Aloha. We have reviewed the Committee Report on the Ph.D. Program in Social Welfare, and are submitting comments with specific reference to their recommendations. Thank you for your support in this endeavor. If there are other items or questions that we might respond to, please feel free to contact us.
University of Hawai`i, Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work
Response to the Graduate Division Review Committee’s April 9, 2012 Report regarding the PH.D. Program in Social Welfare

Overview

The Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work’s (MBTSSW) students, faculty and staff sincerely appreciate the time and effort the Review Committee devoted to examining our PhD program. The review report is clear, thorough, frank and constructive.

The report highlights the program’s strengths in the areas of our program organization, efficient use of limited resources, the quality of instruction, diversity of students, outcomes, and appropriateness of functions. Equally important, the program’s needs and challenges are respectfully emphasized in the areas of inadequate number of faculty to support the program, need for student funding opportunities, poor facilities and need for a suitable permanent School site.

Recognizing the contextual events from which the MBTSSW is emerging, the report gives credit to the ways in which the program is thriving, and how additional support can enable it to flourish. The reviewers’ significant and timely recommendations are prefaced with compelling evidence of the need for research and workforce development in social welfare.

Response to Recommendations

We concur that our capability to achieve benchmarks in the following areas will enhance doctoral education and permit richer engagement of faculty and students in the areas of social justice. We believe that there is movement in all areas, and with continued UHM support, we can enhance our ability to meet our mission of educational excellence.

1. Enable the School to develop a research infrastructure for pre and post awards. Since the School is a relatively small unit without a high volume of grant activity, the UH might consider alternatives such as combining smaller academic units under a common research infrastructure.

The absence of an adequate research infrastructure in the School is fully acknowledged. The issue is circuitous and complicated with a low volume of extramural research grants that would support the development of such a structure, and the small number of senior faculty who can engage in research grant competition in context of their multiple leadership responsibilities.

With faculty support, we have made some modest inroads in this area. These include personnel commitments in the School (e.g. retention of a G-funded APT position in grants management) and investments in interdisciplinary collaboration in personnel (e.g. cluster hire in Native Hawaiian research with JABSOM and Hawai`inuiakea) and research grant applications. In the last 5 months, we have submitted, some in
collaboration (with JABSOM and Nursing), five research grant proposals in Native Hawaiian health and care-giving of elderly populations (4 federal; 1 state).

In order to build upon these modest inroads, it is necessary that the School has a “point” person – Research Director/Associate - who can develop an infrastructure and training to foster competitive research activity. Temporary funding to support such a position will be requested.

2. **Provide the School with a permanent home.** The School is slated to move into a remodeled Gartley Hall within the next two years. The committee regards this as an important activity that will stabilize the Ph.D. program.

We concur. With the Chancellor’s support and formal UHM approval in December 2010, we have participated in plans for a renovated Gartley Hall. As the primary tenants, we are scheduled for a public ground-breaking ceremony in May 2012 with a projected completion date of August 2013.

3. **Facilitate the hiring of additional tenure-line faculty.** Some considerations should be given to the hiring of more senior faculty, especially faculty with excellent records of grant success. The importance of developing a research infrastructure, as outlined in item 1 above, is critical to the success of attracting senior faculty. UH and the School should consider the prospects of cluster hires that facilitate the School to immediately build an area of research.

We concur. As indicated in item 1 above, our capability to develop a research infrastructure and to compete successfully, are positively linked with having scholars with extramural funding records. In 2011, we were successful in a collaborative effort for cluster hires in research on Native Hawaiian health (leads being JABSOM - Public Health; Department of Native Hawaiian Health; and Hawai`inuiakea). The expected start date for three cluster hires is in August 2012.

We recognize that the present challenges of the state economy to balance their budget has implications for our ability to secure additional tenure-lines; however, it is my position that additional requests will be made.

4. **UH should work with the School on its advancement (fund raising) efforts.** Many research universities have advancement teams available to academic units to help facilitate fund raising. One of the priorities of fundraising, in addition to providing student fellowships or stipends, is to develop funds for faculty and students to travel to professional conferences.
We concur. The University of Hawai`i Foundation has newly assigned a foundation officer (FD) to oversee the School’s development efforts. In a field such as social work, challenges exist in identifying donors beyond our alumni base; however, future work on extending our network is needed to raise funds that support student and faculty development.

5. **The School should examine the availability of courses for Ph.D. students.** Some Ph.D. students noted that a few recommended courses were either unavailable or lacked specialty focus which prevented them from achieving the Ph.D. milestones in a timely manner. The School should determine how widespread this problem is and develop means to resolve the problem.

Course availability is an ongoing challenge within the program and across the Mānoa campus. While the program assistant and chair continually seek courses to support students’ research areas and email broadcast courses as they become available, this is an area we actively problem-solve out of necessity. Currently, we monitor all Mānoa-based graduate courses in the areas of research methodology and specialization foci. However, we can improve the process, for example, by proactively, contacting allied departments to request their graduate course offerings.

Our sincere thanks for the UH Graduate Division’s support of the review process; we are grateful for the ease of communication and their availability for consultation. Mahalo piha to the Review Committee for giving clarity to our strengths and challenges; both are critical to developing program excellence, and meeting social welfare needs locally, nationally, and globally.