CHAPTER 12: ADMINISTRATION

Happy Graduation 2010!

With students are Anne Deepak (Top Right photo, on right); Dorinda Noble, Sally Hill Jones, and Nancy Chavkin (Middle Left photo); Karen Knox (Bottom Left, on left)
Administering our MSW Program in a Climate of Change

Maintaining our Focus Despite Distractions

Change has been a constant and pervasive influence in the School’s life since our last reaffirmation, challenging us to maintain our focus on the educational mission before us. Our external environment has changed: Central Texas is burgeoning and the state’s population is now more than 50% Hispanic. Over the last two years, University funding from the state has been cut by $17 million. State politicians are demanding more accountability from state universities in faculty workload and in student retention and graduation rates. Internally, the University culture has changed. Student enrollment has risen dramatically; physical space is crowded on campus; the University has become an HSI entity; and University standards for faculty productivity have risen sharply. The School has seen sharp rises in student population, and our faculty size has more than doubled. The School has embraced online education, and has significantly raised expectations for faculty scholarship and performance. Despite these strong winds of change, the School has remained focused on its mission. Rising enrollments have given the University and the School a much-needed financial cushion against state cuts, and the School is in a strong position to move forward.

EDUCATION POLICY 3.4—ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE. Social work faculty and administrators, based on their education, knowledge, and skills, are best suited to make decisions regarding delivery of social work education. They exercise autonomy in designing an administrative and leadership structure, developing curriculum, and formulating and implementing policies that support the education of competent social workers.
Accreditation Standard 3.4—Administrative Structure

3.4.1 The program describes its administrative structure and shows how it provides the necessary autonomy to achieve the program’s mission and goals.
3.4.2 The program describes how the social work faculty has responsibility for defining program curriculum consistent with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards and the institution’s policies.
3.4.3 The program describes how the administration and faculty of the social work program participate in formulating and implementing policies related to the recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion, and tenure of program personnel.
3.4.4 The program identifies the social work program director. Institutions with accredited BSW and MSW programs appoint a separate director for each.

M3.4.4(a) The program describes the MSW program director’s leadership ability experience, and other academic and professional activities in social work. The program documents that the director has a master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program. In addition, it is preferred that the MSW program director have a doctoral degree, preferably in social work.

M3.4.4(b) The program provides documentation that the director has a full-time appointment to the social work program.

M3.4.4(c) The program describes the procedures for determining the program director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. To carry out the administrative functions of the program, a minimum of 50% assigned time is required at the master’s level. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.

3.4.5 The program identifies the field education director.

3.4.5(a) The program describes the field director’s ability to provide leadership in the field education program through practice experience, field instruction experience, and administrative and other relevant academic and professional activities in social work.

M3.4.5(b) The program documents that the field education director has a master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and at least 2 years of post-baccalaureate or postmaster’s social work degree practice experience.

M3.4.5(c) The program describes the procedures for determining the field director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education. To carry out the administrative functions of the field at least 50% assigned time is required for master’s programs. The program demonstrates this time is sufficient.

3.4.5(d) The program provides documentation that the field director has a full-time appointment to the social work program.

Our Organizational Structure

The School is one of seven units in the College of Applied Arts (CAA), which includes Family and Consumer Science, Criminal Justice, Occupational Education, Agriculture, and Army and Air Force Military Sciences. The School’s administrative structure is depicted this way:
David served as Graduate Assistant to Dr. Wisner. He helped develop materials for an article and was co-author with Dr. Wisner on a 2010 article on using meditation as intervention for adolescents, published in *Children and Schools*.

George completed his internship in 2010 at Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany. His research project involved a study of the USO at the base.

**Autonomy.** The School, though it is integrated with the larger university, has its own separate budget and decides how to spend its money, though it must be accountable in how it spends its funds. As in all public bureaucracies, spending decisions go through an approval process; however, the reality is that, as long as justifications are reasonable, the School rarely encounters opposition to spending decisions.

The School also creates its own personnel policies (consistent with University standards and in adherence with state and federal laws). The School makes its own hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion decisions, with approvals as set out in the University personnel policies. The University has been supportive of most School personnel decisions and works with the School to resolve any issues that arise.
Curriculum decisions rest with the School faculty. Those decisions are reviewed and approved by University faculty committees, where colleagues may raise thought-provoking and useful questions, but have never to date blocked any School curriculum decision.

The School is autonomous, within the larger University context, in making key decisions that affect our ability to meet mission and goals in ways that are consistent with professional values and ethics.

**Overseeing the Curriculum**

The School’s curriculum must answer to several masters: the School faculty, who are in charge of the curriculum; the standards of the University; CSWE’s Educational Policies and Standards (EPAS); and student needs and professional concerns. Ultimately, the faculty is in charge of defining, shaping, and sequencing its curriculum.

MSW curriculum decisions begin with the MSW Coordinator and the School MSW Oversight Committee, who regularly review and assess the timeliness and the evidence supporting the curriculum. The committee looks at curriculum in light of reports of what graduates need to know in the current work world, those reports coming from students and the professional field. They also compare the curriculum with the outcomes measures that we conduct to ensure that every competency and practice behavior is met. We measure outcomes not only for CSWE, but also for our regional accrediting body, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

When the MSW Committee determines that curriculum changes are merited, they recommend changes to the School Curriculum Committee (a committee of the whole faculty, chaired by a member of the faculty). If changes are minor (such as adding additional content on a topic, or changing the placement of the course in the course sequence), and constitute no change to course title or learning goals, the Committee may elect to revise the School’s master syllabus of the course and make those changes internally.

If a course is to be dropped or added, or if the title is to be changed, or if more than 50% of the course is altered, the School Director forwards changes adopted by the School Curriculum Committee to be reviewed by the College of Applied Arts Curriculum Committee, which is constituted by a representative from each College academic unit and is chaired by a faculty member. Once the College Committee approves, the changes are forwarded for review by the Dean and ultimately by the University Curriculum Committee (again, a faculty-led and faculty-constituted committee). The Provost reviews those decisions.
Making Personnel Decisions

The University has extensive policies about hiring, evaluating, retaining, promoting, and tenuring faculty, all in accordance with applicable laws. The University also employs a well-qualified full-time Equity and Access Officer who assists the School with fair and legal ways to make personnel decisions.

Hiring Faculty. The School faculty, led by the School’s Search Task Force, discusses School personnel needs, creates and reviews job ads, selects candidates to be interviewed, leads and engages in candidate interviews, reviews candidates’ qualifications and performance in the interview, and recommends those candidates which meet the job ad specifications and are acceptable to the faculty. This process, of course, is interspersed with reviews by the Equity and Access Officer to make sure that the process is fair, and with reviews and recommendations by the Director and the Dean to the Provost, who makes the official hire of faculty. The University hires new faculty at or above the national median 9-month salary levels identified by the College and University Professors’ Association (CUPA) per level and per discipline. This process, though laborious, results in hiring decisions that have been thoroughly vetted in legal, equitable ways. The School faculty have a great deal of input into hiring decisions.

Evaluation. The School has its own written faculty evaluation policies and tenure policies, which are approved by the Dean and Provost. All core faculty are evaluated yearly, a process which involves peer review of classroom presentation and course materials, including course sites on TRACS, the University’s electronic teaching platform; self-evaluation of teaching, scholarship, and service; and evaluation by and feedback from the Personnel Committee (all tenured faculty in the School). (The School also visits adjuncts’ classes and gives feedback on teaching methods and materials.) After the Personnel Committee reviews all materials, guided by the School policies on evaluation and tenure, they forward their responses to the Director, who reviews and forwards the material to the Dean for review. The evaluation results are forwarded to the Provost.

Faculty get the benefit of a great deal of written and verbal feedback in this process. Untenured faculty have three visits per year from tenured faculty to assess class delivery and materials. Second-year faculty are assessed twice during the second year by the Personnel Committee and Director, which can be very helpful to faculty as they develop a research agenda. Third-year faculty get an intensive review to assist them in moving toward tenure. Faculty receive specific and timely feedback on what elements need improvement and how to improve in their performance.

Tenure and Promotion. Tenure-track faculty are considered for tenure in their sixth year at Texas State. Their tenure packets are examined by the Personnel Committee, Director, Dean, Provost, President, and Board of Regents. Tenure consideration is the culmination of six years of evaluation,
review, and feedback, so tenure candidates have a great deal of help in achieving tenure and are well-briefed on the status of their tenure materials. The School’s candidates going forward in Year 6 have all been successful over the last decade and more, so the School has a strong record of helping people achieve this milestone. The same careful, purposeful review and feedback process holds true for tenured individuals who seek promotion to full professor, and the School’s candidates for promotion have been successful for more than a decade.

**Leadership**

In the time-honored tradition of the academy, faculty meet frequently in various committees to shape and lead the work of the MSW program. Central in this endeavor is the MSW Oversight Committee, which meets several times yearly and continues its between-meetings work electronically. The School also has designated a leader for the MSW program.

**School Director.** The School has a Director, Dr. Dorinda Noble, LCSW, who has been at Texas State since 2001, having come from serving as MSW Coordinator at Louisiana State University School of Social Work for the previous decade. After serving for two years as MSW Coordinator at Texas State, and following a national search, she was named School Director in 2003. All chairs and directors undergo yearly evaluations, as well as in-depth comprehensive evaluations every three years. Dr. Noble has just been reappointed as Director after the comprehensive evaluation last year, which was conducted by the Dean and involved interviews with all faculty and student surveys to assess the quality of leadership the Director provides. A graduate of Tulane University (MSW) and University of Texas-Austin (Ph.D.), Dr. Noble has more than 30 years of social work education experience, including 7 years serving as director of an accredited undergraduate social work program. She has numerous publications and speaks often in national and international forums, particularly on topics of ethics, supervision, and professional regulation. Dr. Noble served as chair of the Louisiana State Board of Social Work Examiners (gubernatorial appointment) for several years, and has served the last six years on the Texas Board of Social Worker Examiners (gubernatorial appointment). She serves on the Board of Directors of Association of Social Work Boards.

**MSW Coordinator.** The School’s MSW Coordinator, Dr. Mary Jo Garcia Biggs, LCSW, is an Associate Professor appointed to the School full-time. She earned her MSW at Our Lady of the Lake University and her Ph.D. in Education at Texas A&M University. Following several semesters of adjunct teaching at Texas State, she joined the faculty as a tenure-track assistant professor in 2004. Though she has taught policy, research, HBSE and macro practice in both the MSW and BSW programs, her most consistent role in the School has been as coordinator of the MSW online program. Dr. Garcia Biggs, who has taught online numerous times and is quite knowledgeable about the strengths and challenges of online education, has presented at national and international...
forums on the topic of online MSW education. A solid scholar and educator, Dr. Garcia Biggs is also very involved in mentoring Latina women on campus, as well as participating in many other service efforts, many of which deal with diversity issues. She has a 100% appointment with the School.

Dr. Garcia Biggs, who is an outstanding networker and creative problem-solver, assumed the MSW Coordinator role in 2011. The School, in 2011, revamped its MSW admissions process based on student and community input that the School needed to make admissions decisions more quickly. The Provost generously provided us the money to fund an MSW Admissions Coordinator position (half-time), which has freed up time for the MSW Coordinator to be more focused in refining and overseeing the degree program. Dr. Garcia Biggs receives a 75% course release while we evaluate our new admissions process and work division. The MSW Coordinator’s role involves:

- oversees the MSW curriculum (with the MSW Oversight Committee) and working with the School Director to make needed changes to curriculum and catalogue, per University policy and schedule
- with the MSW Committee, reviews all syllabi and makes needed adjustments based on student and field input; makes time schedules for updates of online course construction that reflects these revisions
- informs and answers questions (along with the MSW Admissions Coordinator) for potential MSW students
- works with the MSW admissions process with the MSW Admissions Coordinator and the part-time administrative assistant assigned to work with MSW admissions
- makes final admissions recommendations to the Graduate College
- communicates with the Graduate College on application and admissions issues, degree plan issues for existing MSW students, and program policies and procedures; represents the School on the Graduate Council
- reports to faculty on MSW issues and seeks their input
- designs and delivers the MSW orientation for new students
- chairs the MSW Committee which reviews and refines MSW policies and curriculum matters
- consults with MSW students and faculty who have questions or issues about curriculum or student performance
- Responds to online students who have questions about degree requirements and course sequence, or who have technological problems
- Is the first contact person to field MSW student complaints, advising them of due process; informs the faculty and Director of problems, and consult with faculty about ways to address problems
- communicates with the Field Office regarding MSW field issues, to make sure that MSW goals are met
- works with the Field Office to put on the MSW Research Forum

Jennifer graduated in 2007. She was one of five Ima Hogg Mental Health Scholars across the state. She now works at Austin’s Shoal Creek Hospital, developing curriculum for a new cognitive therapy-based unit for individuals struggling with chemical dependency.

Imelda did her placement at a VA hospital in Temple, TX. She did a major study on service needs for the elderly and disabled in the area. The VA was so impressed that they hired her.
communicates with the Director to help choose Research Fellows and Graduate Research Assistants, matching them with faculty based on existing faculty research efforts

- monitors student enrollment, assists the Director in determining number of sections needed for MSW courses, and keeps track of the different MSW student cohorts progressing through the program

- works during the summer to ensure smooth operations of the MSW program

- Communicates with Director and faculty about shaping the future of the MSW program

- represents the MSW program to University and community, planning for future development and refinement of the program

Texas State MSW program receives hundreds of applications every year. The program has increased by 73% over the last five years, so the work requirements are considerable. Given these variables, and taking into account the transition the School is undergoing in its MSW admissions process, a 75% workload release for the MSW Coordinator seems appropriate.

Field Coordinator. The School’s Field Coordinator, Dr. Karen Knox, LCSW, has 21 years in social work education and has been with the School as a full-time faculty since 1995. Holding the MSW and Ph.D. in social work, she is a full professor with a notable record in publication and presentations on a national and international scale. She has 24 years of practice experience, particularly in working with domestic violence clients and juvenile justice matters. Dr. Knox has been involved with the Texas State Field Office for 15 years and is very knowledgeable about best practices in practicum. She is well-known and highly regarded among the School’s field agencies, and is successful in working with students. Ultimately, she is responsible for the Texas State Field Office, and oversees faculty who are assigned field duties to assure that they meet the goals of the Field Office. She is the lead person in making sure that field duties are carried out properly. In addition, Dr. Knox ensures that the School schedules the proper number of field sections, helps identify appropriate faculty to handle field sections, and ensures that field materials are correct on the web-site and on paper. She also chairs the Field Oversight Committee.

Dr. Knox has a 50% release to oversee the Field Office. She works primarily with MSW field placements and attends the MSW Oversight Committee. When combined with the 25% release of Mr. Dave Henton, Assistant Field Coordinator, the School gives 75% release to manage field. It is a big job, but 75% release appears to be adequate to handle the following tasks:

- Develops high-quality new field practicum sites and assesses whether affiliated agencies remain appropriate for the Texas State field placement partnership
- Oversees updating and refining Field Manuals and other field materials
- Works closely with faculty to ensure that field and class materials are integrated and function together to support the School mission
• Oversees planning and facilitating both Agency-Based Field Instructor Workshops, and Pre-Field Orientations for students
• Interviews prospective field students and assesses their readiness for field, advising them on fields of practice and available agency experiences
• Consults with faculty as needed regarding appropriate placements for specific students, and to ensure that faculty have meaningful input into field
• Identifies agencies at which particular students should interview, and ensures that those interviews are properly done
• Makes placements of students in specific agencies
• Serves as a liaison to students and Field Instructors, making 2-3 timely, well-focused field visits per semester to placement sites
• Teaches integrative field seminar for practicum students
• In conjunction with the student and the Field Instructor, assesses student performance in field
• Troubleshoots difficulties in placements
• Oversees the design and implementation of the Field Evaluation process to ensure that the program is meeting goals
• Works with the MSW Coordinator to mount the MSW Research Forum in connection with field placement
• Works with Director and faculty to refine and upgrade the field program, based on input from students and field agencies

Assistant Field Coordinator. The School’s Assistant Field Coordinator, Mr. Dave Henton, LMSW, assists Dr. Knox in managing the field program. Mr. Henton is a full-time faculty person with the School, and has been for 20 years. He holds the MSW from University of Texas-Austin, has about 40 hours of doctoral studies in social work at Case Western Reserve, and holds the Masters of Arts in Pastoral Studies from Seminary of the Southwest. With a work history of 6 years in mental health, Mr. Henton is an expert in working directly with vulnerable populations. He is an expert teacher who receives high student evaluations. As a Clinical Assistant Professor, Mr. Henton is not required to engage in scholarship as a function of his position, but he frequently presents at regional, national, and international meetings on topics of depression in the elderly, and spirituality in social work. Mr. Henton, who is bilingual, has been helpful in selecting and working with graduate students who are Hogg Foundation Bilingual Scholars, committed to a career in mental health with Spanish-speaking clients. He is faculty advisor for Phi Alpha Honorary Society. Mr. Henton has been involved with field practicum at Texas State for 16 years and receives a 25% workload release for his field duties.