

Experiences of Social Work Students, Faculty, and Staff with Disabilities: Photovoice-Inspired Project

Instructional Ideas

Funded by CSWE Special Projects Fund, the purpose of this Council on Disability and Persons with Disabilities' (CDPD) project was to provide a creative and empowerment-based approach for social work students, faculty, and staff to share their experiences in social work programs and on college campuses through a photovoice-inspired approach. To increase the inclusivity of the project, the type of data collected was widened to include photos, sound collages, scrap booking, poetry, or other creative expressions.

This project relates to three of the Council's charges. The Council is charged to "stimulate initiatives and activities that bring the social, political, and economic issues of disability strongly within the framework of social work education". Inviting social work students, faculty, and staff to document their experience of disability in social work academe and education provides a creative venue for drawing attention to social, political, and economic issues of disability. The Council is also charged to "recommend activities to the CSWE Board, commissions, and membership that advance inclusive participation of persons with disabilities". The proposed project directly asks for the participation disabled students, faculty, and staff. The photos and videos can potentially also help to "identify procedures that impede full participation", which is another charge of the Council.

The Council would like the collected art to be used in social work courses to spark discussion about the experiences of social work students, faculty, and staff, both positive and negative. These materials could help students learn about disability, form possible actions in collaboration with disabled people, inspire ideas for policy advocacy, or disability community-connected research.

Below, we provide some instructional and discussion question ideas for social work courses. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but is meant to stimulate instructor creativity. We also encourage instructors to share with the Council their innovations in using these materials.

Possible Instructional Ideas:

- Students can complete a critical reflection of the themes presented in the art compendium as an assignment
- For in-class discussion, students can review art compendium submissions to identify relevant issues, action ideas, policy needs, and possible policy strategies
- For student researchers, they can identify the strengths and limitations of the methodology used to collect student, faculty, and staff experiences

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What themes do you notice across the submissions, both positive and negative?

- What voices are represented in the submissions? What voices are missing? Why do you think that is occurring?
- How could these perspectives and voices be amplified in social work education? Social welfare policy? Social work research?
- What are some social work educational policy implications that the submissions suggest?
- How might the social work profession realize disability justice?