Chapter 10: Culture of Learning

Students and Faculty celebrate at Hooding Ceremonies
Building a Diverse Culture of Learning for MSW Students

Crafting an Implicit Professional Learning Environment

We build our School by crafting a culture of learning that encourages diverse thought and diverse cultures, and that admits and retains students who can grow and develop through our program to become leaders of the profession. These are elements of the School's implicit curriculum, which sets the context and backdrop of our efforts to meet our mission and reach our goals.

EDUCATIONAL POLICY 3.0.—Implicit Curriculum: The Learning Environment. The implicit curriculum refers to the educational environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented. It is composed of the following elements: the program’s commitment to diversity; admissions policies and procedures; advisement, retention, and termination policies; student participation in governance; faculty; administrative structure; and resources. The implicit curriculum is manifested through policies that are fair and transparent in substance and implementation, the qualifications of the faculty, and the adequacy of resources. The culture of human interchange; the spirit of inquiry; the support for difference and diversity; and the values and priorities in the educational environment, including the field setting, inform the student’s learning and development. The implicit curriculum is as important as the explicit curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program’s graduates. Heightened awareness of the importance of the implicit curriculum promotes an educational culture that is congruent with the values of the profession.

“They know enough who know how to learn.”

—Henry Adams
EDUCATIONAL POLICY 3.1—Diversity. The program’s commitment to diversity—including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation—is reflected in its learning environment (institutional setting; selection of field education settings and their clientele; composition of program advisory or field committees; educational and social resources; resource allocation; program leadership; speaker series, seminars, and special programs; support groups; research and other initiatives; and the demographic make-up of its faculty, staff, and student body).

Accreditation Standard 3.1—Diversity

3.1.1 The program describes the specific and continuous efforts it makes to provide a learning environment in which respect for all persons and understanding of diversity and difference are practiced.

3.1.2 The program describes how its learning environment models affirmation and respect for diversity and difference.

3.1.3 The program discusses specific plans to improve the learning environment to affirm and support persons with diverse identities.

Accreditation Standard 3.2—Student Development: Admissions; Advisement, Retention, and Termination; and Student Participation Admissions

M3.2.1 The program identifies the criteria it uses for admission. The criteria for admission to the master’s program must include an earned bachelor’s degree from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting association.

3.2.2 The program describes the process and procedures for evaluating applications and notifying applicants of the decision and any contingent conditions associated with admission.

M3.2.3 BSW graduates entering MSW programs are not to repeat what has been mastered in their BSW programs. MSW programs describe the policies and procedures used for awarding advanced standing. These policies and procedures should be explicit and unambiguous. Advanced standing is awarded only to graduates holding degrees from baccalaureate social work programs accredited by CSWE, those recognized through its International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service, or covered under a memorandum of understanding with international social work accreditors.

3.2.4 The program describes its policies and procedures concerning the transfer of credits.

3.2.5 The program submits its written policy indicating that it does not grant social work course credit for life experience or previous work experience. The program documents how it informs applicants and other constituents of this policy.

Advisement, retention, and termination

3.2.6 The program describes its academic and professional advising policies and procedures. Professional advising is provided by social work program faculty, staff, or both.
The program spells out how it informs students of its criteria for evaluating their academic and professional performance, including policies and procedures for grievance.

The program submits its policies and procedures for terminating a student's enrollment in the social work program for reasons of academic and professional performance.

**Student participation**

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

The program demonstrates how it provides opportunities and encourages students to organize in their interests.

**Creating the MSW Student Body**

The School is committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, and creating an atmosphere in which students can learn tolerance and new perspectives from one another. Currently the School serves 221 MSW students, of whom nearly 32% are Hispanic, 10.5% are black, and nearly 53% are white. Race and ethnicity of MSW student body by year are shown in the following table.

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>International Non-Resident</th>
<th>White, non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Hispanic of any race</th>
<th>Black/non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaskan Native</th>
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<td>66.1</td>
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<td>14.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>10.4</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Fewer than half of our MSW students are baccalaureate graduates of Texas State. The majority are Texans, which is appropriate for a state-supported university. Our online program serves students in other states, as well as some who are based on military installations abroad. This diversity of student experience provides much comparative experience and knowledge for students.

The majority of our MSW students are female; our current and past gender distribution varies around 90% female and 10% male. Students vary by age, with the largest age group made up of students aged 25-29, followed by students aged 30-34, as shown by the following chart:

Another distinction in our MSW program is between part-time students and full-time students. All our online students are part-time, and a number of our on-campus students are also part-time due to family and work obligations. We encourage any student who is working more than part-time to attend school part-time, in order to ensure that the student can give sufficient time to studies. Though numbers vary, currently we have more part-time than full-time students, likely because the sputtering economy drives them to work. The following table describes part-time and full-time enrollment.
Admissions. The School has enjoyed a growing number of applications for the MSW program over the last five years. Currently, we receive 3-4 applications for every available slot. Because of the heavy load of applications, and because the University has recently adopted the Banner system to handle all admissions, the School revamped its procedures for admissions in 2011. The School hired an MSW Admissions Coordinator (an experienced MSW) to work with applicants and manage the flow of applications. We also moved to a true rolling admissions process, in which we consider applications when they are completed until we constitute our student cohorts. We will be evaluating this new procedure in spring 2012 to make any needed refinements, but our initial response to the new procedures is positive. Admission criteria, however, have not changed, only procedures.

Candidates for admission to the MSW degree program first apply online to Texas State Graduate College and complete either the On-Campus MSW application or the Online MSW application online. If the Graduate College admits, they transfer the application using the Banner software to the MSW Admissions Coordinator for initial review. Applicants must:

- hold an undergraduate degree from a regionally-accredited university (as demonstrated by official transcripts),
- have taken a statistics course and a human anatomy/physiology course,
- have at least a 3.0 GPA,
- write a satisfactory essay expressing their motivation to pursue social work as a career,
- prepare a satisfactory resume,
- and demonstrate a liberal arts background.

Their materials must reflect appropriate communication, organized thinking, and a commitment to public sector work. Applicants should also have a legal record free of felonies, though the School will consider extenuating circumstances if
the legal problems do not prohibit the School from making a reasonable field placement for the student.

Full-time core faculty members who are also members of the Graduate Faculty (which currently is all but four clinical faculty members) serve as reviewers, using a review matrix which evaluates the above criteria. The Admissions Coordinator collates faculty reviews and submits a recommendation to the MSW Coordinator, who may choose to interview the candidate. The MSW Coordinator then recommends to the Graduate College that the applicant be admitted, denied, or admitted on a conditional basis (in which specific conditions, such as completing a human biology for social workers class within the first semester of course work, must be satisfied). The Graduate College and the School both communicate with the applicant about the admissions decision through written letter and email. In addition, the College of Applied Arts has a designated Graduate Admissions Director who supports all graduate programs in the College. She also communicates with all admitted applicants to encourage them to enroll.

**Advanced Standing** applicants must hold the BSW from a CSWE-accredited program and meet all other admission criteria. They must have earned a minimum 3.0 GPA in all undergraduate social work courses. Applicants who hold the BSW, however, are not guaranteed admittance into Advanced Standing. Successful Advanced Standing applicants are admitted into the concentration year and, consequently, do not repeat foundation content. If a student wishes to take a foundation course to shore up learning, he or she is permitted to do so on an individual basis, but it is not required.

**Online** applicants must meet the same admissions criteria as on-campus applicants. We accept online students who live outside of a 50-mile radius from San Marcos, however. Online applicants are also informed that, to be successful in online studies, they must have access to computer equipment that supports online learning, specified on the School website.

To repeat and clarify:

- **All MSW students must hold an undergraduate degree from an accredited university** (specified on page 20 of the *Graduate Catalogue*).
- **All Advanced Standing students must hold the BSW from a CSWE-accredited university** (specified on page 106 of the *Graduate Catalogue*). They do not repeat foundation curriculum.
- **The School does not grant academic credit for life or work experience.**

**Transfers.** The Graduate College will accept six credit hours earned in graduate courses completed in residence at an accredited institution (as verified by an official transcript), if:

- The courses are appropriate to the Texas State MSW degree program;
- Courses are not used for credit on another degree;
⇒ The grade earned in the course was at least a “B” (pass/fail grades are not accepted for transfer);
⇒ If the credits were earned prior to the student's admission to the Texas State Graduate College, the credits may be applied to the student's current MSW degree program. The student must provide written verification of status at that university, and the MSW Director must submit a written request to the Dean of the Graduate College asking the Dean to accept the transfer work as part of the Texas State degree;
⇒ OR, if the credits are to be earned after the student is admitted to the Texas State Graduate College, the Texas State Dean of the Graduate College must give prior written approval of the enrollment and send a letter of good standing to the other institution before the student enrolls in the courses(s) to be transferred.

These standards are explained on pages 41-42 of the Graduate Catalogue.

**Conditional Admission.** The School has a mechanism for admitting students conditionally if they do not meet GPA requirements or they have not completed the prerequisite courses in human anatomy/physiology and statistics. In reality, however, because our level of applications is robust, we do not typically consider conditional applications. However, from time to time, the MSW Coordinator may recommend to the Graduate Dean that an applicant who shows promise in graduate studies be admitted conditionally. This scenario arises most often for applicants who have not completed the prerequisite biology and statistics courses, and such applicants, if admitted, must complete the courses in their first semester of graduate study. On rare occasions, a promising student who is slightly below the required GPA may be admitted on condition that he/she maintain a required grade point average during the first two semesters of graduate study. When the student has completed the conditions of admission, the MSW Coordinator will recommend to the Graduate Dean that the student be admitted unconditionally. If the student has not satisfied the conditions of admission within the specified time limit, the Dean of the Graduate College may discontinue his or her enrollment. These standards are explained on page 21 of the Graduate Catalogue.

**Appeals.** Applicants who are not satisfied with the results of the MSW admissions process have the right to appeal the decision to the Graduate College Dean, providing additional documentation to amend the original application. They must submit written appeals within 30 days of receiving the admissions decision. The Graduate Dean forwards the appeals materials to the MSW Coordinator, who reviews the application and additional documentation, based on the School’s admission criteria and the applicant pool. The MSW Coordinator also asks two faculty members to review the materials. Based upon these reviews, the MSW Coordinator recommends actions on the appeal to the School Director, who also reviews the materials and forwards the results of the appeal to the Graduate Dean. The Graduate Dean makes the final admissions decision and informs the applicant. This process should be completed in approximately 30 days.
Advising and Retaining Students

**Orientation.** Advising begins with MSW New Student Orientation, which is conducted both in person and on-line when new cohorts commence in summer and fall. The Coordinator and other faculty encourage students to study the School Student Handbook, which is posted on the School website. During Orientation, faculty talk with students about the material in the Handbook, emphasizing helpful hints about using the Library’s on-line services, the Office of Disabilities, and other entities which can help them achieve success. Faculty also spend time at orientation alerting students to graduate performance expectations and how best to be successful in graduate education.

**Curriculum Advising.** Because our MSW curriculum is tightly structured and is essentially lock-step, and because the School gives approvals for students to register for graduate courses, students do not need much curriculum advising. Their sequence of courses is well-laid-out. Their degree plans are available to them, the Coordinator, and their Faculty Advisor via Banner. The MSW Coordinator and the Faculty Advisor are available to work with students who, for health or other reasons, find themselves out of sequence on their courses. One of the major issues students tend to face is “time crunch”. Many have family obligations and work responsibilities. Faculty work with students to set priorities in meeting their academic goals.

**Professional Advising.** Each student, however, is assigned a Faculty Professional Advisor. This faculty person can assist on curriculum issues, but is available to talk with students about professional behavior, licensure, job-hunting, and all sorts of professional career issues. Faculty Advisors talk with students individually and in groups, and are available both during scheduled office hours (five hours per week) or email office hours, and by appointment. We also talk with online students through computer cameras and microphones. Faculty do not serve as personal counselors to students on non-academic matters, but will refer students for counseling and other resources if needed. If they desire, MSW students may request a change in faculty advisors.

**Retention.** Because of these efforts, and because we choose talented students for admission, 90% of our MSW students are retained and complete the program.

**Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Governance**

**Rights and Responsibilities.** The School, through the Student Handbook (both hard copy and on the web site), informs students of their rights and responsibilities; this information is available in the official University Student Handbook, which delineates academic policies and procedures; students’ rights, privileges, and expectations; and the grievance and resolution process. It describes students’ responsibilities, including required and prohibited conduct, and specifies policies on sexual and racial harassment, denial of civil rights, and computer use. The Student Handbook explains how Texas State administers student justice and how disciplinary penalties are determined. It
outlines students’ due process rights and options for hearing grievances, as well as rights to appeal and review. Issues such as the prohibition of plagiarism, the rules against sexual harassment, the regulation of alcohol use and the prohibition of drugs and tobacco use on campus, and the rules related to absence on religious holidays are clarified in the student handbook. A supplementary source of information for graduate students is the Graduate Catalog, which contains policy statements on multiculturalism and disability, admissions and policies and registration procedures, and guidance on course load.

Governance. Undergraduate and graduate representatives of the Organization of Student Social Workers (OSSW) and a representative of the Alpha Chi chapter of the Phi Alpha National Honor Society are invited to attend regular meetings of School faculty. Students have voice but not vote on the faculty, consistent with Texas State Faculty Senate policy which limits faculty governance to full-time faculty. Students are also recruited to serve on several School committees, where their opinions are solicited and considered. In reality, student participation in School committees is rather low, since many of our students are working individuals, commute to school, and have limited time to participate.

One way the School solicits student input is through periodic focus groups on specific issues, such as how to develop more helpful content on multiculturalism. The School also involves students as participants in developing the learning environment through encouraging them to be part of developing classroom logistics and expectations for civility. Students also have a number of opportunities through mid-term and final course evaluations, as well as through day-to-day class discussion, to comment on issues such as textbooks, course assignments, and other curriculum issues.

Because Texas State is a public institution, the state Legislature is profoundly influential on students’ experience here. We encourage students to be involved with their legislators to express needs and concerns. To this end, we organize Social Work Day at the Legislature as an opportunity for students to meet with legislators at the state capitol. This educational event has been popular and is well-attended by our MSW students. The School supports it by organizing the event, securing matching t-shirts for students to buy, and providing shuttles to Austin.

Organizing in Student Self-Interest. The two major social work organizations to which students can belong follow:

- The Organization of Student Social Workers (OSSW) promotes a closer bond among students in social work, and provides for students to have input into the degree programs. OSSW, which serves as an advocacy and service organization for social work students, is totally student-run, though a faculty advisor is assigned and assists the organization in meeting its goals. Membership is open to all School students (including Pre-majors and minors). OSSW sponsors various activities, such as parties, fund-raisers,
and service projects in the community. The group encourages student participation in presenting research as well.

- Many students also participate in Texas State’s Alpha Chi Chapter of Phi Alpha, the National Social Work Honor Society. Graduate membership in Phi Alpha is open to students who have completed at least four courses in MSW graduate studies and achieved a minimum grade point average of 3.5. New Phi Alpha members are inducted in a recognition ceremony held in conjunction with OSSW. In addition to promoting academic achievement, Phi Alpha members also participate in service projects and in professional conferences and scholarly presentations.

Students may also affiliate with Interruptions, a multicultural antiracism peer-education group started by social work students some years ago. It is committed to educating the Texas State community about ways to recognize and interrupt racism at all levels. Though this is now a campus-wide organization, it is closely related to the School and offers a fine vehicle in which to encourage students to celebrate diversity.

**Empowering Students.** Students have been empowered to create a learning environment that meets their needs through these various organizations. For instance:
- Through OSSW, MSW students have discussed the need for more multicultural content, which faculty have taken to heart and have integrated into courses.
- OSSW has also been successful in securing some funds from the University to support the educational Student Day at the Legislature experience.
- OSSW students were influential in initiating a series of brown-bag luncheons to discuss issues important to students, such as resume-writing and job-hunting.
- Student groups are also active in bringing various speakers to campus. The faculty teach students to value continuing education as professionals, always expanding the borders of their knowledge and skills as they continue through professional life.

**Evaluation of Student Performance.** The School, working through its MSW Oversight Committee, prepares, reviews, and refines a master syllabus for each graduate course and chooses core textbooks. The Committee also oversees the core assignments that measure competencies and practice behaviors. Faculty may use additional texts or readings and has freedom to alter the sequence of learning materials, or to add and refine assignments other than the core assignments. Faculty agree, however, to maintain the basic integrity of the course syllabus: course learning aims, core textbooks, core assignments, and various universal elements such as information on Office of Student Disability, basic expectations for attendance and classroom conduct, and adherence to social work ethics.

The resulting syllabi are comprehensive, and all course policies and expectations are carefully constructed. They clearly describe the variety of evaluative mechanisms that the School uses, such as group activities, tests, research and concept papers, discussions, role plays and simulations, tests,
community projects, oral reports, and other strategies, to demonstrate their mastery of learning.

**Final Grade Appeals.** Students who wish to appeal a course grade have due process to appeal to the faculty member, the Director, and the Dean. The appeals forms are available on the College website. The number of appeals which come through the School is small, but when a student files a grade appeal, the School looks to the syllabus as a key factor. Consequently, faculty are clear that syllabi must be clearly written and must be comprehensive.

**Evaluation of Student Fitness and Performance.** Students occasionally have challenges in meeting standards of academic performance, professional behavior, or ethical conduct. In those cases, which are infrequent, we follow our **Evaluation of Student Fitness and Performance Policy**, available to students online. The policy points out that every student signs a contract upon entering studies in the School, 1) agreeing to adhere to the Code of Ethics and applicable state laws; and 2) acknowledging understanding that a student can be terminated from the program based on failing to satisfactorily achieve academic and professional standards. Faculty evaluate students’ academic achievement and professional development based on CSWE EPAS, the University Honor Code, and the Texas State and School of Social Work Student Handbooks.

The University Registrar, Graduate College, or Academic Advisor will inform each student and the BSW or MSW Degree Coordinators in writing of any changes in the student’s academic standing. Each student is responsible for contacting the Degree Coordinator, and submitting a corrective action plan to resolve any academic standing issue by the end of the semester in which the problem is identified.

If a faculty member has a serious concern about a student’s professional behavior and/or development, the faculty member will:

- Document the concern timely and submit it to the student’s Faculty Advisor and the appropriate Degree Coordinator, who will determine if a corrective action plan is needed.
- If corrective action needed, the faculty member will meet with the student, discussing the concern and developing a corrective plan together. Absent the student’s participation, the faculty member will develop the plan.
- The corrective action plan will be sent to the student, the Faculty Advisor, and the appropriate Degree Coordinator electronically.
- If the concern is resolved, the faculty member will document this change in behavior, inform the student’s Faculty Advisor and appropriate Degree Coordinator, and no further action will be pursued on the matter.
- However, if the documented unprofessional behavior persists, the faculty member will consult with the student’s Advisor and Degree Coordinator, who will refer the Student Concern Form, corrective action plan and any other supporting documentation to the Program Standards Committee for review and recommendations. All documentation will also be provided to the student.
- The Program Standards Committee will convene a hearing within ten (10) working days to make recommendations. The faculty member, student, and student’s advisor will attend and air their responses to the situation.
After deliberating, the Committee will report its decision(s) in writing within ten (10) working days to the student, the appropriate Degree Coordinator, and the School Director.

The student has ten (10) working days to accept/reject the Committee’s recommendation(s) in writing. If a student fails to respond, we assume that the student accepts the decision. The student may appeal the decision to the School Director and the College Dean, whose decision is final.

Appreciating and Accepting Diversity

The University’s mission addresses the need for well-educated people to appreciate and accept diversity, and this emphasis is clearly evident in the School. The University, over the last eight years, has made funds available to hire qualified faculty who bring diverse factors to enrich the faculty; the School has been fortunate to be able to hire five diverse faculty through six cycles of this Target of Opportunity program.

Selecting Field Agencies that Promote Diversity. The School, which works with hundreds of agencies across Texas and the nation, strives to ensure diversity in field experiences. The School’s priority is to place students, particularly foundation students, in public agencies, which means that students work with the most vulnerable populations in the community, those who live in poverty, have limited options, and are frequently marginalized. These client populations often include many people who are ethnic minorities.

In addition to public agencies, we also work with non-profit and faith-based agencies that offer diversity in the populations they serve and in their practice fields. These agencies serve the most vulnerable groups, typically using streams of public money. In addition to working in agencies that have diverse sources of authorization and work with different populations, our students also can choose between rural, urban, and ex-urban settings for field placement. The agencies with which we work offer a blend of micro, mezzo, and macro work. We have placements in local, state, and federal agencies, and we have an active working relationship with several military social work programs, such as Fort Hood and other military installations and various Veteran’s Affairs installations.

Our online students have particularly diverse field settings. Many of our online students live in primarily rural areas, which means that they may operate in some professional isolation in their communities. A student in Andrews, Texas, for instance, may be the only social worker in the county, or perhaps in several counties. So she brings a perspective on professional work which is markedly different than a student who is placed in the Dallas area, surrounded by professional resources.

Because the School has a personalized approach to developing placement opportunities with students based on their learning needs and career aspirations, we have rich opportunities to make placements diverse. Our agency-based field supervisors are also a diverse lot in terms of gender, age,
sexual orientation, religion, ability, and ethnicity. These field supervisors present a broad variety of professional backgrounds and earned their social work degrees at different universities. The School incorporates the rich backgrounds and experiences of our field supervisors by using them as our advisors to help us keep abreast of what is going on in the work place, what kind of contemporary learning students need to be successful in the work place, and how well we are doing in preparing students. Here are just a few of the various placement agencies that expose MSW students to diverse issues:

⇒ State and national legislative and policy-making offices
⇒ State agency offices serving children in peril, the elderly, and the disabled
⇒ Mental health centers across the nation, such as Gulf Bend MHMR Center in Victoria, Texas
⇒ Victims’ services agencies in various counties
⇒ VA hospitals across Texas serving veterans with serious service-related injuries
⇒ Agencies serving people with sexually diverse life styles, such as OutYouth, an agency for adolescents seeking acceptance for their homosexuality
⇒ Forensic prison units
⇒ An AIDS Coalition agency in North Carolina which was a private for-profit organization but used our AL student in doing a major Quality Assurance Program Evaluation
⇒ A child and family service agency in rural California

**A Multi-Cultural Faculty and Staff.** The School of Social Work faculty presents diversity on a number of levels:

- Currently, seventeen core faculty are female, while four are male.
- Two core faculty members are African-American; three are Hispanic; one is Asian American; and the others are white with a spectrum of origins. Of our current five adjunct faculty, two are Hispanic and one is African American.
- Faculty present different physical abilities and health statuses. While two faculty regularly run marathons, for instance, another person is a kidney transplant recipient, and yet another faculty person regularly uses a cane or walker to assist in mobility.
- They represent various religions, with a range of political, social, and dietary beliefs.
- Faculty ages range from roughly 35-61.
- Faculty come from a variety of economic backgrounds, and they originally hail from various localities (from Massachusetts to Kansas, Mississippi, California, and many points in between), and they have worked professionally in such diverse areas as Illinois, Minnesota, Tennessee, Louisiana, England, India, and Mexico. Now they live all over Central Texas, from San Antonio to Round Rock, New Braunfels to Round Top, Kyle to Killeen. We are a commuting faculty.
- Several of the faculty speak Spanish.
- Faculty differ in sexual orientation and family structure.
- Several of our faculty are the first in their families to earn a college degree.

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Dr. Anne Deepak is the faculty sponsor of Interruptions, a campus student group designed to interrupt racism.
Faculty certainly present diverse work backgrounds and interests. Dr. Kathy Selber is passionate about working with military families and veterans, while Dr. Catherine Hawkins is focused on global human rights and sustaining gains through peace. Dr. Betsy Wisner teaches meditation and self-reflection as intervention, while Dr. Christine Norton is committed to adventure therapy and Dr. Raphael Travis teaches Hip-Hop as therapy. So there are many diverse viewpoints on the faculty.

Regardless of faculty members’ diverse contextual factors, all faculty have access to resources equally. The University and School makes funding available for professional travel, creates grant opportunities and makes grant support services available, provides graduate assistant time, and provides all other faculty resources regardless of any contextual factor.

The School has four administrative staff, three of whom are Hispanic and speak Spanish fluently. Their differences in culture, place of origin, first language, family educational level, and other contextual factors do not interfere with their access to University and School resources. They are treated equitably.

**Educational Strategies that Enhance Appreciation of Diversity.** The School uses educational strategies that build a culture in which students learn to appreciate the broad range of human diversity.

- The School’s mission incorporates an emphasis on serving the most vulnerable populations, and these are diverse groups on many levels.
- The School has embraced online education as a way to reach out to educationally-underserved prospective MSWs, particularly those in rural areas. The learning from online technology has washed back over the our face-to-face classes, where we have expanded teaching strategies so that the School can now more easily accommodate diverse groups, such as differently-abled students who would benefit from more flexible learning techniques. Learning activities that incorporate technology also express appreciation for how different generations learn differently.
- The School enjoys a grant from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health which provides generous stipends to bi-lingual students who want a career working in mental health with Spanish-speaking clients. The events which this grant allows us to sponsor have benefited all MSW students. We sponsor speakers who address issues related to Latino culture, such as a speaker who dealt with cultural traditions around dying which affect family dynamics.
- Some of our courses have been translated to multi-cultural emphasis through the cooperative work of faculty and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. We hope to have more of these translations in the future.
- The School is involved with a campus group exploring dual language issues on campus, and we will continue to work with this effort.
- The fact that the University is designated as an Hispanic-Serving Institution highlights that the study body has a substantial Hispanic component. It also offers many opportunities for future learning experiences that will teach students to appreciate diversity. For instance, the College of Applied Arts Dean, Dr. Jaime Chahin, is in charge of the University’s drive to bring in grants related to the
University’s HSI-status. He and several members of the School faculty are discussing how to develop a Hispanic Family Institute to study the Hispanic family across the life span, and develop recommendations for serving Hispanic families.

Faculty are engaged in a number of research projects that involve diversity, and they share these activities with students. For instance:

- Drs. Ausbrooks, Jones, and Tijerina have done research on the cultural climate in schools of social work.
- Drs. Travis and Ausbrooks have researched interventions empowering high-school-aged black men.
- Dr. Tijerina has researched Hispanic women in higher education.
- Dr. Tijerina has researched the effect of child welfare services on Mexican immigrants.
- Drs. Russell and Ausbrooks have researched transracial adoption.
- Drs. Jones, Biggs, and Knox have researched services to the aged.
- Dr. Travis’s research on using Hip-Hop as an intervention with youth speaks to many issues of divergent thinking.

The School offers an undergraduate course as part of the University’s study abroad program in Cambridge, England. Though not many students are able to participate in this program, participating students volunteer in British social agencies and learn about service systems in other societies.