pitt admission. This would help program administrators better understand their primary competition and develop more targeted strategies to respond to their competitors.

### ***Student funding***

The funding package at Pitt appears to be relatively generous. As such, we recommend that recruitment materials highlight these generous funding packages. If summer funding is likely to be available to most students, this too should be highlighted in recruitment materials.

Because conversations with students suggested that some are graduating with substantial debt, we believe it would be prudent to review students' needs for financial aid in comparison to the financial aid package provided. As the cost of living continues to rise, the value of the current financial aid package against current costs should be reconsidered on a regular basis to determine whether the package is keeping pace with costs.

A review of funding packages for MSW/Ph.D. students may also be in order. We were told that the MSW/Ph.D. students are often some of the strongest students in the program. It appears that their funding package, however, may not be as generous as what is provided to Ph.D. students who – by design – remain in the program fewer years because their time in the MSW program is not fully covered by fellowships. The program should consider ways to cover these students' for their entire time in the program.

The current funding package requires students to work as a research or teaching assistant for all four years. The program should consider changing the first and final semesters or years to “fellowship” terms when students are not required to work and can focus on their studies and adjustment to the program or the job search. This may ease some pressure that students experience when arriving in the program and give them more time to begin engaging in research. A final fellowship year or semester can allow students to give more time to dissertation writing, publications, and seeking academic positions.

### ***Research preparation***

The School has made important efforts to acculturate students to the academy by supporting their presentations at national conferences and their publication record. Students are also engaged in a good deal of secondary data analysis. Because of time pressures to move through the program within four years, few students have opportunities to engage in primary data collection activities and they may not have exposure to the many aspects of research practice. The Center on Race and Social Problems offers students important exposure to an intellectual community and to important scholarly ideas and research.

We believe that the Center on Race and Social Problems is a very valuable asset to the School that could be leveraged further still. Efforts to use the staff associated with the Center (or to hire additional staff) to support the development of dissertation grants and faculty research grants could have a ripple effect in terms of faculty and student research productivity.

We also see the Center on Race and Social Problems as a unique “branding” opportunity in that its further growth and development could help to identify Pitt as the national centerpiece of research on issues pertaining to race, social problems, and social work. This branding would not only bring additional research dollars, but could also contribute to the recruitment issues we noted above. That is, as potential students learn about the Center, this will become a further draw, bringing students to Pitt who might have otherwise selected another university.

### ***Doctoral curriculum***

We observed a doctoral curriculum that may be overly proscriptive and over-full. The number of required courses and activities for students is extremely high, yet it is not entirely clear how all of these course requirements necessarily relate to students’ future roles as faculty. We understand that conversations about curriculum redesign can be sensitive among faculty, but we strongly recommend that a review of all required courses be undertaken to determine whether some can be offered as electives rather than required courses. As such, students would have more opportunities to pursue their individual intellectual paths within the context of the program.

Relatedly, we are puzzled by the length of the required Dissertation Overview. We understand that this document serves as a kind of “dissertation prospectus,” yet we were told that it is often close to 100 pages in length. Given the research demands in the changing landscape of academia, students increasingly need to learn how to write concise grant proposals that convey their complex ideas and designs in a compressed format. We recommend that the Dissertation Overview be adjusted so that it mirrors something more like a short grant submission. A new approach would have several advantages: (1) it would be more feasible for students to develop relatively rapidly and therefore move them more quickly into the dissertation phase of their work; (2) the dissertation chair plays a significant role in the development of the overview, but because this large document is so fully developed, it might create a reluctance among other committee members to give an honest assessment of the quality of the approach – with so much already invested in the proposed methods, it would mean setting a student back by several months if the dissertation plan were significantly revised; and (3) it could help students develop more skills in grant-writing, since most submissions are somewhat shorter documents that push researchers to be concise in their description.

The field of social science statistics is changing extremely rapidly and many Schools of Social Work are challenged to keep up with this new landscape. We recommend a close analysis of the required research methods and statistics courses offered within the School to determine whether they are keeping current with cutting-edge strategies in research and statistics.

The current assignment of doctoral students to faculty in the first and second year represents an excellent strategy for ensuring equity in workload among faculty members. The hazard of this model, however, is that it may not reflect changes in doctoral education in many other universities. Elsewhere, student applicants are targeting universities because the work of particular faculty aligns with their intellectual interests. These students are then assured of an opportunity to develop a mentored relationship with individual faculty who they name in their application. When students have an opportunity to work directly with their desired mentor from the early days of their graduate studies, they may be more likely to develop strong networks with others in the field, to be able to develop a line of research that corresponds directly with their interests, and to develop a richer C.V. that shows their deep connectivity to a particular intellectual field. The School may want to consider whether the current practice, which provides a more equitable workload, is justified against the possibility that they may lose students in the admissions process to other universities that offer a different mentoring model.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The doctoral program at the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh is in a strategic position for continued growth and development. It has benefitted from solid and thoughtful leadership for several years; it enjoys the support of central campus administrators; it has a dedicated faculty; and a diverse and talented student body. The program can use the Center on Race and Social Problems to build its research infrastructure, to make strategic alliances with other units on campus, and to “brand” the Pitt model. The Dean and the Program Director are acutely aware of the rapidly changing market in doctoral education and in the demands on early career faculty. And doctoral students attending Pitt understand this evolving landscape and are working hard to be notable leaders in the field.