

Review of the Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) 44.0701

Context and overview. The Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) program is housed in the School of Social Work within the College of Arts and Sciences. The school also offers a Master of Social Work program with sequences in child and family practice, gerontology practice, and school social work and is the host unit for the Center of Adoption Studies. The B.S.W. program is designed to prepare generalist social work practitioners for their first position in the field. A required field practicum exposes students to a variety of practice settings and client profiles. Effectiveness of the program in preparing students for the profession is evidenced by its long-standing affiliation with the Council on Social Work Education.

Self-study process. The program review process for the B.S.W. program coincided with the process for reaffirmation of the School of Social Work by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Significant portions of the internal program review process were similar to the reaffirmation self-study process. Although the director of the School of Social Work was the primary author of the program review self-study report, the CSWE self-study report and the program review self-study report were written with collaboration and input from the entire faculty, particularly the sections regarding the curriculum. Sections of the reports related to student development and program administration were developed with consultation from the B.S.W. director of student services, the director of field education, and the B.S.W. program coordinator. Input from external stakeholders included discussion with the community advisory board and feedback from alumni surveys. Final review of the self-study report occurred at the all-faculty/staff retreat in August 2014.

Program curriculum. The B.S.W. program is considered an upper-division professional practice major. Because the program is accredited by CSWE, its core curriculum is highly prescribed by accreditation standards. CSWE requires that core professional content be built on a liberal arts foundation. Students complete the liberal arts component of the major during their first two years, through courses meeting General Education program requirements. The core major curriculum includes 54 credit hours taken during the junior and senior years. Courses are sequenced so knowledge acquisition is horizontally and vertically integrated. Each course is only offered one time a year, and students matriculate as a cohort in the same classes, in sequenced order. Students complete three courses in human behavior in the social environment, five practice courses, two policy courses, one research course, and five field practicum and seminar courses.

Program or unit faculty. The School of Social Work has 12 tenure track faculty members (including the director) and three administrative/professional staff members. The three staff positions include the director of field education, the director of B.S.W. student services (advisor), and the director of M.S.W. student services (advisor). Each administrative/professional staff member teaches two or three courses a year. Faculty members who teach in the School of Social Work all maintain their commitment to the profession through leadership in teaching, scholarship, and service. As instructors in a professional preparation discipline, faculty members are expected to significantly contribute to service in order to maintain connections to the professional discipline of social work. Most faculty members sit on boards for social service agencies and professional organizations, provide consultation to agencies or professional bodies, conduct training, volunteer in service roles, or continue in limited secondary employment as practitioners. This involvement is critical to keeping faculty both connected with and current with the professional practice field.

Program goals and quality indices. The B.S.W. program is guided by four goals: to foster students' identification and conduct as professional social workers; to prepare students for strength-based, ethical generalist practice in agency-based settings to work with diverse clients at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice; to prepare students to advocate for social, organizational, community, economic, and policy change to advance human rights and create a more just society; and to prepare students with a liberal arts foundation to employ critical thinking to integrate multiple sources of knowledge including theoretical and conceptual knowledge, practice wisdom, and knowledge generated through evidence-based research to inform generalist best practices that are responsive to evolving needs. Indicators used by faculty to assess program quality relative to peer and benchmark programs include the quality of alumni relations, preparation of students for child welfare employment, and community and scholarly engagement of students.

Student learning outcomes assessment plan and process. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) standards require that all accredited programs be competency-based and track outcomes regarding student learning and professional competence. Programs must demonstrate that students are competent on 41 practice behaviors embedded within 10 competency standards. The School of Social Work conducts summative measurement of student competency using a performance-based, naturalistic approach to assessment. The summative measurement of competency uses embedded assignments across the curriculum.

Specialized accreditation. The B.S.W. program has been fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1980. At its February 2015 meeting, the CSWE Commission on Accreditation voted to reaffirm accreditation of the B.S.W. program for eight years, ending in February 2023.

Responses to recommendation resulting from the previous program review. The 2006 program review resulted in three recommendations: identify optimum enrollment, identify indicators of program uniqueness and ways to continually improve, and analyze factors impacting faculty recruitment and retention. Since the 2006 review, the School of Social Work has made internal changes to advisor job descriptions in order to positively impact recruitment, admission, and advisement. The faculty has identified key qualities of program uniqueness, including a highly experiential preparation for professional practice. Faculty retention has stabilized. The school had four hires within three years since the last program review and is well within the faculty-to-student ratios required by CSWE.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* projects that employment nationwide for social workers will increase 19 percent through 2020. That rate is higher than the average across all occupations. Employment in some social work specializations, such as gerontology social work and work with substance abuse disorders, is expected to increase even more than 19 percent. Local and statewide trends, such as a high number of anticipated retirements in the child welfare sector, and developments on the national level, such as the Affordable Care Act, will likely enhance employment opportunities.

Major findings of this program review self-study. The B.S.W. program at Illinois State University is vibrant, dynamic, and strong. The program meets all standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In February 2015, the program was fully accredited by CSWE for eight years, the longest accreditation period granted by the council to any program. Student quality is improving, as evidenced by an increase in grade point average. The faculty is at full-capacity according to accreditation standards and continues to be productive in scholarship and teaching. Two areas identified for improvement through the self-study process include a continued focus on recruitment and the development of child welfare courses that enable students to complete the three licensure exams for immediate employment in the child welfare sector.

Initiatives and plans for the next program review cycle. Through the self-study process, the School of Social Work has identified five initiatives to improve the B.S.W. program. School of Social Work administrators and advisors will continue to enhance recruitment and retention efforts to meet the target enrollment. This will be accomplished by developing and implementing an aggressive recruitment plan with community colleges, by consistent and timely follow-up with inquiries, and by nurturing closer advisory relationships with freshmen and sophomore students who have declared social work as their major. Second, program administrators and advisors will develop and implement a plan to consistently track alumni, including their contact information and employment or admission to graduate school. Nurturing closer and sustained relationships with alumni may lead to new field practicum sites, high-quality guest speakers in the classroom, opportunities for consultations with the program regarding developing trends in the practice community, and financial contributions to the University. Third, program administrators and advisors will enhance the scholarly distinction of social work students by increasing the number of social work students who enroll in the Honors program on campus. Fourth, program administrators and advisors will enhance the leadership distinction of social work students by increasing the number of social work students who enroll in the ISULeads Leadership Certificate program. Fifth, program faculty, administrators, and advisors will implement and continue to refine the child welfare specialization to qualify students for licensing in the child welfare employment sector.

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.) to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks the program for a well written, complete and forward-looking self-study report. The committee thanks the program for the detail with which it has explained the curriculum and for its thoughtful and constructive analysis of both IBHE comparator and aspirational programs.

The committee commends faculty for adoption of an intricate performance-based student learning outcomes assessment plan that uses embedded assignments aligned with Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of the Council on Social Work Education to evaluate competencies at three performance levels: simulation, written application of content to field clients, and student performance with actual clients. The committee commends faculty for systematic review of assessment data to ensure horizontal and vertical integration across the curriculum and for use of assessment results to inform program changes. Also noteworthy is involvement of the community advisory board in reviewing assessment results and providing input regarding areas that need to be strengthened.

The committee acknowledges staffing changes made by the school to assign recruitment, admission, and advisement functions to a single position for the B.S.W. program and for development of a plan to identify and respond more quickly to student issues potentially impacting retention. After implementation of these changes, the number of students in the program increased 27 percent, restoring enrollment to 2009 and 2010 levels.

The committee recognizes faculty members for their commitment to the social work profession as demonstrated by their research and scholarship and by their professional service through involvement with organizations on the local, state, and national levels. By incorporating their research and service experiences into their courses, faculty members are able to instruct students in the latest theories and practices in the discipline. Faculty research has also been used by the State of Illinois to guide child and family welfare policies and programs. The committee also recognizes program faculty members for their commitment to quality teaching through their extensive participation in professional development programs and their use of feedback mechanisms such as third-party chat sessions with students. The committee acknowledges the program for its work with Milner Library faculty to map discipline-appropriate information literacy skills to the curriculum and for progressively-advanced information literacy instruction through relevant and applied experiences.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study, tentatively due October 1, 2022, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

- Work with Enrollment Management and Academic Services to stabilize enrollment within a range that is sustainable over the next eight years given resources available to the program; the plan should include initiatives to increase male representation among students and to maintain the quality of students with respect to average ACT scores and external transfer grade point average.
- Continue efforts to sustain male representation among faculty in the School of Social Work at or above average levels across all social work programs in the United States.
- Develop and implement a plan to increase involvement of B.S.W. majors in the newly-restructured Honors program and in the ISULeads Leadership Certificate Program; the committee suggests exploring ways to involve students in the programs before the students are officially admitted to the B.S.W. program.
- Working with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), develop and implement a plan to qualify B.S.W. graduates to engage in child welfare functions immediately upon employment with DCFS; the plan should address delivery of content required by DCFS and administration of examinations required by the agency.
- Develop and implement a systematic approach to regular communication with program alumni to maintain information regarding their successes in employment and advanced education and to encourage their ongoing involvement with the program through sponsorship of practicum sites, mentoring students, guiding curriculum development, and giving; means of communication to be explored include, but are not limited to, enhanced use of social media tools and development of a dynamic alumni section on the School of Social Work website.

- Continue to utilize data collected through program assessment to make program improvements and document how that has been addressed.



Comparative Data, Bachelor of Social Work (44.0701)

Fall Enrollment

<u>University</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Governors State University	117	144	161	159	159
Illinois State University	159	173	174	157	148
Northeastern Illinois University	264	286	344	391	410
Southern Illinois University Carbondale	226	239	246	261	290
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	98	65	61	77	89
U of I at Chicago	0				
U of I at Springfield	105	102	115	127	103
U of I at Urbana/Champaign			47	107	113
Western Illinois University	187	200	183	192	186
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>1,156</i>	<i>1,209</i>	<i>1,331</i>	<i>1,471</i>	<i>1,498</i>

Fiscal Year Degrees

<u>University</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Governors State University	22	36	41	43	56
Illinois State University	54	43	59	64	55
Northeastern Illinois University	64	68	73	95	109
Southern Illinois University Carbondale	101	69	69	85	92
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	54	37	34	38	41
U of I at Chicago					41
U of I at Springfield	26	38	41	46	59
U of I at Urbana/Champaign		0	0	43	53
Western Illinois University	59	45	61	55	55
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>380</i>	<i>336</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>469</i>	<i>561</i>