Faculty responsiveness via a question-and-answer newsletter: Its impact on student satisfaction

Daniel Pérez

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FACULTY RESPONSIVENESS VIA A QUESTION-AND-ANSWER NEWSLETTER:
ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT SATISFACTION

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Daniel Perez
June 2000
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6/13/00 Date
ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between student satisfaction and faculty responsiveness to student concerns. "Action Research" was employed. Data analysis focused on group comparisons. Participants were able to address concerns relevant to the educational life of students. A pre-test and post-test survey design gauged changes in student satisfaction levels as a result of participating in the development of a Question-and-Answer Newsletter.

Participating students anonymously submitted questions and concerns to which the faculty responded. The issue of program evaluation and accountability demands that schools of social work accommodate the varying agendas of multiple constituencies. Students, as a constituency and as consumers of the institution's services, are a primary source for feedback. This study facilitated this by engaging students in a dialogue with faculty in a safe, constructive manner. Schools of social work could use similar models of research and intervention, not only to enhance services to students, but to improve program effectiveness as well.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A mi Ama',

Tu apoyo me dio la fuerza para sobrevivir y para, en el final, sobresalir. No hay día que tu influencia no se manifest en mi vivir. Te agradecoz todo.

To my sister Annabelle,

For believing in me and for never leaving. You have been my tether and in your presence I have always found solace. Thank You.

To Robert,

For teaching me about forgiveness and love. It will serve me and those I serve in this profession. Thank You for holding me up.

To Mike, Diane, Malcolm, Jenny, and Johnna,

God takes care of us all. He even provides family in its absence. You gave me a foundation when I had none.

To Tracy,

There's a reason why we ended up next to each other in Hill's class! You have been my mentor and best friend. You unknowingly took care of me for many years. Now, I can do the same for others.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Focus</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Participants</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Recommendations</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: SURVEY</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D: QUESTION COLLECTION FORM</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX E: THE MESSENGER</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Faculty Responsiveness & Student Satisfaction, Increase in Group Scores........33

Table 2. Faculty Responsiveness & Student Satisfaction, Increase in Group Scores........34
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Rising out of the cry for accountability by the taxpaying public, schools of social work along with other institutions of higher learning have had to evaluate their own effectiveness through stern cajoling and sometimes kid-gloved coercion. Historically, most schools of social work would not choose to engage in program assessment (Buchan, 1991). As the taxpaying public and private interest groups have congruently stripped them of assessment immunity, the Council on Social Work Education has had to clearly delineate the assessment responsibilities of schools of social work. These often rigorous requirements and standards specify the parameters for curriculum needs, educational policies, and expected instructional outcomes. Despite the comprehensive nature of these standards, however, they lack a clear focus regarding the weight of student satisfaction in the measurement of program effectiveness.

The trepidation that schools must experience as they bandy about the notion of including the perceptions of students in their program evaluation is understandable and reasonable. However, to permit students the opportunity to evaluate their satisfaction with programming, in light of all of the stressors that impact their lives and judgement,
can be considered a strong statement of support to student concerns. And, more specifically, to request that students evaluate faculty and administrative responsiveness to pressing collective concerns, is a risk that can demonstrate the willingness of schools to reasonably accommodate the concerns of one of their more important constituencies, the student body.

Key ingredients to successful program assessment of higher education are faculty and student involvement in addition to administrative and staff support (Buchan, 1991). A paradigm shift behooves the interest of the evaluated. Making the conscious effort to view and utilize evaluation as a tool for program improvement and less as a criticism of current program performance becomes a vital aspect of the evaluation process.

This adjustment in perception increases in importance when seemingly competing agendas are a part of the evaluation equation. Nettles (1987) listed as his first principle of good assessment the implementation of a multidimensional approach. This was to include, among other aspects of the program, student retention data, student satisfaction with curriculum, and student feedback surveys. The latter of these can become a contentious issue as the
recipient of services is, to some degree, empowered to voice concerns regarding the delivery of services.

It is clear that the educational institution serves various needs in the community. Only one of these is the provision of instructional services to its students. To draw a parallel between students receiving instruction at an institution to customers purchasing goods from a business fully negates that the tuition paid by students covers only a fraction of the cost at both public and private institutions. A more pragmatic assessment is that these institutions are accountable to a varied, political, and complex set of constituencies. This complexity, however, does not diminish the importance of any of the affected parties.

In employing evaluation components that incorporate measures of student satisfaction, the potential for some disquiet is real. Giving thoughtful weight to one constituent's needs, invariably competes with the agenda of another's. The soothing tone of reasonability must predominate.

In the arena of graduate social work education, to determine that satisfaction of students should be a measure of program effectiveness seems to call into subjective question the efforts of well-meaning and very competent
faculty and administration. And because graduate students participate in educational programs in moving dynamic streams, the reality exists for potentially disruptive changes in faculty and administration.

The evaluation of this relationship, student satisfaction as it relates to faculty responsiveness, is an important problem for exploration. This study is needed because often students have very real or perceived fears about engaging faculty in meaningful, constructive, problem solving discussions. The anonymous participation afforded to the participants in this study served as a vital link toward the beginnings of a dialogue that could prove very useful. This research may serve as a catalyst to strengthening faculty, student ties.

It may become a launching pad for discussion of issues that are sometimes not necessarily addressed in strict program evaluation. It strengthens a paradigm for mutual problem solving that employs diplomacy and respect for all parties' concerns. And perhaps of greatest significance is that it serves as a tangible learning tool for the graduate social work student in emulating many of the ethics and standards for which the profession is respected.
Problem Focus

Dramatic increases in student enrollment and demands in M.S.W. programs nationwide have forced M.S.W. programs to "make difficult choices about how to meet these demands with static or slowly growing faculty resources, (McMurtry & McClelland, 1997). A balance in the energies expended to meet the needs of all concerned parties is therefore a more judicious use of resources.

Understanding the various affected constituencies guides M.S.W. programs toward more effective evaluation of programming and delivery of services. One of these groups is the students themselves.

Social work students tend to be empathic and are more apt to identify with underprivileged populations (Black, 1993). Professional ethic calls for these students to become advocates and tools of empowerment as they enter the profession of social work. It demands that they respect the dignity of each individual and that the principle of "self determination" predominate. As the challenge of student satisfaction as an indicator of program effectiveness is recognized and embraced, the importance of this basic understanding of the social work student comes to the fore. As schools of social work evaluate their own effectiveness, in addition to improving programming, it becomes clear that
involving students in their own empowerment can also be an invaluable tool in reinforcing the ethics of social work.

The National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics delineates standards of conduct that all professional social workers are expected to adhere to. Among these are standards that include the individual's right to self determination and the responsibility of the social worker to facilitate informed participation in shaping institutions.

The institution of graduate social work education is a potential forum for active learning of these very basic professional standards. A more apt microcosm of the complexities of the greater exterior political and social milieu could not have been created by the profession for the inculcation of the profession's ethics.

The internalization of these ethics and of the larger professional core values is a function of graduate social work education. Values are conceptual abstractions drawn from immediate experience, are affectively charged, and consequently become criteria for directing action (Hunter & Saleeby, 1978). It follows that the immediate experience in the instance of this study is the involvement of the students in the exchange of information and ideas and perhaps even in the sometimes inevitable changing of the landscape of the institution.
This study, a student satisfaction survey that employed action based research methods, served to empower the students in this M.S.W. program. This study provided the participating students and faculty a tangible example of action research effectiveness. In addition, it did this in a very personally impacting and effective manner. The potential for the internalization of the social work values and ethics of the experience were real and immediately palpable. The ability to convey their concerns to faculty without fear of repercussion unleashed a swell of emotion and thought as evidenced by the commentary captured in the Question-and-Answer Newsletter. This exercise in empowerment alone may be accessed by these students later in their professional lives.

The full utility of this study bears further investigation. The results of this study speak only to the immediate need for the beginnings of a mutual problem solving dialogue. The program evaluation needs of this department of social work were not comprehensively addressed. However, the resulting intervention product, the Question-and-Answer Newsletter, could serve programming needs by providing a beginning framework for a thoughtful discussion of the issues. The results of this study promote one of the most fundamental ethics of social work;
empowerment. Beyond merely reading, discussing the concept, or even promoting it in client populations, this study serves as a tangible example of this ethic to those students and faculty who participated.

This study asked:

"How does the responsiveness to student concerns by faculty and administrative staff, through the vehicle of a "Question-and-Answer Newsletter", affect the level of student satisfaction in the M.S.W. program at California State University, San Bernardino?"

**Literature Review**

The availability of "satisfaction" research as it relates to employment satisfaction is extensive. It is of particular interest because much of the formulation for student satisfaction research has its roots in this body of work. Organizational researchers and executives have had a vested interest in understanding how job characteristics relate to job productivity and job satisfaction (Finaly, 1994). The results of this work have included a reevaluation and consequent addressing of job related issues such as burnout, alienation, lack of motivation and hampered productivity. The evident congruency between job satisfaction issues and student satisfaction has directed the linking of the two bodies of research work. Therefore,
student satisfaction research has resulted as an outgrowth of the former.

In job satisfaction research, measurement of satisfaction with any particular activity has been done by defining certain characteristics at a perceptual level, or the perceived attributes of the job. Among the more relevant personal characteristics affecting perception are attitudes, motives, interests, past experience, and expectations (Broadbent, 1998). These characteristics are measured in most studies by the notion of need fulfillment (Finaly, 1994). The dominant paradigm and research findings have clearly indicated that it is not the objective characteristics of the job but how the individual perceives his/her job that is the salient predictor of an individual’s job satisfaction (Finaly, 1994).

Broadbent (1998) adds that increasingly psychologists regard satisfaction with an activity as the emotional or affective part of the attitude toward that activity. This approach assumes that the bio/psycho/social aspects of one’s environment affect satisfaction in some direct way. Consequently, the effects of those conditions depend considerably on an individual’s perceptions of the causes of those conditions (Broadbent, 1998).
Research has shown that if the perceived problem is associated with an external factor, beyond the individual's control, then the likelihood of the problem leading to dissatisfaction is more probable (Lister, 1995). It follows that if the individual is given some vehicle by which to affect the problem, then satisfaction will increase.

Prior investigations of student satisfaction with Master of Social Work Programs have focused largely on student satisfaction as it relates to their field work or field practicum experiences. Cimino, Cimino, Nuehring, and Wisler-Wladock (1982) identified five independent factors indicating different types of satisfaction with field work for M.S.W. students. These included global satisfaction, satisfaction with the relationship with the instructor, sense of belonging, satisfaction with the quality of the agency, and satisfaction with the quality of supervision. It was concluded that student satisfaction could not be treated as a unified concept, but was instead based on various factors or aspects of the experience with field, (Cimino, Cimino, Nuehring, Raybin, Wisler-Waldock, 1982). That and similar studies found that student satisfaction with field placement was a multidimensional construct that was influenced by a variety of factors (Cimino, et al, 1982; Fortune, et al, 1985, & Kissman and Tran, 1990). Other
identified potential predictors of graduate student satisfaction included the quality of field instruction and communication with the instructor (Fortune, et al, 1985).

Research findings indicate as well that one of the most powerful predictors of satisfaction with the field experience was the satisfaction with the field work instructor relationship (Alperin, 1998). Other studies echoed similar results underscoring the importance of a satisfactory relationship with the student’s instructors that included ongoing feedback and communication regarding the student’s status (Alperin, 1998; Finaly, 1994; Broadbent, 1998).

The healthy, open exchange of information, concerns, and ideas that occurs in fieldwork consultation and supervision sets a standard for problem solving. Guiding students through a course of graduate social work; however, is an ongoing process of evaluation, reclarification, and reevaluation (B. Koerin, P. Harrigan, & W. Reeves, 1990). Research that measured the impact of intervening factors on changing levels of students satisfaction is not available. However, it has been shown that the transition from student to social worker is a process that social work educators do not control, but can facilitate (B. Koerin, P. Harrigan, & W. Reeves, 1990). As the field work instructor impacts on
the satisfaction of the field work experience, the social work educator is vital in the development of the social worker from mere student to professional. The responsibility looms large, but is not in its entirety the responsibility of any one of the forces that affects the student's life. Embroiled in this development is the student himself. The social work curriculum inculcates the values of empowerment, self determination and the dignity and self worth of the individual. Students develop skills reflecting these values, and, hopefully, experience relationships with faculty, field instructors, and other professionals who model them (B. Koerin, P. Harrigan, & W. Reeves, 1990).

In the role of adviser, faculty are found to be invaluable in facilitating transition from student to social work professional especially for the younger M.S.W. student (B. Koerin, P. Harrigan, & W. Reeves, 1990). The relationship between student and instructor/ faculty again is underscored as vital. Full time M.S.W. students as well as part time students are faced with acting out multiple roles in their lives and the existence of this academic and sometimes personal support can help alleviate the stress endured in undertaking a graduate education in social work.
Multiple role enactment, however, may be associated with a variety of benefits, such as exposure to multiple resources for tangible and emotional support. Consequently, and despite presumed logic, part-time students may experience higher levels of adjustment than is the case for full-time students (Potts, 1991).

Several researchers have documented that part-time graduate students were more likely to also work (Potts, 1991). In instances such as these the perception of familial support, no matter how that manifested itself, seemed to reduce the vulnerability to stress. And as the data show, perceptions of role demands were more powerful predictors of stress and role strain than actual role situations (Home, 1997).

It is reported that academic outcomes between part-time and full-time students are equivalent (Potts, 1991). However, because part-time enrollment often involves responsibilities outside the realm of academics, such as marriage, parenthood, and employment, it is reasonable to predict that part-time enrollment is also associated with role stress (Potts, 1991). This increase in extracurricular role-related stress would seem to exacerbate any existing school-related anxiety and reduce student satisfaction.
However, the composite of these various role enactments, and the ensuing stress leaves many faculty at a loss with how to respond (Home, 1993). One obstacle to responsiveness, is the lack of empirically based guidelines identifying which situations increase risk of stress and role strain and which supports reduce vulnerability (Home, 1997).

The measurement of student satisfaction and how to achieve increases in this is a difficult prospect. Whether the underlying motivation is eventual increased programmatic effectiveness, or improved student academic outcomes, or even increased positive regard for the school in its community, research findings indicate that the construct is a multifaceted one. During the course of reviewing the available relevant literature, it was found that studies conducted to measure student satisfaction focused largely on perception of satisfaction based on linear, one directional relationships with factors that influenced the students' levels of satisfaction. Students associated their levels of satisfaction with how much support was received or available, or to the availability of academic resources in their environs. The implication is that the subjects of most of these studies were passive receivers of services, consumers as it were. Faculty, administration, and school
personnel were shouldered with the hardy and, as reported in some of the findings, the unachievable responsibility of ensuring student satisfaction.

At the outset of this section, this writer indicated that the precursor to student satisfaction research was job satisfaction research. Interestingly, in job satisfaction research some of the indicators that were the greatest predictors of satisfaction were autonomy, task clarity, challenge, and variety (Finaly, 1994). The studies looked at the opportunity for these individuals to exercise freedom of personal will. They also considered the employing of standards of personal responsibility in completing tasks and the availability of varied tasks. This implies that these subjects were active participants in the generation of their own satisfaction. Despite this general incongruence in measurements of satisfaction, one study did speak to student participation in the generation of their own satisfaction.

Essential to the process of transitioning students to professionalism is the implementation of appropriate evaluative procedures which involve all the participating members of the program (Broadbent, 1998). This broad based approach to program evaluation shares the task amongst all including the "recipient of services" and to a good extent empowers them. These students are given responsibility for
the direction that their education takes. The results indicate that the levels of satisfaction tend to be higher when students perceive themselves as having some control over their environment and are able to influence outcomes such as their level of satisfaction with their placement and teaching (Broadbent, 1998).

The ability to choose their placement and the ability to sit on curriculum committees exists for the M.S.W. students at California State University, San Bernardino. The department utilizes the Student Association as one channel for the conveyance of concerns and issues from students to faculty and administration. The faculty and administration post office hours at which time they are available to receive individual concerns. The department as well employs mediums such as seminar courses, orientations, and written communications to the students to convey concerns or address issues. Programmatically, this body of students seems to be afforded the opportunity to participate actively in their own education. Currently the department employs a data collection tool that measures student satisfaction in various areas.

The department has increased considerably in population in the last year as it has attempted to meet the demands for increased capacity by the community, but has been unable to
commensurately increase faculty resources. This dynamic is echoed in a previous study of M.S.W. Programs which found that some of this lack of growth in M.S.W. faculty is the result of a generalized scarcity of resources affecting most universities, (McMurtry & McClelland, 1997). There exists in this department a scarcity of resources and the ensuing dynamic could potentially preclude faculty and administration from effectively responding to student concerns. In light of all this, a medium for enhancing the perception of support received by students in order to increase levels of student satisfaction, appears to be warranted.

Serving the interests of this study is the Scarcity Hypothesis which maintains that multiple role enactments are associated with high levels of stress and poor psychological adjustment (Goode, 1960). This has been employed to study the effects of multiple role strain in part time graduate students of social work. This theory posits that given the amount of limited human time and energy that exists in each of us, a variety of roles could force the individual toward constant compromise in fulfilling all their role obligations. It further posits that individuals who need to allocate energies and skills to reduce role strain to bearable proportions tend to avoid certain roles and are
forced into a series of "role bargains" (Goode, 1960). This would diminish the person's capacity to tolerate stress and could compromise performance in all roles.

This is echoed in various models that Luther and Ziegler (1991) employed in a study of vulnerability and tolerance. The compensatory model indicates that stress can lower levels of competence or it can improve adjustment levels. The challenge model shows that stress continues to enhance competence in role enactment provided the levels of stress are not too high.

In addition to this, data shows that the mere perceptions of role demands are predictors of role strain (Home, 1997). This perception impacts the interpretation of the individual's environmental stressors. This study explores student perception of faculty support via faculty responses to student concerns and its influence on the level of their satisfaction with the program even in the face of increased extracurricular role demands.

The utility of a study of this nature permeates short and long term objectives for both students and for the program. The exercise of beginning a dialogue toward change that will improve student satisfaction may impact the lasting impressions the students, and eventual alumni, have of their educational experience. This impression could
impact long term support of their department when these alumni enter the profession. In addition, the general attractiveness of the department to new students by creating an outside image for the department can also be a positive long term outcome, (Finaly, 1994). More immediately, the direct result this study is that it begins to perceptually provide the student body with some ownership of their educational experience and potentially provide them with increased satisfaction with the overall program.
METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino has increased enrollment considerably in the last year. It has created an additional full-time cohort of students. It has done so in an attempt to meet the demands for increased capacity by the community, but has been unable to commensurately increase faculty resources. The ensuing dynamic of reduced available time per student that this scarcity of faculty resources forces, could potentially preclude faculty and administration from effectively and more thoroughly responding to student concerns. Various vehicles for relaying student concerns exist. These include mediums such as the Student Association, seminars, opportunities for students to sit on various committees, and written communications. Despite their existence and potential for being effective sounding boards for student concerns, participating in these activities seems to as well increase role demands on students. Therefore, students already overwhelmed with managing the entirety of their varied roles, tend not to participate. This in turn creates a gap in the constructive, problem solving discourse between faculty and students that
could prove beneficial to the department. This participatory research study is an attempt to bridge that gap.

This study explores the relationship between faculty responsiveness and student satisfaction levels at California State University, San Bernardino's M.S.W. Program. It involves the students and faculty in the research study intervention. This study measures the impact of one vehicle for communication between students and faculty, a "Question-and-Answer Newsletter".

Methodology

Action Research was the research method employed in this study. Action research methodology calls for the participation of the persons affected by the research. Participating in the exploration of the presenting issue provides the participants with the ability to have an impact on the issue. Research findings indicate that when individuals are given some vehicle to affect a presenting problem in their environment, levels of satisfaction increase. Real and potential benefits were derived from using action research. One real benefit is that students were given the opportunity to be empowered by participating in the development of the research intervention, the Question-and-Answer Newsletter. A potential benefit is that a reflective and potentially permanent process for
communication may have been activated. The value of providing students a safe forum for expression of dissatisfaction and concerns may prompt faculty and administration to pursue similar vehicles for communication in the future.

Sample

For this study data were collected from two cohorts of students in the M.S.W. program; one full-time cohort, (the Monday/Wednesday, first-year student cohort) and one part-time cohort, (the second-year part-time student cohort). The cohorts of students were chosen using the following criteria: cohorts must consist of current students in the M.S.W. Program at CSUSB, either part-time or full-time, and cohorts that would remain largely intact from the Winter Quarter 2000 through the Spring Quarter 2000.

Ensuring anonymity was imperative to the administration of surveys and development of the intervention in this study. In order that students experience permission to ask programmatic questions that might be considered sensitive, their anonymity had to be assured. Purposive sampling was employed in the choosing of cohorts to facilitate the nature of the study. The study could not individually track and match pre and post surveys of students participating. The data analysis focused on group comparisons between group pre
and post test survey results. The exact number of respondents and consequent sample size could not be established as the cohorts did not remain entirely intact from pre survey to post survey and because all participation was anonymous. However, the number of pre-surveys administered to the two cohorts in the Winter quarter was 44. The number of post-surveys administered to the two cohorts in the Spring quarter was 46.

**Instrument**

The instrument utilized for the research was adapted from an existing instrument that has been used to measure various aspects of student satisfaction. Currently the M.S.W. programs at the California State Universities of Long Beach, San Diego, and San Bernardino employ very similar instruments. The overall evaluation instrument employed in a study conducted at Long Beach in 1991, from which this measurement tool was derived, has been used at the Long Beach and San Bernardino campuses for a number of years. The tool has not been formally tested for reliability or validity. However, the adapted version at Long Beach, from which this instrument was derived, reports a high degree of internal consistency. The tool responds to the issue of cultural sensitivity as it is designed to be accessible to graduate students in social work, in and of itself a
culture. Despite the diversity that is represented by those surveyed, as graduate students, their collective educational and intellectual level, made the use of the tool easily amenable to them.

The data collected consisted of 29 responses to a survey consisting of 4 point Likert scales which were ordinal in level of measurement. These scales were used to measure the dependent variable, "satisfaction" as it relates to faculty and administrative responsiveness. Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with each item: 0=Don't Know or Not Applicable, 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree. (See Appendix A.) The scale statements represented items which have relevance to student satisfaction as it relates to faculty and administrative responsiveness to their concerns.

Various categories were covered by the totality of the scales employed. "Departmental Faculty" was explored as a category via student responses to scales concerning their perception of faculty attitudes, competency, and professional behavior. "Administration" was explored in terms of student perceptions of administrator competency and general attitudes. "Student Services" was explored as a category using scales that reflected student responses to statements regarding advising, policy formulation, student
rights, and student services. In addition to this, another category explored student responses to scales touching on "Overall Departmental Educational Milieu". These addressed social climate, feeling supported and encouraged, provision of information regarding curriculum and professional activities, and student perception of the employing of social work ethics in the governance of the department. "The Department as a Reference Group" was a category that enabled the students to reflect on their identified sense of pride with regard to the department and how the community is impacted by the department in relation to issues of concern to social work. "Overall Perceptions" was a category that addressed the students' feelings about their overall personal satisfaction with the program and their comfort with recommending the CSUSB Department of Social Work to anyone interested in social work education. Finally, the section, "Question and Answer Newsletter", addressed participation in the development of the intervention product. It also addressed the students' perceptions about their level of satisfaction and how this related to their ability to communicate their concerns to the faculty.

In addition, respondents were provided a space for comments at the end of the Likert scale items.
The independent variables were Cohort Identification, Concentration, Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Marital Status, Number of Children, and Employment Status. These were measured using categories and were nominal except for "age" and "number of children" which were ratio in level of measurement.

Perceptions of particular circumstances have been identified as key predictors in measuring the satisfaction levels of students. For this reason, the tool employed measured overall satisfaction as it relates to various aspects of the students' experiences. It is for this reason as well that, for the purposes of this study, faculty responsiveness was not delineated as specific behaviors exhibited by faculty. Rather, responsiveness referred to their willingness to participate in the development of the Question-and-Answer Newsletter by simply responding to student questions and concerns. Therefore, this study was designed to measure the impact of this one vehicle for communication between faculty and students and whether this format for responsiveness affects student satisfaction. This study asked,

"How does the responsiveness to student concerns by faculty and administrative staff, through the vehicle of a
‘Question-and-Answer Newsletter’, affect the level of student satisfaction with the M.S.W. program at California State University, San Bernardino?"

Procedure

Because of the potentially sensitive nature of this participatory study, the researcher exercised caution, respect for all parties, and diplomacy. The times and dates for the administration of the pre-surveys and post-surveys were coordinated with faculty and department administration. The surveys were administered before the beginning of the class periods and the respective instructors were not present during administration.

In the 5th week of the Winter quarter 2000, the pre-surveys were administered to the participating cohorts in their classrooms. The researcher, safeguarding student anonymity, collected their questions and concerns for the development of the “Newsletter” after completion of the pre-survey. (See Appendix D.) These were retyped verbatim and distributed to relevant members of the faculty and administration of the Department of Social Work at CSUSB. In the 8th week, the responses were returned to the researcher by the faculty and administration. These were compiled into the actual Question-and-Answer Newsletter entitled “The
Messenger." (See Appendix E.) In the 1st week of the Spring quarter 2000, the researcher distributed the Newsletters to all participating students and faculty. In the 3rd week of the Spring quarter 2000, the post-surveys were administered to the participating cohorts in their classrooms.

Protection of Human Participants

As indicated in the "Policies and Procedures for Review of Research Involving Human Participants" (Pg.7) (1), "research in established educational settings..." is exempt from general human participants requirements. Anonymity was assured as clear identifiers were not requested from participants and participants agreed to withhold whatever information they did not feel comfortable in sharing.

The participants in this study were all adults and were given an Informed Consent to participate in this study. (See Appendix B.) Respondents were provided with information concerning the purpose of the research, the name of the research supervisor, and her phone number, the type of questions that were asked of them, and the guarantee that the respondent cease participation in the study at any time. Respondents were as well provided with a Debriefing Statement that included instructions on how to obtain information about the results of the study. (See Appendix C.)
There were no physical risks from participating in this study. To assure confidentiality, no data was identified by name. No one other than the researcher had access to the subjects' individual responses.

Faculty and Administration were afforded the opportunity for anonymity in the Newsletter. The purpose for this level of conservatism in the process was to increase the level of openness in communication between students and faculty via the Question-and-Answer Newsletter. In the development of the Newsletter, all questions submitted by students were retyped by the researcher before submission to faculty and administration. The participants were afforded an opportunity to reflect solely on the benefits of open communication without the potential hindrances of fear and apprehension that may be associated with making oneself vulnerable by asking difficult and sometimes sensitive questions.
RESULTS

The survey consisted of 35 items that gathered quantitative data concerning factors that impact student satisfaction. A total of 90 surveys, 44 pre-surveys and 46 post-surveys, were completed by students in the M.S.W. Program at CSUSB. The pre-surveys and post-surveys were not individually matched to gauge changes in individuals. Rather, group results or T-Tests were at the center of the researcher's attention. The administration of the pre-surveys and post-surveys to the two cohorts of students occurred over the course of two quarters. The interval between the two administrations of the survey was a total of nine weeks. The purpose of creating an interval was to implement the participatory intervention which included the development and distribution of the Question-and-Answer Newsletter.

The data sets, pre and post, showed very similar results in demographic data. This stands to reason as the two sets of cohorts are comprised of essentially the same students. Of the 90 respondents, 81% reporting were female and 17% were male. The data revealed that 40% were married, 32% were single, and 22% were divorced. The most represented ethnicity was Caucasian at 65%, followed by 15% Latino, 6%
African American, 4% Asian American, and 8% Other. Fifty-three percent indicated that they had children while 46% did not have any children.

The data also indicated that 30% of the respondents worked between 31 and 40 hours per week, 42% worked 30 hours or less a week, and 29% were not employed. Of the 90 respondents, 43.8% reported receiving financial aid or grants during the year, while 56.2% did not. Twenty-four percent reported having no paid social work experience prior to entering the program, while 75.3% reported up to three years paid social work experience. The reported results for unpaid/volunteer experience prior to entering the program were nearly identical with 23.3% reporting no experience and 75% with up to three years of unpaid experience.

In the set, as age in years increased, the numbers of individuals decreased. Thirty-four percent of the respondents fell in the age group 23-30 years, 32.1% were in the 31-40 age group, 22.1% in the 41-50 years group, and 12.6% in the 53 years and over group.

The majority of respondents, 53.9% indicated that they were in the “Mental Health Concentration” in the Program, 35% reported being in the “Children, Youth, and Families Concentration”, and 6% were in the “Macro Concentration.”
An analysis of the data shows that on 11 of 29 items surveyed there was a change in the desired direction, suggesting an increase in the student satisfaction level from the pre-survey to the post-survey over the nine week interim. Changes in the desired direction were found in all categories of variables impacting on student satisfaction except for in one, "Overall Perceptions". In this category of variables, which captured perceptions that were more generalized to larger aspects of the M.S.W. Program, changes occurred in the direction indicating a decrease in satisfaction level. The following tables display the changes that occurred in the desired direction suggesting an increase in satisfaction.

Table 1. Faculty Responsiveness and Student Satisfaction

Increase In Group Scores/ T Tests

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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Pre-Survey: Striped  Post-Survey: Black

![Bar Chart]

A  B  C  D  E  F
**Legend:**

A. Student Perceives Faculty As Competent
B. Student Perceives Administration As Competent
C. Administration Exemplifies Behaviors Expected Of Professional Social Workers
D. Social Work Department Assists Student With Use Of Educational Services.
E. Social Work Department Manifests Mission Of Helping Profession
F. Student Perceives Social Climate In Department As Positive

**Table 2. Faculty Responsiveness and Student Satisfaction**

Increase In Group Scores/ T Tests

Pre-Survey: Striped   Post-Survey: Black
Legend:

G. SW Department’s Style Of Functioning Reflects Social Work Values
H. SW Department Is Looked To By Community For Leadership
I. SW Department Has Impact Regarding Social Work On Community
J. Q&A Newsletter Is One Way To Help Positively Impact Student Perception Of Faculty Responsiveness
K. Student’s Participation In Development Of Q&A Newsletter Improved Overall Satisfaction

Two items in the section addressing perceptions about the Question-and-Answer Newsletter (Table 2. Items J&K) showed change in the desired direction suggesting an increase in the level of student satisfaction. One of these addressed the students' perceptions about whether or not the implementation of a Question-and-Answer Newsletter would be one way to help them feel that faculty could be more responsive to their concerns. The other item addressed their participation in the development of the Question-and-Answer Newsletter and its impact on their level of satisfaction with the M.S.W. Program.
Although changes occurred in the means of group data between the pre survey and the post survey, the analysis revealed that the results were not statistically significant. Decreases in group means from pre to post testing occurred in 18 items of the survey. Tables are used to illustrate these. (See Appendix F.) Of particular interest, however, were the comments that students provided in the "Comments Section" at the end of the survey. Of the 13 comments noted, there were seven that had a similar theme. The comments' collective thrust was that although the Question-and-Answer Newsletter was an effective forum for voicing student concerns, the answers provided to students by faculty were too vague and did not fully or directly answer the questions posed by students. Some of the comments were: "Answers were vague, 'politically correct...'", "Answers were too vague, did not increase my satisfaction...", "The idea of a Q&A Newsletter is great, but faculty seemed to dance around the issues...", "...opinions and questions were voiced, but not necessarily answered as the responses were vague...", "It was frustrating to not have my question directly answered on the Newsletter...".
DISCUSSION

The findings in this study reveal that changes occurred in the satisfaction levels of respondents from pre survey, through the development of the Question-and-Answer Newsletter, to the post survey. Changes occurred in the desired direction on some of the variables impacting satisfaction suggesting an increase in the level of student satisfaction as a result of faculty responsiveness. However, the findings also reveal that these changes were not statistically significant. Findings included comments thematically concurring that although the concept of a Question-and-Answer Newsletter was an effective way of conveying concerns, the actual responses from the faculty had a negative bearing on levels of satisfaction.

The question of whether the intervention tool, the Question-and-Answer Newsletter, impacted student satisfaction was not clearly answered. However, in the literature review, Broadbent (1998) indicates that the levels of satisfaction tend to be higher when students perceive themselves as having some control over their environment and are able to influence outcomes such as their level of satisfaction with their educational experience (Broadbent, 1998). Because the participating students were
empowered through the opportunity to have their concerns and questions addressed, this study seems to support Broadbent's findings. In addition, Hunter and Saleeby (1978) support that values, such as empowerment, are conceptual abstractions drawn from immediate experience, are affectively charged, and consequently become criteria for directing action. As schools of social work evaluate their own effectiveness, in addition to improving programming, it becomes clear that involving students in the process can also be an invaluable tool in reinforcing the ethics of social work. Despite the outcomes, the inherent worth of the process needs to be underscored. There is considerable potential for internalization of social work values such as empowerment. This exercise in empowerment may serve these students later in their professional lives.

Fortune (1985) identified other potential predictors of graduate student satisfaction which included communication with the instructors. In this study, changes in the desired direction, suggesting increases in student satisfaction as a result of participation in the development of the intervention tool, support that communication with faculty can impact satisfaction levels positively.
However, Potts (1991) notes that potential stressors such as marriage, parenthood, and employment, can be associated with role stress and negatively impact student satisfaction. In this study, 42% of respondents worked up to 40 hours a week during the time that the study was conducted and 53% of the respondents reported having children. The stress associated with these extra role demands on respondents could have negatively impacted their satisfaction levels, impacting the results of the study.

Limitations and Recommendations

Some of the limitations of this study included the purposive sampling which limited respondents to two cohorts representing only a portion of the student body in the M.S.W. Program. This was due to the limited time and resources of the researcher. For future studies, a larger, more representative sample of the student body is recommended. This will allow for a diversity of students representing the spectrum of the student experience in the department.

Another limitation of this study was the inability to control for other factors impinging upon satisfaction levels. It became clear to the researcher, as the study progressed, that it would be difficult to discern whether
the intervention tool would be the actual catalyst for change in satisfaction levels or whether other factors in the milieu of student life would infect the study. Concurrent to the course of this study, a review of the Department Chair was taking place. That involved other surveys and processes that also looked at satisfaction levels in the department. This may have also had an impact on this study's results. Researching the possibility of planning in advance and anticipating barriers like this would help the researcher work around them.

One clear and anticipated limitation was the time constraints under which the researcher had to work. The nine week interim between pre survey and post survey may not have been sufficient to gauge change in satisfaction levels. A longer time frame is recommended.

Finally the tool itself may not have been the most apt for this study. Including more specific questions about the actual intervention in the survey is advised.

Despite these limitations, there were strengths. The researcher, who was also the President of the Social Work Student Association at the time, had the advantage of having frequent contact with faculty and administration in the department. This facilitated the development of the
Question-and-Answer Newsletter which by many accounts was a very sensitive task. It involved the diplomatic and cautious handling of competing needs and interests among students and faculty. Another strength was that faculty and administration who, although initially skeptical, were eventually supportive of the project, recognizing its value as the beginning of a constructive dialogue.

Implications

Broadbent (1998) cites that among the more relevant characteristics affecting perception are attitudes and past experiences. In addition research findings have clearly indicated that it is not the objective characteristics of an activity, but how the individual perceives this activity that is the salient predictor of the individual's satisfaction (Finaly, 1994).

Faculty responsiveness to students and its impact on satisfaction level can rest on the premise that if the student merely perceives that faculty is responsive, then their satisfaction levels will increase. This is not to imply that concrete responsiveness need not be employed, but that faculty in social work schools can engage in exercises that promote an awareness that they are responsive.
Schools of social work can duplicate the efforts of this study by creating safe, open forums for student concerns such as question and answer newsletters. These avenues can also take the form of actual faculty/student forums or truly representative student associations. These can be associations of student officers who receive academic credit for their participation in addition to strong adviser guidance. Aggressive, active recruitment of student involvement for input to committees is another potential avenue as well as providing students with “suggestion boxes” where students generally congregate.

In the literature review Buchan (1991) notes that key ingredients to successful program assessment of higher education are faculty, administration, and student involvement. This study captured all of these levels. Schools of social work can use similar approaches to program evaluation by giving one of their most important constituencies, the student body, the ability to participate in evaluation. Furthermore, providing students with the ability to impact their environment by engaging in such exercises as the development of a question and answer newsletter, endows them with a sense of control. This ultimately empowers the participants as agents of change in
the very midst of what is actually research. Bringing to life the concept of empowerment, schools of social work can take teaching from lecture to very personal experiential learning. The integration of this core social work value in students of social work can have a positive impact on the profession of social work. Students experiencing a participatory research project such as this can gain tangible evidence of the value of empowerment before going into the workplace.

Finally, this study embodies the collaboration between one student researcher, two student cohorts, and a faculty/administration with many and varied agendas. Involving students in the weighty and subjective task of measuring student satisfaction, sends a message that speaks of a willingness, by faculty and administration, to be evaluated, critiqued, and sometimes criticized. This difficult decision goes beyond merely pandering to the interests of vocal students as much as it resonates with being able to find value in self evaluation, reflection, and willingness to change.
APPENDIX A

Survey

Introduction

The purpose of this inventory is to provide an opportunity for you to evaluate certain aspects of your student experience and consequent satisfaction as it relates to faculty and administrative response to your concerns as a student in the Department of Social Work. The information that you and your fellow students provide will assist the researcher in determining the effectiveness of one vehicle for communicating concerns between faculty and students. Please be assured that your responses will remain anonymous and will in no way affect the evaluation of your performance as a student. Faculty and administration will not know who you are. The researcher is primarily concerned with group responses. Your responses will be incorporated into the collective data of your class, further assuring your anonymity.

Instructions

The following is a number of statements representing variables that are believed to be reflective of student satisfaction with various aspects of the program. These statements are grouped into six general categories: (A) Departmental Faculty, (B) Administration, (C) Student Services, (D) Overall Departmental Educational Milieu, (E) The Department as a Reference Group, (F) Overall Perceptions, (G) Communication with Faculty & Administration. In responding to the statement, please rely on your own experiences. Be sure to respond to all the statements.

♦ Please indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with each question by using the following scale:
  4 = SA (Strongly Agree)
  3 = A  (Agree)
  2 = D  (Disagree)
  1 = SD (Strongly Disagree)
  0 = DT or NA (Don’t Know or Not Applicable)
A. Departmental Faculty

1. I have found members of the faculty to be competent in terms of the functions and responsibilities assigned to them.

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2. The attitudes of faculty toward me have reflected concern and responsiveness.

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3. My impression is that members of the faculty exemplify the attitudes and behaviors expected of professional social workers.

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B. Administration

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3. My impression is that members of the administration exemplify the attitudes and behaviors expected of professional social workers.

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C. Student Services

1. The Departmental advising process and procedures have assisted me in my professional education.

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2. There have been opportunities for me to participate in the formulation of policies that influence my education (I.E., Student Association).

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3. I believe my rights as a student have been respected and protected.

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4. The Department has assisted me to make use of educational services (I.E., registration, placement, financial aid, etc...).

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D. Overall Departmental Educational Milieu.

1. The overall environment of the Department has reflected a humanistic orientation which manifests the mission and concern of a helping profession.

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2. I have been encouraged to be actively involved in my education.

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3. Generally, the social climate among students and faculty in the department has fostered in me a sense of aspiration and security.

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4. The Department has provided adequate information about its curriculum, policies, and procedures.

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5. The process of decision-making and governance in the Department has reflected the values of the profession, especially the democratic principles.

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E. The Department as a Reference Group

1. In my contacts with the students of other departments in the University, I have had a sense of pride in identifying myself as a student of the Department of Social Work.

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2. I feel that the local social work community has looked to the Department for leadership in matters related to social work education.

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3. The Department has significant impact upon the community in relation to issues of concern to social work.

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F. Overall Perceptions

1. I think that social work is an important profession making significant contributions to human betterment.

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2. I am being adequately prepared to develop the competence required of a professional social worker.

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3. I would feel comfortable recommending the CSUSB Department of Social Work to anyone interested in social work education.

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4. I have derived a sense of personal satisfaction from my involvement in the overall educational experience in the Department of Social Work.

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5. In summary, my overall assessment of this educational experience for me is positive.

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**G. Question and Answer Newsletter.**

1. I am comfortable approaching Faculty and Administration with my concerns directly.

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2. Having my questions addressed through a Question and Answer Newsletter is one way to help me feel that Faculty and Administration can be more responsive to my concerns.

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3. The opportunity to ask my questions of the Faculty and Administration anonymously would be an opportunity to have my concerns voiced.

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4. I believe that it is important to be able to communicate my concerns to the Faculty and Administration.

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5. I believe that my increased ability to communicate my concerns to the Faculty and Administration improves my overall sense of satisfaction with this M.S.W. Program.

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6. Participating in the development of a Question and Answer Newsletter improves my overall satisfaction with this M.S.W. Program.

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Your completion of the following will help the researcher make sense of all the information you just provided.

*Note: All answers are confidential. The aggregate findings across classes is what will be looked at. However, if you are not comfortable answering any of the following, please skip that question.*

1. Are you a:
   1. ___Full-time student M/W Cohort (First Year)
   2. ___Full-time student T/Th Cohort (First Year)
   3. ___Full-time student M/W Cohort (Second Year)
   4. ___Full-time student T/Th Cohort (Second Year)
   5. ___Part-time student (First Year)
   6. ___Part-time student (Second Year)
   7. ___Part-time student (Third Year)

2. Is your Concentration in:
   1. ___Children, Youth, and Families
   2. ___Mental Health
   3. ___Macro Practice

3. What was you undergraduate major?
   1. ___Social Work/ Welfare
   2. ___Other, Specify

4. How many months/ years of paid social work related experience did you have prior to entering this program?
   _______Years _______Months
5. How many months/ years of unpaid (volunteer) social work related experience did you have prior to entering this program?

_____ Years _____ Months

Background Information

6. Age: _____ Years

7. Gender: _____ Female _____ Male

8. Ethnicity: ___ African/ American ___ Latino ___ Asian ___ Anglo ___ Other

9. Marital Status:
   1. ___ Single
   2. ___ Married or Couple
   3. ___ Separated
   4. ___ Divorced
   5. ___ Widowed
   6. ___ Other, specify________________________

10. Do you have children?
   1. ___ Yes
   2. ___ No

11. During this quarter have of been employed? (do not count field placement).
   1. ___ Yes, _______ Number hours/ week
   2. ___ No

12. Did you receive any financial grants during the past year? 1. ___ Yes 2. ___ No
APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to explore the impact of faculty responsiveness on student satisfaction. This study is being conducted by Daniel Perez, a Master of Social Work student at CSU, San Bernardino. This study is approved by the Institutional Review Board and the Department of Social Work. Along with approximately 60 students, you will participate in all portions of the study including pre-test, your anonymous submission of “Questions” to a Question and Answer Newsletter, and a post test. You will be asked information about your assessment of various aspects pertaining to Departmental Faculty, Administration, and Student Services. You will be asked to complete pre and post surveys which will ask 29 questions of you some of which will ask that you give information about your personal background. You may choose to not participate in any or all of this research project. At the conclusion of the survey, the investigator will be available to answer any questions you may have. You can be assured that all information you provide will be held in strict confidence and at no time will your personal information be revealed. The project’s final results will be reported after the data has been collected and evaluated. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (909) 792-4461 or my research adviser, Dr. McCaslin, at (909)880-5501. Your signature below indicates your willingness to participate in this project.

Your Signature ___________________________ Date signed ___________
APPENDIX C

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for participating in this survey.

The study in which you have just participated will explore if faculty responsiveness has an impact on student satisfaction levels here in the Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino. One tangible medium for expressing responsiveness is your participation in the development of a Question and Answer Newsletter. This study will explore the viability of a medium like this for improving faculty/student communication.

Please feel free to express any feelings you may have now about participating in this project. Your answers and feelings will be held in strict confidence and the investigator asks that you not discuss the nature of this study with other participants.

If you are interested in the results of this study or have any questions about the research at any time, you may contact this investigator, Daniel Perez at (909) 792-4461. Or you may contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Research Adviser, at (909)880-5501. Complete results will be available after June, 2000.
APPENDIX D

Question Collection Form

Effective communication is vital to the mutual understanding of concerns between two parties. One step toward this understanding is answering questions that are important. This is your opportunity to ask questions of the M.S.W. Faculty.

**Purpose**

Your participation will help clarify concerns that may affect all students. Responses to all questions will be compiled and a Question & Answer Newsletter will be distributed to all M.S.W. Students.

**Parameter for Questions**

Questions should address concerns that students in this M.S.W. Program may face.

Your anonymity is assured.

Please write your question/s below.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your participation.

Daniel Perez
This “Newsletter” is a collaborative effort between students and faculty in the MSW Program at CSUSB. It does not represent the breadth of student concerns. It is merely one effort to address some of these concerns. The following includes questions collected anonymously from students in our M.S.W. Program. The ensuing responses were provided by faculty and staff in our department. The categories include:

Field Placement
Curriculum, Scheduling, & Electives
Faculty & Administration
Miscellaneous
Comments

“READ ON !!”  “READ ON !!”  “READ ON !!”

Field Placement

1. Can we design our own field placements that will meet our needs and educational goals? If yes, how?

There are at least two opportunities for students to design their own field placements. The first is when they meet with the Field Director, Mr. Petty, to select their field placement site. The second is through input into the department’s field committee, which meets at least once a quarter. The field committee currently has student membership and we welcome additional student input at any time. The learning agreement is meant to tailor the student’s field experience to that student’s needs and educational goals. This agreement is negotiated after the field site has been finalized.

2. Why is it that we are discouraged from participating in field placements other than those in the field placement officer’s computer system?

There is a process for accepting new field placement sites that involves assessment of the site as a learning experience and the development of contract with those sites. We cannot place students in field placement settings that have not gone through this process. If you look in your field manual, you will see the standards that are used to assess placement sites. We encourage the development of new sites at any time. If you are aware of any, these should be brought to Mr. Petty’s attention and he can start the review process.
3. It is important for students entering their first field placement to be given more information and options regarding possible agencies. Does the department have any future plans to refine the field placement process so that students will feel more comfortable and educated about their decision?

The field placement process has been refined over the last two years. For example, there is now a directory of field placement sites available to students. Student’s should request a copy from Mr. Petty. There is also a list of agencies in the department’s new web site, which will soon be up and running.

4. Why is there not more information in regard to the context of individual field placements?

Students who have specific requests regarding contextual information that is not in the directory should talk to Mr. Petty.

**Curriculum, Scheduling, & Electives**

5. The number of electives offered right now appear to be very limited. Would it be possible to expand the number of electives that are offered?

The department has a fixed budget for implementing the program based on a formula. Also, faculty have a fixed workload. Within those constraints we implement required courses first and if there is budget or faculty workload time remaining, we implement elective courses. The only way we could expand this would be to have more faculty and a larger budget. We are not slated to receive these increases at this time.

6. When determining the days and times Social Work electives are to be offered, is student input asked for or considered?

When scheduling electives, we look at students’ schedule of required courses and schedule the class for the time when most students would be able to attend. We try to accommodate personal schedules such as Part timers’ work commitments and full timers’ need to have day classes. However, we cannot satisfy every cohort’s need every quarter. We, therefore, rotate time of electives so that each academic year, we have tried to accommodate each cohort at least once.

7. How can the “part-timers” be given more consideration when classes are being scheduled so that we can receive a full schedule rather than a haphazard after thought?

All classes for the academic year are scheduled in the previous spring quarter. This schedule is available in a publication in the bookstore. The department issues a quarterly schedule as a convenience to social work students. Minor changes may occur after the scheduling plan has been made according to faculty availability.
8. In order to implement Child Abuse Class as core in curriculum, why can’t Macro Task Groups & Macro Policy be a combined class?

We don’t understand the first part of this question or how it links to the second part. We would be grateful for some clarification. We can answer the second part separately. The Macro Task group (SW600) content emphasizes agency, task group and community practice. Macro Policy (SW 606A & SW606B) content emphasizes policy initiation and development in various decision-making arenas (agency, community, legislative). These are different bodies of knowledge that need to be mastered. However, we are always developing our curriculum and the relevant committees could take a look at this suggestion if it were explained in more detail.

9. Since Social Work with groups and Social Work with Families are so different, why are there only two classes in practice?

You make a good point. However, we only have two years. If we add a direct practice class, we have to take a class away somewhere else in the program. All classes have important content. We cannot identify a class that can be taken out of the program.

10. Why do the practice classes offered in this program seem to be so weak?

We need more detail to be able to answer this question. If you feel that you are experiencing a “weak” class, you have several avenues by which you can do something about this. You can give feedback on the student evaluation forms (these are read and taken very seriously). You can discuss your concerns with your professor. You can give feedback to the appropriate curriculum committee. You can talk to the Director of Student Life or the Director of the Program. Specific constructive suggestions are welcome and very helpful.

11. Why do we have so few electives to choose from each quarter?

See 5 above.

12. Why are you only offering us a “bargain basement” education?

We are offering the best education possible with the funding provided by the taxpayer. Your fees pay one third the cost of your education. The other two thirds come from State allocations to California State University. So, although “bargain” may have a negative connotation, this is a “bargain” compared to the fees required by private universities.

Faculty & Administration

13. Upon entering this program, I was assured that the program “cared about our well being.” Upon further interaction with administration, this has not been upheld. I have not felt inspired by the administration as to what social work really is. We preach “Code of Ethics”, but we don’t practice it in this M.S.W. Program. Where is the consistency in follow through with respect to the “values of professional social workers”?
If you have specific concerns about the ethical practices within this program, please talk to your adviser.

14. Some classes are taught by non-doctorate level, inexperienced staff. This is severely disappointing. Why are these individuals being hired to teach?

Why are non doctoral faculty used as professors?

Why do we have instructors who are not Ph.D.’s?

Some instructors are much more knowledgeable than others. What is required of staff before hiring in terms of experience and education?

You may be delighted to know that the M.S.W. is a terminal professional degree. It qualifies you to practice with clients, do research, and teach at both the community college and university level. There are three kinds of faculty in our department. The first kind is tenure track. You can only be in a tenure position if you have a doctorate. All our tenure track faculty have doctorates and a range of academic and practice experience. The second kind is Title IVE faculty. These faculty have primary responsibility for students entering the Child Welfare profession. They may or may not have a doctorate and they have considerable experience. The third kind is adjunct faculty who teach on a part time basis. The department has a commitment to “growing our own” adjunct faculty locally. We, therefore, will encourage local social work practitioners who have not taught before but are interested in teaching, to teach a class for us in the area where they have had experience. They may or may not have a doctorate, they have a Masters level of education, they have practice experience, and they often have training experience.

15. It seems that the department cannot keep good instructors. Why have so many good faculty left?

b. Why are so many of the social work faculty members leaving this program?

c. Why are so many faculty members unhappy or leaving?

d. Why do the expectations of certain instructors seem biased?

A vibrant growing department such as ours will experience continual change. Just as in any other work place, faculty and staff make their own decisions about their place in the evolving organization. These decisions, though they affect all of us, as in any other institution, are confidential personnel matters. In reference to 15d, if you have experienced bias, please talk to the instructor concerned whenever possible and/or your adviser.

16. Why are some instructors not put on the class schedules?
Sometimes instructors make their final commitment to teach in our program based on their outside work schedule. This can change. Therefore, the final decision on who will be teaching a class may be made after the schedule is circulated.

17. Why do we have a field instructor who is also our faculty liaison? Isn’t this a conflict of interest?

You make a good point. This is an ongoing discussion among faculty members. Indeed when you have your faculty liaison, your field instructor, and your adviser as the same person, it adds to the conflict of interest. The rationale for the instructor and the liaison being the same person is the need to be sure that the instructor is in continual contact with the agency. It’s also more efficient for a program with a limited number of faculty. The rationale for the field liaison being the adviser is the reality that this faculty member is the only faculty member that you maintain a year long contact with. Other courses generally last only one quarter. However, we could revisit these rationales in the field committee.

18. Who made the drastic mistake to make Dr. Morris Chairperson?!!

How is the chairperson for the department chosen?

What qualified Dr. Morris to be chair?

“I think the same thought at least three times a day!! And you know who did?? All the other tenure track faculty. They voted for me. A chair is chosen through an open electoral process. A call goes out for nominations. When nominations close, then the nominees present their credentials to faculty and students. The tenure track faculty then vote.”

Miscellaneous

19. Can the department of Social Work give out a detailed outline for graduating students regarding important deadlines, due dates, and time frames for requirements associated with graduation? If this exists, where can we get a copy?

These are all in the campus catalogue and reproduced in the M.S.W. student handbook.

20. Why does the department appear to be homophobic?

This is a vague comment so I will try to offer some specificity. The department has curriculum. One of the accreditation guidelines for the curriculum is a need to address diversity in the broadest sense of the word. As we look at current syllabi, all classes appear to do this. The department has faculty and staff. It is the Human Resources policy of this campus that discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated. You will be pleased to know that the social work department has one of the most diverse faculty and student bodies on campus. If you experience a class where diversity, of any kind, is weak, we welcome your input and help in strengthening the program. If you
personally have experienced attitudes of intolerance with regard to ANY aspect of diversity, please talk to the person involved, if at all possible, and/or your adviser.

21. Why does the choice of faculty not celebrate diversity? Most are white and straight?

In the hiring process, as in any organization, we do not inquire about sexual orientation and we do not hire on the basis of characteristic of diversity. We hire on the basis of qualifications and experience. In this department we have a total of 14 full time faculty. We have 2 African Americans, 1 Latina, 2 Asians, 3 white males, and 6 white women.

---

**Student Comments & Faculty Responses**

“A newsletter would be an organized format to air grievances of M.S.W. students.”

We are so excited; we have our first newsletter “The Network” in your boxes. Perhaps this can be another venue for student input.

“I have found there to be much rigidity within the department. This can be measured by the amounts of polarization among administrators.”

In this department we have four faculty with administrative responsibilities. Dr. Morris (Chair & Director); Mr. Petty (Director of Field); and Dr. Mary (Director of Student Life). We work hard to be a team so we are unclear about this comment.

“I have very mixed feelings about this M.S.W. Program. When instructors tell you ‘that is all the information I’m going to give you for the test!’ - It makes me wonder - about how much - they want us to learn.”

If you have concerns about tests and grading, please talk to the appropriate instructor and/or your adviser. No one wants you to fail. We all want you to earn your M.S.W. degree.

“I have seen broad differences in individual instructors and administrators which make it difficult to answer questions covering all in both groups. It becomes a choice of who made a bigger impact - the staff member who facilitated a positive experience, or the one who lead to a negative experience.”

We need more clarity to respond to this comment.

“I feel that there is only one professor in this program that truly exemplifies what the profession of social work is all about. She is trustworthy, caring, compassionate, empathic, and an EXCELLENT teacher. Dr. McCaslin is heads above the rest.”

We all have considerable respect for Dr. McCaslin.
"Q & A Newsletter can be easily ignored by an administration that doesn’t want to listen."

We hope that you can see from the above that we have taken this project very seriously.

"There will always be certain legends or rumors that even a Q & A Newsletter won’t resolve."

Good point, you’re right!

"In terms of information that new students may find helpful... I recommend:

■ Some information on what types of jobs each field of practice prepares students for

■ Breakdown of specific jobs in terms of skills used -what your day/week/year may look like. To help people identify where they best fit."

In collaboration with SWSA we are planning a job fair in the spring quarter.

We want to thank you for this opportunity to respond to your questions and comments. It has given us some good ideas about how to improve communication in the department.

Dr. Mary & Dr. Morris

Any questions about this Newsletter can be directed to Daniel Perez.
Table 3. Faculty Responsiveness & Student Satisfaction

**Decrease In Group Scores/ T Tests**

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**Group Mean Scores - Pre and Post**

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**Legend:**

A. Faculty attitudes reflect concern toward students
B. Student perceives faculty as displaying behaviors expected of professional social workers
C. Administrator's attitudes reflect concern toward students
D. Departmental advising assists students with professional education
E. Student has opportunities to influence departmental policies
F. Student believes their rights have been respected and protected
G. Student has been encouraged to be actively involved in their education
H. Department has provided adequate information about policies and curriculum
I. Student feels pride identifying with department
J. Student believes that social work is an important profession
K. Student is being adequately prepared to be a competent social worker
L. Student would recommend department to a colleague
M. Student is personally satisfied with involvement in their educational experience
N. Student believes overall experience has been positive
O. Student is comfortable approaching faculty directly with concerns
P. Student believes ability to ask questions of faculty anonymously = having concerns voiced
Q. Student believes that it is important to communicate concerns to faculty
R. Student believes that their ability to communicate concerns increases their overall satisfaction
REFERENCES


Kissman, K., & Van Tran, T. (1990). Perceived quality of field placement education among graduate social work


