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Understanding Student Perspective's around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the School of Social Work

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2022 Mini Assessment Grant Progress Report

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Project Overview: The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee within the School of Social Work, co-chaired by Drs. Yelick and Sherwood sought to examine the domains of the implicit curriculum of the School of Social Work at Western Michigan University, which is preparing for re-accreditation through the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The project seeks to discover the experiences of students in the School of Social Work at Western Michigan University related to the implicit curriculum as well as the perspectives of the students within the School of Social Work around the dimensions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Therefore, this project utilized a mixed-methods sequential research design utilizing a survey assessing student perspectives around the implicit curriculum and climate students experience while in the School of Social Work. Open-ended questions within the survey were also utilized to gain a broader perspective on student experiences. There were six online focus groups that focused on the experiences of students in the program using ability and disability, gender and gender identity, and racism as the dimensions of diversity.

Project Standing: This project was initiated February 2022 with an anticipated completion date of December 2022. The co-chairs of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee have been sifting through the quantitative and qualitative data and are currently examining the results. A report is being prepared for the School of Social Work to be shared at the upcoming faculty meeting. Once the results are shared and discussed, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee will finalize the report and submit the report to the re-accreditation committee for inclusion in the self-study, which is submitted to CSWE. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee did share preliminary results (see appendices A and B) with the faculty in the School of Social Work, which was utilized in part to make minor changes to the advising protocols and provided the Director of the School of Social Work with some intel on student perspectives around the implicit curriculum. Once the full report is finalized, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee will make recommendations to the School of Social Work as well as within the self-study for re-accreditation to improve student experiences within the School of Social Work.

Project Budget: The project budget was $1440.00, which included hiring a part-time graduate student for 60 hours ($20.00 per hour) and purchase of a software package to support data analysis of the qualitative findings ($240.00).

Project Goals: One of the goals of this project was to aid in the re-accreditation process within the School of Social Work, a goal that is currently being achieved; however, a secondary goal of this project was to establish a mechanism for assessing students' experiences with the implicit curriculum and overall climate of the School of Social Work. There were 167 students (MSW and BSW combined) who completed the survey, which resulted in a 39% response rate ($N = 423$). Although this response rate is low, it is considered standard according to research experts (CITE). Of note, there were 97 individual responses to the open-ended questions presented within the survey, which provided context to the quantitative elements within the survey (see Appendix B for redacted results). These responses provide nuanced context around student experiences and demonstrate that providing students with an opportunity to provide feedback, results in students sharing their experiences. This then leads to change and growth within the School of Social Work as students provide their experiences, positive and negative, and the School of Social Work can respond to those experiences.

Project Impact: While the overall impact of this project is still being examined, as the final results are being completed and disseminated, this project as already affected faculty and staff within the School of Social Work. The School of Social Work seeks to be a learner-centered program focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Within the project, students were able to provide feedback on the areas within the program where the School of Social Work needed improvement. In one area, MSW-level students identified advising as being problematic. Given these preliminary results, the School of Social Work has begun to implement new strategies to improve the advising experiences. The School of Social Work has requested faculty be more communicative with their advising students and providing in-person as well as remote office hours to ensure students can access their advisor when needed. Finally, the 167 student-level responses provided the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee with rich data around students' experiences with the implicit curriculum, climate, and diversity, equity, and inclusion within the School of Social Work (see Appendix A for the preliminary survey results). Once these results are finalized and disseminated to the School of Social Work, a commitment to continued efforts to ascertain feedback from students could be made from leadership within the School of Social Work and the broader College of Health and Human Services.

Appendix A

Preliminary Quantitative Findings

Below is a summary of the final data collected from the DEI survey. Section 1 includes programmatic demographic data. Section 2 provides summary data from the Implicit Curriculum. Section 3 provides summary data on the culture and climate results.

<u>Section 1: Programmatic Demographic Data Results</u>

A total of 167 students have responded to the survey since March 2022. The following data provide preliminary programmatic data results. At this time participant characteristics will not be shared.

	Variable	Response N	Valid Percent
Degree	**MSW**	114	68%
	BSW	52	32%
Missing = 1 (0.9%)			
Geographic Location (MSW ONLY)	**Benton Harbor**	8	7%
	Grand Rapids	62	55%
	Kalamazoo	42	37%
MSW Program	**Advanced Standing – Full Time**	13	11%
	Advanced Standing – Part Time	10	9%
	Standard/Extended Study Full Time	38	34%
	Standard/Extended Study Part Time	50	45%
Missing = 3 (2.6%)			
MSW Year	**First Year**	34	20%
	Second Year	53	47%
	Third Year or More	25	22%
Program Specialization	**Trauma Across the Life Span**	27	36%
	TF-CBT	15	20%
	School Social Work	30	27%
	Geriatrics	1	1.3%
	Gerontology	1	1.3%
	Macro/PP&A	3	3.9%
Missing = 37 (32%)			
BSW Grade Level	**Senior**	28	58%
	Junior	15	31%
	Sophomore	5	10%
Missing = 4 (7.7%)			
Currently in Field	**Yes**	64	74%
	No	22	26%
Missing = 81 (49%)			
Hours in Field	**Less than 15**	4	6%
	15 to 20	51	81%
	More than 20	8	13%
Missing = 104 (62%)			

Section 2: Implicit Curriculum Survey Results

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Student Support Services	Effective Orientation	143	17%	46%
	Uncomplicated Course Registration	142	20%	51%
	Funds/Scholarships Available	144	32%	19%
	Writing Services Available	142	7%	54%
	Access to Library Databases	144	5%	78%
	Able to Communicate with Librarians	144	5%	55%
	Access to Technology	143	4%	73%
	Sufficient Technology Assistance	142	7%	55%
	Up-to-date Technology	143	7%	60%
	Guidance for Career	143	22%	44%

Implications: While there were overwhelmingly positive responses to the student support services; there are some areas of concern as well. Approximately 22% of students disagree or strongly disagree that there are adequate guidance for career, more than 30% of students disagree or strongly disagree that there are adequate funds/scholarships available, and about a fifth of students disagree or strongly disagree that the orientation and course registration systems are effective/uncomplicated.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Experiences with Faculty/Instructors	Faculty/Instructors are available outside of class	144	6%	68%
	Faculty/Instructors respond to emails timely	144	17%	58%
	Faculty/Instructors are knowledgeable	144	2%	80%
	Faculty/Instructors facilitate critical thinking discussions	144	6%	74%
	Faculty/Instructors create safe and respectful learning environments	143	4%	76%
	Faculty/Instructors are responsive to student feedback	144	11%	60%
	Faculty/Instructors set reasonably high expectations	144	5%	66%
	Faculty/Instructors provide feedback about assignments that helped my writing	143	12%	56%
	Faculty/Instructors provide feedback that improves critical thinking	143	10%	62%
	Faculty/Instructors assign grades fairly	143	5%	71%
	Faculty/Instructors effectively facilitate discussion related to diversity	142	8%	63%

Implications: Similarly, to the above, the responses were overwhelmingly positive; however, 17% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that faculty and instructors respond to emails in a timely fashion, while 12% and 10% disagree or strongly disagree that faculty and instructors provide feedback that improves writing and critical thinking. Finally, 11% of students disagree or strongly disagree that faculty and instructors are responsive to student feedback.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Experiences with Courses	Quality of Instruction was consistently high	144	20%	55%
	Classes are engaging	143	6%	61%
	Classes provide high-quality instruction	141	9%	57%
	Classes prepare me for the type of work I want to do	142	12%	55%
	Classes create an environment respectful of different opinions	142	4%	69%
	Course Readings/Assignments further knowledge	142	6%	65%

Implications: While nearly 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that classes create an environment respectful of different opinions, 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the quality of instruction was consistently high while 12% disagreed or strongly disagreed that classes prepare them for the type of work they want to do.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Experiences with Community	SSW provides a positive atmosphere	141	2%	69%
	SSW is a safe and comfortable environment	141	2.4%	71%
	There are opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities	141	11%	50%
	My program provides a welcoming space for students	140	5%	66%
	Peers contribute to a positive community experience	140	1%	70%
	Staff/Administrators are responsive to student concerns	90	10%	56%

Implications: Approximately 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that peers contribute to a positive community experience, while nearly 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the School of Social Work provides a positive atmosphere and a safe and comfortable environment.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Experiences with Academic Advisors	I meet with my faculty advisor at least once per semester	141	34%	42%
	My academic advisor is available when I need	141	12%	48%
	I am comfortable discussing curriculum needs with my academic advisor	141	10%	60%
	My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the curricular/program expectations	141	10%	56%
	My academic advisor provides support	139	14%	50%
	My academic advisor provides direction	140	13%	50%
	My academic advisor shares similar interest to me	140	14%	38%
	I do not feel like I need the services of a faculty advisor	140	53%	14%

	I seek advising services from faculty/instructors other than my identified academic advisor	139	25%	43%
	There are faculty/instructors who share similar interests with me	140	4%	57%
	Faculty/Instructors are available to consult with me	140	3%	67%

Implications: Approximately, 48% of students agreed or strongly agreed that faculty and instructors are available to consult with as needed. However, 14% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that their academic advisor provides support and 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their academic advisor provides direction.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Experiences with Field Placement	My program has field placement options consistent with my professional goals	80*	4%	81%
	I was placed in one of my top options for field placement	80	8%	86%
	My field placement helps meet my professional goals	80	6%	80%
	My field placement provided the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in courses	80	9%	84%
	My field placement is/was sufficiently challenging	80	17%	74%
	My field placement increased my ability to work effectively with others from backgrounds different from my own	80	4%	85%
	I often feel/felt overwhelmed at my placement	80	40%	37%
	My field coordinator addressed my needs/concerns related to field placements	80	4%	79%
	The field supervision I receive/received included clear performance expectations	80	16%	70%
	The quality of supervision within my field placement is/was high	80	20%	61%

Note for this section, only students that indicated completing or currently completing field were prompted.

Implications: Students had overwhelmingly positive experiences within their field placements, with 81% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the program offered placement options consistent with career goals and that they were placed in a top choice for their field placement. Approximately, 84% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their field placement provided the opportunity to apply knowledge learned within their courses and 85% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their field placement increased their ability to work effectively with others from backgrounds different from their own. Just about 37% of students did agree or strongly agree with the sentiment that they were overwhelmed with placement, while nearly one fifth of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that their supervision within field was high and 16% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the field supervision included clear performance expectations.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Experiences with Diversity	My program supports and encourages ability diversity	140	6%	65%
	My program supports and encourages gender diversity	140	5%	67%
	My program supports and encourages international diversity	140	5%	63%
	My program supports and encourages race/ethnic diversity	140	5%	70%
	My program supports and encourages religious/spiritual diversity	140	7%	56%
	My program supports and encourages sexual identity diversity	140	3%	66%
	My program supports and encourages socio-economic status diversity	140	7%	63%
	My program has helped me recognize intolerance/injustice for diverse groups	140	4%	70%
	My program has helped me communicate effective with others from backgrounds different from my own	140	4%	67%
	My program has made me feel isolated from others in class when discussing diversity	139	53%	18%
	My program has made me feel that my opinions were not respected	139	59%	10%
	My program has made me push to adopt "politically correct" attitudes that I don't share	139	49%	13%
	Program includes diversity within admissions	139	7%	51%
	Program includes diversity within courses	139	7%	66%
	Program includes diversity within assignments/readings	139	10%	60%
	Program includes diversity within field placement settings	138	4%	60%

Implications: Overall, students had positive experiences with diversity, with 70% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the program supports and encourages race and ethnic diversity and has helped students recognize intolerance and injustice for diverse groups. Approximately, 10% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the program includes diversity within assignments and readings. Additionally, 18% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the program made them feel isolated from others in class when discussing diversity, 10% agreed or strongly agreed that their opinions were not respected, and 13% agreed or strongly agreed that the program pushed them to adopt "politically correct" attitudes.

Section 3: Culture and Climate Results

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
	The SSW is welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds	139	3%	67%
	People like me are represented in the curriculum	138	10%	58%
	People like me are represented among the faculty/instructors	139	16%	57%
	I feel comfortable being able to express all aspects of my identity within the SSW	139	12%	61%
Student Voice	I feel comfortable voicing my concerns within the SSW	139	8%	63%
	I feel like the SSW listens to students on matters that affect them	139	9%	53%
	I feel like the SSW involves students in decisions that affect students	139	10%	47%
	The SSW is harassment-free environment	139	2%	62%
	I feel safe reporting an incident of harassment	139	4%	63%
	The SSW has a positive image with students	139	4%	62%
	The SSW follows through on promises made to students	139	6%	44%

Implications: There were some positive responses from students regarding student voice with nearly 67% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the School of Social Work is welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds and 62% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing that the School of Social Work is a harassment-free environment and that students feel safe reporting incidents of harassment. However, 16% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that people like them are represented among the faculty/instructors. Additionally, 12% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed they were comfortable being able to express all aspects of their identity within the School of Social Work.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
	The SSW is achieving its mission	139	4%	59%
	The vision for the SSW reflects the goals of the field	139	2%	66%
	The SSW's culture aligns with the profession's values	139	2%	68%
School of Social Work	I am happy with the direction of the SSW	139	5%	63%
	The SSW has adequate staffing to support students	139	17%	46%
	Providing high quality service is a priority for the SSW	139	9%	55%
	The definition of success for the SSW is clear to me	138	13%	52%

Implications: While 68% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the School of Social Work's culture aligns with the profession's values, 17% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the School of Social Work has adequate staffing to support students.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Physical Accessibility	My building is accessible	139	4%	55%
	I do not have any difficulties access my physical classes	139	3%	57%
	There is support available in the event I am unable to access physical locations as needed	139	2%	43%
	The SSW is accessible for people of diverse backgrounds	139	2%	61%
	Extracurricular events/activities are accessible within the SSW	139	8%	39%

Implications: While there is not a large percentage of students that disagree or strongly disagree with any one of these statements, of note is that nearly 10% of students had disagreed or strongly disagreed that extracurricular events and activities were accessible within the School of Social Work.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Online Accessibility	The online capabilities of the SSW effectively meet my learning needs	139	7%	59%
	Adequate support is readily available in the event problems arise with the online technology needed to be successful in my courses	139	7%	52%
	Navigating the online systems needed for my program is uncomplicated	139	10%	56%

Implications: Similar to the above, not a large percentage of students had disagreed with any one of these statements; yet nearly 10% of students had disagreed or strongly disagreed with each of these statements.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Faculty/Instructors in the SSW	The SSW employs diverse representation in leadership, faculty/instructors, and staff	139	16%	47%
	There is effective communication between the instructors and students	139	7%	59%
	The faculty/instructors provide a safe classroom experience	139	4%	73%
	Faculty/instructors are effective in online teaching modalities	139	11%	56%
	The faculty/instructors provide a safe remote learning environment	139	1%	72%
	I feel respected by faculty/instructors	139	1%	73%
	I am comfortable informing faculty/instructors of my need for ADA accommodations	139	2%	46%

	Faculty/Instructors are receptive to my ADA accommodation needs	139	1%	40%

Implications: Approximately 73% of students agreed or strongly agreed that faculty and instructors provide safe classroom experiences, 73% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel respected by faculty and instructors, and more than 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the faculty and instructors provide safe remote learning environments. However, 16% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the School of Social Work employs a diverse representation in leadership, faculty/instructors, and staff and 11% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that faculty and instructors are effective in online teaching modalities.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Academic Advisors in SSW	The SSW informed me of my academic advisor	139	22%	53%
	I know how to contact my academic advisor	139	7%	70%
	My academic advisor involves me in decisions that affect my progress toward graduation	138	19%	45%

Implications: Approximately 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they know how to contact their academic advisor, however, 22% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the School of Social Work informed me of my academic advisor. Approximately, 19% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that their academic advisor involves them in decisions that affect their progress toward graduation.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Field Coordinators within the SSW	I am provided adequate support in finding field placements	138	7%	63%
	My field advisor is knowledgeable about field-related expectations	138	2%	70%
	My field advisor involves me in decisions that affect my field placement	138	4%	65%

Implications: Overwhelmingly, students had positive responses in all aspects of their field coordinators within the School of Social Work.

Variable		Response N	% Disagree	% Agree
Communication within the SSW	The SSW effectively communicates with me	139	8%	62%
	There is effective communication between leadership and students	139	11%	51%
	I get enough feedback about how well I am doing	139	15%	50%
	I feel that I am recognized for my performance within the SSW	139	17%	39%

Implications: There were a number of concerns raised in this section, with 17% of students disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they feel recognized within the School of Social Work. Additionally, 15% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they get enough feedback about their progress and nearly 11% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is effective communication between leadership and students.

Appendix B

Open-Ended Survey Questions – Redacted

Implicit Curriculum Scale – Open-ended responses

Question 31: Please feel free to provide comments, context, or your feelings about the student support services:

Positive responses:

1. There are wonderful student resource options!
2. Writing center is amazing. Director [REDACTED] is the best.
3. Without [REDACTED], I would not have made it through my first semester. I felt so lost and I had no idea what was going on. I had no idea what to expect going into the program. No information about the program was sent to me other than a Bronco ID and an email. [REDACTED] has helped me so much and so many others that I have talked to, and she isn't even my field liaison.
4. There was some difficulty getting in touch with an academic advisor to discuss career and class options, but after connecting it has gone well.
5. I have not had to utilize many due to my whole program being during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have been able to access library and other Information via remote from home easily.
6. I have not had to use many student support services but I know that there is a lot of support out there if I were to need it. The registration process has always been straightforward and I have felt well-informed and supported with career guidance
7. I have not used writing services, tech assistance, or librarian services. I have never been told about the guidance for my career but I have had professors that were helpful.
8. There is adequate guidance for jobs only in the Grand Rapids area.

Responses raising concerns:

1. Unfortunately, I feel completely unsupported financially as I journey through my master's. It is concerning to see Western Michigan University invest in themselves rather than their students.
2. I have received a scholarship through western and the social work program in my previous years at western but I feel like I don't get them when I desperately need them. I have several bills to pay that I do not get paid enough to pay them and I still have $900 in tuition payments to pay. I don't even know what I am going to do. I have such a high gpa for a senior in college and there are no scholarships being given to me like I definitely need.
3. I have not received any support in regard to career readiness or obtaining licensure from the School of Social Work, itself. I have from my field placement supervisor, but not from anyone within the School of Social Work, itself. Additionally, I do not feel any sense of belonging in connection to this program. Granted, I believe that is primarily due to COVID-19. However, it is an absolute disservice to this cohort of graduate students as our professional networks are absolutely lacking. Lastly, I have not had great experiences with the way advisors are set up in this program. Though I recognize that I can reach out to them, none of my advisors have ever reached out to me. I feel like I don't even have an advisor because of this system. It just sucks and feels pretty isolating.
4. I don't feel that we as students are told the different options there are for social work professions until we get closer to our concentration year, which by then we have already had to make a decision on what our concentration will be.
5. COVID made direct contact more difficult (higher work loads>less access)
6. I have received very limited support from them. I also have received wrong information from advisors and have not gotten the help I needed in areas such as registering for classes that I need for my school of social work certification.

7. Many of the items listed are availble within the university at large, but as a masters student who did not attend WMU as an undergrad, I had to lead myself to get connected to those resources because they were not advertised to my by the school.
8. My advisor changed without anyone notifying me, so it was hard to get in contact with someone to help me through planning my future courses. I heard that this happened to many other students as well.
9. There are a million career paths you can take within the world of social work and I don't feel like the program does a good job of helping you narrow the field and working with you on next steps for narrowing it to what you really want to do and how to go about doing it.

Other responses:

1. I haven't sought out any technology support, so I don't feel I can answer those questions. However I do assume that it's easier to be in the program when you own or have access to your own technology like I do. Orientation was everything I had already read through in the program materials online.
2. I have not attempted to contact the librarians for any needs, nor have I ever used the technology assistance.
3. I have a lot of "neither agree nor disagree" because I have yet to start the program. As for course registration process - I've used online registration through other schools that were a little less complicated/helped visualize what a school week would look like as you picked out classes.
4. No Concerns

Question 33: Please feel free to provide comments, context, or your feelings about the faculty or instructors within the School of Social Work:

Positive responses:

1. I feel that the faculty are very knowledgeable and they offer great perspectives. The perspectives that are offered are shared in a thoughtful and respectful manner.
2. FACULTY IS AWESOME! There should be more support all around for staff
3. For the most part, faculty instructors are great. I have had a few that are not as knowledgeable, but not many.
4. For the most part, instructors were very good. I feel like the online experience took away from a lot of courses honestly. There were a few courses I felt like would have been more beneficial if they were in person, especially for the instructors who didn't seem as prepared to teach an online course due to COVID.
5. I have enjoyed nearly all of my instructors within the School of Social Work. These instructors truly care about us as people and are willing to make accommodations to support students. I feel very prepared to enter my career because of the instructors at Western.

Responses raising concerns:

1. All of the instructors are great, fair, knowledgeable and respectful. I've learned to much from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They are tremendous instructors and I want to thank the university for hiring them and to give them a huge shoutout for being effective instructors that are passionate about the field of social work. I've learned so much from them and I will always be grateful for them and take their teachings into the field of social work. There is one instructor that is not beneficial for student learning, growth, and voice. Her name is [REDACTED]. In virtual meetings, I have seen her give negative facial expressions and body movements like rolling her eyes and signing when a student is talking. Her instructions are difficult to understand and when students ask her a question pertaining to the syllabus or any assignments, she doesn't use the ability of minimal encouragers and instead, she rolls her eyes and sighs. I have talked to multiple students who have expressed concerns about her teaching style and some of them have reported her and told me that nothing will come of it. This is unfortunate because if multiple students are reporting her behaviors and gestures to the university, then I strongly believe that it's the university's responsibility to investigate the issue especially since WMU promotes that they want their students to be successful and to have instructors that promote student voice, growth and respect. This is an alarming situation because I have read her reviews on rate my professor and they are below average. And I hope that the university can look further into the situation for the benefit and growth of the current and future students. And for the reputation of WMU

and WMU's Social Work program. WMU has been a great experience but it is alarming that a significant amount of students have issued their concerns about this instructor and nothing has come of it. We as a community must make our student's voice and concerns

2. At times it is difficult being a Black student because conversations in class are very white-opinion based.

3. Faculty and instructors within the School of Social Work lead discussions that support their ideas, beliefs, and opinions. If you do not agree, you are not welcome in discussions. The instructors do not present their opinions as their thoughts but instead as facts, and often when presenting 'facts' do not use any evidence or research to support their 'data'.

4. Few of my instructors have been able to integrate discussion about systemic racism into larger context discussions.

5. First, I'd like to say that I firmly believe there are some School of Social Work instructors who excel at effectively facilitating discussions related to diversity. With that being said and in making a broad generalization, School of Social Work faculty/instructors do not effectively facilitate discussions related to diversity. I have multiple examples of this. In one research course I took this past year, we were encouraged to only focus on finding "normal" people for our research subjects. What our instructor then clarified is that we should not be seeking to work with incarcerated or formally incarcerated people and severely mentally ill folks. Although I can recognize that this is due to HSIRB processes, it was an incredibly inappropriate way of communicating this to MSW students. In particular, MSW students with minute experiences in research. Another example, in different class, an instructor brought up LGBTQ relationship. The instructor said that LGBTQ individuals are more promiscuous than heterosexual individuals, which led to a conversation about bisexual women being promiscuous. The instructor did not have the skills to facilitate this conversation and honor the nuances of sexuality. She said she read this information in a book and wanted to see how the class felt. However, she did not check any of the biphobia and homophobia happening the space. Instead, she merely relied upon the LGBTQ students in class to defend themselves and their own community. This absolutely communicated that I would not be safe to come out to this instructor because of potentially experiencing homophobia, invasive questions, and assumption-based microaggressions. One more example, and one that comes from our School's director, [REDACTED]. I cannot remember where I witnessed this webinar, but I was viewing a video on motivational interviewing. Much of the examples in this webinar involved weight loss. As a fat person, this is already touchy for me because rarely are conversations on weight loss actually affirming for fat people. Instead, they tend to be stigmatizing, discriminatory, and just plain mean. In this webinar, [REDACTED] popped on screen to talk about weight loss. One comment she made about this was to lose weight in order to keep her husband happy. I am absolutely paraphrasing here, but this was what I interpreted. My heart broke hearing this. What this communicated to me is that thin people are the only ones worthy of relationships. Furthermore, I have never seen any faculty/instructor grapple with weight bias in social work fields. In fact, there are many missing conversations in our programs. For example, I do not believe the School of Social Work is actually producing culturally competent social workers. This is primarily due to the fact that this program will not NAME racism and white supremacy. Not merely name, but explicitly name these systems as violent and traumatizing for folks of color. I have never been in any classroom space that has grappled with social work's own racist history. Overall, there feels like this fear of being controversial of being sued. It is so disappointing for a school to be more worried about getting in trouble than worried about allowing MSW students to leave their programs still being racist, homophobic, ableist, etc.

6. I currently have an instructor that provides little to no feedback on writing assignments. She has strict guidelines, but no feedback. It would be helpful to have some sort of comment regarding changes that she would like to have made, when necessary.

7. I think overall most professors work to ensure their materials help progress us as students. But sometimes the mundane tasks and assignments can diminish the larger picture of the course or class we are in. At times I question what course I'm in and how it will help me in the field.

8. I've only had a few instances of miscommunication with instructors. My thoughts are that they take on too much and don't have time to get back to us individually in some cases.

9. Only a handful of professors have pushed critical thinking, provide feedback, and relate to real life situations in social work. Many professors have surface level discussions and do not make the environment completely open/comfortable to push the discussions further. Many instructors have office hours, or state they are available but many have been difficult to get a hold of to provide further instruction/answer questions, and be supportive of students.

10. Some faculty and staff are very informative and helpful, while others are not. I have had faculty who respond immediately and some who do not answer emails barely at all, even important ones pertaining to field placements and problems happening in the placement. Most feedback I have gotten from almost every professor has been short and non-constructive or grades are based on completion not content which makes it hard to gage how we as students are doing in terms of applying the information we learn in class to assignments.

11. This was a challenging section to fill out, because I have had both very effective and very ineffective professors so far in this program. So though I mostly selected agree, there is at least one professor who I would have selected disagree for most of these questions. Overall, I feel the ability for faculty/instructors to speak on diversity is also unique to each professor, and overall I think skill in the department is lacking.

12. I have had amazing professors in this program but I have also had terrible professors as well. The terrible professors given vague expectations of assignments and don't communicate well. It is frustrating to go into a class where you learn nothing.

13. I have had really awesome professors and some that were not as great. Some of the professors that I have had seemed to be lazy and did not give the best feedback/teaching skills.

14. I have taken professors both in GR and Kalamazoo. I found that the full time faculty were more involved and I learned more from them than the adjunct professors in GR. While I appreciate that the program in GR may be easier than the program in Kalamazoo, I worry I won't be adequately prepared when I graduate.

15. Papers should be graded in more timely manner so that I am able to learn from my mistakes before next paper

16. The faculty/instructors I have dealt with have all been supportive. I have found myself frustrated at the lack of academic rigor and knowing that most students in my classes have received perfect grades despite the effort put into assignments being highly varied between students.

Other responses:

1. I have yet to start the program, so I have yet to form an opinion on some of these matters.

Question 35: Please feel free to provide comments, context, or your feelings about courses and coursework:

Positive responses:

1. I feel the courses that are offered include the most current research and it aligns with what we are experiencing in the world. We are able to draw from current experiences and examples.
2. I think most of the classed applied to the type of work that I want to do, and the ones that weren't related to the work that I will do were related to topics that will likely be covered on the licensing exam so I still believe they were beneficial.

Responses raising concerns:

1. During my first year in the social work department, I feel as if I wasted a lot of time and money. I have gained little to no knowledge that I have not already learned physically working in the field. I look forward to my second year.
2. I do not feel like my courses are adequately preparing me for actually interacting with clients and social work systems when I graduate. I especially do not feel prepared for the licensing exam.
3. I feel that my experience with the classes and instruction has been highly inconsistent between instructors, both related to engagement and quality of instruction.

4. I have had fairly poor experiences with one professor in particular where students have felt like there is no sense of direction in the class whatsoever. No clear expectations for group projects or assignments and it is abundantly clear that this professor does not read our writing assignments and just blindly gives out A's for completion. Verbal expectations for class assignments vary from week to week and some students are told one thing while other students are told another. This professor is also a field liaison so little direction or support becomes incredibly frustrating in field class because students have little support when things go haywire in the field placement and are not sure of what should be happening in the field placement until it's too late to fix the issue. Also, if an issue is brought up in private with the liaison and the student would like their support during a field visit, the liaison does not address it in the meeting and does not acknowledge it when the student tries to bring it up in the meeting. Speaking from personal experience and for other students who have had similar or worse experiences.

5. Online school is not educational or a method of high quality instruction. Social workers are so needed right now and we should be prioritizing in person education so that our future social workers are accurately equipped. Discussion posts are not learning, reflection papers are not learning. Different opinions are not respected, only opinions from certain political parties are ever heard and respected.

6. The classes that have been most engaging and relevant to real world work are elective courses. Some of the weekend classes offered prepare students more and provide more information in a short period than classes that go all semester. Again, half of professors attempt to engage, provide information about what we would like to do, but half read off slides and rush through materials. Sometimes the amount of reading is overwhelming when discussions seem to be the most beneficial to open honest conversations with students.

7. There are definitely courses that challenge thinking, but there are other courses that feel like busy work. Some professors welcome discussion and hard conversations/differing opinions. But others avoid the topics completely

8. I think classes being online has lessoned the quality of learning.

9. I think the courses offered are valuable and have useful content. I appreciate the variety of courses offered, especially with electives. However, I'm not confident that my courses have prepared me for what the "real world" of social work will be like.

10. I wish there was an option to emphasize in medical social work. There is one class that offers it but I wish there were more. Most classes I felt respected of opinions, however, during the year of the election when politics became the most discussed topic during class, most professors assumed that because we are in social work we are liberal and therefore many professors would diss the conservative view, and I felt as though I had to conform to everyone else's beliefs.

11. Most of the time this is true but I have instances or certain courses that are far below par.

12. The transition to online learning drastically shifted the qulity of education I was receiving. The professors did not undergo any training in order to prepare them to provide more than a lecture PowerPoint for a virtual schooling. This was not comparable to before the pandemic.   Sometimes readings further knowledge but often the assignments feel more like checking a box than an actual learning experience.

Other responses:

1. A lot of my classes are book reliant and that just isn't my learning style.
2. Again, I've had one professor I would generally rate lower.
3. I am in my foundation year, so I am in a lot of foundation classes that do not apply to what I want to do with my life. The first year has been hard on me intellectually for this reason. I am in more therapy-based courses now and am starting to enjoy the program more.
4. I start the MSW program in the fall of 2022

Question 37: Please feel free to provide comments, context, or your feelings about the community within the School of Social Work:

Positive Responses:

1. The best part of this program was the supportive staff in addition to the community of like-minded social workers. I always felt supported in this program by my peers and professors.

Responses raising concerns:

1. As a non-traditional student with a family and a full-time jobs, I feel little to no connection with the wider School of Social Work community. Covid-19 may be part of the reason for this, as there is little opportunity for relationship building outside of class time when everything is online/remote.
2. Hard to get to know the community when everything is online. No in person orientation, minimal in person classes, and no in person events or mixers. So really I do not even know my community.
3. I attend the GR campus and I find there aren't many opportunities to get involved with WMU programs unless you attend in Kalamazoo. I am a full-time mom and may not be able to attend, but I know there are other students who would love to have more extracurricular events in other locations.
4. I have not had the chance to get involved in extracurriculars and I'm not sure what if any are available in GR as opposed to main campus.
5. If this program were truly welcoming, we would see a diverse set of students in the program. Rarely do I have colleagues of color in my classes, disabled colleagues in my classes, queer colleagues in my classes, people involved in different religions in my classes, etc. This is a heavily white, cisgender, straight, non-disabled, etc. program. We don't just see that modeled in the students, but in the make up of our instructors as well. This does not inherently mean these individuals aren't doing good work, but I do think it's one of the things that explains the lack of meaningful diversity, equity, inclusion, and socail justice conversations happening. The majority of these conversations that I have ever even witnessed happening have come from a dominant lens that erases marginalized experiences. Also, in reference to administrators responding to student concerns, the fact that [REDACTED] is still an instructor regardless of how often he is complained about at WMU is ridiculous. [REDACTED] has a lot of great knowledge, but he is not a good instructor.
6. Other than Students in Action, there do not seem to be many opportunities to get involved, or if there are they are not well promoted. Again there have been some professors who provide a welcoming space and are inviting students to be involved in the community, but overall it is not many. There have been multiple reports discussed among peers about bringing concerns up to staff/administrators and they go nowhere. There is often little communication back, or a blanket statement. It often feels that WMU is prioritizing profits over safe and effective programming for students.
7. The only sense of community is through group projects. I have met a few great people through group projects, but one issue we all felt was how disconnected we all feel from each other as students.
8. I loved my original cohort group (that already graduated). We had a good network among us. I'm not sure that can be achieved as much with covid restrictions. I also believe that I personally felt comfortable and welcome, but I know others who have different viewpoints felt less accepted for their different, more conservative beliefs.
9. With everything being online, I have no idea what was or was not available in regard to extra curricular. With everything being online I did not get to know any of my peers.

Other responses:

1. I only had two semesters in person.
2. I wish we could have gone back to in-person learning to be able to build relationships with one another.
3. There should be a social work masters graduation ceremony in.person option

Question 39: Please feel free to provide comments, context, or your feelings about your academic advisor:

Positive responses:

1. [REDACTED] is my advisor. She responds within the hour, answers all my questions and is patient with me. I appreciate everything she's helped me with.
2. I have met with my academic advisor once or twice, and she was very helpful. However, [REDACTED]. has been serving as a guide to me in most areas of my program. She truly is the best - I don't know if I would have continued in the program without her!
3. I have never formally met with my academic advisor. However, there are other faculty that I feel comfortable asking questions to and receiving advice from.
4. I haven't had a chance to talk much with my advisor, but I utilize my field coordinator more than my advisor, since I've known my field coordinator since undergrad.
5. [REDACTED] is beyond helpful and supportive. She even went out of her way to assist my husband secure an internship though he is not a SW student.

Responses raising concerns:

1. Advisors seem to change frequently, and it is unclear to many students who, when, and how to meet with them. Advisors do not check in with students majority of the time. It seems that students have to go after advisors to attempt to schedule time to discuss programming. Especially when it comes to field placements, there have been many reports of not getting return emails/calls, and becoming very stressed about what to do. Personally, I have 2 professors, 1 who I have had class with, and 1 who was recommended who have been some of the only help and guidance I have received through programming.
2. I have yet to be assigned to an advisor. And I have not received confirmation on when I will be assigned.
3. I've only met with my advisor once and it was moderately helpful. I've never received communication from my advisor.
4. I've had at least 3 advisers over my 3 years in the MSW program, and my first advisor was the only one I met with or experienced any meaningful discussion with. During my last year, my advisor has been absent and unresponsive.
5. Of the 6 semesters that I have been enrolled in the MSW program, I have talked to my advisor once. And when I reached out, I found out I was given the wrong advisor the first time and had to be connected to my advisor. In the email communication I had with my advisor, once connected, our correspondence was brief and neutral at best. I feel like the School of Social Work has this instructor-advisor model but does not actually train any of these instructors to be advisors. For example, one of my friends in the program has to complete an extra semester because [REDACTED] did not share any information with her about the graduation timeline. And don't get me wrong, I love [REDACTED]. But he should not be an advisor for anyone due to how busy he is.
6. The most interaction and support I have had with social work instructors outside of class time has been from [REDACTED]. She has been the only one responsive to emails or questions about field and other topics. I have not heard back from my advisor or other staff on the occasions I have reached out for possible specialities like TF-CBT/TALS. In the remote world it is easy to get lost in the shuffle, but I have managed to sign up for the correct classes and get things needed to support my education either through [REDACTED], my own researching, or talking to classmates.
7. Honestly, I don't know who my official faculty advisor is but I have leaned heavily on [REDACTED] and am grateful for her support!
8. I have only met with my academic advisor twice during the past three years. There is poor communication about deadlines and the ACC requirements. The financial aid system, especially for summer terms, is difficult to navigate.
9. I never met with any advisor - I reached out on occasion and they were not helpful or knowledgeable. They were basically of no help to me - I figured out on my own what classes I needed and what I needed in order to graduate.

10. I only talked to my advisor one time and she had no idea how to answer my questions. She sent me to a different person.
11. It seems as though my academic advisor has switched a few different times so it has been confusing trying to determine who to contact if I need guidance. There are faculty members that I feel comfortable talking to ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) that have been very helpful for me along the way.
12. It was not made clear to me until my 4th semester that I had been assigned an academic advisor. Then once I found out who it was, they did not respond to my emails. I worked directly with [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. when ever I had questions because I didn't know who else would actually respond
13. My advisor changed without anyone notifying me during my third year, and therefore I didn't know who to reach out to for assistance. I then met with my new advisor one time for about 5 minutes and don't remember her name. Initially, my advisor was [REDACTED] and she often did not reply to my emails and I met with her only once at the beginning of the program to outline my courses and never heard from her again.
14. When my adviser was [REDACTED]I had nothing but amazing experiences. She is amazing and the best part of the WMU GR program hands down. Since it has changed I do not feel the same connection and I am sad that it changed for my final year after having [REDACTED] for two of the three years.

Question 44: Please feel free to provide comments, context, or your feelings about field placement:

Positive responses:

1. My field experience has been very enjoyable and I am so thankful for all the work that [REDACTED] has done to help place me at sites that have prepared me well to enter the field as a social worker.

Responses raising concerns:

1. I felt that the school of social work did not check to see how the placement would benefit MSW interns and did not check to make sure that direct supervisors were licensed LMSW's or higher and had adequate experience with the agency. Supervision was lacking, as I was completing tasks completely alone with little to no contact with supervisors. When this issue was brought to the attention of my liaison, they said we would talk about it in our field visit. This did not happen and when I tried to bring up the issue the meeting was ended. Have also heard awful stories from other students in classes who have had issues go higher up than their liaison to discuss their problems and they also were not resolved for this student.
2. I have been trying to keep it professional and direct in my responses in this survey, but that statement about "politically correct" ideas is such bullshit. And I can grasp that you are asking to understand the attitudes of MSW students. However, I think that perpetuates the trivailizing of eradicating oppressive ideologies from future socail workers. If some students felt that they were having "politically correct" ideas, I do not think that they should be socail workers. Maybe that's too far, but if you have beliefs that some people are less deserving than others, why the hell would they be in this program. It is of the highest priority for this school to be encouraging and facilitating the eradicating of these oppressive ideologies from their students. If you don't find this to be a main priority, why the fuck is this program even in existence??? It is so laughable to me that this program is supposed to be one of the best in regard to trauma work, but there is little-to-no recognition of oppression as trauma and how to navigate that with clients in session.
3. My first field placement was difficult and unclear at the beginning. Doing work based placement required extra steps, but those were not completely clear. I had to continuously reach out to ask for paperwork that was supposed to be sent, and then to make sure everything was in line before beginning. My second placement I secured on my own. After numerous emails to department heads trying to get help to figure out where to go and how to secure a summer placement due to work, I got little help. Emails went unanswered multiple times, and when I set things up on my own, I still got let down by delayed responses, or no response at all. It was extremely frustrating as this is not completely in our hands. My field instructor was the only real guidance I had during these transitions.
4. My field placement was great this year! Last year, during Covid, my placement was barely a placement.

Other responses:

1. I do not feel equipped to make affirmative comments on diversity within the School of Social Work because as a white cis-female I am in the majority gender/racial group of students in the program. I hope feedback from members of marginalized identities are able to provide more helpful insight from their perspectives and experiences.

2. Only one field placement was found for me and it was a very brief process so I don't feel I have enough experience to review that piece of the program.

3. The KCDI realizes their lack in ability to carry 3 interns on the team at a time. This created a high level of independence I was not ready for. However, working under such pressure resulted in the development of skills I will need in the future.

4. This comment is more so for the diversity section but there was no comment box available for me for some reason. I felt like the program could talk a little more about religious differences. Sexual identity, race/ethnicity, and gender were talked about greatly but I didn't experience much discussion about religion. I am a practicing Christian and honestly at times was nervous to share that because there was so little discussion surrounding religion.