Professional Development:
The International Journal of
Continuing Social Work Education

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Journal:	Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education
Article Title:	*Distance Education Evaluation: The Second Cohort*
Author(s):	*Christine B. Kleinpeter and Marilyn K. Potts*
Volume and Issue Number:	*Vol. 7 No. 1*
Manuscript ID:	*71004*
Page Number:	*4*
Year:	*2004*

Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education is published three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Winter) by the Center for Social Work Research at 1 University Station, D3500 Austin, TX 78712. Journal subscriptions are $110. Our website at www.profdevjournal.org contains additional information regarding submission of publications and subscriptions.

ISSN: 1097-4911

URL: www.profdevjournal.org **Email: www.profdevjournal.org/contact**

Distance Education Evaluation: The Second Cohort

Christine B. Kleinpeter, Psy.D. and Marilyn K. Potts, Ph.D.

The Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach, completed the second cycle of a three-year distance education (DE) program in May 2001. This part-time MSW program was based on an urban campus in southern California and offered in four locations on state university campuses in Bakersfield, Ventura, Chico, and Humboldt. Courses were offered through a combination of face-to-face delivery and interactive television (ITV). This is a partial replication study; the results from the first cohort are presented elsewhere (Potts & Hagan, 2000).

In the second cohort, students attended a traditional semester model, instead of the summer block field placement model used with the first cohort. Site Coordinators were employed to assist with experiential exercises and lead discussion groups (Kleinpeter & Potts, 2003). Students were linked by ITV in paired sites, 74 students total, 15-19 at each of 4 sites (37 students in each linked class). Comparisons were made between distance education (DE) students and 58 on-campus (OC) students (3-year, part-time comparison group) on grades, faculty evaluations, and field instructors' evaluations. Additionally, DE students evaluated their satisfaction levels with technology, effectiveness of instructors using technology, and local resources (e.g., library and student health services).

DE literature suggests that by the 1990s the costs of equipping classrooms for television transmission had dropped substantially and come within the reach of many educational institutions (Mehrotra, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001). The availability of two- way audio and video transmission persuaded many otherwise skeptical educators to give serious consideration to establishing DE courses or programs. By the late 1990s, many institutions of higher education were offering entire degree programs through ITV.

A number of studies have found that the educational outcomes of DE are comparable with those of traditional higher education (Biner et.al., 1994; Zirkin & Sumler, 1995; Potts & Hagan, 2000). These positive outcomes led to changes in accrediting bodies' standards that now address these new technologies and recognize the advantages of DE for fulfillment of institutional missions. DE provides invaluable service to those students previously denied access to higher education because of geographic or scheduling difficulties. Additionally, DE shows great promise in the areas of continuing professional education, personal enrichment, and lifelong learning.

Literature Review

Blakely (1992) indicated that the educators would need to deliver the content in a different format in a DE program, including the use of discussion leaders in the classroom and field instructors to monitor the development of practice skills. Blakely and Schoenherr (1995) concluded that "probably the most appropriate configuration of a DE program for social work would be ITV...This technology is highly interactive, allowing students and the instructor at the originating site to see and talk to students at the remote sites in real time" (p. 9). The authors recommended the use of on-site instructors who would be responsible for distribution of handouts, collecting written assignments, monitoring exams, acting as a discussion leader, and facilitating experiential activities. These authors concluded, "This method of education,

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particularly the use of compressed video, can provide a learning experience that is equal to that of a program presented in the traditional face-to-face classroom" (p. 10).

The University of North Dakota has offered both graduate and undergraduate courses in social work through the use of compressed video technology since 1990. Heitkamp (1995) reported that DE students were found to perform as well academically as on-campus students, and there were no differences found in students' satisfaction between the two groups.

Kelly (1993) used an on-site coordinator to facilitate discussion groups held at each site in an Iowa DE program. She stated that a lecture was held for one hour, followed by a question and answer period over the technology and an off-camera discussion of the content of each site. Rooney and Bibnus (1995) used facilitators to lead discussions at local sites in a DE program in child welfare. Michigan State University offers an MSW distance program using compressed video technology and faculty coordinators for all courses taught in the curriculum, including practice methods (Freddolino, 1996). Freddolino and Sutherland (2000) concluded that there were no statistically significant differences in students' overall perceptions of the classroom environments between DE and on-campus sites.

Coe and Elliott (1999) evaluated a graduate-level direct practice course taught through satellite television instruction. Results were compared with an on-campus direct practice course. Findings indicated that DE students were equivalent to on-campus students in terms of grade outcomes, interaction with the instructor and classmates, and perceptions of the instructor.

Hollister and McGee (2000) evaluated a graduate-level course on child welfare and substance abuse taught over ITV. Authors reported that DE students' performance and course grades were similar to those of on-campus students. Additionally, findings indicated that instructor-student communication was equivalent in both on-campus and DE cohorts.

Ouellette, Sells, and Rittner (1999) described a model of teaching an advanced practice methods course using a combination of ITV and web-based instruction. The authors found that most students involved in this technology-supported course reported a positive learning experience. They noted that students seemed to adapt more quickly to ITV that was similar to the traditional classroom (i.e., teacher-driven), and had more difficulty adapting to the web-based instruction that was a self-directed (i.e., student- driven) mode of learning.

Several authors have suggested that the fundamental issues in DE are teaching methods and new faculty roles (Purdy and Wright, 1992; Whitaker, 1995; and Guskin, 1994). Purdy and Wright (1992) stated "It is not that the technology underpinning DE drives the system but rather that fundamental changes in teaching style, technique, and motivation must take place to make the new 'classrooms' of the present and future function effectively" (p. 4).

The present study utilized a model of DE that included ITV and on-site coordinators as assistant instructors in the classroom (Hagan, Wilson, Potts, Wheeler & Bess; 1999). Additionally, the course instructors traveled to the off-campus sites two times during each semester in order to facilitate professional socialization.

Method

The present study utilized a model of DE that included ITV and on-site coordinators as assistant instructors in the classroom. Additionally, course instructors traveled to off-campus sites two times during each semester (three times for practice courses) in order to facilitate professional socialization and the development of practice skills. This study is a comparability analysis of DE and on-campus (OC) students in the equivalent model (i.e., three-year, part-time).

Data Collection and Instruments

Data on demographic characteristics, educational background, and social work experience were derived from a self-administered baseline questionnaire administered during the first week of the first

semester of the first academic year. Undergraduate GPAs and GRE scores were taken directly from students' application packets.

The baseline questionnaire included sections on diversity experience and multi-cultural sensitivity. The diversity experience scale contained four items concerning the extent to which various environments (i.e., childhood neighborhood, high school, current neighborhood, and current or most recent workplace) consisted of persons whose ethnicity was different from that of the respondent (1=most of same ethnicity to 5=most of different ethnicity). The multi-cultural sensitivity scale was a shortened version of a scale developed by Chau (1998). This six-point, 24-item index concerned comfort levels in dealing with culturally diverse clients, views of the extent to which minority group clients should be helped to adapt to mainstream culture, and the importance of cultural sensitivity in counseling. After recoding for directional consistency, higher scores reflected higher levels of multi-cultural sensitivity. The scale assessing multi-cultural sensitivity was re-administered at the end of the final semester of the program.

Student ratings of technology, instructional quality, and resources were based on a self-administered questionnaire administered at the end of the second semester of each academic year. This five-point, 18-item instrument measured three aspects of satisfaction: with the technology itself, the effectiveness of the instructor using the technology, and the availability of local resources (Haga & Heitkamp, 1995). Higher scores reflected higher levels of satisfaction.

A five-point scale is used by the University to evaluate all courses, with higher scores indicating more positive evaluations. Eight items concern clarity of objectives, consistency of grading, usefulness of assignments, reasonableness of expectations, preparation of instructor, effectiveness of delivery, availability during office hours, and overall teaching effectiveness.

At the end of each field placement, field instructors are asked to rate students on a wide variety of both micro and macro competencies. These ratings provide a valuable third-party assessment of learning outcomes. Ratings are based on performance in 16 content areas, each containing from three to 16 items (e.g., ethics and values; motivations; self-awareness; knowledge of agency and community; written and oral communication skills; application of theoretical concepts; and assessment, diagnosis, and intervention skills). Ratings range from one (unacceptable) to six (exceptional demonstration of skill development).

The instrument used by the Department of Social Work for its overall program evaluation consists of 30 items measured on a five-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of satisfaction. Items are aggregated into nine content areas. This instrument is administered to all students at the end of each academic year.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

At the beginning of the first semester, there were 78 DE students and 59 OC students who provided baseline data. Data were collected on the first day of class, drop outs were calculated on census date which is the third week of class. At census date, 77 students began the DE program. Demographic and other background characteristics are shown in Table 1. On average, DE students were nearly 7 years older than OC students. No significant gender differences were apparent, with a majority of females in both groups. OC students were more ethnically diverse (47.5% non-Hispanic white) compared to DE students (75.6% non-Hispanic white).

Educational Characteristics and Social Work Background

The group difference in undergraduate major neared significance, with DE students tending to have majored in psychology or sociology and OC students in social work/welfare or psychology (see Table 1). Undergraduate GPAs were similar between groups. Although quantitative and analytic GRE scores were not significantly different, DE students had higher verbal GRE scores. Coinciding with the age difference, DE students had signifi-

Table 1. Demographic and Background Characteristics

Characteristic	Distance Education (n=78)	Long Beach (n=59)
Age, Mean (±SD)		
t=4.63, p<.001	37.6 (±8.32)	31.0 (±8.36)
Gender, # (%)		
Female	65 (83.3)	46 (78.0)
Male	13 (16.7)	13 (22.2)
X2=0.33, df=1, p=.51		
Ethnicity, # (%)		
African American/Black	4 (5.1)	7 (11.9)
Asian/Pacific Islander	1 (1.3)	5 (8.5)
Hispanic/Latino	11 (14.1)	16 (27.1)
Non-Hispanic White	59 (75.6)	28 (47.5)
Other	3 (3.8)	3 (5.1)
X2=13.07, df=4, p=.01		
Undergraduate Major, # (%)		
Social Work/Welfare	12 (15.4)	17 (28.8)
Psychology	21 (26.9)	20 (33.9)
Sociology	22 (28.2)	8 (13.6)
Other	23 (29.5)	14 (23.7)
X2=7.11, df=3, p=.07		
Undergraduate GPA, Mean (±SD)		
t=1.68, p=.10	3.2 (±0.4)	3.1 (±0.4)
GRE Scores, Mean (±SD)		
Verbal		
t=2.93, p<.01	458.0 (±125.1)	397.8 (±84.5)
Quantitative		
t=0.30, p=.77	423.6 (±106.6)	417.3 (±101.4)
Analytic		
t=0.51, p=.61	450.0 (±121.5)	438.4 (±96.3)
Years Social Work Experience, Mean (±SD)		
t=5.29, p<.001	5.9 (±4.6)	2.6 (±2.5)
Diversity Experience, Mean (±SD)[a]		
t=3.61, p<.001	2.21 (±0.99)	2.84 (±0.95)
Multicultural Sensitivity, Mean ((±SD)[a]		
t=0.51, p=.61	5.06 (±0.57)	5.01 (±0.46)

[a]Diversity experience range=1 to 5. Multicultural sensitivity range=1-6. Higher scores indicate more extensive experience or higher levels of sensitivity.

cantly more years of social work experience (5.9 and 2.6, respectively).

Diversity Experience and Baseline Multi-Cultural Sensitivity

Coming into the program, students reported low to moderate levels of diversity experience on this five-point scale (see Table 1). DE students reported significantly less diversity experience than OC students (2.21 and 2.84, respectively).

On the other hand, students reported moderate to high baseline levels of multi-cultural sensitivity on this six-point scale (see Table 1). DE and OC students were similar in this regard (5.06 and 5.01, respectively).

Technology, Instruction, and Resources

Students' evaluation of technology, instructors' use of technology, and the availability of local resources ranged from 3.31-4.19 (1-5 scale), suggesting moderate levels of satisfaction (see Table 2). Only one group difference neared significance (year 2 satisfaction with quality of instruction), with Bakersfield students expressing slightly higher levels of satisfaction than those from Channel Islands. Otherwise, a somewhat mixed pattern was apparent. For example, Bakersfield students' scores regarding instructional quality were highest among the four sites in years 2 and 3 but lowest in year 1. Chico students' scores regarding the availability of local resources were highest in year 1 but lowest in year 2. It is unclear why year one is lower than other years. Perhaps an adjustment period is required for returning students to learn to utilize the new technologies of ITV and the web-based library services. A more through orientation to the technology at the beginning of the program cycle might improve the first year ratings of technology and resources. Technology training can also be improved for faculty who are first-time instructors in the DE program. Additionally, over the life of the three-year cohort, there were technology diffi-

Table 2. Satisfaction With Technology, Instruction, and Resources, By Distance Education Site, Mean (±SD)[a]

Time and Scale	Bakersfield	Channel Islands	Chico	Humboldt
Year 1				
Technology	3.80	3.44	3.72	3.63
F=0.67, p=.58	(±0.84)	(±0.56)	(±0.82)	(±0.66)
Instruction	3.31	3.37	3.65	3.79
F=1.31, p=.28	(±1.08)	(±0.72)	(±0.55)	(±0.51)
Resources	3.55	3.47	4.06	3.79
F=1.95, p=.13	(±1.01)	(±0.58)	(±0.72)	(±0.45)
Year 2				
Technology	3.95	3.56	3.46	3.51
F=1.95, p=.13	(±0.48)	(±0.53)	(±0.59)	(±0.75)
Instruction	4.06	3.61	3.88	3.85
F=2.41, p=.08	(±0.41)	(±0.61)	(±0.48)	(±0.36)
Resources	4.13	3.70	3.67	3.69
F=1.69, p=.18	(±0.63)	(±0.75)	(±0.54)	(±0.70)
Year 3				
Technology	4.19	4.11	3.70	4.04
F=1.38, p=.26	(±0.70)	(±0.57)	(±0.72)	(±0.76)
Instruction	4.10	3.87	3.81	3.88
F=0.55, p=.65	(±0.60)	(±0.70)	(±0.65)	(±0.63)
Resources	3.87	3.55	3.79	4.05
F=1.40, p=.25	(±0.83)	(±0.64)	(±0.82)	(±0.59)

[a]Range=1 to 5. Higher scores indicate more positive evaluations.

culties experienced by each site which were caused either by equipment failures or new technicians who were hired during the program cycle. Our evaluation of the technology seemed to mirror closely the actual technical failures that occurred at each site.

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations, on average, were high (i.e., over 4 on a 1-5 scale) and did not differ between DE and OC groups (see Table 3). Since the university aggregates course evaluations by the course rather than by the individual student, significance testing for individual courses was not possible. However, absolute levels on a course by course and site by site basis were revealing. These results are reported in detail in our final report (Kleinpeter, 2002) and provide implications for improvement of curriculum delivery. With the exception of three courses, DE evaluations were moderate to high (i.e., over 3). The exceptions were SW 550 (Computers in Social Services) in Bakersfield (1.57), Channel Islands (2.87), and Humboldt (2.69); SW 592 (Community Projects) in Humboldt (2.69); and SW 663 (Alcoholism and Substance Abuse) in Chico (2.97). It is notable that all of these courses were taught by part-time local instructors. The remaining site-specific DE evaluations ranged from 3.51-4.98.

Grades

Final GPAs were nearly identical (see Table 3). The more detailed analyses contained in our final report showed a mixed pattern (Kleinpeter, 2002). For most courses, DE students from some sites attained lower grades than on-campus students, while those from other sites attained higher grades than on-campus students. Final GPAs were very similar across the four sites, ranging from 3.70 for Channel Islands to 3.74 for Chico. Although students were similar in terms of admissions data (i.e., GRE and undergraduate GPAs), students did differ in terms of undergraduate major and years of experience. One may speculate that students in Humboldt and Chico, who had access to a BSW program, may have done better in some of the foundation courses due to the preparation they received as BSWs. However, Channel Islands and

Table 3. Course Evaluations, Final Gpa, And Changesin Multicultural Sensitivity Scores, Mean (±Sd)[a]

Variable	Distance Education	Long Beach
Course Evaluations t=0.73, p=.50	4.23 (±0.76)	4.33 (±0.44)
Final GPA t=0.63, p=.53	3.71 (±0.14)	3.73 (±0.11)
Baseline Multicultural Sensitivity Scale Scores	5.06 (±0.57)	5.01 (±0.46)
Final Multicultural Sensitivity Scale Scores	5.23 (±0.41) Paired t=1.85, p=.07	5.08 (±0.46) Paired t=0.58, p=.57

[a]Course evaluations range=1-5, with higher scores indicating more positive views. GPA range=1-4. Mulitcultural sensitivity range=1-5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sensitivity.

Table 4. Field Instructor Evaluations, First Placement, Mean (±Sd)[a]

Index	Distance Education	Long Beach
Ethics		
t=1.56, p=.12	4.80 (±0.66)	4.55 (±0.65)
Professional Role		
t=1.01, p=.32	4.57 (±0.62)	4.41 (±0.72)
Responsibility as Learner		
t=0.35, p=.73	4.57 (±0.69)	4.51 (±0.78)
Self-Awareness		
t=1.17 p=.25	4.53 (±0.69)	4.32 (±0.80)
Use of Field Instruction		
t=0.19, p=.85	4.62 (±0.66)	4.59 (±0.69)
Knowledge of Agency Goals		
t=1.07, p=.29	4.48 (±0.73)	4.30 (±0.71)
Knowledge of Community		
t=0.38, p=.71	4.32 (±0.68)	4.25 (±0.75)
Identification with Agency		
t=0.50, p=.62	4.21 (±0.74)	4.11 (±0.88)
Writing Skills		
t=0.75, p=.46	4.59 (±0.72)	4.45 (±0.90)
Oral Skills		
t=0.68, p=.50	4.69 (±0.75)	4.56 (±0.79)
Organizational Skills		
t=0.55, p=.59	4.75 (±0.68)	4.66 (±0.74)
Professional Use of Self		
t=1.23, p=.22	4.49 (±0.70)	4.26 (±0.87)
Application of Theory		
t=0.69, p=.49	4.37 (±0.74)	4.24 (±0.84)
Interviewing Skills		
t=0.88, p=.38	4.37 (±0.68)	4.19 (±0.96)
Assessment Skills		
t=1.31, p=.19	4.36 (±0.68)	4.10 (±0.86)
Intervention Skills		
t=0.30, p=.76	4.47 (±0.69)	4.41 (±0.66)
Overall Evaluation		
t=0.61, p=.54	4.69 (±0.65)	4.63 (±0.70)

Table 5. Field Instructor Evaluations, Second Placement, Mean (±Sd)[a]

Index	Distance Education	Long Beach
Ethics		
t=0.24, p=.81	5.00 (±0.58)	4.96 (±0.58)
Professional Role		
t=0.48, p=.63	4.94 (±0.66)	4.87 (±0.55)
Responsibility as Learner		
t=0.09, p=.93	4.83 (±0.72)	4.84 (±0.52)
Self-Awareness		
t=0.37, p=.71	4.80 (±0.62)	4.84 (±0.50)
Use of Field Instruction		
t=0.16, p=.87	4.95 (±0.69)	4.93 (±0.49)
Knowledge of Agency Goals		
t=0.04, p=.97	4.76 (±0.68)	4.75 (±0.58)
Knowledge of Community		
t=1.36, p=.18	4.83 (±0.62)	4.62 (±0.62)
Identification with Agency		
t=0.42, p=.68	4.52 (±0.71)	4.60 (±0.71)
Writing Skills		
t=0.39, p=.70	4.71 (±0.76)	4.77 (±0.50)
Oral Skills		
t=0.47, p=.64	4.77 (±0.82)	4.85 (±0.60)
Organizational Skills		
t=0.29, p=.77	4.80 (±0.78)	4.75 (±0.55)
Professional Use of Self		
t=0.62, p=.54	4.83 (±0.67)	4.74 (±0.54)
Application of Theory		
t=0.46, p=.64	4.81 (±0.62)	4.75 (±0.52)
Interviewing Skills		
t=1.49, p=.14	4.85 (±0.60)	4.65 (±0.57)
Assessment Skills		
t=0.80, p=.43	4.74 (±0.64)	4.61 (±0.60)
Intervention Skills		
t=0.31, p=.76	4.76 (±0.60)	4.71 (±0.55)
Overall Evaluation		
t=0.77, p=.44	4.81 (±0.60)	4.75 (±0.46)

[a]*Range=1-6. Higher scores indicate more positive evaluations.*

Bakersfield contained fewer undergraduate social work majors. Additionally, one could reason that the ongoing sites had the support of experienced site coordinators and field work instructors, which may have added to their success. On-campus students had fewer years of social work experience than DE students, which may have made the DE students better prepared for the practice courses.

Changes in Multi-Cultural Sensitivity

As noted above, DE and OC students' baseline scores on the multi-cultural sensitivity scale were nearly identical. As shown in Table 3, paired t-test results comparing scores at entry and exit from the program neared significance for DE students, improving slightly from 5.06 to 5.23, while those for OC students did not, improving negligibly from 5.01 to 5.08.

Field Instructor Ratings of Students

First-year field placement evaluations are shown in Table 4; second-year evaluations are shown in Table 5. For the first-year placement, field instructors' ratings of DE students ranged from 4.21 (identification with agency) to 4.80 (ethics) on a scale of 1-6. Ratings of OC students ranged from

4.10 (assessment skills) to 4.59 (use of field instruction). For the second-year placement, identification with agency and ethics were again rated lowest and highest among DE students (4.52 and 5.00, respectively). Notably, these areas also rated lowest and highest among OC students (4.60 and 4.96, respectively). Students in both the DE and on-campus part-time program models have several years of social work experience prior to admission to the MSW program and many continue at their place of employment during their years in the MSW program. One could reason that they have stronger identification with their supervisors and place of employment than with their field work agencies due to their history of employment. Also, students were assigned to their field work agencies and supervisors in settings that they have not worked in previously; therefore, some students hope to gain additional skills but return to their prior place of employment. In our case, 50% of our students were employees of public child welfare departments and had committed to returning to their home office after completing their degree programs.

Although DE students were rated slightly more positively than OC students in all 16 content areas during their first-year field placement, no significant differences were apparent. The overall evaluation for the first-year placement, which was aggregated across all areas, was 4.69 for DE students and 4.63 for OC students. During their second-year placement, field instructors rated DE students slightly more positively in 11 of 16 areas but, again, these differences were not significant. The overall evaluation for the second-year placement was 4.81 for DE and 4.75 for OC students.

Overall Program Evaluations

Overall program evaluations are shown for the final year only (see Table 6). The lowest rating for both DE and OC students concerned student services (3.23 and 3.09, respectively), which would be considered "neutral" on this 1-5 scale. The highest rating for both DE and OC students was for general perceptions (4.46 and 4.25, respectively). DE students had significantly higher evaluations than OC students regarding the curriculum and multi-cultural equity indices. Three other indices neared significance, with DE students evaluating three aspects of the program slightly more positively than OC students: faculty and administration, the milieu of the department, and general perceptions.

Table 6. Overall Program Evaluations, Final Year, Mean (±Sd)[a]

Index	Distance Education	Long Beach
Curriculum t=2.98, p<.01	4.10 (±0.54)	3.78 (±0.63)
Faculty and Administration t=1.66, p=.10	4.20 (±0.71)	3.98 (±0.78)
Facilities and Resources t=0.54, p=.59	3.86 (±0.89)	3.78 (±0.79)
Student Services t=0.14, p=.89	3.50 (±1.01)	3.52 (±0.75)
Milieu of Department t=1.84, p=.07	4.10 (±0.75)	3.86 (±0.73)
Faculty as Reference Group t=1.18, p=.24	3.75 (±0.78)	3.90 (±0.65)
Multicultural Equity t=3.65, p<.001	4.30 (±0.68)	3.88 (±0.65)
Student Equity t=0.96, p=.34	3.23 (±0.91)	3.09 (±0.87)
General Perceptions t=1.68, p=.09	4.46 (±0.57)	4.25 (±0.82)

[a]*Range=1-5. Higher scores indicate more positive evaluations.*

However, as noted above regarding individual course evaluations, there was considerable diversity across DE sites (Kleinpeter, 2002). For six indices, significant differences were apparent, but the direction of these differences varied. Regarding the curriculum, Bakersfield and Chico students were more positive than Long Beach students. Regarding faculty and administration, the milieu of the department, and multi-cultural equity, Bakersfield, Channel Islands, and Chico students were more positive than both Humboldt and Long Beach students. A different pattern was noted for facilities and resources, with Channel Islands exhibiting the lowest level of satisfaction. It is of note that Channel Islands students were located on a new campus that did not yet have many of the facilities available on an established campus.

Student Retention

In the fall of 1998, 78 students were admitted to

the DE MSW program. One student dropped out prior to the third week of classes, therefore 77 DE students were counted by the university's census date. Of the 77 students, one student moved to Long Beach and merged with the on-campus students. One student moved out of state and enrolled in another MSW program. Two students were dismissed for poor academic performance. Three students took medical leave from the program. Three students withdrew from the program for personal reasons. Sixty-seven students completed all coursework (this figure does not account for students who may be currently completing theses). The student retention rate was 87%.

Discussion

Curriculum

When reviewing the overall course evaluations for the three-year cycle, the trend continues that the lowest course evaluations result when part-time faculty are hired at off-campus locations. This was most notable in the computers course (SW 550) and in some cases with field seminar courses that require face- to- face instruction. Many of the part-time instructors were teaching similar courses in their home universities. Perhaps they did not fully appreciate how their course fit into our curriculum. They may not have understood how their course builds on other courses or how it provides the foundation for future courses as a full-time instructor in our department would understand. Social work curricula vary across programs, and many of the part-time instructors would have had experience teaching at the BSW level, rather than the MSW level, or were community practitioners rather than academic faculty members. The program will continue to hire part-time local faculty for these courses due to the "hands on" nature of the computers course and our perceived need for in-person interaction in field seminars. The DE Committee at CSULB has recommended that we increase monitoring of new, part-time faculty members through additional contact with the Long Beach Administration, the Research Sequence Chair, and the Director of Field Work in an effort to provide early mentoring in departmental policies and procedures, as well as course content. Evaluations of seasoned part-time local faculty are equivalent to those of on-campus faculty.

Technology

The students' ratings of technology improved over the three year cycle of the program. Because of the move in the Channel Islands site from the Northridge Campus Extension in Ventura, to the CSUCI Campus during this cycle, there were technical difficulties related to the purchase of new equipment and set up delays. This impacted Channel Islands, as well as Chico, because they were paired sites. In Humboldt, the equipment was upgraded during this program cycle in order to add additional microphones. We continue as a program to upgrade needed equipment at DE sites as the program expands to accommodate instructional needs.

Student Support Services

Some students have reported that it is difficult to access support services such as the health center or the library. This is due, in part, to differences between CSU campuses in school calendars, which means that, at times, our students are in sessions when the off-campus site is not in session. In this area, two steps were taken in preparation for our third cycle. With regard to health services and disability services, we have formalized a contract which outlines that students at each of the DE sites will receive health and disability services provided by the distance campuses and reimbursed by the host campus (Kleinpeter & Oliver, 2003). In this manner, our students will have access to those services in their own community. At this time, we have not yet been able to resolve the difference in academic calendars, which means that if the DE site campus is closed for a period of time due to school break or other holiday, our students would not have access to those services for short periods of time.

In regard to library services, some students have complained that they are in class during the available Saturday hours and that some cannot come to the library during weekdays due to employment. During our third DE program cycle, we have

encouraged the use of the Long Beach library in regard to doing research and ordering articles or textbooks. The CSULB library staff gave in-person orientations at each site for students to learn how to access the CSULB library and order resource materials. Although each DE site has a social work library, this has not been accessible for all students, so the web connection to the CSULB library will continue to be an important part of student support services. We are planning in the next program cycle to provide an extensive technology orientation which will assist students in utilizing the CSULB library through the web-based technology, rather than relying on the local libraries which may not include an extensive selection of social work literature. Through the CSULB web-based library services, the DE students can access any book available through the interlibrary loan program which includes several university libraries.

During the second DE program cycle, we had only one student who required the extended assistance of Disabled Student Services due to a loss of vision. The student was able to receive the needed services provided by the distance site campus. Generally, most of our students have private medical insurance through their employers, so we have had a low usage of health services.

Administration

In the first cohort of this program, the Graduate Advisor to the on-campus program assumed the duties of coordination of the DE program. In the second cycle, the program included collaboration with five universities. Assigned time for the Distance Education Coordinator and the addition of an Administrative Assistant were essential. Our third program cycle is staffed in a similar manner.

Site Coordinators

During the second cycle of the program, the role of the site coordinators was clearly outlined by the DE Committee at CSULB. It is hoped that the clear outline of responsibilities will assist site coordinators. It is also hoped that it will assist faculty in understanding how to use a site coordinator as an assistant instructor in the DE classroom. Additionally, site coordinators were brought on campus for trainings each semester for 1.5 days. The trainings were offered more often and with less content, as requested by the site coordinators. This format change in trainings seems to be more effective and will be continued in future cycles.

In conclusion, the mission of the DE program was twofold: 1) to increase the number of professionally trained social workers across the state, and 2) to assist other CSU campuses in the development of independent MSW programs. Many of the California State University campuses plan to have their own MSW programs, but due to budget constraints may utilize the DE program as an immediate way to assist their communities by the provision of graduate-level social workers until such time as their funding is appropriate to implement their mission of having an independent program. At CSULB, we are limited by our budget constraints to only offer four sites, which is adding approximately 20 new social workers, each three-year cycle, to the rural communities in the most need. By the end of the second cohort of the DE program, CSULB has graduated over 100 MSWs, many who live in rural parts of the state. Additionally, two CSU campuses (i.e., Bakersfield and Chico) have used the DE program as a springboard in opening their on-campus MSW program. Currently, Hayward and Humboldt campuses are also developing their own programs. The faculty and administration of CSULB are extremely proud of the outcomes of the DE program.

As state budgets are constrained, many departments of social service and other institutions of higher learner may consider DE models including ITV and web-based approaches as a way to provide continuing social work education to students who are unable to participate in traditional social work programs due to work and family responsibilities. Such new teaching methods have the advantage of taking the education to the student population in their workplace or local community setting. These new technologies will make continuing social work education available to a larger group of individuals in the future, particularly residents of rural communities.

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