

Outcome Assessment Report, for academic year 2020-21
Facundo Valdez School of Social Work
Bachelor of Social Work Program

Program Mission:

Consistent with the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) set forth by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the Mission of the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work is to educate students to practice social work competently with the diverse, multicultural populations of New Mexico and the Southwest. This context of cultural and regional responsiveness informs the School's creation and implementation of all its educational programs. The School has a primary commitment to Hispanic and Native American people. Our curriculum grounds students in core professional social work values, skills and ethical principles, and provides a focused awareness and respect for cultural differences and how poverty affects the well-being of people in the region.

Assessment Methods Overview:

For assessment of student learning outcomes during the 2020-21 school year, the School of Social Work continued with the same assessment processes established during our last assessment cycle, with some minor adjustments. Thus, for each of the nine social work competencies outlined by CSWE (ethical and professional behavior, engaging diversity, advancing rights and justice, etc.) the School identified one classroom-based assignment that was used to assess student learning in that area. Every student in every section of required courses, regardless of campus location or mode of delivery, was given the same instructions for these select assignments, and every instructor used a standardized rating scale targeted to the specified social work competency to rate the student's mastery, independent of the student's overall grade for the assignment. All instructors were trained on the use of these ratings scales by the lead instructor for the course. Each scale consisted of two questions that assessed specific dimensions of the competency, and each item was rated on the same ordinal scale, ranging from no competency to exceeds expectations for competency. For example, to assess the competency in social work research, instructors rated the extent to which students successfully used literature to inform a research question, and then, the extent to which they presented a maximally valid research plan to collect data, two dimensions of research competency. (Of note, students were also rated on the nine social work competencies by their supervisors in their field placement settings, based on their demonstration of the relevant knowledge and skills in practice.)

In order to assess general student learning outcomes for the University, the course-embedded rating scales for most of the nine selected assignments additionally prompted instructors to rate student mastery of one of the four NMHU traits. Thus, instructors administered a standardized assignment, and upon reviewing student work, completed a rating scale consisting of at least two questions tapping into a social work competency; and then, in most cases, they *also* rated the student on an NMHU trait-specific question. The assessment of the student mastery of the social work competencies and the NMHU traits were thus integrated.

A summary table documenting the courses and assignments used to assess both the nine social work competencies and the four NMHU traits at the BSW level appears below. You'll note that efforts were made to select courses at both the junior and senior levels.

Competency	Social Work Course	Assignment	Supplemental Assessment of NMHU Trait
1) Ethical, Professional Behavior	3310 Law & Ethics	Case Study Paper	Critical thinking
2) Engage Diversity	3830 Diversity	Critical Self-Reflection	
3) Advance Rights & Justice	4660 Practice 4	Community Intervention	Content Knowledge
4) Research	4300 Research 2	IRB Proposal	Use of Technology
5) Policy Practice	3410 Policy	Action Plan	Communication
6) Engage	3660 Practice 1	Life Span Role Play	Communication
7) Assess	4680 Theory	Theory-Based Assessment	Content Knowledge
8) Intervene	4650 Practice 3	Family Assessment	Critical Thinking
9) Evaluate			

The ratings scales used to assess the NMHU Traits are described below, along with a presentation of the results. Of note is that while we had full participation by instructors for the ratings of the social work competencies, we did have some missing data related to the NMHU traits, as some instructors overlooked the last question on the rating scale.

The full results, including a summary of outcomes data related to the social work competencies, appear in an appendix at the end of this report. What appears below is a summary of the results related to student mastery of the NMHU Traits, only.

Specific Measures of Learning Outcomes, with Results, Organized by NMHU Trait

NMHU Trait: Critical and Reflective Thinking

Assessment 1

CSWE Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical & Professional Behavior

The **Case Study Paper** in SOWK 3310, was used to assess student demonstration of **Ethical and Professional Behavior**. For this assignment, each student analyzed the same case example, related to a homeless family that declines the offer of a shelter placement. Students were instructed to apply the NASW Code of Ethics, as well as statute related to child abuse reporting. After identifying and weighing ethical and value dilemmas, students were asked to propose a case plan for the family members. This assignment was also used to assess the student on the NMHU Trait, **Critical and Reflective Thinking**.

Assessment 2

CSWE Competencies 8 & 9: Intervention and Evaluation of Practice

The **Family Assessment** assignment in SOWK 4650, was used to assess student's competency at both **Intervention Planning** and **Evaluation**. For this assignment, students were asked to conduct an assessment based on a family narrative from an assigned film. Students were asked to demonstrate a person-in-environment perspective in identifying strengths, needs, and diversity and social justice issues. They then wrote an assessment and made a treatment plan that incorporated evidence-based interventions, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. Again, this assignment was also used to assess the student on the NMHU Trait, **Critical and Reflective Thinking**.

Thus, for each of these measures, in addition to rating students on the social work competencies, instructors rated them on the **Critical and Reflective Thinking** trait by answering the following question:

How well did the student demonstrate critical and reflective thinking? (e.g., integrating and weighing multiple sources of information, grounding conclusions in evidence, providing rationale for conclusions)?

- 1 = Not at all (does not demonstrate this trait)
- 2 = Inadequately (some problems evident in demonstration of this trait)
- 3 = Adequately (demonstrates the trait, but falls short of full mastery)
- 4 = Well (demonstrates mastery of the trait appropriate for BSW level)
- 5 = Exceptionally well (exceeds expectations for mastery of the trait at BSW level)

The benchmark was set at 4, demonstrating mastery of the trait. Ratings of 1, 2, and 3 were combined to indicate that the student did not demonstrate mastery, and ratings of 4 and 5 were combined to indicate that the student did demonstrate mastery. Descriptive statistics reveal the following rates of proficiency, or mastery, in the area of **Critical and Reflective Thinking**:

<i>Assessment 1, SOWK 3310 Case Study Paper</i>	
Number of students assessed	76
Percentage of students meeting benchmark	46.68%
<i>Assessment 2, SOWK 4650, Family Assessment</i>	
Number of students assessed	82
Percentage of students meeting benchmark	78.05%

Interpretation of Results

Just 47% of the 76 students who were assessed on this trait in SOWK 3310 were rated by their instructors as demonstrating proficiency in critical and reflective thinking at the BSW-level. In SOWK 4650, an advanced course, 78.05% of students were rated as demonstrating proficiency in this area. This improvement from students' first semester in the program (SOWK 3310) to the

Fall of their second year (SOWK 4650) is encouraging. However, even in the advanced course, nearly 22% showed less than full mastery and therefore would benefit from supplemental education and support to help them further build these skills. Luckily, critical thinking is incorporated into many, if not most, assignments in both the junior and senior year of the BSW program, and thus skills are taught, reinforced, and practiced throughout the program.

NMHU Trait: Effective Use of Technology

Assessment 1

CSWE Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

The **IRB Proposal** in SOWK 4300, Research Methods II, was used to indicate student competency in understanding and demonstrating **Research** knowledge and skills. In this assignment, students were asked to select a topic related to social work practice and the populations served and to read peer-reviewed research journal articles on the topic. They then used the findings of this literature review, their own practice experience, and their knowledge of ethical and maximally valid research practices to craft a research question and methodology. They then communicated this planned research methodology by completing a research proposal for the NMHU Institutional Review Board (IRB). This assignment was also used to assess students on the NMHU Trait, **Effective Use of Technology**.

Thus, in addition to rating the students on dimensions of research, instructors rated them on the trait by answering the following question:

How effectively did the student use technology (e.g., use of writing or presentation software, data management or analysis software, online research tools)?

- 1 = Not at all (does not demonstrate this trait)
- 2 = Inadequately (some problems evident in demonstration of this trait)
- 3 = Adequately (demonstrates the trait, but falls short of full mastery)
- 4 = Well (demonstrates mastery of the trait appropriate for BSW level)
- 5 = Exceptionally well (exceeds expectations for mastery of the trait at BSW level)

Note that the IRB Proposal in SOWK 4300 was the only measure of the NMHU Trait, **Effective Use of Technology**, at the BSW level. Thus, below, we present the descriptive statistics for this measure only. Again, the benchmark was set at 4, demonstrating mastery of the trait. Ratings of 1, 2, and 3 were combined to indicate the student did not demonstrate mastery, and ratings of 4 and 5 were combined to indicate the student did demonstrate mastery. Descriptive statistics reveal the following rates of proficiency, or mastery, in the area of **Effective Use of Technology**:

<i>Assessment 1, SOWK 4300 IRB Proposal</i>	
Number of students assessed	87
Number of students meeting benchmark	75.86%

Interpretation of Results

Just over three quarters (75.86%) of the 87 students who were assessed on this trait were rated by their instructors as demonstrating **effective use of technology**, appropriate for the BSW-level. Roughly one quarter showed less than full mastery of this trait and will therefore benefit from supplemental support and training to build their technology skills. Throughout their BSW program, students must learn to be critical users of internet-based information, and they must learn to use software-based and web-based applications, such as Brightspace, Zoom, and the library's databases. It is worth noting that during the 2020-21 school year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, every class and all classwork were completed remotely, requiring students to use technology for all aspects of learning. Given that, this assessment represents only one tiny piece of a student's demonstrated use of technology.

NMHU Trait: Effective Communication

Assessment 1

CSWE Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

The **Action Plan** assignment in SOWK 3410, Social Policy, was used to indicate student competency in **Engaging in Policy Practice**. For this research-informed advocacy assignment, students created an action plan to promote a policy identified through earlier research. Students were required to summarize the core arguments in favor and against the policy, identify stakeholders and other partners for collaboration, craft messages for the public and decision-makers, and identify ways to disseminate this message through media and community events. This assignment was also used to assess students on the NMHU Trait, **Effective Communication**.

Assessment 2

CSWE Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations & Communities

The **Life Span Role Play Assignment** in SOWK 3660, Generalist Practice 2, was used to indicate student competency in understanding and demonstrating **Engagement** knowledge and skills. In this assignment, students were asked to demonstrate basic social work interviewing and communication skills appropriate to the developmental life stage of a client system through a role play activity. Further, they developed and wrote a client scenario which describes the client's situation, strengths, limitations, and current goals and objectives. They also wrote a summary of the characteristics of the assigned developmental stage and discussed how it would influence their approach to interviewing the client system. This assignment was also used to assess the student on the NMHU Trait, **Effective Communication**.

Thus, for each of these measures, in addition to rating students on the social work competencies, instructors rated them on the **Effective Communication** trait by answering the following question:

How effectively did the student communicate, orally or in writing (e.g., how clearly, accurately, appropriately for the audience)?

- 1 = Not at all (does not demonstrate this trait)
- 2 = Inadequately (some problems evident in demonstration of this trait)
- 3 = Adequately (demonstrates the trait, but falls short of full mastery)
- 4 = Well (demonstrates mastery of the trait appropriate for BSW level)
- 5 = Exceptionally well (exceeds expectations for mastery of the trait at BSW level)

Again, the benchmark was set at 4, demonstrating mastery of the trait. Ratings of 1, 2, and 3 were combined to indicate the student did not demonstrate mastery, and ratings of 4 and 5 were combined to indicate the student did demonstrate mastery. Descriptive statistics reveal the following rates of proficiency, or mastery, in the area of communication:

<i>Assessment 1, SOWK 3410 Action Plan</i>	
Number of students assessed	75
Percentage of students meeting benchmark	84.0%
<i>Assessment 2, SOWK 3660, Life Span Role Play Assignment</i>	
Number of students assessed	86
Percentage of students meeting benchmark	83.72%

Interpretation of Results:

On both indicators, close to 85% of the students who were assessed on this trait were rated by their instructors as demonstrating **effective communication**, appropriate for the BSW-level. Roughly one sixth showed less than full mastery, and therefore would benefit from supplemental training and support to build these skills. Oral and written communication is a part of nearly all classroom activities and assignments in the BSW program, and all field placements, so students have many opportunities to get support and feedback from a diversity of instructors. Our faculty are interested in creating new, additional opportunities to support students in developing their written communication skills, in particular, as this is an area where some students continue to struggle.

NMHU Trait: Content Knowledge & Skills

Assessment 1

CSWE Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic and Environmental Justice

The **Community Intervention Assignment** in SOWK 4660, Generalist Social Work Practice IV, was used to indicate student competency in **Advancing Rights and Justice**. For this written assignment, students outlined a plan to advocate for a specific human right within a specific community. Students identified a social problem and a population affected, and applied their social work knowledge to guide the development of strategies and tactics to ameliorate the social problem and thereby enhance human rights. This assignment was also used to assess students on the NMHU Trait, **Content Knowledge and Skills**.

Assessment 2

CSWE Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

The **Theory-Based Assessment Assignment** in SOWK 4680, Theories of Social Work Practice, was used to indicate student competency in understanding and demonstrating **Assessment** knowledge and skills. For this assignment, students were asked to complete a bio-psychosocial-spiritual assessment of and apply four theoretical paradigms to a sample case. They also were asked to describe how they would build and use self-awareness in serving such a client. This assignment was also used to assess students on the NMHU Trait, **Content Knowledge and Skills**.

Thus, for each of these measures, in addition to rating students on the social work competencies, instructors rated them on the **Content Knowledge and Skills** trait by answering the following question:

How well did the student demonstrate mastery of the relevant social work knowledge and skills (e.g., correct application of theory, terminology, or social work skills)?

- 1 = Not at all (does not demonstrate this trait)
- 2 = Inadequately (some problems evident in demonstration of this trait)
- 3 = Adequately (demonstrates the trait, but falls short of full mastery)
- 4 = Well (demonstrates mastery of the trait appropriate for BSW level)
- 5 = Exceptionally well (exceeds expectations for mastery of the trait at BSW level)

As with the other measures, the benchmark was set at 4, demonstrating mastery of the trait. Ratings of 1, 2, and 3 were combined to indicate the student did not demonstrate mastery, and ratings of 4 and 5 were combined to indicate the student did demonstrate mastery. Descriptive statistics reveal the following rates of mastery in the area of **content knowledge and skills**:

<i>Assessment 1, SOWK 4660, Community Intervention Assignment</i>	
Number of students assessed	91
Percentage of students meeting benchmark	64.84%
<i>Assessment 2, SOWK 4680, Theory-Based Assessment</i>	
Number of students assessed	84
Percentage of students meeting benchmark	80.95%

Interpretation of Results:

Roughly 65% of the students who were assessed on this trait in SOWK 4660 and 81% of those assessed in SOWK 4680 were rated by their instructors as demonstrating **content knowledge and skills**, appropriate for the BSW-level. Roughly 35% and 19%, respectively, did not demonstrate content knowledge and skills. The “content” in this case related to advocacy strategies and to bio-psychosocial-spiritual assessment skills and the applications of social work theories of practice. Attention is needed to determine how we can support more students in

achieving the benchmark in for content knowledge. As this NMHU Trait relates most directly to all nine social work competencies, it should be noted here that our students demonstrated high levels of competence in most areas of the classroom-based assessments, including these, but even higher levels of social work skill-based competence in their field placements. Please see the summary table in the Appendix for more information.

Additional Information about the Context of these Results

This assessment took place during an academic year notable for adversity. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all classes were delivered online, predominantly synchronously, through Zoom, although there were a few asynchronous class sections, as well. Thus, all student learning took place remotely, which resulted in challenges for some students. Many students were previously unfamiliar with the online learning platforms and classroom environment and had a steep learning curve. Many students had distractions in their home learning environment, and others had insufficient or unstable internet access, while still others complained of “Zoom fatigue,” which interfered with their engagement with their learning. Additionally, many students experienced stress and/or hardship in their personal lives and their communities due to the economic, health, and interpersonal upheaval associated with the pandemic.

Remote education offered challenges for instructors, as well, as they were forced to adapt both their teaching and their assessment of student learning. For instance, role play assignments require simulated social work service delivery. The fact that students performed better at demonstrating social work skills and knowledge in their field practicum settings could indicate that students were unable to perform at their best in online classroom-based role play assessments.

In any case, while the above results certainly highlight areas to target with efforts to improve teaching and student support, we should also feel impressed and proud of our faculty and our students for their perseverance and for achieving the observed levels of student learning and mastery, despite these challenges.

Utilization of Results:

For each NMHU Trait indicator, we generated frequency data, as discussed above, and were able to determine where our students are struggling. Taking an average across indicators of each NMHU Trait, roughly 3/4 of students achieved the benchmarks for content knowledge and use of technology. Somewhat more than that, close to 5/6, achieved the benchmark on oral and written communication. And somewhat less than that, about 2/3, achieved the benchmark for critical thinking. While it is a clear majority who were rated highly by their instructors on the four NMHU traits, we can and should always be exploring pathways to better support our students' success.

Since our last assessment cycle, we have expanded some School-specific academic supports which should enhance mastery of the NMHU Traits. The School's online writing lab, staffed by a

trained graduate student, has been made available to students at all campus locations through online technology. Our social work-designated librarian also continues to be available to support students school-wide. And our School's technology support program, also run by a trained graduate student, now offers one-on-one help to instructors and students, school-wide. We also have a new grant, our SWEEP grant, to help us retain and support students who are struggling academically or personally. Through this grant, staff and faculty have worked to improve communication with students and to make our advisement and academic support services easier to access. Our intent is for each of these student-focused resources and supports to be continued, expanded, and improved, with feedback and input from students, faculty, and staff.

This was the second wave of assessment reliant on this method of data collection, the use of Rating Scales to assess specific social work skills (the CSWE competencies), along with one of the four NMHU traits, as demonstrated through class assignments. While we had full participation by instructors implementing the social work competency Rating Scales, we did not have complete data for the Trait questions. These questions nearly always appeared on a second easy-to-miss page of a Word document that instructors used to guide their ratings, although the social work competency and NMHU Trait assessments were integrated on the Excel worksheets that instructors used for data entry. In the future, we should move towards electronic forms (such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms) to remove this barrier to full participation. This would also simplify data entry and data management. Of course, our faculty should also consider alternatives to basing our rating on existing classroom assignments. The School's Curriculum Committee is currently evaluating our assessment plan for next year, for both the social work competencies and the NMHU Traits. Ideally, we will continue to expand and improve our generation of usable data that can help inform programming.

Changes to the Program Based on Results:

While we are only just now reflecting on areas for improvement based on these data, some changes in curriculum and teaching changes are already in process. Based on findings from our last assessment cycle, as well as real-time feedback from students and instructors, we have begun to make programmatic changes, primarily targeting the social work competencies. We have made changes to our field supervisor trainings, to support them in creating opportunities for students to practice more of the social work competencies, particularly those related to research, evaluation, and policy practice. Adjustments have been made to readings and assignments to help students achieve greater levels of skill at engaging diversity. And the Law & Ethics course has been significantly revised to better prepare students to demonstrate mastery of the ethics and professionalism competency.

Most importantly, we have expanded the role of our Lead Faculty member for each course in order to promote greater consistency between instructors and greater student success, overall. Lead Faculty members are asked to offer support to instructors more regularly throughout the semester, to provide more guidance on teaching of the course content, skills, and social work competencies, and to provide a "portfolio" of classroom and online activities that are targeted

towards building these competencies. Going forward, lead faculty could additionally offer guidance and recommend teaching activities geared toward the NMHU Traits.

Based on results of student learning outcomes data from the 2020-21 school year, additional program improvements are being considered. In a meeting of the Curriculum Committee, a recommendation was put forth to insert more scaffolded assignments into our syllabi, allowing students to break down and build skills and knowledge, step-by-step. Related to field practicum, to enable the field learning experience to best complement the classroom learning experience, the field team is considering the development of a syllabus for field placements, that would include assignments specifically targeted to the social work competencies, including those with which students most struggle – research, evaluation, and policy practice. The field team is also working to bring more macro-social work practice content to the continuing education offered to field instructors, so that instructors can build their own competency, thus enabling them to better support students.

We may also consider making changes to our outcomes assessment procedures. Rather than using existing class assignments as the basis for the Rating Scales, lead faculty, together with other instructors, could work to reconceptualize and redevelop assignments with the social work competencies and NMHU traits, in mind. Thus, students would be intentionally taught the skills and content on which they will be assessed. Further, it was recommended that we explore the possibility of comprehensive, end-of-course assessment activities, when students have had the benefit of a full semester of instruction.

Retention Strategies:

The Facundo Valdez School of Social Work has very good retention and graduation rates. We presume this is due, in part, to our well-defined course sequence or program map, which provides students a clear pathway to degree completion. It is also likely due, in part, to the fact that we only teach juniors and seniors, who have already achieved some academic success. That said, we can and do take steps to improve. Our primary efforts to improve retention have focused on improving our advisement structure and our student supports.

In terms of advisement, we do have a system in place to assure that all students are assigned an advisor, and that both the student and faculty member are informed of how to contact one another. These advisors are all full-time (contingent and tenured or tenure-track) faculty members. Faculty advisors receive training and support on the course sequence and curriculum and on effective advisement strategies, including methods of outreach and use of Degree Audit. New faculty advisors are paired with an experienced one, who provides consultation, mentorship, and help with problem-solving, and our BSW Program Coordinator is also available to clarify program requirements and guide advisors in supporting students.

Notably, during the 2021-22 school year, our student support and retention strategies have expanded significantly, in large part due to the resources made available through our SWEEP grant. We have expanded the role of our Student Support Specialists, available at all campus

locations, who offer regular workshops, as well as individualized support, to help students navigate issues related to course selection and registration. Further, our SWEEP team has developed a host of resources to support both students and faculty alike, including a written Guide to Faculty Advisement, Course Planning Forms for use by students in charting their progress towards their degrees, and a Social Work Student Guide, which outlines available supports and offers guidance and on school policies and expectations. And we have a designated faculty member who can offer “enhanced advisement” to students facing unusual or steep personal and academic barriers to their success and program completion. We are hopeful that these and other academic and personal supports offered or guided by our SWEEP team will lead to even great retention and graduation success for our school, and greater mastery of the social work competencies and NMHU Traits.

Appendix: Summary Student Learning Outcomes Data, 2020-21

BSW Outcomes Data

Social Work Competency	Measure	% achieving benchmark on their average rating	N	Average % achieving benchmark on the two measures
1 Ethics & Professionalism	3331 Case Study Paper	53.95%	76	75.57%
	Final field eval	97.18%	71	
2 Engaging diversity	3830 Critical Self-Reflection	68.35%	79	81.36%
	Final field eval	94.37%	71	
3 Advancing Rights and Justice	4660 Community Intervention	61.54%	91	74.43%
	Final field eval	87.32%	71	
4 Research	4300 IRB Proposal	73.56%	87	76.92%
	Final field eval	80.28%	71	
5 Policy Practice	3410 Action Plan	77.33%	75	80.92%
	Final field eval	84.51%	71	
6 Engagement	3660 Life Span Role Play	80.23%	86	88.0%
	Final field eval	95.77%	71	
7 Assessment	4680 Theory-based Ass't	71.43%	84	80.79%
	Final field eval	90.14%	71	
8 Intervention	4650 Family Assessment	75.27%	93	84.82%
	Final field eval	94.37%	71	
9 Evaluation	4650 Family Assessment	65.59%	93	73.84%
	Final field eval	82.09%	68	

NMHU Trait Data – BSW Level

Trait	Measure	N	% achieving benchmark
Critical Thinking	3310 Research Assignment	76	48.68%
	4650 Family Assessment	82	78.05%
Content Knowledge	4660 Community Intervention	91	64.84%
	4680 Theory Based Assessment	84	80.95%
Communication	3410 Action Plan	75	84.0%
	3660 Life Span Role Play	86	83.72%
Use of Technology	4300 IRB Proposal	87	75.86%