



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Priorities for Improving Social Work Education
CSWE Commission on Research
November 2016

As a way to respond to CSWE’s Commission on Research’s (COR) official charge “to provide leadership in establishing key research priorities” for improving social work education, we crafted eight possible research priorities based on the mission of CSWE, a scan of its major activities and initiatives, and a review of the current environmental context of social work education. We conducted a formal survey of all Commission and Council members in the summer of 2014 to elicit their own importance ratings of the priorities and to invite comment. Participants loudly affirmed the draft priorities. In fact, over three quarters of respondents (N=93) rated every priority as extremely or very important and over half of the participants rated 6 of the 8 priorities as “extremely important.”

At the 2015 Annual Program Meeting (APM) in Denver we sponsored a “Connect” session for the larger membership community to invite dialogue the draft research priorities. This too was affirming of the effort to move the organization toward an even stronger research presence in the field. The desire to enrich the interface of research and social work education in particular and to be transparent and above-board about those priorities echoes the recent calls for developing a “science of social work” and for using research to meet the Grand Challenges facing our society.

This COR initiative to recommend research priorities may serve to clarify what is important to CSWE as an organization at this time in its history as it again begins a strategic planning process. In that way, these priorities can affirm, support and direct decision-making of the staff and volunteer leaders as they consider what goals and initiatives to pursue and how to allocate resources and energy. Different arms of the organization- Commissions and Councils, as well as the central administration- are likely to be validated to see how their own efforts fit with the priorities and are already helping move the organization forward in terms of its organization’s research mission and scientific agenda.

The COR, as part of its charge, pledges to help CSWE grapple with the questions and action implications associated with these priorities, catalog CSWE’s (and other organizations) efforts that give voice to them, and to periodically update the priorities.

Research Priority

- 1) Supporting the investigation of “best practices” in assessing and teaching competencies (knowledge, values, skills) in learner-centered environments across the curriculum
- 2) Continuing to refine and expand the collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant data on important characteristics of BSW, MSW, and doctoral programs, applicants, students, graduates, and faculty in social work in the United States
- 3) Identifying instructional innovations and new models of successful interprofessional education with relevance for 21st century social work practice.
- 4) Supporting inquiry around the outcomes of online and hybrid education and the consistency on online programs with accepted standards of “quality” in online learning
- 5) Supporting scientific inquiry into the empirical base of major aspects of curriculum policies and accreditation priorities
- 6) Assessing the impact of social work education and research related to advancement of human rights, social justice, and the diminution of disparities in health, mental health, and human services
- 7) Supporting the identification of “best practices” in research instruction, scientific inquiry, the critical evaluation of methods and analysis, and effective/judicious/thoughtful use of research findings in practice
- 8) Supporting inquiry around the correspondence and congruence between the current and emerging roles and activities of practicing social workers and current and anticipated curriculum content