1. University-community partnerships. We continued our consortium with UT-Austin by having two consortium meetings, with the final meeting being an overview, evaluation and celebration of the entire program. The collaboration between the universities was strengthened by having students from both programs at the same agency sites, which provided networking opportunities. The sites recruited for this program continued throughout the grant time period and met the needs of the students. We added a total of five sites throughout the program, with one added in this final year. A primary focus of the program was to build the capacity to meet the needs of rural Hispanic older adults, an underserved population. We had a specialized workshop to train the students and field instructors on the topic. The majority of our field sites are in rural areas serving this population, as well; therefore, the stipend students got direct practice experience in working with rural, Hispanic older adults. Although the advisory board was formed and met twice a year, it did not solidify into a strong, guiding body as we anticipated (see Lessons Learned).

2. Competency-based education. We integrated the Geriatric Social Work Competencies into the trainings for students and field instructors at consortium meetings. For example, the initial consortium meeting included an introduction to the competencies for students and field instructors. In addition, one consortium meeting focusing on Hispanic older adults applied the competencies to this population in exercises. Our curriculum had been gerontologized through the Gero-Ed grant, finalized during the first year of the HPPAE grant. As our social work program plans for reaccreditation using the new CSWE EPAS, we have used the Geriatric Social Work Competencies as a model. The competencies will be used in a pre- and post-test design with students in an aging course who participate in a service-learning project involving an ongoing relationship with an older adult. The social work with older adults and HBSE courses have been continually revised, further integrating the competencies. HPPAE field instructors also have the opportunity to attend the field instructor workshops that include content on competency-based education.

3. Field Rotations. There were no changes from the original rotation model. We used three models: hub, split, and concurrent. These worked well and met the needs of the agencies, field instructors, and students. When non-HPPAE students heard about the rotation model, they requested to have this in their field placements. Therefore, we have begun to use the model in placements other than HPPAE placements. We plan to continue using this model, regardless of funding, although we anticipate having stipends (see sustainability).
4. Expanded role of the field instructor. The HPPAE field instructors greatly appreciated the stipends we built into this grant. They felt it acknowledged their status and expanded role and recognized the extra effort and time involved. The HPPAE field instructors have continued to present in classes and are considered for adjunct instructor positions. We included them on the advisory board, but were not as active as anticipated. We attempted to engage them in a variety of ways, but our own time constraints were a challenge.

5. Student recruitment. We had six stipend students this year, one more than was planned. Over the course of the grant we had 13 stipend students, one more than we anticipated. Therefore, we exceeded our goals. We recruited through an elective course on social work with older adults, which was a requirement for receipt of the grant. We also used a flyer (attached) that we posted in conspicuous places and handed out at orientations and discussed in the field application process. Former HPPAE scholars also recruited during internship experiences and as guest speakers in classes. This was more than adequate for the numbers of stipend students we could support.

6. Leadership Development. HPPAE scholars presented at meetings for other students, faculty, and field instructors. HPPAE scholars participated in research projects. For example, two students conducted a qualitative research study with community-dwelling older adults examining town-gown relationships and produced a monograph that was disseminated throughout the university, including to the top administrative level. We maintain strong mentoring relationships with HPPAE scholars after graduation. We anticipate that some will definitely become field instructors. We forward information on continuing education and job opportunities. HPPAE scholars are participating in the HPPAE alumni group.

7. Plans for sustainability. We applied for a large SAMSHA grant, but were unsuccessful. We explored options for grants with the local hospital, Central Texas Medical Center, but obstacles prevented this development. We plan to apply for the McKenna Foundation grant based out of a nearby community. Several of the long-term care facilities that serve as field sites offer our students stipends. We will continue to receive stipends from our university’s Long Term Care Institute. We will continue to use the Hogg Foundation library in Austin to explore other funding opportunities. We are extensively involved in a university research group, Council on Interdisciplinary Research & Grants, which will provide opportunities for more research and grant funding. One of the co-principal investigators has received a grant to develop a service learning component as part of the course on social work with older adults. This involves students volunteering for the Mutual Assistance Program, operated by another university academic unit. Students are matched with older adults in the community and provide companionship and practical assistance. Two co-principal investigators are members of the
pilot group of the Normalization project. As previously described, we will continue the partnerships with field sites and instructors, integration of competency-based education, and the rotation model. We will be attempting to continue field instructor stipends as funds allow. All three co-principal investigators teach across the curriculum so that, with other faculty who are invested in the field of gerontological social work, student recruitment will continue. Through the Long Term Care Institute and other relationships built throughout the grant period, research and presentation opportunities will continue to involve students.

8. Dissemination and marketing plans. Two of us will be presenting findings of a qualitative study of the intergenerational programs through the Texas Department of Aging & Disabilities programs at CSWE in 2009, and submitting the findings for publication. We are working on a journal article on healthy aging. One of us published a book chapter on working with older Latinos. Two HPPAE students completed a qualitative study on town-gown relationships with community-dwelling older adults, resulting in a monograph that was disseminated throughout the university community. An upcoming gerontology MSW student completed a qualitative study on ADHD in older adult women and will be presenting her findings with one of the co-principal investigators at CSWE 2009, as well as submitting the findings for publication.

In March 2007, we presented at the BPD conference in Destin, Florida on gerontologizing the curriculum, including internship possibilities. We also presented at the Texas NASW meeting in November, 2008 in Galveston, Texas on the results of a study on healthy aging.

Below is a list of dissemination products listed in previous reports.


9. Evaluation

As previously reported, some students have had difficulties accessing the website, particularly around changes of the address and changes of personnel at HPPAE. One of the HPPAE field instructors completed a focus group with older adult clients at a geriatric psychiatric facility about the HPPAE students and received very positive feedback. The clients appreciated the students’ work with them and advised the agency to hire the students. (When a position came open, one student was hired.) Further evaluation may occur in the course of participation in the Normalization Project.

10. Lessons Learned. We wish we realized the amount of work involved, which would have meant more emphasis on course release time for the co-principal investigators. We wish we would have recruited more community leaders and agency personnel for the Advisory Board for sustainability purposes. Although we attempted to do this, it seemed to fall to the bottom of the list of priorities and we also found that some members changed jobs or moved away. We wish we would have emphasized the Advisory Board more. We wish we had been able to work more closely with our consortium partner. The two programs worked more independently of each other than we would have desired.

11. Successes and Difficulties. This program was a major success for students. The majority of them are working in the field. The field instructors have found it valuable and stimulating to work with such high quality students. “These are the best students that we’ve ever had referred for our internships,” is an example of one statement by a field instructor.

12. Multiplier Effects. Quantitative long term outcomes include 13 well-trained social workers who are or will most likely be working in the field of gerontological social work, assisting older adults in need. The number of field placements that focus on gerontology has increased. The number of presentations and publications for the co-principal investigators has increased due to our work on this grant, furthering our careers and connections with others in the field. We have greatly increased our curriculum materials related to gerontology, including books and DVDs. Qualitatively, there have been many effects. The awareness of the need for social workers trained to work in gerontology and the awareness of the rewards of working with older adults has increased among the students and faculty in our program. The quality of our relationship with field instructors has been enhanced by the involvement required by the grant. The quality of the training involved in the consortium meetings has increased the education and skill level of students, field instructors, and faculty. Relationships with other disciplines
interested in gerontology at our university have been formed. Several of us are considering developing a gerontology certificate program (sociology, psychology, counseling, and health administration). We are developing a relationship with faculty in the School of Health Administration focused on service learning, involving the Mutual Assistance Program that pairs students with older adults in need of companionship or practical assistance. Gerontology is firmly entrenched in our program, which will have long-lasting effects.

13. Perspective of Students. As described above, one field instructor in talking about the HPPAE scholars stated, “These are the best students that we’ve ever had referred for our internships.” “I have learned many new things during my internships. The following are some quotes from HPPAE scholars:

“At the .. program, I learned how to write progress notes, treatment goals, and the master treatment plan. I was able to shadow the nurse as she did initial evaluation and assessments with potential clients. I was able to attend many group sessions as well as lead a few of them and co-lead, co-create a smaller focus group aimed at community re-entry and relapse prevention. At the hospital, I learned about Advance Directives, a Medical Power of Attorney, and other directives a person may want to enact concerning their health care. I did social histories and assessments there, as well as attended the daily round table interdisciplinary meetings. Personally, I feel like my self-confidence in my ability to be a social worker grew during my internship. I was able to put my learning into action successfully as well as learn the new things required of me”.

“Prior to this internship, I had not had any experience facilitating groups other than in class. I am more confident now in facilitating groups. I was able to learn about ADD, anxiety and many other disorders that disturb older adults as well. I am feeling more confident in assisting families and problem solving. I definitely plan on staying in the geriatric field, because I truly love and enjoy it”.

“I love working with the geriatric population, but I have enjoyed it more on an individual basis. I think that you can learn a lot more about the patient and how they are really feeling if you meet with them individually. I would like to go on to do more counseling with this population and get my LCSW in a few years”.

“Each day of the week, there are therapy pets in the building. This was a big plus for me as I love dogs and cats,… I would recommend both places as future placements. The hospital provides one with a good understanding of what social services are needed in a rural hospital and the ..Program is an excellent clinical placement.”

Focus groups were conducted with the clients at an outpatient geriatric agency. Some comments from the clients about the HPPAE scholars are below:
“We learn from interns because they show a different point of view.”

“We learn a lot from them.”

“Interns are a blessing to us.”

“Interns help us not to get old and teach us to take better care of ourselves.”

“Each one brings a different perspective and outlook.”

“I learn from them what the younger generation is thinking and the way they talk. I learn new words from them.”

“I love having interns. I like to hear their views.”

At our final HPPAE consortium meeting, we asked all attending, students and field instructors to write six words that describe working with older adults, in accordance with the six-word memoir movement (http://www.smithmag.net/sixwords). Here were some of the results:

“Self-awareness garnered with loving kindness – compassionately”

“Gray hair, fragile bodies, reaching out”

“Simple pleasures less then, first now”

“Here today. Gone tomorrow. Love matters”

“See me; have lots to share”

“Invested in the experienced; learned much”

“Grace, wisdom, compassion as we age”

“Learning from older adults is awesome”

“Life experience, courage, hope – their story”

“Intergenerational sharing for a greater cause”

“Touching history: my privilege, their voice”

“Witnessed strength and courage despite loss”