

Berkeley Social Welfare

Comprehensive Review: Reimagining Instructional Workload and Budgetary Alignment

Summary of 2021 Report to EVCP and SSW Dean

Given our [November 2020 charge](#) tied to the EVCP's [Academic Finance Reform Initiative](#) and ongoing [CSWE](#) re-accreditation, the School of Social Welfare (SSW) recently embarked on a comprehensive review geared toward developing recommendations for its overall strategic planning and financial realignment, to refine its admissions procedures, and to explore opportunities for streamlining and enhancing curricula across degree programs.

The preexisting faculty committees for the undergraduate, MSW, and doctoral programs evaluated their respective programs during the spring 2021 semester concerning the areas outlined in the [comprehensive review framework](#) provided by the Dean. The following summary reflects a high-level overview of *some* of the key challenges and opportunities facing each program with recommendations informed by the faculty's work to date and in support of the School's forthcoming strategic plan renewal (*anticipated in spring 2022*).

The School's aspiration of integrating and aligning its research, teaching, practice, and service missions; to operate sustainably; and to thrive as a community advancing the common good, was both the impetus for, and illuminated by, this process. During AY 21-22, the aforementioned program committees will progressively implement admissions and curricular reform as outlined in their respective faculty service charges, as informed by this report and in alignment with the strategic priorities of the School and broader campus.

Undergraduate Studies (BASW)

Berkeley Social Welfare currently offers a Bachelor's in Social Welfare (BASW) through a longstanding agreement with the College of Letters and Sciences. Only three required courses for the major are offered in-house, in addition to two electives during the academic year and four electives during the summer. Increasing undergraduate course enrollment within the School of Social Welfare has at least two key benefits: 1) students consistently report frustration with the lack of elective coursework available in the major; and 2) increased student credit hours (SCH) would result in additional annual funding per the revised model for central campus' Academic Finance Reform.

Bearing in mind opportunities to enrich the undergraduate experience for current Social Work students and, as a public-serving institution, address [California's state-wide behavioral health workforce crisis](#), the following strategies were recommended:

- **Expanded elective course offerings.**
 - *Developing* two new elective courses every summer that would be taught by SW Ph.D. students, to provide greater choice among summer offerings;
 - *Soliciting* faculty interest in designing new electives to be taught on rotation during the academic year, considering incentives for proposing American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES)-eligible course topics; and
 - *Raising* the enrollment cap on SW 181 and SW 150AC to 100 students each, and prioritizing the creation of new courses that can serve students at similar scale.
 - *Creating* a new large, lower-division course with the potential to attract students from across campus as well as high school students connected to the Pre-college Scholars program; thereby introducing them to both Social Work and a topic relevant to general student interests.
- **Social Justice summer minor.**
 - *Establishing* a new summer minor to launch in Summer 2023 in collaboration with Summer Sessions staff and the undergraduate committee, potentially in connection with the Dean's Sports Initiative given its emphasis on social justice and well-being.
- **Community-engaged undergraduate summer internships, as part of the Youth Equity Discovery Arc Initiative.**
 - *Launching* a summer community-service course, taught by a current doctoral student with faculty oversight, in collaboration with the Public Service Center. The internship course could attract prospective students to the newly proposed summer minor (see *above*), complement other new elective offerings, and serve as a pathway to the MSW program by illuminating professional opportunities in social work fields.

Master's in Social Work (MSW)

Per conversations in the advent of a new Dean, current and future implications of the pandemic and racial reckoning on health and human services, and the ongoing CSWE self-study and reaccreditation, the School is well-positioned to reexamine the purpose and future direction of master's-level social work education and training, particularly at the nexus of research and practice, for the explicit advancement of social justice.

Through a process of engaging senate and field faculty members both individually and collectively throughout the Spring 2021 semester, and in consultation with the Dean, the following programmatic goals and recommendations emerged:

- **Reflexive engagement of contemporary challenges for the common good.**
 - *Convening* symposia on a range of complex societal challenges to engage and integrate new insights from social work research, practice, and policy domains.
- **Curricular redesign for anti-racist/anti-oppressive, multilevel practice.**
 - *Reexamining* the MSW program's curricula and pedagogy holistically in alignment with updated [Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards \(EPAS\)](#) competencies related to anti-oppressive practice and advancing human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice.
 - *Creating* community spaces and programming to cultivate greater faculty collaboration across research and practice domains for the promotion of innovative, rigorous, and cohesive training.

- *Operationalizing* cross-cutting skills for MSWs across all aspects of the degree program, such as by:
 - *Identifying* a set of direct and indirect skill-building foci that can be explicitly referenced in course syllabi and serve as course evaluation anchors.
 - *Embedding* core curricular foci in the School's messaging to prospective students, faculty hires, and external constituencies.
- *Streamlining* theoretical curriculum by reducing the quantity of required and elective MSW courses from 35 to 15.
- *Utilizing* AR/VR simulation labs for cutting-edge, evidence-based clinical training and assessment.
- **Operational sustainability.**
 - *Identifying* a sustainable financial model for the field education program and Unit 18 instructional staff compensation.
 - *Recruiting* Senate faculty eligible to teach across degree programs, especially but not limited to the MSW program.
 - *Updating* faculty workload policies to more closely align with best practices from top peer programs in social work, as well as trends shared by other Berkeley professional schools.

Doctoral Program (SW Ph.D.)

Senate faculty members are in consensus that embarking on a career in research and the production of new knowledge is the desired outcome for Social Welfare Ph.D. students, which remains to be explicitly reflected across all of the program's procedures, most notably in regard to recruitment, assessment, and student support. Despite recent advancements in admitting under-represented minority (URM) students, this review underscored the need for greater racial diversity as critical to the program's ability to maintain its excellence and relevance.

Several opportunities for improvement emerged from this study:

- **MSW-PhD pipeline development.**
 - Seek funding for a pre-doctoral training program to build the pipeline of MSWs from under-resourced communities who apply to the Social Welfare Ph.D.
- **Improved collaboration between senate faculty and Student Services staff.**
 - *Clarifying* the roles of Ph.D. subcommittee, faculty advisors, and staff to ensure uniform and equitable admissions processes and procedures.
 - *Defining* expectations for all faculty in doctoral student recruitment.
 - *Explicating* criteria for rating applications by refining the rubric and its anchors.
 - *Evaluating* Academic Student Employee (ASE) position allocation to ensure that training contributes to each student's development as future social welfare scholars and educators.
- **Opportunities for funding and academic student employment (GSI/GSRships).**
 - *Revising* the Ph.D. program's funding goals to prioritize student training.
 - *Developing* an approach for using Ph.D. student summer fellowship funding to support research residencies, in which students can work with faculty on projects to develop research skills.

- *Documenting* the number of semesters students receive funding via GSI and GSR positions, as well as other teaching and research positions, by collecting data via the pre-candidacy Annual Progress Review process.
- *Evaluating* whether additional course requirements should be added to enrich GSI- and GSRships.
- *Committing* that each Ph.D. student minimally completes one GSI and one GSR position while being funded by the SSW.
- *Implementing* cost-sharing strategies with faculty to increase the availability of GSR positions.
- **Holistic progress reviews.**
 - *Amending* the pre-candidacy Annual Progress Review to include a holistic assessment of each student's training experiences.
 - *Revising* the pre-candidacy Academic Progress Review process in Spring 2022 to include a numerical report of conference presentations, other presentations, and internal presentations.
 - *Creating* a form so that students who have advanced to candidacy can easily document their conference and presentation experiences.