

# 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 2011-2012

#### 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. The test was administered as a paper and pencil test. Scores range from 200 to 800 with an average of 500 and standard deviation of 100.

In the spring of 2012, 7 social work seniors took the exam. PACAT reported that there were significant linear relationships between overall ACAT score and GPA, indicating that higher GPAs were predictive of higher overall ACAT scores. Significant relations were also found for ACAT scores in practice and human behavior for overall and major GPAs. The ACAT research score only correlated with major GPA and not with overall GPA. There was no significant relationship between the ACAT policy score and either of the GPAs reported.

PACAT reported the overall performance standard score to be 516, which falls above the benchmark set by NCSSS, and placed us at the 56st percentile. They reported a reference group size of 2,351. PACAT reports that in any given year, the majority of scores fall between 400 and 600 with a score of 600 being 1 standard deviation above average.

Content Area	Min	Max	Standard Score (SD)	Below Expectations	Meets or Exceeds Expectations
HBSE	382	614	528.14 (96.47)	2	5
Practice	247	615	488.14 (133.05)	3	4
Policy	365	603	502.00 (78.22)	2	5
Research	365	611	530.71 (87.44)	2	5
Overall	306	624	518.86 (112.07)	2	5

### **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 were expected to complete the thesis assignment. One student did not complete the assignment and received a grade of Fail. Out of the students who completed the assignment, 8 (66.7%) passed and 4 (33.3%) passed with honors. Total scores on the thesis (for the 11 who completed the thesis) ranged from 70 to 100, with a mean of 90.00 (SD 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	0 - 10	8.29 (1.11)	0	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)
Practice	0 - 10	9.29 (.76)	0	0	7 (100%)
Policy	0 - 10	8.86 (1.07)	0	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)
Research	0 - 9	7.14 (1.68)	0	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)
Diversity	0 - 10	9.57 (.53)	0	0	7 (100%)
Values/Ethics	0 - 10	7.86 (1.57)	0	3 (42.9%)	5 (57.1%)
Knowledge Building	0 - 10	9.71 (.76)	0	0	7 (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 (SSW 466) 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 8 students who participated in field education over the course of the 2011-2012 academic year: 7 (87.5%) exceeded expectations, 1 (12.5%) met expectations, and 0 (0%) was below expectations.

## *Exit Survey Findings*

Starting at the end of the 2008-2009 academic year we initiated sending an online exit survey 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. As a result of last year having only one student complete the exit survey online we offered the opportunity for them to complete it as a paper and pencil survey at the end of the semester as the end of a class. This resulted in receiving eight completed exit surveys.

In this survey, students were asked to rate their own abilities related to each program objective. The mean responses for each of these items were at or above 3.4 (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 experience, BASSO, and overall program on a scale of 1 to 5.

All respondents rated academic advisement as very good (mean 5.0). Students were asked to rate both the junior and senior field experience. The junior field experience was a mean of 3.9 and the senior field experience was a mean of 4.6, both above our threshold of 3.0.

Experience with BASSO, the student group, was rated as good or very good by 4 students and as “can’t rate” by 4. The mean was 4.5, which was above our threshold of 3.0.

The overall BA/BSW program was rated good or very good with a mean of 3.8, which is above our threshold of 3.0.

Qualitative comments on the strengths of the program included: the faculty (mentioned six times), the small class size, advisement, and how they viewed the curriculum as preparing them for the real world.

Qualitative comments on areas to improve the program included: additional work to better understand research, less policy, and issues with scheduling of social work classes that would allow a student to minor in another academic area.

Another question asked was “what classes were you most happy that you took” the responses included: SSS 101 (introduction to social work), Diversity, Human Behavior, and Research. Two faculty members were called out as favorites, Ruthie White and Dr. Sabatino.

## **Curricular Improvements**

The NCSST 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. Modifications are sometimes implemented for the current year, when possible, and sometimes implemented in subsequent years when it is too late to make a change for the current year.

Based on student feedback and course evaluation data, changes were made to the Field seminar for the 2011-2012 year. The committee had decided to include content on human behavior theories in the senior year as a result of the decrease in performance in this area on the ACAT in 2011. The committee decided to incorporate content related to human behavior theory review into the spring semester of the field seminar in 2012. Comparing the ACAT scores from spring 2012 to 2011, it is evident that the mean score increased from 510 to 528.

The committee discussed the policy area of the ACAT as that represents another area where a decline in scores has been noted over the past years. Comparing the ACAT score in 2012 to 2011, an increase from a mean of 468 to 502 is noted. This increase implies that modifications to the policy sequence may have been beneficial, but scores in this area will continue to be monitored to determine if the upward trend is maintained..

Of note is that the practice section of the ACAT declined in 2012 to below the benchmark set by the program. As such, for fall 2012, a revised syllabus was utilized. Findings from 2013 will be compared with those from 2012 to determine if this change yields an improved score in this area. The students were all in the exceeds expectations category in their ability to apply a practice model to a problem of interest in the senior thesis, indicating that they are able to be competent in this area of practice.