

Section I

Brief Description of Kean University and MSW Program

I. Brief Description of the University and the MSW Program

A. The University

Founded in 1855 as a teacher training institution, Kean University expanded its program offerings in 1958 in the areas of arts and sciences. Pursuant to the Higher Education Act of 1966, major expansions in professional programs at the baccalaureate and graduate levels, including certification programs, were added, thus allowing Kean University to meet comprehensive educational needs of New Jersey residents. As an institution of higher education, Kean University has a long-standing commitment to provide access, excellence and equity in higher education.

B. University Mission

The central theme of Kean University remains teaching excellence supported by a commitment to research and scholarship in basic disciplines and in applied areas. The University recognizes its obligation to provide quality programs based on a rigorous foundation in liberal arts and sciences. It also underscores the importance of responsiveness in academic programming and services. "Through its programs and services, the University will continue to remain responsive to the changing technology and other innovations in the workplace and the evolving needs of the students who attend Kean."

A cornerstone of the mission is the affirmation of the importance of providing access to higher education. This includes recognition of the responsibility to offer support programs and services to under prepared students, for adults returning to college, for students of varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and for students with special needs. Finally, the mission includes a statement of the dedication of the University to maintain an educational environment in which cultural diversity can flourish (Institutional Self-Study, July 1990, pg. 1).

C. The MSW Program

Built on a firm commitment to social justice attainable through access, excellence and equity, Kean University's social work program has continued to serve the interests and mission of the University and those of the profession it represents. It prepares students to be lifelong learners, to be informed citizens, and to engage in advanced professional practice. Additionally, it exemplifies the University's programmatic responses to the evolving needs of students and of the people and communities directly influenced by changing technology and other innovations in the workplace. The pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning at the graduate level will ensure that students are adequately equipped with skills, knowledge and values for advanced generalist practice with systems of varying types and sizes from the interpersonal to the national, emphasizing both the diversity and the linkages among these various systems. The promotion of equity and increasing accessibility to education for students with demonstrable potential for advanced practice will serve as an instrument for the attainment of social justice.

MSW Mission Statement

The primary mission of the Masters in Social Work Program is to prepare students of diverse backgrounds to provide leadership in addressing social and psychological problems facing the residents of New Jersey and surrounding areas.

MSW Goal#1 Have advanced generalists social workers competent to provide excellence of service to a diverse range of client constituencies guided by professional knowledge, skills, values, and ethics.

Objective 1: Develop social work students with professional knowledge, values, skills and ethics as evidence by their academic performance and utilization as interns and alumni.

Objective 2: Develop social work students with a commitment, sensitivity, and skills of practice for working with diverse client constituencies as evidence by academic performance.

Objective 3: Develop social worker students who engage who engage in professional use of self as evidence by their ability to relate to and evaluate the problems faced by diverse client constituencies.

MSW Goal # 2 Have social work students maintain the ideals of professional development, life long learning, and participation as informed citizenship committed to human rights and social and economic justice.

Objective 1: Develop social work students who are committed to life long learning, participation as informed citizenship, maintain and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice committed as evidence by their academic performance, practice as alumni, and participation in social and political action.

Objective 2: Develop social work students who are committed to empirical foundations of social work as evidence by their academic performance and ability to use research that contributes to the social work profession as students and alumni.

D. Philosophy of Field Practice

The Department of Social Work views coursework and field practice as mutually supportive and complementary parts of an integrative professional social work education. Field practice provides learning opportunities related to all parts of the curriculum and the opportunity for social work students to develop the skills required for independent practice with systems of all types and sizes.

Collaboration between the department of social work and the field is essential, and requires continuous contact regarding the student's learning experience, curriculum issues and the evaluation of the student's professional development. Because the field plays such an important role in this process, the social work department is committed to finding ways to strengthen this relationship.

Through our experiences with the BSW program, the department has a long and productive history with many agencies in the New Jersey and New York area. The constant changes in the human services systems and society at large require that this relationship be used to ensure that both the curriculum and field education remain both current and capable of reflecting future trends.

E. Field Practice

Field practice concurrent with course work helps students integrate their learning. From the beginning of their professional education, the student begins to experience the opportunity and responsibility to apply knowledge and skills in realistic situations. Feedback from field to class and vice versa reinforces both learning environments. All students are expected to reflect on their current field experiences by sharing written and verbal material in their courses. (see IV. Policies of Field Education, I. Process Recording).

F. Field Instructors

Field practice is viewed as an integral part of the curriculum and therefore the field instructor is part of the teaching team. Agency-based field instructors hold a master's degree in social work and a minimum of two years post-master's experience. Field instructors are expected to understand the theoretical underpinnings of both generalist and advanced generalist practice. In order to facilitate this process, seminars will be held by the department to address these and other issues in social work practice.

G. Faculty Liaison

Faculty members of the social work department serve as faculty liaison for each student in the first and second year of the social work program. They are responsible for visiting students at their agency during both semesters in the first and second year and maintaining telephone contact with the field instructor. The field liaisons' visits to the agency are designed to evaluate the student's performance in the field; identify the student's learning needs; and, further develop the collaboration between the department and the field agency. In addition, the faculty liaison will be responsible for reviewing the field instructor's written evaluation of the student and making a decision with regard to the student's grade.