

*CSWE Complaint Updated Progress
August 2019-August 2020*

BACKGROUND

On September 15, 2017, a complaint was filed with CSWE regarding the UMB SSW on the following Accreditation Standards:

Accreditation Standard 3.0.1: *The program describes the specific and continuous efforts it makes to provide a learning environment that models affirmation and respect for diversity and difference.*

Accreditation Standard 3.0.2: *The program explains how these efforts provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment.*

Accreditation Standard 3.0.3: *The program describes specific plans to continually improve the learning environment to affirm and support persons with diverse identities.*

On February 4, 2018, the SSW submitted a response to the complaint, which was followed by a CSWE site visit on September 19-20, 2018, by Associate Professor Antoinette Farmer of Rutgers University and Professor Beverly Black of the University of Texas at Arlington. On August 1, 2019, the SSW submitted a complaint progress report.

This document summarizes the SSW's efforts to meet these Accreditation Standards, particularly in terms of changes to the explicit and implicit curriculum since August of 2019.

EXPLICIT CURRICULUM

While the complaint focused particularly on education standards for the implicit curriculum, the SSW has made significant changes to the explicit curriculum that will enhance the SSW's ability to strengthen the implicit curriculum and create an inclusive learning environment that affirms, supports, and respects diversity and difference, and encourages anti-oppressive social work practice.

Following an in-depth review by the MPC of diversity and anti-oppression content in the existing curriculum, as well as the year-long development and piloting of different approaches to enhancing this content (co-lead by the MPC and the Diversity and Anti-Oppression Workgroup (DAO)), in the spring of 2019 the FO approved the following three curriculum changes:

1. Develop and add a field seminar to our foundation field practicum.
2. Create and add an on-line pre-requisite on the history of structural oppression.
3. Develop and add a 15-week, 3-credit course required of all foundation students on structural oppression and its implications for social work practice.

Foundation Field Seminar:

For the 2019-2020 academic year, the Office of Field Education launched a new field seminar required for all foundation students enrolled in field. These monthly seminars are facilitated by Adjunct Field Liaisons and create a space for students to:

1. Become oriented to the principles and practice of social work.
2. Practice critical self-reflection to improve self-awareness, and awareness of the impact of self on developing professional identity.
3. Discuss issues of oppression, privilege and cultural humility, and integrate the practice of critical self-reflection within an anti-oppression, culturally humble framework.
4. Bridge material learned in class with the practical application of that material and other practices in field.
5. Discuss experiences and troubleshoot issues in field.

A Brief History of Oppression and Resistance Online Pre-Requisite

In July of 2020, the SSW launched a new pre-requisite online course. This self-paced 0-credit online course focuses on Baltimore as a representation of other cities, communities, and groups that experience and fight oppression of themselves and others in our society. It includes narrated content, links to resources for further exploration, and brief reflection assignments and takes approximately 15 hours to complete. All incoming students are required to complete the course by the third week of classes, and will submit their reflection assignments to their instructor for SOWK 610. Continuing students were also given the option to enroll in the pre-requisite, and it is also available to all SSW faculty and staff.

SOWK 610: Structural Oppression and Its Implications for Social Work

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the SSW added a new 3-credit course required for all MSW students to take in their first semester in the program. This course examines the ways structural oppression – e.g., by race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, religious and cultural beliefs and practices, ethnicity, national origin, and class – shapes our consciousness, our communities, and our cultural norms. This course explores social identity in the context of a complex web of structural oppression – and the ways that dominant narratives influence the way we see ourselves and others. It addresses the ways social work practice and research have created and maintained structural oppression and power disparities. It also provides examples of anti-oppressive social work practice, and identifies steps we can take to overcome and undo structural oppression.

This course was developed by a team of full time and adjunct faculty in the summer of 2019, with feedback solicited from additional faculty, administrators, students, alumni, and community members. It was taught three times as an elective during the 2019-2020 academic year, and subsequently revised based on lessons learned. All instructors for this course for the upcoming year participated in a series of trainings to review and discuss the content, and will attend bi-weekly meetings throughout the semester to process challenges, share tips and resources, and provide support to one another. Instructors are also collaborating on asynchronous recorded lectures to share across all sections.

IMPLICIT CURRICULUM

In our August 2019 progress report, we described 10 specific ways we had been strengthening and enhancing our climate of inclusion since Drs. Black and Farmer visited our campuses in the spring of 2018. Below we highlight the specific ways we have made meaningful progress in the three EPAS standards since our last progress report – some of these continue the work we highlighted last year, so are new areas.

New SSW Leadership

On July 1, 2020, Dr. Judy Postmus became the new Dean of the SSW. Dean Postmus came to the SSW from Rutgers University School of Social Work, where she was a professor, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, and Director of the Center on Violence Against Women and Children. Dean Postmus is committed to leading the SSW to become an anti-racist and anti-oppressive institution that will promote racial, social, and economic justice at the SSW, UMB, and our city.

Creating a New Position of Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In August of 2020, Neijma Celestine-Donnor, MSW, LCSW-C, took on the role of the SSW's first Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Dean Celestine-Donnor is an alum of the MSW program who most recently served as the Director of Campus Climate Support and Engagement at the University of Maryland, College Park. Dean Celestine-Donnor will play a leadership role for building and fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, restoration, reconciliation, and accessibility at the UMB SSW. She will be collaborating closely with administrators, faculty (full-time and part-time), staff, and students to promote changes in policies, practices, and the organizational culture.

Faculty and Staff Trainings*

Title	Facilitator(s)	Training Date	Audience
<i>Rx on Racial Healing</i>	Dr. Gail C. Christopher, founder of the Ntianu Garden Center for Healing & Nature	August 21, 2019	UMB SSW All School Meeting (all faculty and staff)
<i>Implicit Bias and Micro-Aggressions in the Classroom</i>	Russell McClain, Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law	January 31, 2020	All faculty
<i>Setting Space, and Social Identity, Power & Oppression</i>	Adam Schneider, Mercedes Hightower, Emma Kupferman, and Lauren McCarthy, instructors of SOWK 610	February 14, 2020 or February 15, 2020	All faculty
<i>Power, Privilege, & Oppression</i>	Adam Schneider, Mercedes Hightower, Emma Kupferman, and Lauren McCarthy,	February 28, 2020 or February 29, 2020	All faculty

	instructors of SOWK 610		
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* We postponed 3 additional trainings by SOWK 610 instructors due to COVID-19, and will offer them as asynchronous online trainings in fall of 2020

Teaching Support Program

In the fall of 2019, the SSW launched the Teaching Support Program (TSP) to provide ongoing pedagogical support to teaching faculty in order to bolster instructor knowledge, capacity, and skills for the purpose of creating and maintaining brave spaces. A Brave Space is a classroom environment that acknowledges the challenges that both students and faculty have when attempting to have discussion around difficult and/or sensitive topics such as race, power, privilege and the various forms of oppression for the purpose of learning. The Coordinator of the TSP is Victoria Stubbs, a clinical instructor who has demonstrated exceptional skill in the classroom, including around addressing oppression and promoting inclusion.

This past academic year, the TSP held peer coaching circles (both in-person and online), conducted classroom observations to give instructors detailed feedback on their teaching, and provided trainings to a number of SSW stakeholders on the 6 Pillars of a Brave Space (vulnerability, perspective taking, lean into fear, critical thinking, examine intentions, and mindfulness). Ms. Stubbs also was part of the team that developed the new *A Brief History of Oppression and Resistance* online pre-requisite, and co-facilitated trainings for instructors for the new required foundation course SOWK 610: Structural Oppression and Its Implications for Social Work. For the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year, the TSP will be expanding its supports and resources, including bi-monthly peer coaching circles, monthly videos sharing tips for creating inclusive online spaces, and creating a hub for teaching resources.

Enhancing Opportunities for Students to Participate in the Life, Policies, and Shared Governance of the SSW

Over the past year, the SSW has continued to enhance and expand opportunities for students to participate in the life, policies, and shared governance of the school and campus.

Our Office of Student Services (OSS) supports our active Student Government Association, which participates fully in the school's governance. In collaboration with the OSS, the SGA Board holds monthly meetings open to all students (SGA groups held approximately 27 meetings in the Fall of 2019 and 14 meetings in the Spring of 2020), is the liaison with the campus USGA, elicits feedback from the student body, and communicates student ideas and concerns to the faculty and administration. Our Faculty Plan of Organization (FPO) articulates clear guidelines for student representation and voting rights on most faculty committees. The student representatives on the committees are active participants, and their opinions and collaborative efforts on subcommittees are valued. While chairs of faculty committees may actively recruit students to participate, the SGA Board is responsible for making appointments to faculty committees. In addition to existing committees, this past year MSW student representatives served on search committees for the Dean and the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Diversity & Anti-Oppression Committee

The Diversity & Anti-Oppression Committee (DAO), which includes faculty, staff, and students, continued its work to promote an inclusive and anti-oppressive environment for all members of the SSW

community. Specific activities this past year included participating in the planning of all-gender restrooms in the SSW, advocating for students adversely affected by the UMB change in student health insurance coverage, organizing trainings on implicit bias (facilitated by Russell McClain), and beginning a process to assess community engagement in research initiatives. This past year, the DAO co-chairs were Professor Fernando Wagner and MSW student Maryrejahliil Lanier.

Creation of the Staff Council

In the fall of 2019, the SSW launched the Staff Council, a forum where staff members can address and discuss a range of issues, including creating a more inclusive environment and culture. The creation of the Staff Council was a key recommendation from the SSW's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Taskforce, and was developed by a team lead by Ms. Christina Fenwick in the Dean's Office. The Council aims to promote effective communication among staff, and participation and representation of staff members in decision-making. Over the past year, members of the Council's Executive Committee (elected by their peers) have served on key committees at the SSW.

Enhancing School-Wide Communications

In August of 2019, the SSW launched a new *Commitment to Diversity and Anti-Oppression Excellence* website: <https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/dao/>. Visitors to this site can access previous reports and assessments of the SSW's climate, including: 1) Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Task Force Report, prepared by a task force of students, staff, and faculty; 2) A Call to Character: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, prepared by Dr. Damon Williams and his colleagues as part of an external review of the SSW; and 3) our response packet to the CSWE complaint. The site also includes video recordings of relevant lectures and events, information on key groups in the SSW, and links to UMB resources on topics such as Title IX and The Office of Diversity, ADA, and Affirmative Action. In June of 2020, the SSW also added an Anti-Racist Resource Library, which we will continue to update with reading lists, podcasts, articles, blogs, and other resources. The site is currently being reviewed and updated with input from the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to expand and enhance its content, resources, and reach.