The Social Work Department at Bemidji State University (BSU) utilized a mixed-methodological approach to examine the explicit and implicit curriculum. This approach allowed for assessment from social work faculty, site (field) supervisors, BSW graduates, and area practitioners. It employed both quantitative tools (likert-scale surveys) and qualitative tools (focus groups, open-ended surveys) to evaluate the Department’s success specific to the attainment of the ten competencies and creation of an affirming learning environment. The Assessment Plan was administered equitably with the two BSW tracks, the on-campus and SWIM.

A four-prong Assessment Plan ensured a rich compliment of data from multiple sources thereby increasing confidence in the findings as well as uncovering discrepancies. This methodology represented a holistic approach to assessment. The first prong was specific to the Implicit Curriculum. The Department conducted a focus group with area practitioners to obtain feedback specific to the learning environment. The discussion focused on cultural preparedness, course curriculum, and faculty qualifications. In April 2011, a focus group was held with eleven practitioners providing valuable information on the Department’s strengths as well as areas for improvement.

The second Assessment prong focused on the curriculum from the perspective of student graduates. The Social Work Department surveyed graduates on degree of preparedness for practice in the 41 practice behaviors. One year after completing the BSW degree, graduates are asked to complete a SurveyMonkey tool asking for feedback on preparedness for practice. The third prong also focused on curriculum, this time from the perspective of site (field) supervisors.
They were surveyed around student preparedness for practice in the 41 practice behaviors. In June 2012, field supervisors completed a SurveyMonkey tool to assess social work interns’ skill-levels and readiness for practice.

Finally, the fourth prong is the focus of the remainder of this section. The Social Work Department assessed student outcomes in the 10 competencies and 41 practice behaviors utilizing two quantitative measurement tools for each practice behavior. The Assessment Plan discussed below provides details on this assessment process.

➤ Competency Benchmark

The benchmark to measure student success at achieving the competencies was “75% of students will score a 3 or higher on a grading rubric of 1-5.” The grading rubric was:

- 5 – the student excelled in this area
- 4 – the student functioned above expectations in this area
- 3 – the student met most expectations in this area
- 2 – the student met a few expectations in this area
- 1 – the student did not meet the expectations in this area

For each track (on-campus and SWIM), the 10 competencies and the 41 practice behaviors had equal weight. The Social Work Department chose to use an equally weighted 75% benchmark for the following reasons. First, as a newly piloted outcome-based Assessment Plan, faculty could not determine with any proficiency which practice behaviors should be weighted differently. It was decided to weight them equally and re-examine this factor when designing the 2016 Assessment Plan. In addition, the 75% benchmark was chosen to mesh with the Social Work Department’s expectation of student performance. To be admitted to the Social Work majors, students must earn a 2.50 GPA (75%) in required social work courses taken to date. This
2.50 GPA is also necessary to begin the block 480-hour internship (final semester) and to graduate with a social work degree from BSU. Therefore, it was logical for the assessment benchmark to be comparable.

### Assessment Components

Assessment of practice behaviors occurred over nine courses utilizing 13 measurement tools. Table 16 outlines courses and signature assignments employed for the CSWE outcome-based assessment. The Social Work Department recognizes this assessment plan was somewhat complex and faculty intend to streamline it with the 2016 Assessment Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses and Signature Assessment Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 2140: Field Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 2160: HBSE I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 3160: HBSE II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 3260: SW Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 3551: Gen Practice I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 3552: Gen Practice II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| SOWK 3553: Gen Practice III | • Macro Cause Advocacy project  
| | • Ethical decision-making assignment  
| | • 15-hour service learning |
| SOWK 4450: Research Seminar | Dissertation critique |
| SOWK 4970: Internship | • Seminar: Career Planning  
| | • Seminar: Resolving ethical dilemmas  
| | • 480-hour internship |

The intent of this Assessment Plan was to examine student progress in multiple courses to help identify curriculum strengths and areas of improvement. Specific signature assignments were used as the basis for evaluation of practice behaviors. In conjunctions with the assignment, a likert scale grading rubric was used. See Appendix Q for the 13 grading rubrics. Identified below is a brief description of the courses for each signature assignment and the associated practice behaviors that were assessed.
60-hour Volunteer Experience (SOWK 2140): Students volunteered in a non-profit agency or school. As an entry-level course, the site supervisor assessed foundation knowledge and skills associated with identifying as a social worker, ethical social work practice, and role of diversity in practice. Practice Behaviors 1, 3, 7, 15, and 17 were measured with this tool.

Problem-Intervention-Theory (SOWK 2160): Students applied knowledge of human behavior in the social environment using a presentation. This assignment was designed for students to demonstrate understanding specific themes including critiques and applying the theory to a specific problem. The final step was to develop an intervention from the theoretical perspective. The instructor assessed student ability to critique and apply this knowledge. Practice Behavior 24 was measured with this tool.

Organizational Analysis (SOWK 3160): Students examine and critique an existing non-profit organization. They applied knowledge of organizational development, leadership, the Cross framework of cultural competence, and ethical considerations. This assignment was completed in a task group format. In this process the instructor assessed students on critical thinking skills, understanding of oppression and discrimination at the organizational level, and the assessment process with groups and organizations. Practice Behaviors 12, 18, 32, and 33 were measured with this tool.

Policy Analysis Project (SOWK 3260): Students examined and critiqued an existing social welfare policy and conducted a social change feasibility analysis. The instructor assessed their ability to integrate diversity in the analysis process and ability to advocate for policy change to enhance social well-being. Practice Behaviors 14 and 25 were measured with this tool.
✓ **1-1 Counseling Recording** (SOWK 3551): Students conducted two 1-1 counseling recordings in this course; the second one was used for assessment purposes. The instructor evaluated their ability to practice skills related to diversity with individual counseling as well as the engagement and intervention phases of that process. Practice Behaviors 16, 30, 31, and 37 were measured with this tool.

✓ **Group Co-Facilitation** (SOWK 3552): Students were co-facilitators in a simulation support group. As an intermediate level course, there were seven practice behaviors assessed by the instructor including professionalism, conceptual frameworks, and engagement, intervention, and evaluation of the group process. Practice Behaviors 2, 6, 23, 29, 38, 40, and 41 were measured with this tool.

✓ **Macro Cause Advocacy Project** (SOWK 3553): Seniors developed and implemented a hypothetical cause advocacy plan in this capstone course. As an advanced level course, eleven practice behaviors were assessed including professionalism, advancing social justice, and assessing and intervening in macro practice. Practice Behaviors 8, 19, 20, 26, 34, 35, 36, and 39 were measured with this tool.

✓ **Macro Practice Ethical Decision-Making** (SOWK 3553): Seniors taking Generalist Practice III examined a macro practice ethical case scenario. The instructor assessed student understanding of the NASW Code of Ethics and an ethical decision-making framework. Practice Behavior 10 was measured with this tool.

✓ **15-hour Macro Service Learning** (SOWK 3553): Seniors taking Generalist Practice III performed 15-hours of community service learning where they work with a task group to organize and conduct a macro practice project. Students were assessed by the project
supervisor on professionalism and providing leadership. Practice Behavior 4 and 28 were measured with this tool.

✓ **Dissertation Critique** (SOWK 4450): Seniors examined and critiqued a dissertation based on understanding research methods. Specifically, students learned about and applied knowledge related to methodology, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. In this assignment, they were assessed by the instructor on skills related to critical thinking, correlation between research and practice, and ability to respond to changes. Practice Behaviors 11, 13, 21, 22, 27 were measured with this tool.

✓ **Internship - Career Planning** (SOWK 4970): During the internship seminar, students identified future educational goals that focus on continuing education, certifications, and/or master’s degree. The Field Director (instructor) assessed student strategies for career-long learning. Practice Behavior 5 was measured with this tool.

✓ **Internship - Resolving Ethical Dilemmas** (SOWK 4970): During the internship seminar, students examined an ethical dilemma related to the difficulty of resolving differences. The Field Director (instructor) assessed student ability to tolerate ambiguity. Practice Behavior 9 was measured with this tool.

✓ **480-hour Internship** (SOWK 4970): The final semester before graduating, students completed an internship. All practice behaviors were applied in the field and students assessed on these skills by the site (field) supervisor. Practice Behaviors 1-41 were measured with this tool.

Assessment data for the largely online track (SWIM) was limited to one tool in one course (60-hour volunteer experience). This new BSW track was piloted in fall 2013 and SWIM
students had completed only one course during the 2013-2014 year in which practice behaviors were formally assessed. As such, it was not possible to compare findings with the on-campus track. Assessment data for students in the SWIM track is included in the data findings described.

Below is a description of the findings competency by competency.

✓ Competency 1, Practice Behaviors 1-6: This competency focused on skills related to social worker identity and professionalism. Findings indicate that 91-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the six practice behaviors. Students appeared to have a foundation understanding of and ability to practice professional social work skills including advocacy, self-reflection, roles and boundaries, demeanor, career-long learning, and supervision/consultation. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to identify with and exhibit professional social work practice.

✓ Competency 2, Practice Behaviors 7-10: This competency focused on the ethical practice of a social worker. Findings indicated that 91-100% of students assessed achieved the benchmark in two of the four practice behaviors. Students appeared to understand the importance of managing personal values (PB7) as well as tolerating the ambiguity of the helping relationship (PB9).

Specific to PB8, 78% of students in the senior capstone course (Generalist Practice III) and 100% of interns understood the use of the NASW Code of Ethics when making ethical decisions. While 78% did reach the competency benchmark, it is a significantly lower achievement than results from other grading rubrics for PB7, 8, and 9.

Specific to PB10, the findings indicated that students did not appear to comprehend and/or utilize ethical decision-making processing skills. Only 57% of all students assessed
achieved the benchmark. Of those, 17% in the senior capstone course achieved the benchmark.

What is demonstrated by the findings for PB8 and 10 was that students in the classroom setting did not appear to integrate the NASW Code of Ethics and/or the Reamer model of ethical decision-making. Yet, when they entered the field and begin to perform internship duties, students appeared to grasp how to process and draw ethical decisions. Faculty reviewed the findings for Practice Behavior 8 and 10. See page 12 for corrective steps taken.

✓ Competency 3, Practice Behaviors 11-13: This competency focused on critical thinking and communication skills required of social workers. Findings indicated that 96-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the three practice behaviors. Students appeared to have a solid grasp of how to apply critical thinking skills in the classroom and in the field with 100% of students assessed achieving the benchmark for PB11 and 12. Students’ ability to understand and apply oral and written professional communication skills (PB13) appeared to be highly successful as well. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated that students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to practice critical thinking and communication skills.

✓ Competency 4, Practice Behaviors 14-17: This competency focused on diversity and cultural responsiveness. Results indicate that students assessed achieved the benchmark in two of the four practice behaviors. For PB 15 and 16, 93-100% of students achieved the benchmark. This indicated a solid understanding of self-awareness to reduce biases as well as understanding the importance of differences in the helping relationship. The competency benchmark was exceeded in these two practice behaviors and the curriculum appeared to be teaching students the knowledge to apply skills related to cultural differences in practice.
The competency benchmark was not achieved for PB14 and 17. Specific to PB14, only 72% of all students assessed appear to understand the role of diversity and difference in practice. Their ability to apply this skill to policy development and analysis appeared to be deficient with only 49% of students achieving the benchmark. With PB17, only 58% of students in the 60-hour volunteer experience appear to understand how to view self as a learner. Yet, with both practice behaviors, by the time students completed the 480-hour internship, they did appear to have a solid understanding of both practice behaviors and how to effectively practice these skills.

Faculty reviewed the findings for Practice Behavior 14 and 17. See page 12 for corrective steps taken.

✔ **Competency 5, Practice Behaviors 18-20:** This competency focused on the social and economic justice role of the social work profession. Findings indicated that 89-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the three practice behaviors. Students appeared to understand and apply skills related to addressing oppression, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to understand and apply social and economic justice skills, in the classroom and the field.

✔ **Competency 6, Practice Behaviors 21-22:** This competency focused on the role of research in social work practice. Findings indicated that 91-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the two practice behaviors. Students appeared to understand the relationship between research and practice and the role both played in driving future data gathering as well as its role in defining best practice models. The assessment outcomes for this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and
the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students how to apply research to practice and practice to research.

✓ Competency 7, Practice Behaviors 23-24: This competency focused on understanding the role of the social environment in the human behavior experience. Findings indicated that 97-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the two practice behaviors. Students appeared to have a solid grasp of the eco-system approach, the generalist practice model, as well as the role of environment in group behavior. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to apply social environment factors to the helping relationship.

✓ Competency 8, Practice Behaviors 25-26: This competency focused on the policy development role of the social work profession. Findings indicated that 91-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the two practice behaviors. Students appeared to exhibit a solid understanding of how to analyze and advocate for policy reform. In addition, they recognized the role of partnerships and collaboration in that process. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students the skills necessary for working collaboratively to create policy change that improves the well-being of those served.

✓ Competency 9, Practice Behaviors 27-28: This competency focused on ability of social workers to respond to context in the helping relationship. Findings indicated that 87-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the two practice behaviors. Students appeared to comprehend and apply contextual factors to practice as well as having the skills to assume a leadership role in promoting change to the service delivery system. The assessment outcomes in
this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students skills to contextualize social work practice.

✓ **Competency 10a, Practice Behaviors 29-31:** This competency focused on the engagement phase of the helping relationship. Findings indicated that 95-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the three practice behaviors. Students appeared to have a solid understanding of engagement skills including interpersonal communication and building the helping relationship. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department has exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to use skills that build on a mutually respectful relationship; be it at the micro, mezzo, or macro level of practice.

✓ **Competency 10b, Practice Behaviors 32-35:** This competency focused on the assessment phase of the helping relationship. Findings indicated that 85-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the four practice behaviors. Students appeared to understand and practice skills related to data gathering, assessing client strengths, and creating appropriate goals and objectives, and intervention strategies. The assessment outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to perform appropriate assessment skills; be it at the micro, mezzo, or macro level of practice.

✓ **Competency 10c, Practice Behaviors 36-40:** This competency focused on the intervention phase of the helping relationship. Findings indicated that 91-100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the five practice behaviors. Students appeared to understand and effectively practice intervention skills that support organization goals while helping clients
to resolve problems and achieve desired conclusions. The assessment outcomes in this competency area demonstrate that students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to practice skills that enable them to appropriately intervene with individuals, groups, and/or communities.

✓ Competency 10d, Practice Behavior 41: This competency focused on the evaluation phase of the helping relationship. Findings indicated that 100% of all students assessed achieved the benchmark in the one practice behavior. Students appeared to have the knowledge and skills to create, collate, and analyze evaluation data as part of assessing success towards intervention goals and objectives. The outcomes in this competency area indicated students in the Social Work Department exceeded the benchmark and the curriculum appeared to be effective in teaching students to practice evaluation skills at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

➢ 4.0.3: Assessment Corrective Action

On an annual basis, the Social Work Department examines assessment findings and makes appropriate curriculum changes to improve the delivery of educational services. Each fall semester, faculty review collated findings from the previous academic year. This usually occurs at a regularly scheduled two-hour Department meeting and/or for 2-3 hours during a staff development day when classes are not held. Discussion focuses on success towards achieving competencies/practice behavior benchmarks; identifying strengths and challenges of the evaluation tools and findings and implication for the curriculum. Practice behaviors in which students appear to be struggling are examined in detail. Strategies to address deficiencies are identified and implemented immediately or the following semester.
During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Social Work Department did achieve the 75% benchmark for each of the ten competencies. Yet, there were three practice behaviors where the Department fell short. This section discusses these practice behaviors and steps taken to address the deficiencies.

- **PB10: Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.**

According to the 2013-2014 data findings, only 57% of students achieved the benchmark for this practice behavior. This is a significant deficit resulting in extensive discussion by faculty. The theoretical model this practice behavior utilizes the Frederick Reamer ethical decision-making framework (2006). Based on years of practice experience by current faculty, the Reamer model provides a well-grounded foundation for how to address professional ethical dilemmas. It is taught in multiple courses across the curriculum before students are evaluated on their understanding of the framework in the senior capstone course.

When considering PB10, faculty also examined student results in PB8, use of the NASW Code of Ethics when making ethical decisions. Only 78% of students in the capstone course achieved the benchmark. This is significantly lower than other practice behavior findings and directly relates to PB10. Faculty discussed both of these findings simultaneously. A conclusion was drawn that for students to fully understand the ethical decision-making process, “real” practice examples are needed versus the use of classroom case scenarios. Furthermore, faculty recognize the curriculum needs to be augmented to improve student understanding of these important concepts.

At a fall 2014 curriculum planning meeting, faculty reviewed social work ethical practice content across the courses. After an in-depth discussion, curriculum was refined to improve student understanding of ethical dilemmas of the profession, how to address these issues, and
importance of utilizing an ethical decision-making process. Two steps were implemented during the 2014-2015 academic year to better prepare students to understand and apply the NASW Code of Ethics and ethical reasoning. For the Introduction to Social Welfare course, in-class discussions will also include a more in-depth presentation of the Reamer model as well as class application to a specific case scenario. In Generalist Practice II, the final exam will include a case scenario with application of the Reamer model for ethical decision-making.

Concurrently, faculty implemented a more intentional teaching approach across the curriculum of the Reamer model of ethical decision-making. Utilizing practice-based case scenarios as a tool, courses that highlight ethical practice concepts and issues include Introduction to Social Welfare, Generalist Practice I, Generalist Practice II, HBSE II, Research Seminar, and Internship Orientation. There is also an in-depth discussion of this framework in Generalist Practice III culminating in the formal assessment of ethical reasoning skills in this advanced level course utilizing an application-based macro practice case scenario.

✓ PB14: Recognize how a culture’s structure and values may impact privilege and power.

According to the 2013-2014 data findings, 72% of students achieved the benchmark for this practice behavior. While the Department accentuates cultural responsiveness and cultural humility across all courses, many students do not appear to entirely understand the influence of power and privilege. To address this shortfall, increased emphasis in several courses will be placed on utilizing videos and case scenarios to help students understand and apply the concepts of power, privilege and culture. Beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, the Introduction to Social Welfare class is utilizing a YouTube video that identifies stereotypes and discusses the relationship of stereotypes with power and privilege. In addition, the concept of micro-
aggressions (Hill, Kim, & Williams, 2010) is introduced in Intercultural Communications and Generalist Practice I. Utilizing case scenarios, articles, videos, and guest speakers, students then learn how to apply it to client systems in Family Dynamics, Social Welfare Policy and Generalist Practice III.

✓ PB17: View self as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

The 2013-2014 data findings indicated that 74% of students achieved the benchmark for this practice behavior. While this is close to the 75% goal, student skills in this area falls short of expectations. It was found that this practice behavior was mistakenly omitted from 15 of the 60-hour volunteer experience evaluation tool which could account for the lower scores. The tool has been corrected. In addition, faculty discussed the terminology of this specific practice behavior. Informant may be misconstrued and the evaluation tool has used other comparable terms such as advisor or mentor. Yet, there still appears to be site supervisor misunderstanding of the intent of this practice behavior. If this practice behavior remains in the 2015 EPAS, the Social Work Department will obtain feedback from Practitioner Advisory Council members on wording that will be clearer for practitioners completing the evaluation tool. In addition, the instructor for the 60-hour volunteer experience will work with the site instructor and students to ensure a common understanding of the intent of the practice behavior and the terminology used on the grading rubric.

➢ Summary

All of the changes proposed above are designed to improve student learner outcomes. The Social Work Department views assessment as an excellent opportunity to review curriculum, celebrate successes, and improve the ability of graduates to become effective social
workers. Based on the 2013-2014 assessment findings, social work faculty conclude the curriculum appears to be effective in students achieving the 10 competencies and 41 practice behaviors.