

Accreditation of Social Work Education: Barriers and Supports for Interprofessional Education

By Mona Gil de Gibaja & Jacquelyn McCroskey

Introduction

As the health and human service needs of children and families increasingly become more complex, and as funding resources to meet these needs are realigned and devolved, it is imperative that professionals delivering services to families are able to work effectively and efficiently with other service providers and with the families and communities they serve. As collaboration and integration become the models from which an increasing number of services are delivered, many students who plan to work in the health and human service fields will need to be equipped to participate in interprofessional collaborative systems of care.

Mona Gil de Gibaja is a doctoral candidate and Jacquelyn McCroskey is an associate professor, both at the School of Social Work, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

To achieve these goals, many universities have begun to develop interdisciplinary or interprofessional education programs. Although the literature in this area is mostly conceptual, researchers and practitioners are in the early stages of theory development. The staff, faculty, and students of some of the existing programs are beginning to evaluate their efforts and to address the barriers and supportive factors impacting interprofessional education.

Lawson (1996), Hogan (1996), and Gelmon (1996)

have identified discipline specific accreditation as a potential barrier to inter-professional education. The following case study was developed by the authors to increase our understanding of how social work accreditation and interprofessional education may interact; it was developed as part of a national project, "Preparing Human Service Workers for Interprofessional Practice: Accreditation Strategies for Effective Interprofessional Education," funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

This case study of the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California (USC) addresses the USC perspective on the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation process, based on the School's last reaccreditation visit in 1993. It examines the Inter-Professional Initiative (IPI) that was developed after the School's most recent accreditation, suggesting how such interprofessional activities may impact future accreditation processes; and it also explores how the University's focus on interdisciplinary initiatives in its Strategic Plan may impact current efforts to achieve interprofessional education at USC. The applicable CSWE standards and relevant parts of the curriculum policy statement are analyzed to highlight possible implications for reaccreditation of social work programs engaged in interprofessional activities.

The information provided in this case study was designed to help inform faculty in other schools and departments of social work by examining the accreditation-related challenges and feasibility of implementing interprofessional education. It may also provide helpful information for faculty in related fields and for community-based practitioners interested in professional preparation. This case study is clearly based on the organizational development of one specific interprofessional education program at one private university; some issues will be specific to that setting, while others may have more general applicability.

The discussion of USC's 1993 accreditation experience is included to highlight general perceptions of how the overall accreditation process may affect faculty and the school's curriculum. Although the IPI had not been implemented during the last accreditation process at USC, it is hoped that the case study, including the framework provided by the interaction of the university's strategic plan, the specific operations of IPI, and these accreditation standards can identify the factors that will help facilitate effective interprofessional education programs involving schools and departments of social work.¹

1993 Accreditation at the USC School of Social Work

The most recent accreditation site visit to the USC School of Social Work was held March 22-24, 1993. During that time, the site team met with the University President, Provost, and a representative of the Office of Affirmative Action. In addition, they met with the Dean, faculty, students, the librarian, alumni, field instructors, and administrative staff. The self-study report, which had taken more than a year of intensive meetings and discussion to complete, included over 400

pages of written material responding to the CSWE standards, along with extensive supportive documentation (faculty curriculum vitae, course syllabi, etc.).

The site visit team provided a report to USC after the site visit. The site visit report, which enumerated the program's strengths and weaknesses in regard to the evaluative criteria, emphasized that the program had numerous strengths which included: a capable faculty; a strong student body; a collegial atmosphere, open communication, and a participatory spirit of faculty and students; a school committed to strengthening its city and state; a school respected nationally for its effective preparation of graduates for practice and its contributions to the professional literature; a nationally renowned dean; a clear articulation of concern for oppressed minorities; use of outcome studies to build curriculum; and an excellent and comprehensive system of student assessment.

However, after a thorough review of the School's self study and report of the site visit team, the CSWE Commission on Accreditation (COA) determined that the USC School of Social Work should be granted only conditional accreditation status. "Conditional" accreditation status is given when a program is found to be in noncompliance with one or more of the evaluative standards and the school has the potential to make corrective action on these issues within 12 months. The COA decision focused on the following areas of non-compliance: (1) there was inadequate information about outcomes of the educational program linked to the School's mission and curriculum; (2) a description of the liberal arts perspective required of students admitted to the program was needed; (3) the Curriculum Policy Statement had not been distributed to all appropriate staff and faculty; (4) various curriculum issues, which included the need for a clear definition of the foundation (or first year) framework; (5) inadequate integration of cultural diversity issues in the Social Welfare Policy and Services (SWSP) curriculum and syllabi; (6) need for a clear definition of social work practice; (7) lack of required readings relative to gender or special populations groups in the SWSP curriculum; (8) a lack of clear definitions, limited readings, and class exercises related to oppressed populations in the curriculum; (9) inadequate faculty resources relative to the number of students and the need to cover curriculum on three campuses; and (10) the need to state that the time limit on degree completion of the part-time program is four years.

The Dean and faculty of the School addressed some of these concerns immediately; others required more discussion among faculty before curricular changes were made. The actions required or action needed for the School to be removed from conditional accreditation status were satisfied within ten months. All the criteria were met in October 1994 and full accreditation was granted until October 2001. Overall, faculty felt that the process had raised important questions and that the curriculum had been improved through the give and take of accreditation. However, many also felt that it was very difficult to sort between the "big" conceptual questions and the minutiae of a myriad of details.

The self-study process is generally viewed as providing opportunities to assess

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academic strengths and weaknesses and to develop proactive plans for improvements. However, another view was expressed by one faculty member whose perception of accreditation was that:

(The) accreditation process is much too process oriented. For example: how many instructors have an MSW and two years post-MSW experience? If CSWE could decrease the overall number of indicators, and focus on some quality indicators for social work education and let schools get there how they want, it would be a lot better. 400-page accreditation documents are not helpful. CSWE tells you what words to put on documents. One can craft a document to appeal to CSWE. How you characterize your program is important. There is too little attention on the outcomes.

This faculty member's perception must have been shared by others as the CSWE accreditation standards were revised in 1994 and have become much more outcome focused.

Interprofessional Education at USC

During the last few years, under the leadership of the University's President, Steven Sample, and Provost, Lloyd Armstrong, USC has focused on expanding its interdisciplinary research, education, and innovation. These key ideas were conceptualized and operationalized in the 1994 USC Strategic Plan.

Specifically, there are two initiatives in the University's Strategic Plan which focused on interdisciplinary education and research:

USC Strategic Plan Initiative 1: Undergraduate Education

[The University will] Provide a distinctive undergraduate experience built on excellent liberal arts (the term includes the humanities, the natural sciences and the social sciences) and professional programs, incorporating a characteristic "USC core" liberal education and providing unique opportunities for career preparation through innovative collaborations between the liberal arts and our diverse array of professional schools. (The Strategic Plan of the University of Southern California, 1994, p. 2)

Strategies to accomplish this initiative include:

- ◆ Create distinctive undergraduate programs that provide excellent education in both the liberal arts and appropriate professional fields in a rich extracurricular environment.
- ◆ Create unique opportunities for both liberal arts and professional students to engage in career exploration, development, and interdisciplinary learning through innovative joining of liberal arts and professional strengths. This will be a university-wide differentiating characteristic of all our undergraduate programs.
- ◆ Develop policies and incentives that facilitate collaboration in teaching between different revenue centers and defuse fragmentation and competition among units. (The Strategic Plan of the University of Southern California, 1994, p. 5)

USC Strategic Plan Initiative 2: Interdisciplinary Research and Education

Create the organizational flexibility and capacity for teamwork to become a world center for innovative interdisciplinary research and education in selected areas. Emphasize programs that span the spectrum from basic to applied research and programs with a high degree of social relevance. (The Strategic Plan of the University of Southern California, 1994, p. 2)

Strategies to accomplish this initiative include:

- ◆ Encourage research that is creative, interdisciplinary, and has high societal relevance; develop programs to stimulate faculty interest in selected broad interdisciplinary problems; eliminate existing disincentives and provide positive incentives for excellent interdisciplinary research with emphasis on areas that are truly innovative.
- ◆ Develop a management structure that helps identify and develop promising interdisciplinary and interdivisional programs with a rapid response time, contains elements of program review, and provides for program discontinuation.
- ◆ Recruit faculty and graduate students who are engaged in interdisciplinary research of distinction. (The Strategic Plan of the University of Southern California, 1994, p. 6)

Although the USC School of Social Work has historically focused on the Masters and Ph.D. levels, some faculty have recently become active in developing undergraduate curriculum. For example, faculty have developed new courses on poverty and social policy; faculty have worked on a new interdisciplinary undergraduate minor on "Families and Children in Urban America"; faculty have taken leadership roles on undergraduate curriculum committees; and faculty in the School of Social Work are involved in a number of interdisciplinary research teams; but development of new graduate-level interdisciplinary curriculum has been much slower and more complicated. Some of the complexities are revealed by one faculty member's comment:

At the undergraduate level, they (USC) are working toward interprofessional education. We believe social work classes are already informed by interdisciplinary content. (However), USC's institutional disincentives are strong. The other academic [units] are surprised when we (social work faculty) work toward interprofessional education.

Even before development of the 1994 Strategic Plan, faculty in several schools and departments had begun to work together to build an interprofessional education program focused on the ever-changing needs of the families and children in the community surrounding the University.

The Inter-Professional Initiative Program

The mission of the USC Inter-Professional Initiative (IPI), created in January 1993, was defined broadly:

IPI is a collaboration of service delivery institutions and USC academic programs oriented toward effecting change in individuals, organizations and the service delivery system. Its purpose is to improve outcomes for children and families through better service delivery, education and training, based on new theoretical foundations and innovative practice strategies.

The first group of students was enrolled in the program in the fall 1993 semester. The IPI is a primarily graduate level training program that selects students from different disciplines and places them in interdisciplinary teams in inner city sites to provide comprehensive health and human services to families and children. The IPI partners university academic units with community sites serving children and families in the immediate vicinity of the campus in South Central Los Angeles. The academic units involved over the last five years have included: clinical psychology, sociology, dentistry, education, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, public administration, geography, communications, pharmacy, and social work. Students assigned to interprofessional teams at the sites were concurrently enrolled in a bi-monthly seminar, which addressed numerous issues related to practicing in an interprofessional setting. The IPI seminar and team experience was offered in the fall semester, although many of the students continued their participation through the spring. Between 1993 and 1998, IPI enrolled about 25 students each fall for a total of over 100 student participants. While most students were at the masters and doctoral level, nursing students have been senior undergraduates. IPI was put on hold during the 1998-99 academic year due to the absence of key faculty and pending operational reassessment beginning in 1999.

The IPI students were provided with field experience in their area(s) of specialization, and the opportunity to cross-fertilize with other disciplines. The interdisciplinary teams provided support for children and families within their area(s) of expertise, and beyond, based upon collaboration of the group. The primary focus was on education, social services, and health services for children in grades Pre-K through 12 and their families in South Central Los Angeles.

The four primary purposes of the IPI program were to:

1. Develop an inter-professional education model that will instill prospective and practicing education, health, and human service professionals with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to provide family-centered, integrated services in South-Central Los Angeles;
2. Expand the capacity of academic units to coordinate their course offerings, to cross-fertilize, and to promote institutional reform;

3. Enhance the University's relationship with its surrounding community—both the service providers and the residents they serve; and
4. Help identify the key elements of effective service collaboration, and help build a knowledge and experience base that can be disseminated to others with similar interests.

Other special features of the IPI are the focus on: multi-level collaboration; commitment to work in the South Central Los Angeles community; the intensity of commitment of all parties involved; a focus on achieving cultural competency for work in multicultural communities; and development of a multidisciplinary theoretical and conceptual framework to support training and research.

IPI has worked with nine community sites near the USC campus, five of which have played on-going roles over the past five years. The staff members of five continuing partner sites described briefly below have been essential partners in the development and implementation of IPI:

1. The Foshay Learning Center is a K-12 community school with an enrollment of 2,000 students. In the last five years, the Center has transitioned from a junior high school to a middle school to a "learning center" concept, which embraces the notion of the community school where, conceivably a child can attend the same school from kindergarten through the twelfth grade.
2. The Norwood Elementary School is a pre-K-5 school in a community of recent immigrants with an enrollment of 1,100 students, approximately 95 percent of which are Latino.
3. The Pediatric and Family Medical Center is a non-profit, full-service medical clinic that serves large numbers of Latino and African-American families and children, providing a full range of health and dental care services, as well as some social and family-centered services.
4. The Hope Street Family Center of the California Medical Center was originally a federally-funded five year program designed to provide extensive support to 140 economically disadvantaged, culturally marginalized families with preschool aged children. Multi-tiered health and human services are offered to program participants to improve family functioning and increase the potential for future academic achievement in preschool-aged children. Based on early successes, the center has expanded its programs, which now include an in-home visitation program, family preservation services, and childcare.
5. The USC Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) was a university-sponsored resource and referral service focused on meeting the information needs of university staff and students and community residents.

The day-to-day operations of the IPI were the responsibility of the Executive Director (who also holds a Clinical Faculty position in the School of Education), and the Field Instructor (who was a professional staff member of the School of Social Work). The staff worked in partnership with the Principal Investigator (who is a

tenured faculty member of the School of Social Work) and with faculty from multiple academic units on campus, and with professional staff at the community-based sites. A team of faculty from nursing, public administration and social work plan curriculum and key goals for the internship process.

Primary funding for the IPI was secured through in-kind contributions from involved academic units as well as from the Stuart, James Irvine, Ewing Marion Kauffman, and Packard Foundations and Western Oregon State College (with funding from the United States Bureau of Maternal and Child Health).

Reflections on Accreditation and the Future Impact of IPI

Since the IPI was not fully implemented until fall of 1993, it was not included in the self-study for the 1993 accreditation of the School of Social Work. Although the issue of interprofessional education was not an area of focus for the 1993 site visit, it could be an issue during the upcoming accreditation process. To prepare for the reaffirmation process, this case study analyzes some of the specific standards of the Commission on Accreditation, *Handbook of Accreditation Standards and Procedures for the Council on Social Work Education* (1994 edition), to determine which standards are neutral and/or explicitly or implicitly serve as supportive factors or possible barriers to interprofessional education. These standards will need to be taken into account in planning for the next accreditation process projected for 2001.

While many social work educators and practitioners assume that accreditation processes inhibit the development of interprofessional education programs, this analysis of CSWE standards suggests that this may be a result of *implicit interpretation* rather than *explicit standards*. Such ambiguities are further complicated by the numerous demands placed on faculty and programs, as well as the conflicting priorities of multiple stakeholders.

The following review of some of the CSWE accreditation standards and curriculum policy statements highlights potential barriers to interprofessional education (IPE) and also identifies places where more explicit interpretation of the standards or curriculum policy statements could be helpful. To document the specific ways that CSWE standards can be addressed by faculty and administrators involved with IPE programs, this section highlights some of the areas in the accreditation standards and procedures manual that implicitly or explicitly deal with issues that can impact an IPE program.

Accreditation Criteria

There are four types of criteria in the accreditation process that a baccalaureate or master's program in social work must address: (1) candidacy eligibility criteria; (2) program eligibility standards; (3) program evaluative standards; and (4) curriculum policy statements.

A program must fulfill the following candidacy eligibility criteria before they can move any further in the process:

1. The review of the program by the Commission on Accreditation is authorized by the chief executive officer of the institution;
2. The program is an integral part of an educational institution accredited by a regional accrediting agency;
3. The social work program has a full-time chief administrator who has demonstrated leadership ability in the field of social work and holds a master's in social work and a doctorate in social work or a related field;
4. The institution has a written affirmative action policy, plan, or program, and procedures, and a stated policy against discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, gender, ethnic, or national origin, disability or age; and
5. A study has been conducted demonstrating the feasibility of the program in light of community needs, potential student demand, social agency availability and support, and institutional supports.

After achieving candidacy by meeting the criteria above, the program must also meet the following eligibility standards to be eligible for accreditation review:

1. An organizational chart must be provided to show the position of the social work program in the governance of the institution and to demonstrate its position in relation to other professional education programs;
2. The program must specify in its catalog description that it prepares students for entering advanced social work practice (for master's programs);
3. The program must specify the educational level for which it has received CSWE accreditation;
4. The program must provide for 2 years of full-time academic study and, if a part-time program is offered, it must include a maximum of four years of study; and
5. The program must have a curriculum plan that is fully implemented or that will be fully implemented during the academic year in which it is reviewed. The program must have graduated at least one class or be preparing to graduate a class of students during the academic year in which it is reviewed.

In addition, each program must meet the evaluative standards, which pertain to the organization, administration, and curriculum of social work education programs. These standards provide an overview of six areas that must be addressed in the development and continuation of a social work program. These areas are: (1) program rationale and assessment; (2) organization, governance, and resources; (3) nondiscrimination; (4) faculty; (5) student development; and (6) curriculum. There are two additional standards that expand upon the requirements outlined in the first six standards. They address the development of "alternative programs" or "experi-

mental programs” which may entail making exceptions to the existing standards.

Lastly, the Curriculum Policy Statement (CPS) (which is integrated into the evaluative standards for accreditation) highlights the areas that should be addressed in the curriculum and these statements provide information on the relationship between curricula and accreditation standards, the premises underlying social work education, the purpose of social work, and the purpose and structure of baccalaureate and master's social work education. The CPS is descriptive rather than prescriptive, giving each program the opportunity to develop courses that utilize faculty strengths and provide students with the theory and practice information that will help them be effective practitioners in their areas of concentration. The Curriculum Policy Statement addresses the following areas related to developing a social work education program: (1) the liberal arts perspective; (2) the professional foundation; (3) social work ethics and values; (4) diversity; (5) promotion of social and economic justice; (6) populations-at-risk; (7) human behavior and the social environment; (8) social welfare policy and services; (9) social work practice; (10) research; (11) the field practicum; (12) the foundation practicum; and (13) the concentration curriculum. The analysis that follows will summarize some issues in the candidacy eligibility criteria and the eligibility standards that are applicable to interprofessional education. An analysis of some of the evaluative standards that implicitly or explicitly address interprofessional education will also be provided, as well as an analysis of the curriculum policy statements that relate to these standards.

Implications of the Feasibility Study

Before establishing eligibility for candidacy for accreditation, the social work program must complete a feasibility study. Part of the study includes documentation of the ways that faculty, students, and graduates of the program will help to meet community needs. This needs assessment includes “the existing educational and service resources to meet these needs and the dimensions of the gaps between needs and available resources” (CSWE, 1994, p. 9). In many communities, collaboratives, integrated services, multi-purpose resource centers, and school-linked services are developing and/or expanding as preferred ways of meeting the complex needs of many populations (i.e., senior citizens, chronically and severely mentally ill, families and children). As these collaborative efforts increase, it will be imperative that professional education also helps to prepare social workers for these new and changing roles.

In addition, it is vital that schools learn more about collaborative practice to assure that interprofessional education prepares students for what they will need to know to be skilled interprofessional practitioners. In Los Angeles County alone, there are more than 400 collaboratives focused on families and children, each of which has been developed and implemented in unique ways to meet the needs and build on the strengths of local communities. There are, however, similarities and common themes, which could be discerned from these collaboratives, and this

information should inform curricula for both professional and interprofessional education. Therefore, it is important to note that CSWE states that "during any stage, but rarely during the candidacy stage, a program may submit proposals for experimental or alternative programs" (CSWE, 1994, p. 5). Although these types of programs are not required for accreditation, implicitly this statement notifies programs that innovation is allowed.

Implications of the Eligibility Standard on Advanced Social Work Practice

CSWE accreditation Eligibility Standard 4.0 states that "The program must specify in its catalog description that it prepares students for entering advanced social work practice" (CSWE, 1994, p. 62). However, depending on the definition of "advanced" practice, an interprofessional placement might not be perceived as providing "advanced" social work skills. To address this concern the program could have a broad definition of "advanced" practice that would include an interprofessional setting for field placement.

Implications of the Eligibility Standard on the Chief Administrator

Eligibility Standard 6.0 states "that a social work program offering a master's degree must have a chief administrator with full-time appointment to the social work program" (CSWE, 1994, p. 63). However, an explicit supportive factor is that the chief administrator does not have to have a doctorate in social work. As stated in Criterion 3.0 in the Master's Program Candidacy Eligibility Criteria, the administrator "must hold a master's degree from an accredited program in social work and a doctorate in social work or a related field" (CSWE, 1994, p. 34). This allows for an individual with an interdisciplinary background to be hired for this position.

Analysis of Key Accreditation Standards and Curriculum Policy Statements

This analysis summarizes the key Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation standards and curriculum policy statements that are neutral, serve as supportive factors, or possible barriers to interprofessional education. Each accreditation standard or curriculum policy statement is quoted directly from the *CSWE, Handbook of Accreditation Standards and Procedures* (4th Edition) and is identified by italics:

Standard 1.0-Program Rationale and Assessment

Standard 1.0: The educational program must provide a statement of rationale, including a program mission statement and program goals, consistent with social work's purposes, values, and ethics. The mission and goals are to include quality educational preparation for entry into advanced social work practice in an area of concentration. The program's goals must reflect the intent of Curriculum Policy Statement M5.1 to 5.4.5.

To expand the program's mission, the mission statement could include a focus on

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preparing students for collaborative work through interprofessional education. The program goals could also include interprofessional education. In turn, a program that includes interprofessional education in its mission and goals could provide students with preparation for work in collaborative, integrated service delivery systems.

Curriculum Policy Statement M5.4.3 states that all master's social work programs must:

Provide content about the social contexts of social work practice, the changing nature of those contexts, the behavior of organizations, and the dynamics of change.

This implies that content will be oriented toward social work practice with social workers only. However, exposure to the values and knowledge base of allied professions could be added explicitly to this standard.

Curriculum Policy Statement M5.5: The master's curriculum must be based upon a liberal arts perspective and must include the professional foundation and one or more concentrations.

It is important to note that the liberal arts perspective is interdisciplinary. The importance placed on a liberal arts perspective serves as a supportive factor for interprofessional education.

Standard 1.1: Once the mission and goals have been stated, the program must present its objectives, derived from its statement of mission and goals. The program's objectives must reflect the intent of Curriculum Policy Statement M5.7 to M5.7.14, M6.19, and M6.2.

As noted in Standard 1.0, the mission statement and goals could include interprofessional education. Objectives could describe the ways that interprofessional education would be implemented and institutionalized.

Interpretive Guideline 1.1 notes that:

...program objectives are not limited to the substance of the Curriculum Policy Statement and should dynamically reflect regional and institutional needs, priorities and interests to have the greatest possible meaning to all program participants. The program may identify other objectives it considers useful, including, but not limited to, other student learning or activity objectives, program impacts within the institution and community, and faculty impacts on agencies and practice.

This statement provides support for initiatives that would add to the core curriculum, by providing innovative learning opportunities to students who will be working in multidisciplinary settings.

Curriculum Policy Statement M5.7.12 states that:

...all master's social work programs must use communication skills differentially with a variety of client populations, colleagues, and members of the community.

Being able to communicate well with a variety of colleagues is important. Interprofessional education provides students with the communication skills needed to work with a variety of disciplines.

Standard 2.0- Organization, Governance, and Resources

Standard 2.2: The chief administrator of the program must give educational and administrative direction to the program and have demonstrated leadership ability through academic and other experience in the field of social work. The educational credentials of the individual in this role must include a master's degree from an accredited program in social work and a doctorate in social work or a related field.

A potential barrier may exist for hiring an individual whose experience has been largely interdisciplinary if the chief administrator must have academic and other experience in the field of social work. However, the standard does state that the individual can have a doctorate in social work or a related field. This could be a potential barrier for an interdisciplinary professional applying for this position. However, it may also open the position to professionals in other disciplines.

Standard 4.0-Faculty

Standard 4.0: Responsibility for providing educational experiences must be vested in a full-time experienced, knowledgeable faculty who identify with the profession of social work. There is to be sufficient continuity in assignment of a core of full-time faculty who hold social work doctoral degrees and/or hold master's degrees in social work from a Council-accredited program to ensure stability of the program's essential functions. Part-time and adjunct faculty may provide flexibility and breadth to the program as a supplement to the full-time faculty.

This could be a potential barrier if faculty members identify only with the social work profession and if all core faculty members should have doctoral degrees and/or master's degrees in social work. However, identifying with the social work profession does not exclude professionals from other disciplines who have worked in the social work arena for a length of time.

Standard 4.2: Faculty who teach required practice courses or direct the field practicum must hold credentials that include a master's degree in social work from an accredited program and have the equivalent of two years or more of full-time post-master's degree experience in professional social work practice.

The *Interpretive Guideline* for this standard states:

...that programs that have attained candidacy status or become accredited may apply for exceptions to this standard for their full-time or part-time faculty.

This may be a potential barrier when determining where you draw the line between experience as a social worker (or psychologist or nurse) or a generalist. However, it is also important to note that the interpretive guideline provides a way for a

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program to apply for an exception to this standard. For a student whose professional career goal includes collaborative, interdisciplinary practice, having teachers and field instructors who have interprofessional education knowledge and backgrounds may be more important than the singular social work focus.

Standard 5.0 Student Development

Standard 5.3: Academic credit for life experience and previous work experience must not be given, in whole or in part, in lieu of the field practicum or of courses in the professional foundation areas specified in the Curriculum Policy Statement. (See Curriculum Policy Statement M6.3 to 6.14). Statements of this policy are to appear in formal program documents.

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.4 states that:

...new advances in practice knowledge, as well as the accumulated knowledge of social work education and the social work profession, determine the specific content required for the professional foundation. The professional foundation curriculum must include content on social work values and ethics, diversity, social and economic justice, populations-at-risk, human behavior and the social environment, social welfare policy and services, social work practice, research, and field practicum.

Many of the areas covered in the professional foundation curriculum are also covered in disciplines other than social work. This provides a reason to support implementation of interprofessional education in the social work curriculum.

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.5 regarding Social Work Values and Ethics states that:

...programs of social work education must provide specific knowledge about social work values and ethical implications, as well as opportunities for students to demonstrate their application in professional practice. Students must be assisted to develop an awareness of their personal values and to clarify conflicting values and ethical dilemmas.

Social work values and ethics may be similar to those of other professions/disciplines. However, there are also some differences that need to be understood when working in an interdisciplinary setting (Wood, 1998). Interprofessional education provides the skills needed to work in an interdisciplinary setting and the knowledge base needed to understand the values and ethics of others.

In addition, among the values and principles that must be infused throughout every social work curriculum are the following:

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.5.1 states that:

Social workers' professional relationships are built on regard for individual worth and dignity, and are advanced by mutual participation, acceptance, confidentiality, honesty, and responsible handling of conflict.

These criteria may be similar across different disciplines. Interprofessional education gives students an opportunity to share their professional frameworks and to create greater understanding between professions.

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.6 states that:

Diversity: Professional social work education is committed to preparing students to understand and appreciate human diversity. Programs must provide curriculum content about differences and similarities in the experiences, needs and beliefs of people. The curriculum must include content about differential assessment and intervention skills that will enable practitioners to serve diverse populations. Each program is required to include content about population groups that are particularly relevant to the program's mission. These include, but are not limited to, groups distinguished by race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin.

Diversity can also include other professions or community groups. Including the understanding of other disciplines in the description of diversity highlights the need for interprofessional education.

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.8 states that:

Populations-at-Risk: Programs of social work education must present theoretical and practice content about patterns of dynamics, and consequences of discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression. The curriculum must provide content about people of color, women, and gay and lesbian persons. Such content must emphasize the impact of discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression upon these groups.

Each program must include content about populations-at-risk that are particularly relevant to its mission. In addition to those mandated above, such groups include, but are not limited to, those distinguished by age, ethnicity, culture, class, religion, and physical or mental ability.

Multiple professionals from a variety of disciplines are usually involved with working with populations-at-risk. Working in an interdisciplinary setting can be more effective if interprofessional education is the framework from which practice is implemented.

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.11 states that:

Social Work Practice: The professional foundation prepares students to apply a generalist perspective to social work practice systems of all sizes. Foundation practice content emphasizes professional relationships that are characterized by mutuality, collaboration, and respect for the client system. Content on practice assessment focuses on the examination of client strengths and problems in the interactions among individuals and between people and their environments.

Foundation practice content must include knowledge, values, and skills to enhance the well-being of people and to help ameliorate the environmental

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conditions that affect people adversely. Practice content must include the following skills: defining issues; collecting and assessing data; planning and contracting; identifying alternative interventions; selecting and implementing appropriate courses of action; using appropriate research to monitor and evaluate outcomes; applying appropriate research-based knowledge and technological advances; and termination. Practice content also includes approaches and skills for practice with clients from differing social, cultural, racial, religious, spiritual, and class background, and with systems of all sizes.

If collaboration is one of the areas that is stressed in social work practice, then how are students best educated? Interprofessional education provides the academic link for collaborative practice.

Curriculum Policy Statement M6.14 states that:

Field Practicum: The field practicum is an integral component of the curriculum in social work education. It engages the student in supervised social work practice and provides opportunities to apply classroom learning in the field setting.

Social work students are often placed in multi-disciplinary settings. Learning in the classroom and at field sites could include understanding the roles of multiple professionals.

Standard 6.0- Curriculum

Standard 6.2: The master's curriculum prepares students for advanced social work practice; it has a liberal arts prerequisite and must include the professional foundation and one or more concentrations. (See Curriculum Policy Statement M5.5)

Curriculum Policy Statement M5.5 states that the

...master's curriculum must be based upon a liberal arts perspective and must include the professional foundation and one or more concentrations.

A liberal arts pre-requisite supports a wide range of disciplines. This helps students understand multiple disciplinary points of view and provides an introduction to interprofessional education.

Standard 6.4: The program is responsible for providing a clearly designed field practicum for all students including standards for selecting agencies, selecting field instructors with master's degrees in social work, and evaluating student learning in practicum.

The *Interpretive Guideline* states for this standard that

...In those exceptional cases where the field instructor does not hold a social work degree, the social work program faculty should assume responsibility for identifying the specific areas that will require additional faculty involvement to ensure that a social work focus and identification are sustained and for providing whatever involvement is judged necessary to achieve this objective. The program

should be accountable for carrying out this responsibility. Faculty involvement includes frequent and sustained liaison visits to the agency to coordinate and monitor field learning assignments....

Having to select only field instructors with an MSW could be a potential barrier to interprofessional education. However, the interpretive guideline allows for non-social work field instruction. Interprofessional education is beneficial because it provides an opportunity for students to learn from other disciplines and to also receive support from those with the social work perspective. In addition, advanced planning would make it easier to use field instructors from a variety of disciplines when relevant to student learning. For accreditation criteria to be met it is clear, however, that the majority of field instructors will have a social work degree. A non-MSW field instructor in an IPE program may not serve as a barrier to accreditation and could enhance student learning.

Standard 8.0-Experimental Programs

Standard 8.0: Proposals for experimental programs must be submitted to the Commission on Accreditation for approval prior to implementation.

Furthermore, the *Interpretive Guideline for Standard 8.0* states that:

...the Commission has responsibility for formulating educational standards and applying them, for encouraging change in a manner that ensures program stability, and for facilitating the testing of new ideas offering reasonable promise of contributing to social work education. The Commission therefore requires accredited programs to submit for approval, in advance of implementation, those plans for curriculum experimentation that fall outside curriculum policies and accrediting standards. Programs use curriculum experimentation to advance professional social work education. The Commission encourages accredited programs to undertake projects involving significant planned change in educational programs. "Significant planned change" implies that the experiment does not comply with one or more of the accreditation standards. Therefore, the program should defend the means by which program quality is ensured, presenting a clear rationale for implementing the experimental program. Experimental programs may be characterized by major curriculum modifications; alterations in resource configurations; alternative program structures; or some other notable experiment that is undertaken to then expand or improve social work education. In addition, future revisions in the Curriculum Policy Statement and in Evaluative Standards may be influenced by the results of successful educational experiments.

This standard provides faculty with an explicitly supportive vehicle for introducing interprofessional education programs into the social work curriculum. Although an IPE program may not entail noncompliance with one or more of the accreditation standards, if it does or if the accrediting body evaluates this differently an IPE program could be developed as an experimental component to the curriculum using this standard for support.

In some cases interprofessional education could be considered an “experimental” program as it can provide information that applies to many of the criteria for this standard including the testing of new ideas and significant planned change. As collaboration, integrated service delivery and other similar models are becoming more common in practice, interprofessional education will contribute greatly to social work education and could become institutionalized or at least recognized as one of the possible options in a social work program under the CSWE Accreditation Standards and Curriculum Policy Statement.

Conclusion

While the CSWE Commission on Accreditation Standards and Curriculum Policy Statements described above focus appropriately on preparing effective social work practitioners, they are largely silent on the matter of interprofessional preparation for collaborative practice. More specifically, four of the Standards and nine of the Curriculum Policy Statements (CPS) can be viewed as neutral or *potentially* supportive factors for interprofessional education (IPE). None of these Standards or CPS's specifically mentions IPE, but each could be expanded to explicitly address IPE in social work programs and curriculum. Two of the standards (4.1 and 4.2) may serve as potential barriers to IPE. Both of these standards address the importance of hiring MSW administrators, classroom faculty, and field practicum faculty. Lastly, two Standards (2.2 and 6.4) and one CPS (M6.5) serve as both potential barriers and/or supportive factors to IPE. The standards address the educational requirements for the chief administrator and the field faculty and the CPS addresses teaching social work values and ethics which may or may not be similar to those used in other professions.

While these data show that social work accreditation standards present only a few potential barriers to IPE, schools and departments that are already overwhelmed with educational monitoring and record-keeping responsibilities may take their neutrality as a message that could marginalize interprofessional education.

It is also important to recognize that accreditation is perhaps even more important in social work than in other areas of professional education as illustrated by the fact that almost 100 percent of social work programs are accredited by CSWE, while less than 50 percent of teacher education programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and approximately 89 percent of BSN or MSN programs are accredited by the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission.

While the CSWE standards and curriculum policy statements are meant to be descriptive, rather than prescriptive, each must be clearly addressed and documented by applicant schools. In addition, accreditation is essential for social work programs, both to attract qualified students and to help assure their eventual certification as licensed practitioners. In turn, the policy implications of this may be

that those things that are not required, but which are discretionary in the accreditation process, will often be forgotten or at least receive diminished attention.

The practice implications of this study are less explicit. We believe that effective preparation for practice with diverse, complex and changing urban families will increasingly include basic skills in interprofessional collaboration. It may therefore be helpful for CSWE to work with some of the pioneers in this emerging field as they refine standards and review accreditation processes so that new standards make specific mention of interprofessional issues. We do not recommend that experimentation with interprofessional education should be required of every accredited social work program. However, we do believe that recognition of the importance of interprofessional practice issues and specific allowances for experimentation with interprofessional education in the standards would signal those programs most ready to invest in this area, that the time for collaboration across university departments and with communities, families, and children is here.

Lastly, further research should examine how IPE has been viewed during the accreditation process for both social work programs and other related disciplines. Since the standards are largely silent on this issue, this research may help determine the criteria that should be developed to examine IPE during the accreditation process.

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Note

1. A few quotes from key members of the University of Southern California faculty were recorded during an interview with the authors on April 22, 1997, and are included in this report to highlight perceptions and feelings about social work accreditation processes.

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