Master’s Program Committee

Monthly Meeting: September 24, 2018

12:15 to 1:45, Room 5E11

Meeting Minutes

Attended: Corey Shdaimah (Chair), Joan Pittman (Shady Grove), Sarah Dababnah (HB, Foundation, International, Children & Families), Ed Pecukonis (Clinical), Michael Reisch (CASP), Paul Sacco (Aging). John Belcher (Behavioral Health), Gail Betz, Dawn Shafer (Office of Student Affairs), Amanda Lehning (Macro, Policy); Megan Meyer (ex officio); Theda Rose (Research)

Plan for the semester: monthly meetings; can revisit in the Spring

Working Groups: continuing and new

1. Curriculum overview

It is a good time to take up this work, now that self-study has ended and the pilot course is under way. A good start is with stock-taking. The committee decided that it would ask all of the curricular committees to respond to the following questions, with a target due date of our November MPC meeting

1. What are we teaching that we should no longer be teaching?
2. What aren’t we teaching that we should?
3. What are the formats (hybrid, lecture, intensive, workshop) in which we are teaching and how do these work?
4. How can we best evaluate student learning?

These questions should be answered while considering preparing students for relevant jobs/careers and the mission of the school.

1. Academic rigor: the work for last year ended; this year the committee will take up a review of survey results and recommendations for action. This committee will also look into our grading scale. This may include pass/fail/marginal pass options and the removal of A+. They will gather information on what other schools (on campus and other schools of social work) do and make recommendations within what is possible given university policy.
2. Foundation Survey Committee: the work of this committee has been completed. This (and the graduating students survey) will help us determine how widespread are some of the concerns that are raised amongst students and track these across cohorts.
3. Pilot course for diversity and anti-oppression content

* We reviewed updates, including student responses to a survey after the first. It would be helpful to group responses to see patterns, but overall responses were positive.
* We discussed the need for training as we get ready to scale up and the importance that it be important that faculty feel welcome and not attacked. Training should focus on how to facilitate respectful, sensitive, and thoughtful conversation that invites a diversity of perspectives that are brought into the classroom. Ongoing training will be necessary in addition to initial preparation. Format/content would need to be decided based on resources, receptivity, and fit for material.
* Need to develop evaluation mechanisms for scale up
* Given the complexity of this endeavor, we discussed the possibility of gradual scale-up – in Michigan, for example, similar materials were phased in over a couple of years. Infusion of materials into all courses could also be phased in. Some ideas about how to do that would be to target particular groups of students, such as those who are T/Th field first.
* We will continue to discuss the diversity course as it unfolds and prepare.
* Course syllabi and any other potentially helpful materials will be uploaded in the faculty toolbox.

1. Revision of SRC and SGC processes description
2. CSWE site visit in relation to the student complaint: Overall sense that the site visitors did not necessarily engage around materials that we suggested that they review, or come with a sense of what we are doing. In conjunction with the visit, Megan reviewed our course feedback, and generally about 80% of students report that they get a sufficient dose of diversity/anti-oppression materials; they feel respected at the SSW, and a good sense of community. The visitors declined to engage with these reports, and instead met with groups of interested students. The main takeaway that the visitors got was that our students feel that many faculty are uncomfortable or unable to facilitate discussions around diversity and oppression. We discussed the need to balance responding to concerns of particular student groups, while also recognizing what we are doing well and wanting feedback from students to represent a broader swathe of our student population. This loops back into point (4) regarding the need for training to raise the bar for all faculty, including adjuncts, in this area.