

Council on Social Work Education
The Research Agenda: Implementing the CSWE Mission

February 2005

Introduction

The 2003-2004 Board mandate for change in the operations and governance structure of CSWE stimulated much dialogue and discussion over the past 18 months and culminated technically in January 2005, with the affirmative vote for fundamental changes in the governance structure. Prior to this membership vote, on going dialogue and discussion as well as internal restructuring focused on the mission driven imperatives of CSWE and the operations structure for ensuring their accomplishment. The Office of Social Work Education and Research was formed, with a staff director, in order to focus on specific activities and fulfill the organizational mission to promote research. With the establishment of this office and early in the restructuring process, it became very apparent that CSWE needed to define its goals and activities related to research, including evaluation of its own programs, the accumulation and analysis of data to underpin policy decision making by the board, as well as to better serve its various constituent/member groups.

We embarked on a process that included a conference call on March 19, 2004, an in-person meeting held on June 9, 2004 in Alexandria, Virginia, a General Discussion at the October 22, 2004 meeting of the Board of Directors, the discussion of the Leadership Roundtable on December 3, 2004, and the discussion of the Board Strategic Issues Committee on October 21, 2004. Although any agenda that spans activities and initiatives over the next few years, requires continuous monitoring and revision, a basic framework has emerged from the process we have been engaged in since establishing the Office of Social Work Education and Research. There are four goal areas for our agenda: 1) data collection for annual programmatic statistics and member information; 2) research for practice and educational excellence; 3) support for the research agenda of our programs and faculties; and 4) data collection and analysis that underpins the policy and governance decisions of our Board of Directors, our various Commissions and Councils and our general organizational operations.

1. Data collection for annual programmatic statistics and member information:

This function has been ongoing within the CSWE structure. It is, however, at a point that we must take a critical look at what we collect, its usefulness to member programs and individuals, how we collect information, how what is collected becomes useful as part of a larger profile of social work education in the United States, how we analyze and disseminate this information both within CSWE and to outside organizations and researchers. In short, we must sharpen our overall data collection so we understand the strategic issues more fully and where are our strengths in addressing them. This goal area is a high priority and within the current resource allocations of CSWE.

Responsibility: The Offices of Member and Communication Services, Social Work Accreditation and Educational Excellence, and Social Work Education and Research will work on a plan that is integrative of content, direction and outcomes in ensuring that this goal area is appropriately addressed.

Timeframe: Plan for Board review, October 2005.

2. *Research for practice and educational excellence:* It has become abundantly clear as we seek answers to common questions about our professional effectiveness, we must have reliable and valid data upon which to base our conclusions and we must have disseminated information about such practices in formats that can be transmitted to our faculties and then especially to our students through their educational programs. As a priority, however, this goal area will be addressed primarily through partnerships with other organizations, with partial support from CSWE, e.g., IASWR, Campbell Collaborative. Moreover, we will focus research on the relationship of accreditation standards to program outcomes – the alternative to the self study, and additional quality assessment projects of the COA

Responsibility: The Office of the Executive Director and the Office of Social Work Education and Research as coordinators and governance participants in cooperation with the IASWR, the Campbell Collaborative (C2) and the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR). The Office of Social Work Accreditation and Educational Excellence will pursue those matters related more specifically to educational outcomes and accreditation standards.

Timeline: An outcome directed agreement with IASWR will be negotiated by April 3, 2005. Additional understandings that promote interaction between the C2 and SSWR will be available by Fall, 2005. And finally, the COA should further identify the quality assurance projects that it places in priority – Fall 2005.

3. *Support for the research agenda of our programs and faculties.* Throughout the course of our discussions, new or more specific avenues for research related accountability have emerged as important to the overall agenda. This has included topics such as international social work education, child welfare training funds, doctoral education, workforce matters, education of minorities, faculty development, concentrations and infusion models of curriculum development, distance/electronic learning, and the social work and CSWE mission driven imperative of social and economic justice. Primary among a number of our institutions is the issue of research mission and connected with this are the faculty, resources, and appropriate professional support to carry out such missions and to be appropriately recognized within the larger context of higher education in the United States. There is a particular interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and in best practice models.

Responsibility: This work will be further defined and refined through the three Offices of Member and Communication Services, Social Work Education and Research and

Social Work Accreditation and Educational Excellence. The work of the Commission on Curriculum and Educational Innovation in developing the appropriate environmental scan and its attendant assumptions and guides for the future of social work education will be primary to this effort.

Timeline: This effort, along with the information from the environmental scan will be completed by December 31, 2005. An ideal timeline would be to have this part of the research agenda/plan ready for discussion and dissemination at the December 2, meeting of the Leadership Roundtable.

4. ***Data Collection and analysis that underpins the policy and governance decisions of our Board of Directors, Commissions and Councils:*** CSWE must base its policy decisions increasingly on data that presents and evaluates program effectiveness and projects the future health and vitality of the organization. This process began with the October presentation of “dashboard indicators”. However, these efforts require need refinement and greater sharpness of presentation for board policy decisions. Our efforts must be coordinated and based on the needs also to accomplish the work of our Commissions and Councils as the points at which organizational change – with volunteer input and shaping – begin a process leading to the Board of Directors.

Responsibility: The Office of the Executive Director and the Office of Social Work Education and Research will be primarily responsible for working with all CSWE Commissions, Councils, Committees and Task Forces to develop research specific agendas and identify research needs that will underpin their work.

Timeline: This work will be accomplished by May 2006, for presentation to the Board of Directors.