

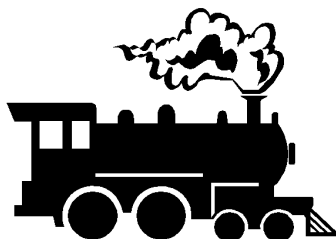
Curriculum Innovations in Schools of Social Work

A Report by the

ACOSA: The Association for
Community Organization & Social Administration

January 1999

ACOSA



Community Practice

"Hot Track Job"

*Association for Community Organization
and Social Administration*

*U.S. News and World Report
January 1999*

Case Western Reserve University

From: Alice Johnson, Associate Professor

A recent project, The Community Practice Pilot Project, was based on the belief that social work education should offer students the opportunity to experience innovative practice with families in impoverished, urban communities. This approach is empowerment-oriented, strengths-based, multicultural-focused, family-centered, and neighborhood-based. A key focus of this approach is that both micro- and macro levels must be built on the strengths and assets of families and communities. Students were primarily exposed to the concepts of community-based family development practice and asset-based community building in the foundation methods course. This course was co-taught by two faculty—one with a specialization in micro social work and the other with expertise in community-based practice. Students were also placed in community-based organizations in which no social workers were employed. These organizations were located in a geographic area known East Village, an area within the Fairfax Neighborhood of Cleveland. They included an inner city, African American church, a city-funded recreation center, a neighborhood-based health clinic, and three intermediary organizations involved in community development. Most of the field sites were located in

Florida State University

From: Dianne Montgomery, Dean

Four years ago the faculty at Florida State University School of Social Work voted to change our school mission to one that focused on community based practice. Since that time we have begun several new initiatives that reflect this mission. One is the development of several community outreach programs, including a youth outreach project in the form of the Boys' Choir of Tallahassee. This choir, with 130 members, has won numerous national and one international competitions, and performed last year at the Kennedy Center (and at the Council on Social Work Education meeting). To my knowledge it is the only choir in the U.S. initiated and sponsored by a school of social work. Its main focus is on prevention and has been incredibly successful.

Other initiatives that might be of some interest is a new certificate program in the "The Arts and Community Practice" and a graduate minor in Dispute Resolution. All of our classes in community organization have an applied community component. For example, for the past year undergraduates taking CO have established and maintained a literacy program for at risk kids in the community.

One consequence of all of these efforts has been an increased interest in and appreciation for the role of community development and community organization in social work among our students.

Georgia State University in Atlanta

From: James L. Wolk, Chair/Professor jwolk@gsu.edu

My name is Jim Wolk and I am Chair of the Department of Social Work at Georgia State University in Atlanta. I received your e-mail on Community Practice and I am delighted to respond. In 1995, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved a new MSW program at Georgia State under the condition that its sole concentration be Community Organizing and Planning. Today we began that program with 14 full time students. Our concentration is Community Partnerships.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) granted us Candidacy Status at the June meeting. While the curriculum is still a work in progress, we have crafted a concentration curriculum with the strong support of our Community Advisory Council that emphasizes skill sets for developing community partnerships. We have a first year course titled Fundamentals of Community Practice because we want students to begin immediately to focus on community even in the foundation year.

The faculty has approved and the university supports the creation of at least one and probably two non-tenure track positions in which we will recruit full-time community practitioners to the faculty to teach skill development and supervise field practicums. We are taking a long look at how to create practicums in the second year that don't lock students into an agency setting, but allow them to work in partnership with several agencies, organizations,

neighborhoods, etc. We have a second year course called Community Partnership Projects in which students will in groups confront real issues in Atlanta and collaborate with community groups to seek innovative responses.

However, I repeat, this is our first day of this adventure and we have much to learn but as a program we are committed to this mission for the MSW program (we also have a large accredited BSW program). All of our first cohort of MSW students are receiving financial assistance either through a paid practicum or a Graduate Research Assistantship. We already have several commitments from agencies for second year community partnership paid practicums.

I might add that one of our faculty has her Ph.D. from MSASS, Sadhna Diwan, another is completing his Ph.D. from MSASS, Venky Chakravarthy, and a third has her MSW from MSASS and Ph.D. from Pittsburgh, Debbie Whitley. Also, the primary fundraiser on our Advisory Council for the department, David Sarnat, is a Case graduate. In addition, we have a formal working relationship with an organization out of Pittsburgh called Consensus Organizing Institute. Their President is Michael Eichler who has an MSW from the University of Pittsburgh. They will be helping us set up concentration field practicums, train our faculty in Consensus Organizing, consult on the development of courses and course modules, and cultivate employment opportunities for our graduates that extend beyond the traditional social agency thinking. They have established community partnerships around the country and have several in Atlanta, including the United Way and the Family Service Agency.

University of Kansas

From: Deborah Page-Adams, Assistant Professor debpa@ukans.edu

Recently, we have added a couple of new practicum opportunities in community practice for our graduate students. These are community economic development placements in Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), microenterprise, and Saturday Academy initiatives. Together, we are calling these initiatives our school's Community Investment Project (CIP).

One example of CIP in action is our graduate student unit in field placement at the new IDA program at Heart of America Family Services Family Focus Center in Kansas City. In that placement, our graduate students work with individuals and organizations to build the financial and property assets of low and moderate-income families. Participants in this Family Asset Building (FAB) program make regular deposits into their special savings accounts for homeownership, self-employment, or college. Their deposits are matched 2:1 with funding from the Kauffman Foundation and the Corporation for Enterprise Development. A neighborhood credit union holds the accounts and provides financial services for FAB participants.

Social work graduate students in this kind of placement learn new community practice skills in mobilizing resources, advocating for and with participants for asset based policies, and designing and facilitating economic education classes. They help participants overcome any obstacles they face in achieving their long-term economic development goals, and research the effects of the asset building initiative on the larger community. Last year's student unit was very successful in helping to get the FAB program, which is part of the national IDA demonstration, up and running. The program has 75 participants whose savings have already leveraged more than \$20,000 in savings for community economic development.

Our school has just established a similar graduate student practicum unit for this academic year at a high school in Kansas City. Social work students in this placement will work with high school faculty, staff, and students to design and implement community-based social and economic development initiatives including an Individual Development Account program, a microenterprise program, and a Saturday Academy for teens and their families.

If more information would be helpful, several people here including Dean Ann Weick and myself are able to talk in some detail about our school's Community Investment Project. Other faculty members involved in the project are Mahasweta Banerjee and Dennis Saleebey.

University of Texas-Austin

From: Jean Avera, Field Education Specialist javera@mail.utexas.edu

This summer, the School of Social Work offered a course on “Social Change and Community Practice” focused specifically on revitalizing our school’s commitment to community organization and grassroots social change. As a result of this course, our students have initiated the formation of a chapter of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society—a nationally based organization for progressive workers in social welfare dedicated to promoting collective and individual action for social justice, peace, and alliance with progressive social movements.

Syracuse University

From: Karen Hopkins, Assistant Professor

Although Syracuse University does not have a specific macro/community practice program yet—we are working on it. We do have students in community practice field internships and graduates in community practice jobs. Below are some examples of the type of jobs and agencies that are field agencies.

- Domestic Violence Coalition Coordinator, Syracuse, NY—Works with law enforcement, courts, legislative process, etc. and organizes survivors of violence to present at the annual report to the community.
- Seven Valleys Health Coalition in Cortland, NY - Pull together various groups in the community, writing collaborative grants, etc. to bring new services and opportunities into the community.
- Citizen Action of New York, a placement agency in Binghamton, NY. They are solely a community action organization currently with three initiatives (neighborhood organizing, managed care consumer advocacy, and occupational health and safety).
- Community Development Agency. Works with social agencies and businesses (including car dealerships and banks) to set up transportation for persons who previously had not qualified for loans and micro enterprises where unemployed or underemployed persons are helped to start small businesses on their own, etc.
- Yorkville Common Pantry—one of the biggest food pantries in New York City.
- CURN, a neighborhood organization in Syracuse, NY that plans and coordinates programs for children and adolescents. For two years, one of the generalist practice classes have had a macro assignment with CURN. Students joined with community residents to do needs assessments and plans and give them to the community.

University of Michigan

From: Barry N Checkoway, Professor of Social Work barrych@umich.edu

Community organization at the UM is more important than ever! I believe that we have the oldest continuous and possibly the largest CO major in the US. We are implementing a new curriculum with serious efforts to revise our courses for the years ahead. Current courses include content on CO theory, grassroots community organizing, community-based planning, community participation, community development, popular education, women and CO, and multicultural, multilingual organizing. These last courses reflect feminist and cultural content of substantial interest to students and faculty members.

We also continue a dual degree program in community-based planning offering an MSW and MUP in conjunction with the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, and another dual degree with the School of Public Health, which includes substantial CO content.

Our field placements are often urban and located in Detroit, and CO alumnus are in key positions in community-based organizations and civic agencies worldwide.

From: Lily Jarman-Rohde, Director of Field Education

The UM School of Social Work revised our curriculum and added a concentration called Community and Social Systems. The new curriculum went into effect Fall 1997. The number of Fall 1998 incoming students enrolled in the Community and Social Systems concentration is double what it was in Fall 1997.

Simmons College

From: Carol E. Bonner, Associate Dean cbonner@simmons.edu

I would be very interested to share information about our new program here at Simmons entitled "The Urban Leadership Program in Clinical Social Work". This is a program, which has recruited 20 students who will receive a certificate in Urban Leadership as well as an MSW. The curriculum includes leadership training, public speaking and grant writing, technology skills and the option to learn Spanish. We have received some foundation funding and continue to develop the various aspects of the program. We have five urban agency partners who are deeply involved and committed to the development of the program.

Stephen F. Austin State University

From: Kathleen Belanger, Child Welfare Professional Development Project:
kbelanger@sfasu.edu

It's very important to mention that all undergraduate programs are required to train their students in ways to make changes in communities and organizations, and this is especially critical in rural areas. In fact, it is so critical in rural areas that our new Master's program is "Advanced Rural Generalist"-that is, everyone who graduates is expected to be able to do community practice. And, even more important, is expected to understand their obligation to change communities and organizations for the good of their "clients." This is an absolutely critical concept.

University of California-Berkeley

From: Jim Midgley, Dean midg@uclink4.berkeley.edu

Berkeley used to be very strong in the field but in recent years our contribution has slipped. However, I am now working hard to revitalize our community social work practice activities. I will be hiring an assistant professor this year in community practice. If you have any suggestions, please let me know. We also have a major initiative with a local African American Church which involves placing four students in the church and doing good old-fashioned community work.

From: Mike Austin, Professor mjaustin@uclink4.berkeley.edu

Since I was one of the early ones educated in this area (Columbia began in 1962 and UC Berkeley in 1963 where I entered the CO program in 1964), there may be some value in a 30+-year perspective. I now chair what is called Management and Planning (MAP) which is the old Community Organizing and Administration sequence at UC Berkeley. With respect to the demographics, our numbers are about the same; namely 20-25% of each entering class of 100 select the MAP program. The shift in student interest is in the direction of policy practice where we help them use data and information to advocate for change in the decision-making processes inside the agency, in the community, and in the state using coalitions and other forms of advocacy.

Traditional community organizing jobs in our area go under the label of community outreach and continue to go to persons of color and the job descriptions tend to have minimal educational qualifications. Depending on a graduate's prior experience, starting salaries range from \$25,000-\$40,000.

University of Hawaii

From: Elizabeth A Mulroy, Associate Professor

Types of Jobs-One example:

A 1997 graduate of our MSW Program got a job as Policy Analyst, Family Service America located in Washington, D.C. She works to build national coalitions that then organize to inform the US Senate staff on the development of

social policies that strengthen children and families: adoptions, crises and emergency services, affordable rental housing.

She prepared for that position with a flexible curriculum plan that gave her the knowledge and skills in both a field of concentration and community practice. For example, she had a concentration in Mental Health (as we are organized around fields of practice) and we individualized a methods major in community practice with field practicum emphasis on state-level legislative analysis, coalition building, and grass roots advocacy. Her field placement was with the Hawaii Affordable Housing and Homeless Alliance, a statewide advocacy and coalition-building organization. She conducted community-based research (supported by enrolling in a community-based research course with me on campus that investigated the implementation of state-level affordable rental housing policy), drafted legislation, provided testimony on that legislation in writing and in person pertaining to the homeless mentally ill, and organized members of that constituency to testify also. Her electives were taken in the Dept. of Urban Planning with courses in Land Use Planning and Community Economic Development.

Thus, a flexible curriculum that encourages cross-registration with other departments, innovates with new practicum sites, and emphasizes community-based research can produce individualized programs suitable to meet the current needs for local, state, as well as national policy practice. She was hired at the national level, we are told, because of her breadth and depth of knowledge in state and local organizing, coalition building, and policy practice—a much-needed perspective “inside the beltway.”

University of Maryland-Baltimore

From: Stanley Wenocur, Professor

At Maryland we have had an increase in the numbers of students taking Community Organization classes last year, and this year it looks like it will continue. We have to run 3 sections of the Comm Org class to fit in all the students.

Here are the figures on the CO and Clin/CO students at the U. of Maryland from the 1997/98 academic year:

Comm Org (CO) = 46
Clin/CO = 27

On the management side of our macro curriculum, we have the following students:

Management = 23
Clinical/Management = 78

If we combined all of the “Macro and Clinical/Macro” students, the total of 174 represented 37% of our advanced year social work student body.

While we have an increase in the number of “straight” CO students, a large amount of the increase comes from students doing a combined concentration, “Clinical/Community Organization & Development” (Clin/COD). These are students who want to retain flexibility in their practice and be able to respond to lots of different job options. Increasingly there is a component of social work practice that is community-based in different ways—whether it involves home visits, family preservation and preventive social work, community needs assessments, institution-community relations building as with the public schools, building community networks and helping clients to develop networks, coalition building, etc.

On the CO side, we have added a community economic development component into our courses and potential field placements, and we also teach resource development for nonprofits. We define CO pretty broadly to include social action and social planning and grass roots organizing, but also program development, resource development, economic development, legislative lobbying, policy analysis, advocacy of all sorts.

Our grads get jobs in all of those areas, depending upon their predilections, skills, experiences, and contacts. I can’t talk about salaries, but my sense is that there is a wide range. Local grass roots efforts usually can’t pay too well into the 20’s, more established organizations may pay beginning MSW Co persons into the mid-30’s. We have grads 10 - 20 years out doing all sorts of things, many in very responsible governmental and non-profit leadership positions, and some still doing basic organizing work, union organizing, lobbying, etc. Some examples are: Director of Governmental Affairs for the City Health Dept., the United Way, Regional Organizer for Stand for Children, Vice President of

University Development, Special Counselor to the Secretary of State, U.S. Senator, associate organizer with the Solidarity Sponsoring Committee, director of Government Affairs for AFSCME, neighborhood organizer, etc. etc.

University of Pennsylvania

From: Michael Reisch, Professor

- Our macro enrollment has remained relatively stable for the past 3 years, although more students are interested in taking macro-type classes.
- Our macro graduates have done very well in terms of jobs and salaries. Some examples include: director of development of major child welfare agency; program directors in settlement houses; directors of residential treatment center and juvenile justice program; policy analysts for public interest groups in Washington; and advocate/policy analyst for regional advocacy organization. In addition, during the past four years over 10 of our graduates have been selected for the Presidential Management Internship Program (although not all of them opted to accept the internship).
- New content areas include: a sub-concentration in social and economic development (within macro); new courses or increased content on resource development and management, strategic planning, community economic development, advocacy and political action, and computer utilization.

University of Pittsburgh

Form: Tracy Soska, Director of Continuing Education tsssw+@pitt.edu

The Community Organizing Program is a component of the Community Organizing and Social Administration concentration at the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, which also offers a direct practice track. There are approximately 75 students in the COSA Program; approximately 30 are CO students in either first or second year study. At 40+ years as the program, the CO Program at the University of Pittsburgh SSW is the oldest and longest standing CO program in the country. Graduates of this program on the faculties of other schools of social work, as well as leaders in national, state, and regional community organizations. The faculty represents core faculty in COSA and adjunct faculty drawn from the region's community organizations.

The CO Program offers three required courses: Introduction to Community Organization, CO Strategies and Tactics, and CO Advanced Seminar. In addition, there is a planning course requirement, and the SSW offers two specialization in planning: Community Economic Development Organizing and Human Service Organizing. Students may also take certain planning courses in other professional disciplines at the University, e.g. Public Health, Public and International Affairs. The CO Program offers a range of second level foundation and concentration elective courses including: Economic and Social Policies, Housing and Urban Policies, Bargaining and Negotiation, Economics for Social Work and Development, and a wide-range of Social Administration electives that students are encouraged to take to fulfill requirements: Grants and Proposal Writing, Social Service Administration, Financial Management, Governance and Participation, among others internal and external to the SSW. The CO Program also offers a specialized second level research course in Community Assessment, as well as a Social Administration research course on Data Management.

Field Placements are a significant part of the program with the first level practicum a generalist placement in a community-based organization and the second level practicum a skills-focused learning experience. Most field placements in CO provide significant student stipends; these paid field placements are a strength of the program. The CO program also has provided for international placements, particularly through an active student/faculty exchange with Universities in Ireland. This Ireland initiative is more than 15 years old.

The CO Program encourages student leadership and supports the Community Organizing Group (COG), a formal CO student organization recognized by our SSW Student Executive Council and our university's student government association. A formal Community Organizing Advisory Committee (COAC) works with the CO program; this advisory group is comprised of faculty, students, field faculty, and leaders from local community organizations and social concerns. COAC has been active since 1984. The SSW CO Program also provides coordination support to a Regional Coalition of Community Builders network community efforts in Southwestern PA. The School also has

established the African American Community Builders Certificate Program, a non-degree based training initiative for community organizers.

The CO Program and its faculty have a strong leadership reputation in the Greater Pittsburgh Area. All three core faculty have received the prestigious Chancellor's Distinguished Public Service Award, more than any other school or academic unit in the University. We are also proud of our recent graduates who are serving in leadership positions with the Mayor's Office, County Commissioners, major family and corporate foundations, and state NASW, as well as directing local and national nonprofit and community development organizations.

University of Texas-Arlington

From: Rick Hoefer, Associate Professor: rhoefer@utarlg.uta.edu

I want to tell you about the Legislative Internship Program that we have at the University of Texas at Arlington. The Legislative Internship Program places second-year Master of Social Work Students in the district offices of State Senators and Representatives. During their 500 hour internship, students perform constituency casework, community outreach and policy analysis duties.

Constituency casework involves helping people with problems such as late child support checks, investigating complaints of maltreatment of prisoners in prison, and assisting citizens know what governmental body is in charge of accomplishing particular duties.

Community outreach involves being the “eyes and ears” of the elected official when he or she cannot attend a meeting or tour a facility. One intern was pressed into service to speak on a radio show when the Senator she interned for could not make it, at the last moment.

Policy analysis consists of understanding problems and devising practical solutions for them. Sometimes the analysis is complex and sometimes simple, but the aim is to come up with workable ways to eliminate problems affecting Texas citizens.

Recent graduates who have gone through the legislative internship program have found jobs as legislative aides, teen court administrator, program and agency administrators and caseworkers at “regular” social service agencies. At present we have 5 state legislators who are enrolled in the program, with at least two more ready to do the paperwork. It is sometimes hard to recruit enough students to fill all the available slots, as some legislators would happily have more than one intern at a time!

Virginia Commonwealth University

From: David P Fauri, Professor dfauri@saturn.vcu.edu

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work offers two M.S.W. concentrations in the second year of study: Clinical Social Work and Planning & Administration Practice (P&A). P&A prepares graduates for entering advanced social work practice through mid-level organizational and community program positions that call for knowledge and skills in system modification and system development. This year we are pleased to report that we have 30 students across two campuses that have selected this concentration and we are experiencing a revitalization of macro interests.

A major strength of the curriculum of this concentration is the newly developing efforts of the teaching faculty to integrate required courses so that students. Rather than taking a series of independent courses, have an experience in which learning class room settings is integrated through the use of cases and texts in two or more classes, and a team of faculty members integrate concentration course content.

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work M.S.W. foundation year of study introduces all students are to basic community practice concepts in two courses that combine organization, community, and policy practice. Faculty take active roles in promoting and engaging in community practice. For example, Dr. Robert Schneider has developed the National Committee for Educating Students to Influence State Policy and Legislation and is co-authoring a book on advocacy in which community practice skills are emphasized. Dr. F. Ellen Netting and

colleagues from two other universities have authored *Social Work Macro Practice*, considered one of the leading textbooks in organizational and community change. This book is required in our foundation courses. Dr. David Fauri is the lead editor on a forthcoming book of macro practice cases in which one of the three sections is devoted to community practice issues. This text is intended to reemphasize the case methods in instruction using real life practice experiences in instruction. We have a number of faculty who have expertise in community practice and these skills are emphasized in the foundation year.

Wayne State University

From: Ann R. Alvarez, Assistant Professor Ann.R.Alvarez@wayne.edu

In the 1960s and beyond, the School of Social Work at Wayne State University was known for its activist faculty and community practice graduates. By the 1990s, however, the Concentration for Community Practice and Administration, as it was then called, had low enrollment, little visibility in the School or community, and its contribution and future were uncertain.

By 1995, WSU faculty perceived increasing national and local interest in community practice, and saw a compelling need for social workers with that perspective and those skills in the Detroit metropolitan area. They took steps to revitalize the content, numbers and contribution of the concentration. Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Ann Rosegrant Alvarez and David Moxley, the Concentration was renamed Community Practice and Social Action, and the School devoted resources and energies to reframing its focus. Rather than administrative issues such as management and supervision, the current emphasis is on the various arenas of community practice, including community organization, resource development, advocacy, and evaluation of programs and community change. Annually, a series of brownbag presentations inform interested students and faculty about community practice, job availability in the area, the Concentration, and student field placement opportunities.

Student response to the changes has been enthusiastic, and the average enrollment in the Concentration has more than doubled since 1993. Agencies and organizations have risen to the challenge of providing exciting growth opportunities for students by offering field placements that include Detroit City Council offices; the International Institute of Metro. Detroit; the Hunger Action Coalition for SE Michigan; Black United Fund; Planned Parenthood of Mid-Michigan; Neighborhood Service Organization; various social service agencies, including church-affiliated; and United Way Community Services. Graduates of the Concentration have been gratified to find their skills in demand, and have accepted positions with a variety of agencies and organizations, including many that sponsor field placements. They have been further pleased to learn that their salaries compare favorably with-and in many cases exceed-those of their peer graduates from other Concentrations.

Western Michigan University

From: Ed Pawlak, Professor

I have served as coordinator of the Policy, Planning, and Administration Program at Western Michigan University School of Social Work for 20 years. This year we have 25 graduate students majoring in our concentration. We also have a Kellogg Grant that just ended in which we had a partnership with neighborhoods.

Wurzweiler School of Social Work

From: Charles Trent, Assistant Professor C0925S@aol.com

WSSW is one of a few schools of social work that has sustained a specialization in Community Social Work since the 1970s. In our Fall/Spring program during the 1990s we averaged 17 majors in this method of practice. We expect to have our biggest class in our regular program this Fall-possibly more than twenty students. We also have CSW majors in our summer block program. These students come from foreign countries and various American states. Our students are very successful in finding and holding employment in government, private and nonprofit organizations of various sizes at salaries above \$35,000.

