REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT FOR THE PhD in SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAM
April 1, 2019

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS
- Carolyn Ma, PharmD., UH Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy, Dean and Associate Professor (Committee Chair)
- Carla Houser, MSW, Executive Director of Residential Youth Services & Empowerment (RYSE)
- Brad Nakamura, PhD, UH Manoa, Dept. of Psychology, Associate Professor
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I. OVERVIEW and REVIEW COMMITTEE CHARGE

The Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work’s (MBTSSW) PhD program in Social Welfare was established in 1991 and given permanent status by the University of Hawai’i (UH) Board of Regents on May 16, 2003. The PhD in Social Welfare at UH Manoa (UHM) is the only doctoral graduate degree in the field of social work offered in the State of Hawai’i and the Pacific Basin. The last review was performed in March 2012.

This Review Committee’s (RC) charge was to assess the PhD in Social Welfare (Program) in regards to its overall quality, educational value, role within UH and the MBTSSW (School), sufficiency of fiscal and human resources, and offer recommendations for improvement.

The RC was provided with the following documents:
1. PhD Social Welfare Program Review Committee Report from April 2012
2. Copy of replies to 2012 Review from MBTSSW in April 2012 and January 2016 (4 yr update)
4. Dean’s Executive Summary
5. Site Visit Agenda
6. Supporting Data with Appendices including curriculum vita for all graduate faculty
7. Annual assessments (2013-2015) of the PhD program

A site visit was conducted on February 21 and 22, 2019. The agenda included meetings with the following:
- Dean Noreen Mokuau
- PhD Program Chair Dr. Jing Guo
- PhD Social Work (SW) graduate faculty
- PhD SW students from different cohorts
- Chair for the Dept. of SW
• PhD SW Committee members
• PhD SW program staff and fiscal officer, Manoa Assessment office
• Members from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
• Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dean and Associate Dean of Graduate Division
• External stakeholders

Overview and Progress Since April 2012 Review
The RC reviewed the recommendations from the April 2012 Review with the following conclusions:

The MBTSSW and the PhD program Committee provided timely responses (4/26/12 and 1/4/16) and more than adequately addressed the committee’s five recommendations.

#1 Development of research infrastructure pre and post awards: In 2014, Dean Mokuau, with Dean Hedges (JABSOM) became the Multiple Investigator of a research infrastructure grant on health disparities from the NIMHD (2014-2019).

Dean Mokuau is also Multiple Investigator for the recently awarded Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) Specialized grant. The project titled Ola HAWAII Research grant focuses on growth and support for investigators to study the determinants of health disparities and interventions in the Pacific.

In 2015, the MBTSSW, the Office of Public Health Studies and the Center on Aging reorganized under one dean. This merger of smaller academic units has helped with efficiency and productivity in instruction, service and research. Positive feedback was expressed from the SW faculty who were interviewed. Dr. Kathryn Braun, Director of the Office of Public Health studies, is 5% SW faculty and attended as a SW graduate faculty and a member of the SW PhD program committee.

The mission of these three entities align not only in their shared goals but also with the future needs for workforce and societal issues. The Dean’s Executive Summary describes Social Work as one of the fastest growing occupations in the nation with an anticipated growth rate of 19% up until 2022. Public Health will generate 3.25 million jobs (2012-2018). With an aging population, both nationally and locally, providing healthcare and caregiving for our kupuna becomes an essential goal to continue to strive.

#2. Facilities and a permanent home: The MBTSSW moved into the newly renovated Gartley Hall in 2014 and houses the School in its entirety with sufficient classrooms, office space for faculty and staff, as well as facilities for conferencing and education simulation. The School strives to maintain safe workspaces with faculty oversight and safety trainings.

#3. Facilitate the hiring of additional tenure-line faculty: MBTSSW has hired three tenure track assistant professors and one non-tenure track faculty who all began in the fall 2018 semester.
# 4. Increasing advancement or development efforts: The MBTSSW has successfully gained two endowed Chair donations, a $1M Richard and Rose Takasaki Professor in Social Policy and the $2M Barbara Cox Anthony Chair in Aging.

#5 Examine availability of courses for PhD students: Ongoing efforts continue in this area with expanded courses offerings especially since the merger with Office of Public Health Studies.

The RC’s report is presented in a format that follows the Guiding WASC Standard Headings. Each section describes the RC’s Assessments and Strengths followed by Recommendations for Improvement.

II. FACULTY & RESEARCH

FACULTY

Assessment and Strengths

The MBTSSW employs 25 full time faculty including 13 regular graduate faculty at different ranks. The School successfully recruited three tenure-track assistant professors and one non-tenure-track assistant professor in fall 2018. Although the 2012 recommendation # 3, suggested hiring of more senior faculty with greater potential for grant success, the School is commended for filling the positions with qualified and dedicated faculty who are fully engaged in teaching, research and service with a particular interest in the PhD Program.

Newly hired faculty report feeling supported by the MBTSSW and senior faculty. Student’s feedback describes the faculty as dedicated and enthusiastic individuals who are actively engaged in teaching (both face-to-face and distance), service, and research.

RESEARCH

Assessment and Strengths

Research is of high quality and in areas that align with the School’s mission and vision. Faculty produce a solid number of refereed scholarly publications. The School’s extramural funding record demonstrates a fair number of past success in grant funding for select Social Work faculty. A synopsis was not provided describing the number of submitted grant applications and the percent of successful grants awarded over the past five years.

Dean Mokuau’s current participation as a multiple investigator in the grants, Ola HAWAII and NIMHD, has helped the MBTSSW gain significant positioning in the health care professional research program. This is helpful for developing and recruiting pilot project ideas and subsequent funding.
Other than the funding support for the Graduate Assistant (GA) positions from the two endowed chair positions, extramural funding sources for GA positions within the Program appears to be an area of underperformance for senior SW faculty or other faculty as Principal Investigators.

**Recommendations for Improvement**

**FACULTY**

- Consider providing mentorship by matching junior faculty with a senior faculty mentor to help with junior faculty success. Senior faculty from other related disciplines may serve as options for mentorship.

- The ability for junior faculty to gain extramural funding within their first three years of their academic career is critical for future success not only for promotion and tenure, but to also build the foundation for larger awards. The RC supports the policy that grants a course release to newly hired faculty in their first year as a method to support the transition and development of their research agendas. If possible, consideration for additional course reduction in years 2 and/or 3, may also aid in junior faculty scholarly endeavors.

**RESEARCH**

- Highly encourage increasing the quantity of proposals for extramural funding grants as a means to provide salaries for GA positions.

- Although comparatively smaller in size to other larger UHM units and graduate programs, this PhD program has the potential to provide significant discovery and advancement in the social welfare issues such as homelessness, poverty and mental health issues that have grown to a critical level in Hawai‘i. The RC strongly recommends that the University (VC Research) consider a more equitable method to support the MBTSSW faculty in grant submission support or in providing fiscal support for research especially within the critical areas of our state’s social welfare needs.

- Recommend collaborating with Public Health faculty and/or other types of health professional programs and their faculty.

**SECTION 3. ACADEMIC CURRICULUM**

**Assessment and Strengths**

The academic curriculum is of good quality and generally meets its objectives. Since 2012, effective changes made to better serve the PhD students.

The core curriculum has been offered without major changes.
The Program has encouraged students to expand their course selections by:

1. Encouraging students to take courses in the departments of Public Health, Urban Planning and other departments.
2. Combining different cohorts to maximize faculty availability and offering courses on a regular basis.
3. Creatively utilizing University resources to allow students to take research method courses outside the department.
4. Allowing MSW students to take PhD level courses.
5. Encouraging students to take other types of PhD courses in public health, urban planning, and psychology.

Two changes were made to address past student underperformance in the Qualifying Exams. First review and revision of QE study guides and examination questions and secondly, allowing students to take a portion of the exam shortly after completion of a section.

The first year cohort of students describes a difficult transition into the heavily quantitative methods coursework as well as their initial understanding of the relevance to Social Welfare.

There has been implementation of monitoring and assessment of student progress.

**Recommendations for Improvements**

- Codify the student handbook in a timely fashion to notify students of new changes related to the program.
- To better prepare students for the heavy quantitative course requirements, the RC recommends that the program improve recruitment screening and a student’s readiness for the quantitative courses.
- Further provide clarification regarding research course curriculum sequencing, coordination, and pre-requisite requirements.
- Communication between the PhD program director with other program’s research methods instructor(s) may help to establish more relevant content and application to Social Welfare.
- Suggest offering students a choice and balance of quantitative and qualitative method courses.
- In addition to the SW699 Independent Research Practicum, have PhD students, with faculty mentor support; work with the Hawai’i Interprofessional Education Program (HIPE) to evaluate their simulations or exercises. This may be mutual benefit to promote the
scholarly assessment and publication of HIPE activities and provide application practice for the PhD students.

- Continue to evaluate and/or adjust student support mechanisms for progress towards completion of degree.

SECTION 4: STUDENTS
Assessment and Strengths

Students feel supported by the faculty and have a sense of deep trust of the faculty.

Faculty expressed support and genuine concern about the student’s academic performance and overall wellness.

Over the last five years, the Program has experienced eight PhD student withdrawals and one additional dismissal. The Program has also had a steady graduation rate in recent years. Consonant with and building upon previous efforts for improving student recruitment and retention, the Program Director and the faculty have engaged in substantive program improvements that include:

1. Increasing support for new student orientation
2. Creation and utilization of the “Academic Plan” initiative
3. Modifications to student’s completion of the Qualifying Exam
4. Staff enrollment and participation in the University’s Assessment Leadership Institute
5. Creation of several rubrics explicitly outlining various student performance domains for assessment.

Since AY 2013-14, the number of applicants per year for the PhD program has ranged from two to six students.

For AY’s 2015 through 2017, the Program did not admit any students.

There appears to be two application processes, one through the electronic Graduate Division and a second manual written application process via the PhD Program.

Students did not describe an interview process in the admissions selection process.

Student’s financial support whether through tuition reduction and/or availability and continuance of GA positions appears to be the singular and most stressful concern for students.

Faculty and staff reported a wide variety of other types of financial support (.25 FTE Graduate Assistantships, full or partial tuition waivers, achievement and other scholarships) mechanisms and the potential of other GA positions across the UHM campus.
Recommendations for Improvement

● Student Recruitment and Application Process
  o Continue to expand recruiting efforts for potential students from a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate study areas. For example, other Master’s trained students with strong foundations in research methodology and science (IT, engineering, education, social sciences) but with personal interest in social welfare, health care policy and public health, may be a good fit for this program.
  o Implement applicant interviews utilizing optional on-site visits or distance technology methods (Zoom/Skype) so the applicant has the opportunity to ask questions and/or interact with the faculty and the faculty have a likewise opportunity.
  o Place simulation videos, positive student testimonials, and highlight successful PhD student projects on the Program website to engage interested applicants.
  o Implement PhD student ambassadors to liaison with potential applicants.
  o Target WICHE WRGP program states thereby enabling non-resident students to pay in-state tuition fees.
  o Continue and/or increase efforts in person, or through all publicly facing resources the fact that the PhD program is preparing students for knowledge, utilization, and application of statistics, research, and policy efforts.
  o Integrate and/or improve coordination with Graduate Division’s electronic admission processes so students complete only one application
  o Develop a method(s) or tracking system to re-engage students who have demonstrated early interest but are lost to follow-up.
  o Monitor newly implemented recruitment strategies and assess on an annual basis. Modify recruitment strategies based upon results.

● Student Retention
  o Specifically in regards to financial support, faculty are strongly encouraged to continue to apply for extramural funding with specific budget line items for salary support for GA positions.
  o Consider foreign country government education support specifically created to promote graduate education in Social Welfare.
  o Continue to leverage less-than-full time Graduate Assistantships
  o Implement a “Buddy System” utilizing the senior PhD students to foster an early peer support network.
  o Formalize an ongoing assessment process of the Program alumni in order to evaluate the program, its mission, and network for potential employment and career opportunities and or community partnership projects or other types of surveys.

● Other Student Recommendations
Student mailboxes to facilitate communication and transmission of hard copy documents with staff and faculty.

- With a consistent increase in cohort size over the next five years, consider a larger dedicated workspace for the PhD students, especially during the first two years of the program when they are more present on campus and/or as they fulfill the responsibilities of their GA positions.

Section 5: Staff Support and Facilities
Assessment and Strengths

STAFF SUPPORT
The MBTSSW staff consists of a dedicated team who clearly care for each other and support the faculty and students. Given their history with the program, they are knowledgeable about the program’s history, policies and procedures and represent well, the mission and vision of the School and Program. The hiring of the fiscal officer releases the faculty from the detailed fiscal responsibilities enabling the faculty to concentrate on their teaching, scholarly and service duties.

FACILITIES
The School moved into the newly renovated Gartley Hall in 2014. Gartley houses the Program in its entirety with sufficient classroom, office space for faculty and staff, and facilities for conferencing and education simulation. The School strives to maintain safe workspaces with faculty oversight and safety trainings.

Recommendations for Improvement

- See Student Section

Section 6. Extension and Outreach
Assessment and Strengths

The geographic region of the University and the School provide areas of strategic interest that include indigenous health services, housing as a platform for health and quality of life, the integration of mental health, substance abuse and primary health services, and community participatory research. The cultural richness and great economic challenges of Hawaii and the surrounding Pacific Island regions allow for an interdisciplinary approach to the social determinants of health.

Faculty and students feel supported to cultivate their own network of mentors and outside community relationships. Both parties also appreciate the freedom to work independently and are encouraged to connect with the Office of Public Health Studies and other outside networks.
The RC commends the MBTSSW administration and faculty for their successful development efforts to fund the two endowed Chair positions.

**Recommendations for Improvement**

- To better support faculty members and students, the School and the Program should consider expanding community partnerships through formalized Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that include financial support from the organization to aid in funding scholarly activities with a full/partial GA salary and to ensure that adequate learning resources are available for students and faculty.

- Strengthen and expand relationships with community and governmental organization stakeholders in the health and human services. Continue to invest in the development of relationships with elected officials and key administrators from large-scale public service agencies and organizations. Target leadership of governmental and community-based organization that should include the State of Hawaii Departments of Human Services, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Public Health and Public Safety.

- Investigate global opportunities that will grow and expand the reach of the Program. Explore how foreign country governments can financially support the education of international students with a return of students to help with the social welfare of their country of origin.

- Consider hosting international visiting researchers, facilitating visiting lectures from senior scholars, and developing research partnerships with schools within and outside of UH.

- Increase interdisciplinary and translational research structures through cross school, and cross-institutional research collaborative partnerships and initiatives.

- Consider a formal designation of a point of contact or individual to lead the fundraising and outreach charge.

- Consider expanding administrative and training opportunities with international networks of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and consumers through collaboration groups such as the Cochrane and Campbell Collaborations.

**Section 7. Concluding Statements and General Synopsis of Recommendations**

Since the 2012 review, the PhD for Social Welfare Program has experienced both marked improvements as well as a period of instability/change in regards to enrollment, recruitment, Program Director leadership changes and a major merger with two other UH Manoa units. The RC highly commends the Dean, MBTSSW faculty, staff, Program Director, and the PhD Committee for the significant amounts of self-assessment, rework and a demonstrated rejuvenation of the Program. The current Program Director has demonstrated significant commitment and dedication to her responsibilities and continuation of her in this role will help to stabilize this rejuvenation effort.
**The RC recommends continuation of the program** with the following overarching recommendations:

1. Seek increased support for extramural grant preparation from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research at UHM.

2. Social Work faculty are highly encouraged to seek financial support for GA positions through increased extramural grant application activity.

3. Explore external partnerships for increased exposure and possible funding sources.

4. Provide mentorship for junior faculty and course release in employment years 2 and 3.

5. At a minimum, continue with the current policy of two-year Chair terms (unlimited) for the PhD Program Director. This would provide consistency in management and allow the individual to build expertise and skill.

6. Increase and expand efforts for student recruitment and retention and implement a smoother transition of first year students into the Program.