Methods

Students who enter the MSW program enter either as (1) a “Regular Cohort” student or (2) an “Advanced Standing” student. Regular cohort students are those who enter the program without an earned undergraduate social work degree from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accredited program or who failed to achieve the academic requirements for admission to the advanced standing program. These students complete a foundation year of course work (21 credit hours) prior to entering their chosen specialization/concentration (either the Clinical Social Work Concentration or the Community and Social Development Concentration). Students accepted into the Advanced Standing program have an undergraduate degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program and have met academic undergraduate GPA requirements. Students in the Advanced Standing program complete two bridge courses (6 credit hours) in addition to the courses in their chosen specialization/concentration.

The CSWE prescribes expected competencies that are operationalized for the foundation level of the program as well as for each specialization. These are delineated in the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards [EPAS] (CSWE, 2008). The foundation competencies and the advanced practice behaviors are assessed at the conclusion of the field experience in their concentration year (last semester of the program.) The program assessment plan consists of the following two summative measures used to evaluate students’ proficiency in demonstrating foundation and advanced practice competencies at the end of their final field experience: (1) Field Instructor Field Placement Evaluation (direct measure), and the (2) Student Field Placement Evaluation Self-Assessment (indirect measure). A third measure is the Comprehensive Examination, which is administered to students on their last semester of the program.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) analyzes these data which are presented to and discussed by the faculty at large to inform curricular change.

Measures:

(1) **Field Instructor Field Placement Evaluation**: Items in this measure correlate with each competency and the operationalized foundation and concentration practice behaviors (or learning outcomes). The measure utilizes Likert-type response set ranging from 1 (low competency) to 5 (meeting and consistently exceeding basic competency). This measure is administered during students’ final field placement and is completed by the field instructor who has supervised the student in their placement, with assistance/consultation from the field course professor, as required. Each practice
behavior is evaluated separately; however, for analytic purposes, they are summed to create an overall mean score per competency.

(2) **Student Field Placement Evaluation Self-Assessment:** This measure is structured as described above. In an effort to increase accuracy, directions for completing the self-assessment also include a reminder to students that these measures will not impact their course grade. This measure is completed by the student at the end of the final field practicum.

(3) **Comprehensive Examination:** This direct measure assesses students’ competencies at the foundation level as well as for their chosen specialization area (Clinical Social Work or Community and Social Development). The standardized exam consists of multiple choice questions that are mapped to the program competencies and operationalized in accordance with various levels of Bloom’s taxonomy of learning domains. Students complete the exam at the end of their final graduate semester. The exam consists of a total of 150 items—75 of which correlate to the foundation curriculum and 75 of which correlate to the concentration specializations. Students are required to earn a minimum of 70% to pass the exam.

**Benchmarks:**

Two of the measures employed for program assessment (the Field Placement Instructor Evaluation and the Field Placement Student Self-Assessment) utilize the same Likert-type scale, with values ranging from 1 (low competency) to 5 (high competency). The mean program benchmark was set at 3 to coordinate with the measurement scale \(3 = \text{consistently meets basic requirements of practice behavior}\). Students are expected to score a minimum of 3 on each competency as a group.

The faculty reviewed and accepted the threshold of (70%) set by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) for the passing of the social work licensure exam. Thus, the College has an expectation that 70% of all students preparing to graduate will achieve a minimum score of 3 on each competency. In addition, students are required to earn a minimum of 70% to pass the Comprehensive Exam.

**Results:**
Data gathered were analyzed by the DGS according to the student performance across the program on foundation competencies and associated practice behaviors, as well as on advanced practice behaviors related to each concentration/specialization. Since the concentration curriculum builds on and integrates the foundation curriculum, the foundation and concentration assessment data are presented in aggregate.

Table 1 (MSW Field Evaluation Assessment Table) presents the grand mean of all students for each competency and the percentage of students who achieved the benchmark mean of 3 or higher for each of the thirteen competencies.

**Table 1: MSW Field Evaluation Assessment Table (N =104)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPAS</th>
<th>Grand Mean for EPAS Student Self-Evaluation</th>
<th>Percentage of Students Scoring 3 or Above</th>
<th>Grand Mean for EPAS Field Instructor Evaluation</th>
<th>Percentage of Students Scoring 3 or Above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Professional social work identity</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principals</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Apply critical thinking</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Engage diversity in practice</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.5 Advance human rights/economic justice</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.6 Engage in research informed practice</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.7 Apply knowledge of HBSE</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.8 Engage in policy practice</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.9 Respond to contexts that shape practice</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Engagement</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Assessment</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Intervention</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.10 Evaluation</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 provides detailed mean scores for each concentration/specialization as follows: (1) students enrolled in the Clinical Social Work Concentration (CSW), and (2) students enrolled in the Community and Social Work Concentration (CSD).

**Table 2: Concentration Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPAS</th>
<th>CSW Field</th>
<th>CSW Self</th>
<th>CSD Field</th>
<th>CSD Self-Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Identify oneself as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Engage diversity and difference in practice</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.5 Advance human rights and economic justice</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.6 Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.7 Apply knowledge of</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
human behavior and the social environment

2.1.8 Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Part</th>
<th>Mean (STD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Min-Max</th>
<th>Mean (STD %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>59.87 (5.70)</td>
<td>60.50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52-73</td>
<td>79.83% (7.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>58.91 (6.45)</td>
<td>59.50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33-71</td>
<td>78.55% (8.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79.19% (8.10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the Comprehensive Exam are detailed in Table 3. The MSW program comprehensive exam consists of 75 questions that correlate with the foundation year curriculum and 75 questions that correlate with course material from their respective concentration curriculum. The comprehensive exam is administered during the last semester of their MSW program. Items for the comprehensive exam were generated by faculty who teach to specific competencies, and attention is given to assure that the exam offers a balanced assessment of each of the required competencies. Students are required to earn a minimum score of 70% to pass the exam.

Table 3: Comprehensive Exam

<p>| Community and Social Development Results (N = 54) | 98 % passed |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Part</th>
<th>Mean (STD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Min-Max</th>
<th>Mean (STD %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>58.91 (6.45)</td>
<td>59.50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33-71</td>
<td>78.55% (8.60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>79.19% (8.10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Clinical Social Work Results (N = 63) 100% passed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Part</th>
<th>Mean (STD)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Min-Max</th>
<th>Mean (STD %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>63.35 (4.26)</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52-71</td>
<td>84.47% (5.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>62.25 (5.60)</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>52-71</td>
<td>83.00% (7.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83.74% (6.58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis:**

All benchmarks were met in the foundation and advanced practice (specialization) competencies overall and for each individual foundation practice behavior. Students met or exceeded the benchmark of 70% or more students reaching or passing the benchmark mean score of 3.

These data were examined for trends, which resulted in special attention being paid to several of the competencies.

Although the benchmark was met on all competencies in the Field Instruction related measures, competencies 2.1.6 (research), 2.1.8 (policy), 2.1.9 (context of practice), and 2.1.10EV (evaluation), achieved the lowest grand mean scores on the Student Self-Evaluation measure with engaging in policy practice being the overall lowest performer. Overall, compared to the 2013-2014 assessment period, these scores reflect either stable or slight improvement across competencies.

All benchmarks were met for all competencies with the field instructor evaluations as well, with field instructor evaluations scoring slightly higher than students’ self-ratings for each of the thirteen competencies. The field instructors rated students the lowest on competencies 2.1.6 (research), 2.1.8 (policy), and 2.1.9 (context) with responding to contexts that shape practice being the overall low performer at 4.17. Overall, compared to the 2013-2014 assessment period, these scores reflect either stable or slight improvement across competencies.

In terms of results from the Comprehensive Exam, 99.1% (116/117) of students passed the first time taking the comprehensive exam, thus exceeding the benchmark of 90%. For the CSD concentration, 1 student failed (1.8%), and for the CSW concentration all students met the required minimum exam score of 70%. The high success rate may be attributed in part to refinement of exam questions, as well as targeted efforts to assure that students have a clear understanding of the potential consequences of failing the exam.
Improvement Action:

Results indicate the following improvement action plan that was formulated following review and discussion with faculty:

1) The first cohort of MSW Clinical Social Work concentration and Community and Social Development concentration students graduated in May 2013. To assess the impact of the programs on post-graduation practice experience, a survey of MSW graduates will be conducted. Data will used to help inform curriculum.

2) Examine program data to identify possible relationship between lower scores on assessment measures and status as a regular program versus advanced standing student. Consider doing a preliminary baseline measure of competencies at the end of the Foundation curriculum to assure that students have a strong foundation prior to entering the concentration/specialization curriculum.

3) Some differences between concentrations were evident the assessment data. These areas will be explored to assure that all competencies are sufficiently addressed across both concentrations.

4) The field practicum workbook activities and Field Education Report were revised- the related FER more fully connects policy to field and allows for more comprehensive application of knowledge and skills in this area.

5) The CSWE released new EPAS for 2015. All courses will be reviewed and competencies will be revised to reflect these new standards. These will be considered in relation to the new COSW Strategic Plan 2015-2020 as well.

6) Continue to review and revise comprehensive exam items based on analysis of cumulative data from past two years. Examine goodness of fit for items regarding their assignment to specific competencies in relation to the 2015 EPAS.