

## Assessment Cycle 2018 – 2019

### Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)

**College: Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development**

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

**The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development.** The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development is a committed and diverse community of scholars, educators, students, and future leaders working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College produces graduates with the capabilities and confidence to be productive members of society equipped with the skill sets necessary to promote economic and social development thereby improving the overall quality of life in the region. The College offers a wide variety of exemplary undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare candidates for career success across the spectrum of professional roles and settings. These programs include teacher education, leadership, and counseling; health and human performance; psychology and addiction studies; social work; and military science. Candidates are taught to become adaptive critical thinkers and problem solvers in diverse scenarios capable of leveraging new technologies to enrich lifelong learning. As caring, competent, reflective practitioners, our graduates become positive role models in their communities and leaders in the nation's military.

**Northwestern State University Bachelor of Social Work Program.** The mission of the Northwestern State University BSW Program is, within the scope of the University's mission, to develop entry-level generalist social work professionals who are competent to meet the growing need for practitioners in our state and regional work force (especially in rural central and western Louisiana). The program offers an appreciation of human diversity in developing lifelong learners and critical thinkers whose values and ethics are consistent with the profession of social work. In this rural setting, the NSU BSW Program maintains a commitment of service to the professional community and populations at risk who experience oppression due to social and economic injustice. This program seeks to provide a caring, student-centered environment that encourages professional development.

**Explanation of Evaluation as it Relates to CSWE Accreditation.** The NSU BSW program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and has been

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since 1977. As expected, assessment of program effectiveness has been a part of our accreditation expectations. In 2008 CSWE began to require programs to assess their effectiveness according to the concept of competencies. They implemented 13 competencies and required that each competency have two measures – one of which could be a student self-assessment. Our most recent reaccreditation (in 2015) was based on the 2008 Educational Policy and Educational Standards (EPAS). We utilized a student self-evaluation and our Field Evaluation (Field Instructor's evaluation of the student).

In 2015 CSWE revised the EPAS and the Competencies, resulting in 9 competencies requiring 2 measures each. Self-evaluation by students was no longer acceptable. Our program elected to change to the 2015 competencies for the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, to begin collecting data for our next accreditation cycle. There have been no changes since the 2017-2018 assessment cycle to the current 2018/2019 cycle. So, the current assessment period is guided by the 2015 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) which focus on student learning outcomes (competencies). This is referred to as a competency-based approach to student learning outcomes. This Competency-based approach requires identifying and assessing what students demonstrate in practice (referred to as practice behaviors). This approach involves assessing ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. Programs are required to assess students on four dimensions throughout the curriculum: knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes. Programs must assess a student's demonstration of competency in nine (9) specific areas of competency. Each competency must be measured incorporating at minimum two of the four dimensions. As stated in the 2015 EPAS Handbook, EPAS recognizes a holistic view of competence; that is, the demonstration of competence is informed by knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that include the social worker's critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment in regard to unique practice situations. Overall professional competence is multi-dimensional and composed of interrelated competencies. An individual social worker's competence is seen as developmental and dynamic, changing over time in relation to continuous learning. (CSWE, 2015)

### Methodology

**Explanation of Assessment Tools.** The NSU BSW program has elected to use Instruments for Program Evaluation created by the Social Work Education Assessment Project (SWEAP). SWEAP is a non-profit organization created by social work academics for the express purpose of helping develop proprietary empirically based and validated assessment instruments for BSW- and MSW-level programs. All instruments are paid for by the Department/University and are completed electronically by students and field instructors. Analyzed data is provided back to the program by SWEAP electronically. Programs can elect to compare student data with national scores as well as ongoing assessment of cohorts. The specific assessment instruments are discussed below in the methodology section.

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### Assessment Process:

The assessment process for the BSW program is as follows:

(1) Students are given the *Curriculum Instrument* (or knowledge test) as a direct measure of knowledge across seven (7) curricular areas and all nine (9) EPAS 2015 Core Competencies at the end of SOWK 4190, Field Work. The *Curriculum Instrument* is a knowledge-based test which allows for analysis of student knowledge gained through the program and will be used to pinpoint areas for curricular enhancement. This assessment is completed through an online portal by students. This measure evaluates the knowledge dimension for all competencies.

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, are assessed using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument allows agency field instructors to measure student achievement across various dimensions related to each EPAS competency, scored on a 5-point Likert scale, and allowing for qualitative feedback. Possible rating options are: 1- Lacking Performance, 2- Inadequate performance, 3- Competent Performance, 4 – Superior Performance, 5 – Mastered Performance. This measure evaluates the skills, values, and cognitive and affective processing dimensions for specific competencies and related practice behaviors.

(2) The Assessment Coordinator retrieves the analyzed data from SWEAP. The coordinator then evaluates the data to determine whether students have met competency benchmarks set by the program.

(3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty, staff, the BSW Advisory Council, and other constituencies.

(4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching specific courses as necessary.

(5) The Assessment Coordinator, in consultation with the Faculty and the Advisory Council, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curriculum and program changes.

### Student Learning Outcomes (Expressed as EPAS Competencies):

#### Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and

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responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.

Social workers:

- make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
- use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
- demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
- use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
- use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.

**Course Map:** All required social work courses address some component of competency 1.

### Measure 1.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)

During their last semester and prior to graduation, students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension. The instrument utilized last year was a student self-assessment tool.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent “or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 67% of 45 students met or exceeded competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle measure of the knowledge-based test, the competency benchmark was not met. 71% of 41 students met competency on the knowledge test. The mean score was slightly lower than national score, but the mean difference was not statistically significant. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, the department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. It was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument would be important to determine if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. As a result, in 2018-2019 the score dropped and remained slightly lower than the national average, however the national average dropped at the same rate as the student scores. The difference between the national average and the student scores was not statistically significant.

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**Decision:** The competency was not met during the 2017-2018 or 2018-2019 assessment cycle utilizing the revised competencies and the knowledge-based curriculum test. It is important to note there is a significant discrepancy in the knowledge scores and the scores assigned by practicing social workers (field instructors) who monitor the progress of the students and work alongside students. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Due to these issues, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and in 2019-2020 develop an in-house exit exam that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations. Faculty will meet in the fall of 2019 to analyze course content and identify ways to strengthen knowledge in ethical and professional behavior throughout the curriculum.

### **Measure 1.2. (Direct – Values, Skills, Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five-point scale).

**Finding:** 93% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 64% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, the competency was met with 97% of 38 students meeting competency; 84% exceeded competency. [Based on the analysis of these results the following changes were made?](#) As a result, in 2018-2019 the

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program met this competency as measured by the Field Instrument with 93% meeting competency.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. The Field Instrument continues to measure our students as competent in this area, and this instrument will continue to be used. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice**

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

Social workers:

- apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
- present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
- apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

**Course Map:** All required social work courses address some component of competency 2, however the course whose content is solely about this competency is SOWK 4450, Cultural Diversity.

### **Measure: 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)**

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the

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nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent “or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 96% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, the students met this competency as 90% of 41 students met competency on the knowledge test. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, in 2018-2019 it was determined to implement the SWEAP instrument for another year would be important in determining if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. During the 2018-2019 assessment cycle, the percentage increased.

**Decision:** Students continue to meet competency in this area, as evidenced by the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 assessment cycle results. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years in several other areas, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations. Faculty will meet in the Fall of 2019 to analyze course content and identify ways to strengthen knowledge engaging diversity and difference in practice throughout the curriculum.

**Measure: 2.2. (Direct – Values, Skills, Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

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Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five point scale).

**Finding:** 95% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 71% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, the competency benchmark was met by 97% of the students. That was the first year that the 2015 competencies were measured (9 as opposed to 15 in the 2008 EPAS) and the first year to utilize this knowledge-based test. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency was met once again on the field instrument.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. The Field Instrument continues to measure our students as competent in this area, and this instrument will continue to be used. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably, and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.

Social workers:

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- apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
- engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

**Course Map:** The social work courses that primarily address this competency are: PSCI 2010 & 2020, and SOWK 3350: Economics and Social Work.

### **Measure 3.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)**

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent “or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 80% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle the competency benchmark was not met. The mean score was slightly lower than the national mean score, but the mean difference was not statistically significant. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results it was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument in 2018-2019 would be important in determining if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met. The difference in mean scores between the student scores and the national average was lower but not statistically significant.

**Decision:** Students met competency in this area this year (2018-2019 assessment cycle), improving on the 2017-2018 assessment cycle scores. However, the faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years in several other areas, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument

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and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations. Faculty will meet in the Fall of 2019 to analyze course content and identify ways to strengthen knowledge in advancing human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice throughout the curriculum.

### **Measure: 3.2. (Direct – Skills)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five point scale).

**Finding:** 100% of 45 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 71% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle on the Field Instrument measure, 100% of students met the competency benchmark. 82% exceeded competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019, the trend continued with 100% meeting competency.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. The Field Instrument continues to measure our students as competent in this area, and this instrument will continue to be used. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice**

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Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice.

Social workers:

- use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;
- apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and
- use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.

**Course Map:** The social work courses which primarily address this area are SOWK 2010: Critical Thinking and Writing in Social Work, SOWK 4030: Statistics, and SOWK 4040: Research Methods. All courses have content emphasizing the importance of empirical research and several outside of the research sequence require students to utilize empirical research.

### Measure 4.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent” or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 62% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** Students have historically struggled to meet the competency benchmark on this related competency. This competency area has been targeted for improvement for the past several years as far back as 2013-2014 since this is the area in which our students struggle the most. Improvements have included implementing a new course entitled “Critical thinking and writing in Social work”, in which reading and understanding research was introduced, as well as the APA model of writing. Changes have also been made to link research activities and learning opportunities more closely to actual practice experiences in the intern agency. Because of the continuing improvement the decision was made to adopt the 2015 EPAS and a new knowledge-based measure in 2017. Utilizing the new measure of the Curriculum knowledge-based test, the competency benchmark was not met during the 2017-2018 assessment cycle with only

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51% of student meeting the benchmark on the knowledge test. The mean score was slightly higher than the national mean score, but the mean difference was not statistically significant. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, research faculty incorporated problem-based learning and team-based learning principles in the research course to increase student competency. As a result, in 2018-2019, the score once again did not meet the benchmark, however it increased significantly as 62% of 45 students met competency on this section of the knowledge test. More importantly, the mean section score was a 58.41% which was statistically significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) than the national average at 51.05%

**Decision:** The 2017-2018 assessment cycle competency score on the knowledge-based measure fell below the benchmark for competency. Based on the analysis of this result, the program identified ways to strengthen the knowledge base of Practice-informed research and Research-informed practice in 2018-2019. Efforts succeeded during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle in increasing the number of those meeting competency, beating out even the national average. However, the competency benchmark was still not met. It is important to note there is a significant discrepancy in the knowledge scores and the scores assigned by practicing social workers (field instructors) who monitor the progress of the students and work alongside students. As a result, the faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations. Additional changes will be made to the research courses including strengthening the use of problem-based learning, team-based learning, and the use of critical thinking frameworks to enhance student competency in research. Other changes will be made utilizing transformational learning principles which will be evaluated through research.

### **Measure 4.2. (Direct –Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument

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measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five point scale).

**Finding:** 95% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 50% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** This competency area has been targeted for improvement for the past several years since this is the area in which our students struggle the most. Improvements have included implementing a new course entitled "Critical thinking and writing in Social work", in which reading and understanding research was introduced, as well as the APA model of writing. Changes have also been made to link research activities and learning opportunities more closely to actual practice experiences in the intern agency. Because of the continuing improvement the decision was made to adopt the 2015 EPAS and a new knowledge-based measure. During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, the competency benchmark was met with 97% of 38 students met competency. 71% exceeded competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met once again on the field instrument as 95% of students met competency with 50% exceeding competency.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. The Field Instrument continues to measure our students as competent in this area, and this instrument will continue to be used. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice**

Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic,

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organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation.

Social workers:

- Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
- assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services;
- apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

**Course Map:** The social work courses which primarily address this competency are SOWK 2090: Social Welfare as a Social Institution and SOWK 4350: Contemporary Social Policy.

### Measure 5.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent” or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 42% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** Because our students were achieving our competencies in previous years (prior to 2017-2018) using the previous self-assessment and the field instrument, our program elected to update our 2017-2018 assessment to the 2015 EPAS and to phase in new assessment tools. Our intent was to achieve a more advanced, streamlined and targeted measure. During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, utilizing the revised assessment plan, the competency benchmark was not met on the knowledge test. Only 46% of 41 students met competency on the knowledge test. The mean score was slightly lower than the national mean score, but the mean difference was not statistically significant. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results it was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument would be important to determine if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. During the 2018-2019 assessment cycle, the percentage of students meeting competency dropped to 42%, however the mean student score was higher than the national average. This difference was statistically significant at a  $p < .03$  level.

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**Decision:** The 2018-2019 assessment cycle competency score on the knowledge-based measure fell below the benchmark for competency for the second year in a row. Based on the analysis of this result, the program will identify ways to strengthen the knowledge base of engaging in policy practice. It is important to note there is a significant discrepancy in the knowledge scores and the scores assigned by practicing social workers (field instructors) who monitor the progress of the students and work alongside students. The faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations.

### **Measure 5.2. (Direct – Values, Skills, Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five point scale).

**Finding:** 100% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 69% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, 97% of 37 students met the competency benchmark. 79% exceeded competency. During the 2018-2019 assessment cycle, 100% met competency.

## Assessment Cycle 2018 – 2019

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met once again on the field instrument. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Social workers:

- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
- use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

**Course Map:** The social work courses which primarily focus on this competency are all of the “practice courses” – SOWK 3120: Generalist Practice with Individuals, SOWK 3130: Generalist Practice with Groups, SOWK 3140: Generalist Practice with Communities and Organizations, SOWK 3150: Generalist Practice with Families, and SOWK 3180: Interviewing Skills.

### **Measure 6.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)**

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

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The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent “or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 44% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** Our program elected to update our 2017-2018 assessment to the 2015 EPAS and to phase in new assessment tools. Our intent was to achieve a more advanced, streamlined and targeted measure. During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, utilizing the revised assessment plan, the competency benchmark was not met on the Curriculum Instrument. The mean score was lower than the national mean score, and the mean difference was statistically significant at .05 alpha level. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument would be important to determine if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. As a result, in the 2018-2019 assessment cycle, the competency benchmark was not met again. The mean score of the students (47.11%) was statistically significantly lower than the mean of the national section score (57.64) a  $p < .001$  level.

**Decision:** Students met competency on previous year’s measures using the self-assessment and field instrument assessment tools. Both the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 competency scores on the knowledge-based exam measure fell below the benchmark for competency. Based on the analysis of this result, the program will identify ways to strengthen the knowledge base of engaging with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. It is important to note there is a significant discrepancy in the knowledge scores and the scores assigned by practicing social workers (field instructors) who monitor the progress of the students and work alongside students. The faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester.

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This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations.

### **Measure 6.2. (Direct –Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five-point scale).

**Finding:** 98% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 81% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, 100% of students met the competency benchmark. 89% exceeded competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met once again on the field instrument as 98% met competency and 81% exceeded. There are no discernible differences in scores beyond differences in instructors and students.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020 faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the

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implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making.

Social workers:

- collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
- develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
- select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

**Course Map:** The social work courses which primarily focus on this competency are all of the “practice courses” – SOWK 3120: Generalist Practice with Individuals, SOWK 3130: Generalist Practice with Groups, SOWK 3140: Generalist Practice with Communities and Organizations, SOWK 3150: Generalist Practice with Families, and SOWK 3180: Interviewing Skills. In addition, SOWK 4900: Differential Diagnosis focuses on mental health assessment.

### Measure 7.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent” or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 87% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** Students have historically (prior to the 2017-2018 assessment cycle) met competency in relation to assessment with clients. During the 2017-2018, 93% of students met competency on the knowledge test. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument would be important to determine if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. As a result, in 2018-2019, the competency benchmark was met.

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**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 assessment cycles. Based on the analysis of this result, the program will identify ways to continue the strong knowledge base of Assessing individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. The faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years in other competency areas, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations

### **Measure 7.2. (Direct –Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five-point scale).

**Finding:** 100% of 45 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 74% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2017 assessment cycle, 100% of 38 students met the competency benchmark. 92% exceeded competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met once again on the field instrument.

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**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020, faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration.

Social workers:

- critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
- use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;
- negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
- facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

**Course Map:** The social work courses which primarily focus on this competency are all of the “practice courses” – SOWK 3120: Generalist Practice with Individuals, SOWK 3130: Generalist Practice with Groups, SOWK 3140: Generalist Practice with Communities and Organizations, SOWK 3150: Generalist Practice with Families, and SOWK 3180: Interviewing Skills.

### **Measure 8.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)**

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the

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nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent “or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 82% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, utilizing the revised assessment plan, the competency benchmark was met as 88% of 41 students met competency on the knowledge test. This matches the historical trend. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2019 results, it was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument would be important to determine if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. As a result, in 2018-2019, the competency benchmark was met. The student section score was slightly lower (by .47 percentage points) than during the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, but was not statistically significantly different.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 assessment cycles. Based on the analysis of this result, the program will identify ways to continue the strong knowledge base of intervening with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. However, the faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years in other competency areas, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations.

**Measure 8.2. (Direct –Skills, Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

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Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five point scale).

**Finding:** 98% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 74% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, 100% of 38 students met the competency benchmark. 82% exceeded competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met once again on the field instrument as 98% achieved competency. There are no discernible differences in scores beyond differences in instructors and students.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020, faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### **Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**

Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.

Social workers:

- select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;

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- critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
- apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

**Course Map:** The social work courses which primarily focus on this competency are all of the “practice courses” – SOWK 3120: Generalist Practice with Individuals, SOWK 3130: Generalist Practice with Groups, SOWK 3140: Generalist Practice with Communities and Organizations, SOWK 3150: Generalist Practice with Families, and SOWK 3180: Interviewing Skills. In addition, the Research sequence courses, SOWK 4030: Statistics and 4040: Research Methods are important courses to this competency.

### **Measure 9.1. (Direct – Knowledge Dimension)**

During their last semester and prior to graduation students complete the *Curriculum Instrument* to serve as a test of student knowledge of social work as it relates to the nine (9) EPAS Competencies. This measure directly addresses the knowledge dimension.

The NSU BSW benchmark is that 80% of the students will be rated as “competent “or above on each of the competencies assessed. This will be used to make program changes where required.

**Finding:** 67% of 45 students met competency on the knowledge test during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, utilizing the revised assessment plan, the competency benchmark was not met on the Curriculum Instrument with only 59% of 41 students meeting competency on the knowledge test. The mean score was slightly lower than the national mean score, but the mean difference was not statistically different. The department decided at that time to make no programmatic changes in order to determine if the measure was useful in assessing student competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined that one more full year of use of the SWEAP instrument would be important to determine if the measure was reliable and valid to make programmatic changes based on findings. As a result, in 2018-2019, 67% of students met competency. Students scored higher in this section (62.22%) than the national average (57.31%) however this was not statistically significantly higher due to the high standard deviation (22.00).

**Decision:** The 2017-2018 competency score on the knowledge-based measure fell below the benchmark for competency. Based on the analysis of this result, the program identified ways to strengthen the knowledge base of evaluating practice with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations by increasing the use of single-system design evaluations and strengthening the practice courses. During the 2018-2019, efforts were successful in increasing the percentage achieving competency. As with other constructs however, the correlation between the field instrument and the

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knowledge test is confounding. Students are, across the board, scored higher by practicing social workers in the field than by the knowledge test. Based on the analysis of this result, the program will further identify ways to strengthen the knowledge base of evaluating practice with individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations. The faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. Upon review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam in 2019-2020 that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations

### **Measure 9.2. (Direct – Skills, Cognitive & Affective Processing)**

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, complete a field internship at an outside agency, which allows them to practice social work under the supervision of a field instructor. Students are evaluated by field instructors using the *Field Instrument*. This instrument measures student achievement across various dimensions related to each Competency. The *Field Instrument* assesses students on the Values, Skills, and Cognitive & Affective Processing dimensions. The measurement benchmark at NSU for each competency is 80%. This means that, at NSU, 80% of student's will be rated as "competent" or above on each competency (scored a three or higher on the five-point scale).

**Finding:** 100% of 42 students met competency during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle. 67% exceeded competency.

**Analysis:** During the 2017-2018 assessment cycle, 100% of students met the competency benchmark. 76% exceeded competency. Based on the analysis of the 2017-2018 results, it was determined to continue training field instructors on the use of the field instrument in 2018-2019. As a result, in 2018-2019 the competency benchmark was met once again on the field instrument.

**Decision:** Students met competency during the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 assessment cycles on the Field Instrument pertaining to this construct. Based on the

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analysis of the 2018-2019 results, in 2019-2020, faculty feel strongly that continued evaluation from outside entities (field instructors) is critical in the overall assessment of student competency. Additional training of field instructors on using the assessment tool is warranted by the variation of feedback of students. Findings related to this measurement necessitate reevaluating the use of a different knowledge exam which will be the focus for improvement in assessment of student competency in 2019-2020.

### Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:

In the 2016-2017 assessment cycle, all measures but one showed that the competencies had been met. The field evaluation showed that 79% of the students had met competency regarding the ability to Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice. This was an improvement as the program had made several efforts to strengthen that competency. Since outcomes had been fairly stable for a few years and were showing favorable achievement of competencies, the program decided that we would adopt the 2015 EPAS and change our measurement instruments for the 2017-2018 assessment cycle. This is in preparation for our next reaccreditation cycle. Please see the Introduction and the attached chart for further details.

The 2018-2019 assessment cycle was the second cycle to utilize the SWEAP instruments for program evaluation created by the Social Work Education Assessment Project. Although as stated in the introduction, the social work program has been utilizing a program developed Field Instrument to measure competency performance since implementing the 2008 competencies which was nearly identical to the tool developed by SWEAP utilizing older competencies. SWEAP is a non-profit organization created by social work academics for the express purpose of helping develop proprietary empirically based and validated assessment instruments for BSW- and MSW-level programs. All instruments were paid for by the Department/University and were completed electronically by students. Analyzed data was provided back to the program by SWEAP electronically. Programs can elect to compare student data with national scores as well as ongoing assessment of cohorts. Also, this is the second year to use nine (9) competencies as opposed to 15 competencies in 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

On the knowledge dimension (knowledge test), meeting competency relates to correctly answering 50% or more total number of questions. Students met the competency benchmark in four competencies (2, 3, 7, and 8), three of which matched the previous year (2,7, and 8). Students did not meet the benchmark in competency 1 (Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior), 4 (Engage in practice informed research and research-informed practice), 5 (Engage in policy practice), 6 (Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities), 9 (Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities). The reports demonstrate the results of t-test, which compares means between our students' scores and national scores. The results showed that there were statistical mean differences between our students' scores and national scores in competency 6 (statistically lower at the  $p < .001$  level). For

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competency 4, student scores were statistically higher than the national section scores at the  $p < .03$  level. All other student scores for those competencies where the benchmark was not met were not statistically significant than the national scores. NSU BSW program students reported statistically lower scores compared to national scores in competency 6 ( $t = -2.94$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Compared to knowledge dimension, students met competency benchmark in all areas as evaluated by agency field instructors.

### Plan of Action Moving Forward

It is of concern that students did not meet set competencies on the knowledge test in 5 of the 9 competency areas, however improvement was shown in several areas. It is also of interest that all the competencies were met as measured by the Field Instrument. The program will take several actions in relation to these concerns. First, after two years of using the Curriculum Test, the faculty met on June 10, 2019 to discuss the inability in achieving the benchmark for two years, and to discuss the continuation or discontinuation of the SWEAP instrument. Several factors necessitated a review of the instrument. After a content review of the questions, faculty responsible for assessment are troubled by the wording of the questions. Most of the questions are not in line with ASWB (Association of Social Work Boards) standards. ASWB is the organization that provides the national exams for licensing social workers. Additionally, the national scores are on a downward trend. Finally, the standard deviations and t-values for the constructs are extremely high (ranging from 16.29 – 22.47). This tool does not seem effective in measuring student competency in social work but assesses student understanding of specific phrasing of questions designed to approach social work constructs. Due to these issues, the faculty voted to discontinue the use of the SWEAP instrument and to develop an in-house exit exam that will be written by the faculty. This instrument will undergo reliability and validity testing in the next several semesters. Measures will be taken to ensure student engagement in preparation for the exam and in ensuring test security. The first implementation of the exam will be during the Fall 2019 semester. This revised assessment plan provides opportunities for the program to identify areas in which to strengthen student learning and ensure students are tested using a tool which follows current test item expectations.

Also, we will consider assessing student competency at multiple points of a student's academic career instead of only at one point so that we can measure knowledge differences before and after entering the BSW program utilizing a revised knowledge text or a different set of measures.

Another consideration will be to determine whether we have chosen the appropriate benchmark for the knowledge instrument as it does not easily translate with the benchmark previously set based on a different measurement tool. It may be that it is more appropriate to use a benchmark looks at a passage rate of an exam created by the faculty. In addition, an assessment will be completed on the areas in which the students did not reach competency. The program will identify areas that need improvement and ways to implement changes in our curriculum to address those. Engaging in research informed practice and practice-informed research is a content

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area to which we are always attending, as is engaging in policy practice, engaging with clients, and evaluating practice with clients. We will continue to strengthen this area by giving students more opportunities to apply research efforts to their social work practice in field placement.

Lastly, programmatic changes will be determined in the Fall of 2019 through an assessment of the curriculum using the deficiencies noted through the knowledge exam results. While those findings might not be valid, they are useful in improving courses. Programmatic changes are set to be made in the research courses. Other content related to critical thinking will be integrated into other courses as identified in the Fall of 2019.

The assessment process for the BSW program beginning in the Fall Semester of 2019-2020 is as follows:

(1) Students will be given a new *Curriculum Instrument* as a direct measure of knowledge across seven (7) curricular areas and all nine (9) EPAS 2015 Core Competencies. Given during the student's final semester, the new *Curriculum Instrument* will be a knowledge-based test and will allow for analysis of student knowledge gained through the program and will be used to pinpoint areas for curricular enhancement.

Students in SOWK 4190, Field Work, will be assessed using a similar *Field Instrument*. The SWEAP instrument will be discontinued due to issues related to timing of receiving the results and the change in the knowledge-based test. This instrument allows agency field instructors to measure student achievement across various dimensions related to each EPAS competency, scored on a 5-point Likert scale, and allowing for qualitative feedback. Possible rating options will be similar enough to the SWEAP instrument which are: 1- Lacking Performance, 2- Inadequate performance, 3- Competent Performance, 4 – Superior Performance, 5 – Mastered Performance.

(2) The Assessment Coordinator will collect the data from students and field instructors and analyze the data using data analysis software. The coordinator will evaluate the data to determine whether students have met competency benchmarks set by the program.

(3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty, staff, the BSW Advisory Council, and other constituencies.

(4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching specific courses as necessary.

(5) The Assessment Coordinator, in consultation with the Faculty and Advisory Council, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curriculum and program changes.