EXECUTIVE REPORT
ON THE 2012 ALUMNI SURVEYS:
Experiences and Perspectives of
MSW Program Graduates 2011
Executive Report on the 2012 MSW Alumni Surveys:

Experiences and Perspectives of MSW Program Graduates 2011

School of Social Work’s Assessment Team:
Jim Nash, Director, MSW Program; Associate Professor
Vikki Vandiver, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; Professor
Janet Putnam, Director of Student Affairs; Assistant Professor
Charlotte Goodluck, Director, BSW Program; Professor
Ellen Masterson, Director, Field Education, Assistant Professor
Anh Phuong Nguyen, MSW Student, Graduate Assistant
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Alumni Survey described in this report was conducted during the 2011-2012 academic year. Survey responses were from alumni who graduated with their MSW degree in June 2011. The questionnaires were collected in May 2012, about one year after graduation.

The School of Social Work administers an Alumni Survey every year as a part of the School’s effort to maintain ongoing evaluation of the MSW program. The Alumni Survey has been an important source of feedback for program growth and improvement. The Alumni Survey consists of a questionnaire that takes about 30 minutes to complete. Content areas include: demographics, current employment, work place setting and functions, salary, licensure/certification, application of knowledge of diversity to their current job, satisfaction with classroom instruction, field internship, and overall level of satisfaction with the MSW program.

METHOD

In May 2012 the School of Social Work emailed 212 surveys to persons who graduated from the PSU MSW program in June 2011. A letter accompanied each survey requesting alumni’s voluntary participation, ensuring confidentiality, and explaining the survey’s purpose. Two weeks later, MSW Program Director, Professor Jim Nash, emailed a follow-up message to remind alumni of the importance of submitting the survey.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 80 graduates responded to the online survey; a response rate of 38%. Of the respondents, 36 (50.7%) were in the full-time option, while 12 (16.9%) indicated they studied in the part-time option. Nine of the surveys (12.7%) were returned by students who entered the program with Advanced Standing, and 14 (19.7%) of the respondents participated in the Distance Option, of whom 10 studied in Salem and 4 in Ashland (See Graph 1). Characteristics of the survey participants are broken down by the Portland campus versus Distance campuses and can be reviewed in Table 1 (page 3).
SURVEY FINDINGS

This report focuses almost exclusively on the structured items included in the survey. Participants’ employment experiences will be discussed first, followed by their satisfaction with the preparation they obtained in the PSU MSW program, the professional activities they reported, and their satisfaction with a career in social work. Responses to the open-ended survey question will be briefly summarized after quantitative results.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Alumni responding to the survey (n=80) graduated from the MSW program in 2011. In terms of ethnicity (rounded to nearest percentage of total 56 respondents) 91% (51 respondents) were White, 3.6% (2 respondents) reported African American origin, 3.6% (2) reported Asian, and 1.8% (1 respondent) reported Native American (See Table below – Racial and Ethnic Group).

GENDER

Most persons enrolled in the MSW program were women, as is the case in the majority of Schools of Social Work. In the survey of 2011 graduates, 78.7% of the respondents were women and 21.3% were men or transgender (see Table below – Gender).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alumni Characteristic</th>
<th>Portland Campus</th>
<th>Distance Campus ( n = 10 )</th>
<th>Total/Percentage</th>
<th>Response totals</th>
<th>No response or skipped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Age</strong></td>
<td>36 ( n = 52 )</td>
<td>33.5 ( n = 10 )</td>
<td>35.4 (total average age)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>49 (61.3%)</td>
<td>61 (76.3%)</td>
<td>19 (23.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 (13.75%)</td>
<td>10 (12.5%)</td>
<td>70 (87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1.25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Degree Prior to MSW</strong></td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW/ Master in Public Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW/PhD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW / Gerontology certificate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Social Worker - One-year field placement at place of employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>10 (12.5%)</td>
<td>70 (87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare Partnership - With IV-E stipend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial/Ethnic Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>42 (59%)</td>
<td>9 (12.7%)</td>
<td>51 (71.7%)</td>
<td>51 (71.7%)</td>
<td>15 (21.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of a Community of Color (Black, Latino, Asian, Native American)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>15 (21.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently Live</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in Portland Metro Area</td>
<td>40 (56.3%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>41 (57.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 50 miles of Portland</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (2.8%)</td>
<td>63 (88.7%)</td>
<td>8 (11.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 50 miles of Portland, but in Washington or Oregon</td>
<td>8 (11.3%)</td>
<td>7 (9.9%)</td>
<td>15 (21.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in U. S., not Washington or Oregon</td>
<td>4 (5.6%)</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability while in School</strong></td>
<td>No data available</td>
<td>No data available</td>
<td>No data available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIRST SOCIAL WORK POSITION

69 respondents reported their concentration in their final year as an MSW student. Of those, most students chose Direct Human Services (DHS), which accounted for 75.4% (n=52). For the other two concentrations, the responses were nearly evenly divided, with 9 (13%) in Community Based Practice (CBP), and 8 (11.6%) in the Social Service Administration and Leadership (SSAL) concentration (see Graph 2).

The ratio of the graduates’ first social work positions that corresponded to their concentration varied among three areas (Graph 3).

Graph 3: Concentration of Educational Program by Focus of First Social Work Position after Graduation. *Cross-tabulation

Of the alumni reporting, most graduates held positions that corresponded to their concentration. Attaining this fit in the first job was done more frequently by DHS graduates, with 84.6% (n=44) finding positions in direct human services. Four CBP graduates (44.4% of all CBP respondents) were hired into community based jobs. Finally, not many first jobs of the alumni were in
Social Service Administration and Leadership. Of the 8 SSAL graduates, 3 (43%) found jobs in this area, while most SSAL graduates worked in DHS or had not found a job.

**EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

An important outcome of the School’s curriculum is **Employability** in the profession of social work. At the time of the survey, the vast majority of respondents (89%, n=63) obtained a paid social work position after graduation. Of the 71 alumni who indicated their current employment status, a total of 71.8% (n=51) were employed full-time, 3.2% higher than last year (68.6%), while 15.5% (n=11) were employed part-time, 4.1% higher than the previous year (11.4%). Notably, 7% (n=5) of the respondents were employed outside social work, and 5.6% (n=4) reported they were seeking work or making other decisions (See Graph 4).

The requirement for an MSW degree is relatively higher for the alumni’s primary and secondary positions. 65.6% (n=40) (13% higher than last year survey) of alumni indicated that an MSW is a requirement for their primary position. (See Graph 5 on the right).
Several alumni have primary and secondary positions, or even a third job. Of the 61 alumni who provided the number of paid positions they were holding, 90.2% (n=55) reported holding one position, while 8.2% (n=5) reported two positions, and 1.6% (n=1) reported three positions. In other words, although the most common pattern for those working full-time was employment in a single social work position, several alumni attained primary employment while holding multiple positions, mostly 2 or 3 jobs (see Graph 6 below).

Of the 60 responses, the average number of hours per week spent at the primary position was 30-40 hours (45%, n=27), and at the secondary position was less than 10 hours (8.3%, n=5) (See Graph 7). The number of alumni working more than 40 hours was relatively high (40%; n=24).
Most of the 7 respondents who were not currently in social work positions provided reasons, such as difficulty getting in the social work field (57%, n= 4), taking another type of job with better pay (n= 4), feeling there was a lack of advancement (n=1), having experienced burnout (n=1), having poor supervision (n=1), or being dissatisfied with the profession (n= 1). Three respondents indicated they were not employed for other reasons, including family responsibilities. For example, one was a stay-at-home mother of a newborn baby. These responses add to more than 100% since some respondents endorsed more than one reason. (see Graph 8).
DIVERSITY OF CLIENTS SERVED

Alumni respondents reported serving a wide variety of clients who are diverse in terms of ethnicity. On average, the majority of clients were reported to be Caucasian, the second group of clients were Hispanic/Latino, the third were African American, followed by Native American and Asian clients, as well as other ethnicity referred to as mixed/multiracial ethnicity.

It is clear that the alumni reporting the most ethnically diverse consumers of social services work in the Portland metropolitan area. No matter the geographic area, approximately three-quarters of the persons served by our alumni struggle with poverty, particularly people with no income, low income, or individuals experiencing severe economic losses. (See Graph 9).
The majority of alumni also reported serving people with other types of diversity beyond ethnicity and income levels, including: persons affected by substance abuse (91.5%), girls and women (86.4%), people experiencing homelessness (79.7%), people with diverse sexual orientations/ GBTL (72.9%), people with mental illness (71.2%), survivors of intimate partner violence (67.8%), people with physical disabilities (61%), and people with developmental disabilities (57.6%). Also, over half of the alumni (52.5%) work directly with veterans and their families, 39% work with immigrants and refugees, and the same percentage work with people who are incarcerated. (See Graph 10).

Additionally, 11 alumni indicated working with other types of service users (18.6%), including: people in acute crisis situations, (tribal) Child Welfare, foster children, men, adjudicated youth, people with life-limiting illness, people with chronic disease, people affected by sex trafficking, and first-generation college students/ students enrolled in public schools.
Besides *ethnicity* and *other types of diversity*, several SSW alumni also focus on working with immigrants and refugees. (Please consult graph 11). However, only 33% (n=2) work over 50-75% of the time with refugees and immigrants.
CHARACTERISTICS OF CURRENT JOB:

Primary Area (Fields) Of Practice

Alumni were asked to indicate up to three Primary Fields of Practice that they engaged in at their primary and secondary employment positions. Graph 12 below displays the results for the primary employment setting, and can include up to three endorsements.

The three most frequently endorsed fields of practice were Adult Mental Health (37.3% of respondents, n=22) and Child Mental Health (30.5%, n=18). Family Services was reported as the primary field of practice by 28.8% (Graph 12). Services to People affected by Substance Abuse and Youth Services were each reported by 20.3%, and Child Welfare by 13.6% of respondents.

The Health Care field was endorsed as the area of their primary position by 16.9% of alumni (n=10); of those, 3.4% were involved with Services for Older Adults, and 10.2% with Hospice and End of Life Care. An additional five alumni (8.5%) indicated that their primary practice included Services to People Experiencing Homelessness, and four alumni (6.8%) indicated their work in Juvenile Justice/Corrections. Also, Housing, Intimate Partner Violence, School Social Work, Adult Criminal Justice, Income Support, Services to Immigrants/Refugees, HIV/AIDS, Occupational Assistance were indicated as fields of practice for the current employment settings of the alumni.

Other fields of practice reported in open-ended responses were: Veterans, Severe and Persistent Mental Illness, Early Education, Wilderness Therapy, Community Organizing, Criminalization of Immigrants, Professional Education/ Career Counseling, Systems Change Work, Trauma issues.

Part-time employment in the secondary jobs reported by alumni were most frequently in the adult and child mental health fields, substance abuse, medical/health care, and family and youth services.

Graph 12 presents the percent of Alumni Endorsing the Field of Practice as One of 3 Focal Areas for their Primary Position (Note: Adds to more than 100%, due to multiple endorsements for the position).
Alumni practiced social work in a variety of settings, as can be seen in Table 2 (and Graph 13 below). In terms of their primary employment, only three types of settings employed more than 12% of respondents: *Outpatient Mental Health facilities* (19.3%), *Hospital* (12.3%) and *Family Service Agency* (12.3%).
Table 2: Practice Setting and Auspices of Primary Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Setting</th>
<th>Primary Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient Mental Health</td>
<td>11 (19.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>7 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Service Agency</td>
<td>7 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Home/Hospice</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>3 (5.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Social Services Agency</td>
<td>3 (5.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Treatment Center (Child and Juveniles)</td>
<td>2 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or university</td>
<td>2 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention Center (Children/Juveniles)</td>
<td>2 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient Medical Facility</td>
<td>1 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Practice—Solo</td>
<td>1 (1.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Settings</td>
<td>11 (19.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total All Settings</td>
<td>57 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other settings employing relatively high percentages of alumni were Nursing homes and Hospice care, Public Social Service Agency, and Schools. Other worked in College/ University, Residential Treatment Center, Detention Center (Child and Juveniles), Private Practice-Solo, Prison settings.

Additionally, 11 alumni (31%) were in Non-profit Organization, Outreach Mental Health, Intensive community based services organization, Law Enforcement Support, Private Community Social Services Agency, Center for Youth experiencing Homelessness, Outpatient – Chemical Dependency, Home Health & Hospice (qualitative responses). (Consult Graph 13)

Graph 13:

Please indicate the setting that best describes your primary place of employment.
Type of Organization

Respondents were asked to characterize the Type of Organization within which they worked. Of the 58 respondents, most responded they worked in a Private, nonprofit organizational structure (62.1%, n=36) (see Graph 14). The next most frequently mentioned organizational type was Public service, government (county, state & federal) at 20.7% (n=12), followed by Private, for profit at 12.1% (n=7).

Graph 14:

Indicate the response that best describes your primary place of employment.

![Bar chart showing the distribution of types of organizations among 58 respondents. The chart indicates that 62.1% work in Private, nonprofit, 20.7% in Public service, government, and 12.1% in Private, for profit.]

Table 3: Practice Focus of Primary and Secondary Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Focus</th>
<th>Primary Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Human Service (DHS)</td>
<td>43 (72.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Practice (CBP)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Service Administration and Leadership (SSAL)</td>
<td>2 (3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined DHS and CBP</td>
<td>11 (18.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined DHS and SSAL</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined CBP and SSAL</td>
<td>3 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (research)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly two-third (72.9%) of the alumni reported that their positions focused on direct human services (DHS), (Table 3, and Graph 15 next page), an increase compared with last year 51% (n=30). Only two alumni (3.4%) were in positions in SSAL, while no alumni indicated their jobs were focused solely on CBP. Rather, over 18% of respondents revealed that their jobs were some combination of the concentrations offered in the MSW Program: 18.6% (n=11) combined DHS with CBP, and the
remaining 5.1% (n=3) combined CBP with SSAL.

**Graph 15:**

*Indicate the response that best describes your role in your primary place of employment.*

**Primary Social Work Role**

In terms of Primary Role, most respondents reported they worked as *Therapists/ Mental Health Clinicians, Case Managers, Counselors, Social Service Specialists*, etc. Below are some main titles of positions reported by MSW alumni.
Eighteen alumni (29.5%) reported working in the same agencies where they worked prior to entering the MSW program. Of these respondents, 66.7% obtained a different position with a higher salary, and 13.3% had the same position but higher salary. On the other hand, 13.3% held the same position at the same salary, and 6.7% obtained a different position but at the same salary. Overall, a substantial proportion of graduates received a higher salary after obtaining their MSW degree.

Graph 16:
ANNUAL (SOCIAL WORK) SALARY

Salary levels continue to be an issue for many MSW graduates as can be seen in Graph 17. First, about one third (35%, n=24) of those who were employed in social work positions made between $30,000-$40,000 in annual earnings, which also was the modal salary range. The second most frequently reported salary range was $40,000-$59,000 with 30.2% (n=19) alumni. Third, 11% (n=7) of respondents reported that their salary was between $20,000-$29,000. Finally, 7.9% (n=5) reported their salaries were between $10,000-$19,999 and 4.8% (n=3) earned $10,000 or less. On the higher side, 6.3% (n=4) reported their earnings as between $50,000-$59,999, and 4.8% (n=3) reported earning the highest salary - between $60,000-$69,999. In short, the survey showed that $30,000-$40,000 was the typical salary range for the MSW graduates. Notably, salary levels were not related to the concentration the respondents completed, participation in distance or main campus programs, or to the number of positions held.

Graph 17:

Current total annual earnings as an individual from all types of employment?
Another pattern in the salary data is that it differs notably by the auspices of the respondents’ primary employment. Graph 18 below presents the cross tabulation distribution of alumni salary categories by the auspices of their primary employment; ordinate values correspond to salary categories, from less than $10,000 to $70,000 or above. The cross tabulation responses reveal that average salaries are highest for social workers employed in state agencies and the federal government. Salaries for employees in county and city positions are similar to those in private for-profit organizations. Employees in private nonprofit organizations have lower salaries on average than other alumni.

**Graph 18:**

**Crosstab responses: Current total annual earnings as an individual from all types of employment/place of employment**
SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRAM AND THE SCHOOL

Program Preparation, Classroom Instruction, Field Internship:

The survey included six items to measure satisfaction with the MSW program: How well did this program prepare you for your FIRST post-MSW job in social work? How well did the MSW program prepare you for your social work career? Evaluate your overall level of satisfaction with the MSW program in specific given areas. Rate your impression of the school climate. Please provide any additional information about the School’s climate. If you were to do it again, would you attend PSU to obtain an MSW?

In terms of satisfaction with the Program preparation for graduates’ first post-MSW job in social work, of those graduates who responded (n=66), the majority reported positively, with 42.5% reporting Well to Very Well, and 42.4% reporting Adequately. About 15% of respondents (n=10) reported being Poorly, Not at all, or Not applicable to this item (See Graph 19).

Graph 19:

In terms of satisfaction with Program preparation for graduates’ social work career, of those who responded (n=65), 44.6% reported Well to Very Well, 46.2% reported Adequately, and 9% reported Poorly (See Graph 20 below).
Table 4 and Graph 21 below present a comparison of seven alumni cohorts who responded to survey items regarding their evaluation of the helpfulness of their preparation through the MSW program. Some interesting trends can be noted. The majority of alumni surveyed since the beginning of the Portland State MSW program have reported that both Foundation and Concentration Practice courses have been helpful in preparing them for their careers. First year field education was rated favorably by at least 66% of respondents over time, and Second year field has exceeded 85% endorsement as helpful. In the 2012 alumni survey, these numbers increased, with 67.7% Satisfied to Very Satisfied with their first year field experience (1% higher than last year), and 93.9% (9% higher than last year’s survey) reported they were satisfied with the second year field experience.

In the past twenty years, only about half of respondents have rated Human Behavior in Social Environment (HBSE) as helpful, but in this latest survey, the number increased, with 62.6% rating the importance of the sequence. During the same period, the proportion of alumni who endorsed the Social Welfare Policy and Research sequences as helpful rose to 66% and 48%, respectively. However, the trend changed in this survey, with a decrease to 55.4% for Social Welfare Policy and 36.9% for Research.

In the past decade, questions tapping into alumni ratings of preparation for SW Career and First Job have shown declines in the proportion of graduates who said that they were Well Prepared (44.6% and 42.5% respectively). However, ratings of courses and field work have held steady or improved. Analysis of qualitative data shed further light on overall preparation ratings. Also, in terms
of level of satisfaction with other courses, 64.6% reported they were Satisfied with Generalist Practice, and 76.2% reported elective courses as helpful.

Table 4: Comparison of Proportion of Seven Alumni Cohorts Agreeing with Survey Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well Prepared for SW Career</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Prepared for First Job</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Yr (Generalist) Practice Helpful</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Yr DHS Helpful</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Yr CBP Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58%*</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Yr SSAL Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Yr Field Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Yr Field Helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This rating for the Advanced CBP concentration is based on data from 1999-2000, the first year the CBP concentration was introduced.
Satisfaction Regarding Climate and Services of the School of Social Work:

Many alumni expressed satisfaction with the climate and services at the School of Social Work. As examples, results on the item “my presence was valued” revealed that 21% believed this was “always true,” and 56% believed it was “often true.” For the item “I felt welcomed” 86.2% agreed that this was “always true” or “often true.” 95.5% alumni thought “Staff were accessible” and 95.4% felt “staff were helpful.” Further, 87.9% alumni trusted that “Faculty were accessible” and 95.4% reported “Faculty were helpful.” 80.3% graduates reported that “Racial and ethnic diversity was valued” and 70.8% felt that “Different religious and spiritual perspectives were valued.” Notably, 95.4% of respondents agreed that “All sexual orientations were valued” and 92.4% were positive that “Gender identity differences were valued.”

Additionally, alumni indicated satisfaction with supportive services by expressing disagreement with a number of statements. More than two-third (78.8%) reported it was “Rarely true” and “Never true” that “I could not obtain info when I needed it,” 59.1% disagreed that “I felt cautious about expressing myself to other students,” and doubted that “I felt cautious about expressing myself to faculty.” (See graph 22 below.)
Overall, 30.8% stated that they would “definitely” attend Portland State University again for their MSW (11% higher than last year), and 40% said they would “probably” attend (See Graph 23).
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SATISFACTION WITH CAREER

Alumni reports of their continuing involvement in professional education activities indicate that over half of the program graduates (52.5%) participated actively in professional organizations and three-fourth (78.4%) read professional literatures on a regular basis. The professional organizations that alumni participate in include: PSU Alumni Association (33%), National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (31%), Social Welfare Action Alliance (SWAA), American Legion, Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), and Full Circle Creative Reuse Center Initiative.

Nearly two-third of the alumni obtained or are currently in the process of obtaining an additional professional qualification, such as state licensure or another advanced degree. For example, 20% respondents reported obtaining a license as an MSW-level social worker (LMSW), 8% reported pursuing a license as an LMSW, and 58.3% on the process of pursuing clinical licensure (LCSW in Oregon or comparable license in another state). 25% registered with a state-level clinical licensing board, 45% are receiving supervision in pursuit of licensure, and some others are pursuing a license other than clinical including Clinical Social Work Associate Certificate (CSWA), Certified Alcohol Drug Counselor I (CADC I), SW license and Chemical Dependency License, Working with Adoptive/Foster Families Certificate, and Interpersonal Neurobiology Certificate. (See Graph 24)
Graduates reported being active in providing education, training, and consultation to others and in participating in social change, social justice, and policy/political issues and activities. On average, 24% reported spending time on a regular basis working in political campaigns for a candidate or a cause to promote social change or social justice. 33% reported being involved in other organized efforts to promote social change or serving in social justice activities including: national training and advocating for Indian Child Welfare, Occupy Portland, Mercy Corps, Amnesty International, Planned Parenthood, Immigrant Rights, SWAA, Local Peace Groups, Code Pink, Portland Jobs with Justice (worker’s rights), church’s social justice committee, board membership to help promote changes to adults released from prison, working to require a diversity and inclusion process, Seattle crisis line, Ashland Food Project, Other Words Feminist Community Center, International Center for Traditional Childbearing, and Center for Disease and Control Advisory Board.

Additionally, 23% reported participating in community forums examining social issues, writing for community newspapers, or other citizen activism, and 17.5% reported working to change existing social policies or to create social service programs since receiving an MSW.

In general, the majority of the graduates were satisfied with their career choice in social work, with 46% endorsing they were very satisfied, and another 42.9% indicating they were somewhat
satisfied. 3.2% felt neither satisfied or dissatisfied, and 7.9% said somewhat dissatisfied (consult Graph 25).

**Graph 25:**

How satisfied are you with your career choice in social work?

![Bar graph showing satisfaction levels]

Other data regarding professional activities since graduation:

- Alumni reported serving in the following professional capacities since graduation:
  - Member of a professional organization working committee: 6%
  - Consultation to a social welfare agency or program: 5%
  - Served on a community agency’s advisory board/board of directors: 5%.

- Respondents reported the following professional development activities:
  - Participated on a professional conference panel: 5%
  - Conducted a workshop on a professional topic: 6.6%
  - Presented a paper or poster at a professional conference: 3.3%
  - Served as keynote speaker at a professional conference: 3.3%
  - Taught a course: 3.3%.
STUDENT DEBT

Alumni were asked about the student debt they owed upon graduation from the MSW program. Generally, the debts incurred while in the MSW program range from $20,000 to $29,000 (12 graduates) and from $40,000 to $59,000 (25 alumni) (Table 5). For undergraduate student debt, the modal amount is from $10,000 to $19,000 (n=13). However, several alumni still owed undergraduate debt as high as $30,000-$39,000 (n=5). Some alumni still owed other student debt, and although it was usually less than $10,000, it increased the amount of overall debt and stress for alumni. In fact, there was one respondent who reported that his/her debt while in the MSW program was as high as $80,000 and another one reported that his/her debt was $70,000 in total.

Table 5: Student debt upon graduation from the MSW program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of debt</th>
<th>Amount($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt incurred while in the MSW program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt incurred as an undergraduate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student debt</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

In response to the survey’s final open-ended question regarding “additional feedback about graduates’ experience in the MSW program and/or the preparation it gave for their career,” nearly one-third (25 alumni) shared their opinions. Overall, there were highly positive comments about the quality of the program, exemplified by descriptors, such as:

“The MSW education was a good starting base.”, “This program enhanced my skills and made me a more complete Social Worker and prepared me for the challenges of the future.”, “The best part of my MSW education was the well-rounded approach to practice and providing us with a solid foundation.”, “Loved the program, and the experience I had.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the program and felt that it provided me with the appropriate training to know what I know as well as what I don’t - and for the areas that I am lacking in, I was trained on how to get the information. I am very satisfied with my MSW experience.”
“As a community-based social worker, the importance of the MSW program for me was not the degree, but the education. Coming into the program with 10 years of community organizing experience, the MSW program, and particularly the CBP track, expanded and deepened my knowledge of community-based social work. I have many organizer colleagues who ask me if my education was worth it, to which I respond heartily with ‘yes!’”

“Overall, the program was an amazing experience. Personally, I wish I wasn’t working so much so I wasn’t as burned out when I graduated. However, I’m working on that! The professors were amazing and supportive and I’m grateful I was accepted into the MSW program. Thank you!”

“I was most grateful for the latitude the faculty gave me in exploring the connections between sustainability and social work. You provided me with some rare and unique opportunities to experience real-world efforts in the dynamic Portland sustainability scene. It forever changed the way I related to the connections between people and place - and the inextricable connections between social, economic and environmental justice. Moreover, I left PSU with a number of examples of practical applications of these connections that I’m still trying to share with a largely impoverished community in upstate NY. Thank you for being so open to trying something new - I hope you remain open to the ideas and passions of all your current and future students.”

“I'm amazed at the energy and passion many of the professors have towards teaching, social change and the profession and values of social work. In the daily grind it has already become difficult to keep the mindset I had while in school.”

Several participants expressed appreciation for the Distance Option giving them the opportunity to complete their MSW while living in their home community. However, some would have liked to have more options during their study:

“The program allowed for no choice in classes or teachers because it was a distance program.”, “As a distance student, I didn't feel connected to the SSW, faculty or the other students since we were unable to participate in many campus events.”

Many alumni appreciated faculty, specific foundation courses, their advanced concentration, and their field placements. They also made positive comments about elective courses and wished that more elective courses could be offered:

“I really appreciated getting to know the faculty there at the School. I really wish that I would have been taught more about what community resources exist within the Portland-Metro area, and had to learn this as I went within my first year following graduation. It would have been nice if instructors or other students had an opportunity to pool their resources together and let others know what else is out there. Also, it was nice to learn that some faculty can provide LCSW supervision.”

“My Advanced Practice Class was essential to my growth and learning in the social work and clinical field. If I could, I would have had that twice in substitute of my lacing Generalist Practice Class.”
"It would be more helpful to offer out of department electives dealing with mental health and specific types of interventions used in community mental health practice, such as DBT and CBT."

There were many recommendations for additional content to be added to coursework, specifically for increased attention to treatment of addictions, personal counseling, mental health diagnosis and treatment, therapy techniques, and clinical skills.

“I feel the education was much too general to be really helpful when applied to specific work settings. I would have loved more focus on clinical work in the direct human service track. While I feel my MSW did help prepare me slightly for clinical work I feel that I was mostly underprepared and lacked important skills and info which ultimately is a disservice to me and to the clients I serve”.

“I feel that my MSW program prepared me very well for my work as a social worker. It would have been helpful to have had more exposure to counseling practices and techniques. I feel like the advanced year was very helpful but only scratched the surface, while the generalist year was almost a complete waste of time. I should have had more exposure to mental health, drug/alcohol treatment, and DSM diagnosis. I think it would be a good idea for the program to survey the mental health agencies and look at what they want new MSW students to know when exiting the program.”

“A lot of the classes were poorly organized and taught and probably led a few students to drop out of the program. A few professors were excellent (Modricin, Vandiver, Talbot). My first year field placement liaison was excellent; my second year one seemed inexperienced. An "older student" support group might’ve been helpful. I met some very nice peers.”

Some alumni recommended increased content around oppressed populations, Child Welfare/DHS, (especially the Indian Child Welfare Act), working with children and families, working with perpetrators of sexual assault, and working with people who experienced domestic violence. Recommendations for teaching this content varied. Some alumni proposed that it be added to generalist coursework and integrated throughout all courses, while others, especially advanced students, favored more specific, specialized focus in social work:

“As an individual with a BSW and 7+ years working in the social work field, I was hoping the MSW program would further "specialize" my degree and allow me to further explore a more specific focus.”

“Offering the opportunity for students to earn a CADC while attending PSU would of been really helpful in preparing for the field. So many social work jobs include working with people who have substance abuse and it seems like it would be a big plus for newly graduated students to have.

Some alumni expressed stress, frustration and difficulty looking for a job:

“ Took me 9 months to get a SW job. There are so much SW graduates and not enough jobs in the area.”
“In retrospect should have gone to UW --more demanding program. I also really am disappointed the school does nothing to help counsel students about post-grad plans (resume class aside). More help connecting students with actual jobs/orgs.”

“I do not feel prepared to work in a clinical setting, which was my goal upon entering the program. I have applied for 30+ jobs since graduation, have had four interviews, and still have not been able to obtain post-graduate employment. I realize this is due in part to the economy, but it is extremely frustrating and stressful to have incurred a huge amount of student loan debt and be unable to find a job after a year of diligent searching.”

Some alumni expressed their concerns about financial issues:

“I love my study but I did end up in a lot of debt.” “Tuitons were too expensive for the Distance Option SW program.”

“In some ways, I wish I could have completed the three year program (instead of the two) while also working. Perhaps I wouldn’t have taken out as much debt. But this would also have allowed me to work while having the space or structure to think critically about the work of social work. The placements/internships were valuable in many ways but were a false sense of reality. I also wish that the class sizes would have been smaller. I would have felt more comfortable participating in class.”

CONCLUSIONS

The 2012 Alumni Survey provides a useful snapshot of the career paths followed by 80 2011 MSW program graduates, reflections on their experiences in the program and how well the program prepared them for their professional lives. The findings from alumni of the Portland campus and Distance options indicate that almost all graduates found employment in social work positions after graduation and were employed in social work positions at the time of the survey. Alumni reported working with a wide-range of diverse client groups and in a range of social work practice settings, most frequently in adult and child mental health, family services, health care, and substance abuse. Almost two-thirds of alumni said their practice focus was DHS and smaller percentages focused on CBP, SSAL, or a combination of concentrations. Most graduates reported working in private nonprofit and public agencies and reported salaries that varied according to employment auspices, with mean salaries highest in federal government and lowest in private nonprofit agencies.

With regard to the quality of career preparation provided by the MSW Program, over half of the graduates reported that the program prepared them well or very well for both their first position and their career in social work. These ratings have declined since the 1990-1999 alumni survey and merit further exploration as to the reasons for the decline. Qualitative comments cast some light on the perceptions of individual alumni of the quality of their social work preparation for their specific career path, indicating, for example, that many graduates wished they had received more substantial preparation in clinical practice to be able to function in the fast-paced and intense work in mental health agencies. The qualitative feedback also indicates a desire for more course content in substance
abuse, social work with children, and collaboration with other disciplines, which they need in their professional work.

With regard to foundation coursework, alumni ratings of First year Generalist Practice and Human Behavior in Social Environment (HBSE) improved since the last survey. However, there were some qualitative comments indicating that foundation coursework was too basic for some graduates, particularly those with a BSW and/or substantial prior social work experience. We believe that the addition of the MSW Advanced Standing Option to the program’s offerings will partially address this concern, although the challenge of teaching students with widely varied levels of previous academic and professional experience in social work will continue.

Ratings of helpfulness on Social Policy as well as Research coursework slightly decreased since last year’s survey, but they were still positive. Alumni ratings of the foundation HBSE sequence increased over the previous survey. In the current curriculum, the HBSE sequence expanded to two courses with a separate course on Diversity and Social Justice.

Both Foundation and Advanced Field Education were rated considerably higher than in the previous survey. Overall, alumni were satisfied with their choice of social work as a career and over three-fourths said they would choose PSU’s MSW Program again.

In conclusion, the School of Social Work faces the ongoing challenge of providing high quality professional training for the next generation of social workers to work in more diverse communities and to address more complex and deep-seated social problems. Based on this survey and a curriculum review, we realize that to ensure continuous improvement of the program, there is a need, among other changes, for more extensive alumni feedback. We will share findings with faculty and members of the MSW Program Team, the MSW Curriculum Committee, the MSW Faculty, MSW students, and the public, to guide program improvements.