November 1, 2012

Jim Fries, PhD
President
New Mexico Highlands University
Box 9000
Las Vegas, NM 87701

Dear President Fries:

At its October 2012 meeting, the Commission on Accreditation (COA) reviewed the Reaffirmation application for the master’s of social work program at New Mexico Highlands University (NM). The COA voted to reaffirm the program’s accreditation for eight years, with a progress report to be reviewed by the COA.

In taking this action, the Commission identified the following areas of concern:

**Accreditation Standard 2.1.8:** [The program discusses how its field education program] develops policies regarding field placements in an organization in which the student is also employed. To ensure the role of student as learner, student assignments and field education supervision are not the same as those of the student’s employment.

**Concern**

Both the site visit report and the program response assert that all students in a placement where they are also employed meet the EPAS standard of different supervision and learning experiences. Still unclear is the issue of “in keeping with the waiver.” The program needs to clarify the details of the waiver referred to in the policy. Waivers that do not specify different supervision and learning experiences would not be acceptable.

**Instruction**

The program is asked to submit a report indicating the details of the waiver and how it relates to ensuring the role of student as learner with different field supervision and assignments.
Accreditation Standard M3.2.3: BSW graduates entering MSW programs are not to repeat what has been mastered in their BSW programs. MSW programs describe the policies and procedures used for awarding advanced standing. These policies and procedures should be explicit and unambiguous. Advanced standing is awarded only to graduates holding degrees from baccalaureate social work programs accredited by CSWE, those recognized through its International Social Work Degree Recognition and Evaluation Service, or covered under a memorandum of understanding with international social work accreditors.

Concern
There remains a lack of clarity with respect to the requirement that BSW students entering MSW program are not to repeat what has been mastered in the BSW program.

Instruction
The program must provide a written policy showing how students in the MSW program do not repeat what has been mastered in their BSW program.

Accreditation Standard 3.2.6: The program describes its academic and professional advising policies and procedures. Professional advising is provided by social work program faculty, staff, or both.

Concern
While it appears that students can usually get answers to their questions and have their needs met, lacking are systematic advising policies and procedures.

Instruction
The program is asked to develop and describe written policies and procedures for academic advising comparable across the program sites.

Accreditation Standard M3.4.4(c): The program describes the procedures for determining the program director’s assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership to the program. To carry out the administrative functions of the program, a minimum of 50% assigned time is required at the master’s level.
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Concern
The program response indicates the dean serves as MSW director on 25% release time for this role.

Instruction
The program must verify 50% release time for the MSW program director for educational and administrative leadership.

**Accreditation Standard 4.0.1:** The program presents its plan to assess the attainment of its competencies. The plan specifies procedures, multiple measures, and benchmarks to assess the attainment of each of the program’s competencies (AS B2.0.3; AS M2.0.4).

Concern
The linkage between the signature assignments and the practice behaviors they assess is not stated. What measures are used by the program to assess each practice behavior and each core competency?

Instruction
The program must provide a plan that specifies procedures, multiple measures, and benchmarks to assess the attainment of each of the program’s competencies (AS M2.0.4).

**Accreditation Standard 4.0.3:** The program identifies any changes in the explicit and implicit curriculum based on the analysis of the assessment data.

Concern
The program response addresses changes that do not appear related to the assessment data related to the 10 core competencies. How was assessment data used to make changes in the curriculum?

Instruction
The program is asked to identify any changes made to the curriculum based on the analysis of the assessment data provided.
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Please submit three copies of the Progress Report no later than **August 1, 2013** for review during the October 2013 COA meeting.

Sincerely,

James P. Adams, Jr., PhD  
Chair,  
Commission on Accreditation 

JPA/mdk

Cc: Alfredo A. Garcia, PhD  
Dean, School of Social Work