

# Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements

## National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS)

### Bachelor of Arts Program in Social Work/Bachelor of Social Work Program in Social Work AY 2009-10

#### Key Assessment Findings

##### *Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT)*

The ACAT was developed by the Program for Area Concentration Achievement Testing (PACAT) as an assessment tool for measuring student integration of the content components of particular disciplinary majors. NCSSS administers the Social Work Curriculum C version of this instrument, which covers four major content areas: human behavior and the social environment, social work practice, policy and services, and research methods.

In the spring of 2010, 13 social work seniors took the exam. PACAT reported that there were positive, significant linear relationships between the student's self reported overall GPA and GPA in major for policy and services, practice, human behavior, and overall performance. In other words, students with higher GPAs had higher scores in these areas. However, there was not a significant relationship between GPA and research methods.

PACAT reported the overall performance standard score to be 495, which falls below the benchmark of 500 set by NCSSS, and placed us at the 48th percentile.

Content Area	Min	Max	Standard Score	Below Expectations	Meets or Exceeds Expectations
HBSE	325	696	491	8	5
Practice	371	697	519	6	7
Policy	298	653	445	8	5
Research	286	723	531	5	8
Overall	329	739	495	6	7

##### *Senior Thesis*

**Pass Rate.** For the undergraduate degree in social work, the senior thesis is the senior comprehensive assessment. In the spring of 2009, 12 students in the senior year completed the thesis assignment; one student did not complete the assignment and at present has an incomplete. Out of the students who completed the assignment, 8 (66.7%) passed and 4 (33.3%) passed with honors. Total scores on the thesis ranged from 70 to 100, with a mean of 90.00 (S.D. = 9.61).

**Content Areas.** Each of the major content areas had a point value of 10 points. Mean scores were calculated for each of the major content areas that students wrote about in the thesis. Each of these content areas is aligned with one of the program objectives. To explore the data in greater depth, each score was recoded into 3 categories, with 0 to 4 recoded to 0 for below expectations, 5 to 7 recoded to 1 for meets expectations, and 8 to 10 recoded to 2 for exceeds expectations.

Content Area	Range	Mean (SD)	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
HBSE	6.5 -10	9.04 (1.08)	0	1 (8.3%)	11 (91.7%)
Practice	7.5 – 10	9.29 (.86)	0	1 (8.3%)	11 (91.7%)
Policy	6 - 10	8.96 (1.34)	0	2 (16.7%)	10 (83.3%)
Research	6 – 10	8.63 (1.19)	0	1 (8.3%)	11 (91.7%)
Diversity	8 - 10	9.33 (.75)	0	0	12 (100%)
Values/Ethics	5 – 10	8.67 (1.54)	0	2 (16.7%)	10 (83.3%)
Knowledge Building	8 - 10	9.58 (.63)	0	0	12 (100%)

### ***Field Evaluation Findings***

Field evaluations are a critical assessment measure for NCSSW as the Council on Social Work Education has defined field education to be the “signature pedagogy” of social work education. In order to categorize the outcomes, the grades that students receive in the second semester of the field seminar class (SSS 466) are used to evaluate how the student is performing in field at the end of the social work program. Students who receive a grade in the “A” range are exceeding expectations, a grade in the “B” range are meeting expectations, and a grade in the “C” range or below are below expectations. Of the 13 students who participated in field education over the course of the 2009-2010 academic year, all completed their field placements in the spring: 9 (69%) exceeded expectations, 3 (23%) met expectations, and 1 (8%) was below expectations

### ***Exit Survey Findings***

As a new initiative at the end of the 2008-2009 academic year, an exit survey was sent to all graduating seniors. This survey encompassed the Field Student Self-Assessment form that had been used as an individual assessment tool in previous years. For the 2009-2010 year, eight students completed the survey, which represents a 61.5% response rate. The surveys were completed between April 28, 2010 and May 12, 2010..

In this survey, students were asked to rate their own abilities related to each program objective. The mean responses for each of these items was at or above 3.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5). This finding demonstrates that on average no item fell below our threshold of 3.0.

Students were asked to rate their experience at NCSSS related to each of the program objectives as well. The mean response for each item was at or above 3.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5). This finding shows that on average no item fell below our threshold of 3.0.

All students were asked to rate their experiences with advising, field seminar, BASSO, and overall program on a scale of 1 to 5.

All respondents rated academic advisement as good or very good (mean 4.8). Students rated the usefulness of the field seminar across the rating scale, with a mean of 3.3. As such, it was above our threshold of 3.0.

Experience with BASSO, the student group, was rated as adequate by 3 students and as “can’t rate” by 5. The mean was 3.0, which was equal to our threshold.

The overall BA/BSW program was rated poor (1), adequate (1), good (3), and very good (3). The mean was 4.0, which is above our threshold of 3.0.

Qualitative comments on the strengths of the program included: the individualized advisement, the teachers and field, SSS 101, SSS 326, and SSS 454, and the teachers (“I had teachers who really opened my eyes and changed the way I think about things.”) Two faculty members specifically named Dr. Mayer and Ms. White.

Qualitative comments on areas to improve the program included: bilingual classes and sign language, starting field in junior year in the fall, reworking the field seminar, assigning different instructors to classes who engage “beyond what was necessary,” have more professors teach the classes rather than part-time faculty, shorten the field seminar class, make the grading more stringent so that not everyone gets an A.

### **Curricular Improvements**

The NCSSS Baccalaureate Committee reviews findings from the previous year at the beginning of every fall term. Based on this review of findings, curricular improvements are explored and some are implemented in subsequent years.

From the analysis of the data from the 2009-2010 year, we have determined that we need to look more closely at the curriculum content covered during the senior year. The course work is spread over the four year undergraduate curriculum, while the standardized assessment is conducted at the end of the four year point. Building on what we found to be effective with the research content areas (incorporating a project into the senior year), we will examine the senior curriculum to find ways to engage the students into thinking more about policy and about human behavior in the senior year with the intention of improving the scores on these content areas on the ACT.

Additionally, we will be modifying our objective statements over the course of this year to more accurately align with the Council on Social Work Education's accreditation statements on competencies. As we engage in this process, we will look to modifying our exit survey and to making adjustments to the curriculum.