CURRICULUM AND COURSES

Curriculum

The Fordham University baccalaureate program in social work is designed to prepare students for positions as generalist social work practitioners in human service agencies. The program builds on students' strong liberal arts experience required through Fordham University's core curriculum and selected prerequisites for study in social work. Once students are admitted to the program, they participate in a variety of learning experiences, including eight classroom courses and 450 hours in field placement and integrative seminar, enhanced by individual and group advising activities.

The B.A.S.W. curriculum, built upon on a liberal arts perspective, prepares students for generalist social work practice. The curriculum is based on an emphasis on a human rights and social justice perspective within an ecosystemic perspective. In addition, the B.A.S.W. program is committed to the promotion of individual and community well-being.

Generalist Social Work Practice Framework

The program's definition of generalist social work practice was prepared in consultation with faculty and is consistent with the generalist practice model of the Graduate School of Social Service. The curriculum prepares graduates for direct, generalist social work practice with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations, provided under the auspices of human service agencies and related institutions. Because emphasis is given to the common factors in social work, graduates have a strong base of knowledge and skills that can be adapted to particular settings, environments, and populations.

The program's generalist practice model is an integrative approach to practice, which attends to the profession's focus on person in environment. Students in the program learn to see beyond the narrow boundaries of separate cases and to appreciate client troubles (e.g., inadequate income, substance abuse, domestic violence) in the context of public issues (e.g., policy debates on welfare reform and health insurance) and agency regulations (e.g., eligibility criteria, screening procedures). They learn to move across system levels and among practice methods based on their assessment to improve the adaptive fit between person and environment in which person is a metaphor for the various size client systems.

The program's vision of generalist social work is distinguished by a common base of knowledge (i.e. ecosystems approach and person-in-environment framework) and common practice principles (i.e. centrality of the client and worker relationship and professional use of self). Fordham believes that a solid understanding and use of phases of assessment, planning, contracting, intervention, and evaluation permeate all social work practice, and continue to do so in light of changes in fields of practice, demographic trends, or in the reconfiguration of service delivery systems.

The knowledge and principles of generalist social work are put into practice through the use of common skills (i.e. engagement and contracting) and roles (i.e. advocate and facilitator). Generalist practice skills and roles are those that are easily adapted to use in diverse settings, across client populations, and levels of intervention that include individual, family, group, organization, and community.

Generalist practitioners have the capacity to move flexibly among roles, with a repertoire of skills applicable to work with client systems of varied sizes. This orientation serves graduates of the program throughout their professional careers. Graduates have the capacity to use their knowledge and skills in serving the needs of clients in a variety of social work venues. Generalist practice also serves as an excellent platform for education and training, including advanced social work practice and specialization in fields of practice, populations, or modalities. Generalist social workers are prepared for life-long learning with the tools to face professional challenges.

The Fordham B.A.S.W. program prepares graduates for direct, generalist social work practice with individuals, families, groups, communities, and organizations, provided under the auspices of human service agencies and related institutions. The education of students in the B.A.S.W. program emphasizes the common factors in social work with a broad range of client populations, in a variety of settings and on multiple levels of practice. Thus, graduates bring a strong base of generalist social work knowledge and skills to be adapted to particular settings, practice, environment, and population. This base is then broadened by specific knowledge about the employing agency, modes of practice, clients, community, constituencies, and other salient factors.

Combination of Curriculum Elements

The program's curriculum design incorporates two features: a commingled model of classroom education, and separate and distinct field instruction and advisement for students.

The commingled model of classroom courses is the component of the curriculum that includes both undergraduate and graduate social work students. The model takes advantage of the rich resources of the Graduate School of Social Service by having undergraduate social work students learn in the same classes along with graduate social work students in the foundation year of study. Students are therefore able to interact with a wider range of teaching faculty and fellow students than would be available to such a relatively small cohort.

The diversity of students in terms of age, race and ethnicity, employment history and status, and social work related experiences is remarkably similar to the diversity of graduate students, thus contributing to a “fit.” B.A.S.W. and M.S.W. students report positively on the learning model; that they are prepared for meeting graduate course expectations and that they find they are welcomed and encouraged to be active class members. With the use of master syllabi, common reading assignments and regular meetings of teaching faculty in foundation curriculum sequences further insures consistency across sections. Thus, the program can insure consistency in course content across the sections in which students are enrolled.

The field education component of the program is operated independently, thus enabling the program to maintain its distinct identity and achieve its objectives. A rigorous screening for undergraduate field placements to provide generalist practice opportunities and quality supervision is conducted. Students in field instruction participate in a bi-weekly integrative seminar solely for students in the B.A.S.W. program.

The advisement system of the program is operated independently and includes both individual and group components. The program's

advisement system supports the development of a sense of community and support among undergraduate social work students and program faculty. It complements the commingled classroom model, and provides forums to address the special needs of students launching social work careers and/or new educational pursuits following graduation.