



The University of Georgia

School of Social Work
Office of the Dean

March 2, 2015

Provost Pam Whitten
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Georgia
Administration Building
Athens, Georgia 30602

Dear Provost Whitten,

I am delighted to strongly endorse the experiential learning requirement.

The School of Social Work (SSW) currently offers a number of experiential learning opportunities including internships, community partnerships, study abroad, and service-learning. We are pleased to submit a draft implementation plan, which will provide an opportunity for the School of Social Work to enrich and enhance experiential learning opportunities.

The SSW's implementation plan was sent under separate cover from Dr. Shari Miller.

Sincerely,

Maurice Daniels
Dean and Professor

cc: Dr. Shari Miller

School of Social Work Experiential Learning Implementation

This document contains summary descriptions of experiential learning opportunities already in place in the School of Social Work as well as two proposed curriculum revisions that enhance experiential learning. Section #1 contains information about those experiential learning opportunities that have been and/or are currently available to students. In some cases, the School of Social Work offers experiential learning opportunities that are required for all undergraduate social work (BSW) majors and are also open to any UGA undergraduate student. The School of Social Work also has an extensive experiential learning requirement that applies to all BSW majors only. Section #2 contains information about two planned initiatives, both of which are connected to a BSW curriculum review and revision process which is nearing completion. Section #3 contains information regarding steps remaining and related timeline to accomplish those items denoted in Section #2.

1. Current Opportunities:

- All BSW students are required to complete SOWK 2154S which requires 25 hours of service over the course of the semester. The class is designed entirely on the basis of an experiential learning model. Assignments focus on prompted reflection grounded in the applied service experiences across students (this course is open to non-social work majors as well).
- We offer and/or have offered a variety of elective service-learning experiences in addition to the above requirement – some examples:
 - We have offered an elective Social Justice and Advocacy course for upper level BSW students which includes a service-learning component (3 specific instances of service-learning) and a requirement that students build an advocacy effort with direct links to the community (local or beyond)
 - We have offered multiple times an inter-disciplinary service-learning elective focused on food insecurity and child/family well-being; students collaborate across disciplines with elementary school children in the context of a school-based food garden
- All BSW seniors are required to complete a year-long field practicum totaling a minimum of 560 experiential learning hours over the course of the academic year. This practicum is an integral aspect of student learning and serves as a hinge for all other learning. Instructors serve as liaisons to agencies in which students are placed, and professional social workers function as on-site supervisors of students' work. This requirement is also supported/mandated by our external accrediting body, The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).
- All graduating BSW seniors are required to complete a Capstone project. Capstone is a year-long applied, experiential, collaborative, and community-engaged effort grounded in professional social work education. In the fall semester, students work collaboratively in small groups to design and implement community-based projects that emphasize social justice and service. Emphasis is placed on engaging and building relationships with community stakeholders. In the spring semester, student groups continue to work collaboratively and with stakeholders to implement

community projects. Finally, student groups develop a creative means of presenting their capstone project and, in late spring present at the BSW Capstone Symposium. Students also write an individual reflective component. The primary purposes of the capstone are to (1) integrate student learning; (2) explicitly address benchmark attainment of the CSWE core competencies; and (3) to build meta-competence.

- Students have the opportunity to engage in experiential learning through applied research mentored by SSW faculty – recent example includes:
 - Students participated in a Maymester experience; they assisted the Northeast Georgia Food Bank in completing the data collection for the National Hunger Study (being conducted in affiliation with the national consortium of food banks--"Feeding America/Second Harvest"). Students received approximately three hours of research training to orient them to the issue, study design, instrumentation, and methodology. Students' primary responsibilities included participation as a member of a team that performed four site visits to either a food bank, a food pantry, or a soup kitchen in one of the 11 counties that make up the northeast food bank region. Via the use of Ipads, students collected data regarding "food insecurity." The sampling, data collection, and analysis strategies were all designed by Westat, a nationally well-known program evaluation company.

2. Proposed revisions to current curricular structure (will enhance experiential learning)

- Proposed BSW curriculum revision involves re-designing a current required course: SOWK 2156 Social Work with Diverse Populations. The revised course, focused on social justice, will be required for BSW majors and will also be open to any undergraduate at UGA. This will be a service-learning course, replacing the current SOWK 2154S (described above). This proposed course wholly integrates classroom learning with experiential learning via applied service experiences, and is grounded deeply in social work's commitment to social justice
- The above described Capstone, which is now located in an existing course as an assignment, in the proposed curriculum revision will become a free-standing, credit-bearing, year-long seminar (1 credit per semester). The experience will be as described above but this revision makes more space available to facilitate students' experiential learning.

3. Steps Remaining to Complete the two Proposed Revisions Noted Here

- Await decision from Curriculum Committee and Curriculum Systems