

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
SELF STUDY**

FOR

Human Services

2013 – 2014

**Program Review Committee:
Bob Fera, Professor, Department Chair
Julia Mirras, Professor, Human Services
Diane Malley-Parcella, Transfer Counselor
Patty Lauziere, Adjunct Professor
Lisa Higgins-Smith, Adjunct Professor
Buffy Gamache, Adjunct Professor**

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Academic Program Review

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Middlesex Community College

Academic Program Review

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Human Services Associate Degree Program at MCC began almost 40 years ago in response to the community mental health movement. Mental health practitioner training grants were regularly awarded and one was successfully written by the then Department Chair of Social Sciences. This movement began in the 1960s aiming at releasing hundreds of thousands of previously institutionalized patients in psychiatric hospitals and facilities for those with developmental disabilities. Community mental health centers, residential treatment centers, psychosocial clubs, sheltered workshops, and other programs and services grew tremendously during this period of time, particularly through the late 1960s and 70s. New paraprofessionals were now needed for these programs and services, positions such as residential counselors, outreach counselors, mental health workers, and case managers, to name but a few. The community mental health movement marked a tremendous departure from past mental health treatment, which had long relied on chronic and long-standing hospitalizations of individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness and or developmental disabilities. This was an exciting time whereby those in the mental health community were confident that these individuals with long hospitalizations ('institutionalized') could thrive in their own communities, especially with the help of these newly trained professionals and paraprofessionals.

At Middlesex, as well as many other institutions of higher learning, new programs sprung up to deliver courses and training experiences which would allow them to help patients in the community. The Human Services Associate Degree program was very successful for many years in attracting new students, especially returning adult students. At that time, the Associate Degree in Human Services allowed the graduate an easy entry into this new field. The mental health practitioner or human service worker was seen in the community with its various roles and titles usually required this type of training and degree. At this time an Associate Degree was still relatively new and valued, especially compared to today's standards. Many students were hired after their required field placement experience/course by the agency they had just served as the training and degree was seen as a requirement given the nature of this newly-developed mental health delivery system. Finally, although not extravagant by any means, salaries for paraprofessionals provided livable wages.

Towards the end of the 20th century, cutbacks in mental health and human services spending and stagnating salaries in the field became more apparent and problematic. At the same time, more and more high school graduates were expected to go to college. What we began to see happening was a growth of students declaring a Human Services

major along with less funding/stagnant salaries for positions still available. For some time, especially in the 1990's, we saw an explosion of students in the program but many of them leaving prematurely, either entering the field before the completion of their degree or dissuaded by the growing knowledge that salaries had not kept pace with the times.

When looking at the inner workings of the program, especially the learning outcomes, curriculum, and retention of students a number of variables and recommendations need to be noted. The learning outcomes are both reasonable and attainable, and faculty members are in agreement that these outcomes be maintained. It is important to note that these learning outcomes also are in keeping with the Human Services Skill Standards which are infused into the core human services courses, and validated in our capstone course, the Supervised Field Placement and Seminar. The curriculum which has undergone some changes in the last several years is both relevant and timely given the needs of human service workers, as well as serving transfer students

One can see from the last Program Review that a significant drop in enrollment took place throughout the first decade of the 21st century. The Associate Degree in Human Services became devalued as salaries slid and more and more students looked to transfer into bachelor degree programs in Human Services and Social Work, or leave the field altogether. To partially meet this new demand, Middlesex, as well as many other colleges, developed transfer options as well as highly specified certificate programs. The narratives of our students (summarized in a later section) reinforce the reality that most students desire a bachelor's degree or more to find a suitable position in the field. Otherwise, either a high school diploma or a specialized certificate will suffice to gain entry as a paraprofessional in today's market. There are no national accrediting bodies or agreed-upon requirements to enter the human services field as much as employers continually tell us they would love to have better trained staff.

As the reader will see in the section on Institutional Data, the number of Human Service majors has risen dramatically since the last program review (from 75 majors to over 175 combined HUS majors (194 total majors from most recent Fall 2013 data), including Career, Transfer and Certificate). Part of this may be attributed to the recession and some to individuals shifting careers away from those which simply and primarily focus on material rewards. This has created a 'good problem' as classes are filled, sections added and a more dynamic and diverse group overall. More and more of these students have indicated to us their desire to get a bachelor's degree, primarily in social work. Part of our attrition can be seen in students transferring before they complete their degree and those who realize that the more they learn about the field, the more they see salaries which are not sustainable.

Academically, the program made a number of changes to the curriculum as a result of the last program review. A number of required courses were changed and several

courses were added to the Concentration List of Social/Behavioral Science Electives (submitted and approved Spring, 2005). Two Human Service courses were eliminated as requirements to better serve the transfer student/articulation process, namely Counseling Theory and Process and Supervised Field Placement and Seminar II. It was found that these courses were not being accepted by many receiving baccalaureate institutions.

Many considerations need to be taken into account in thinking about the Human Services program going forward. If we remember that the program began decades ago in response to new workforce needs generated by the community mental health movement, and that since then support and funding for programs and services has stagnated, the human service degree has shifted in terms of its importance. At the same time, the program which has grown to become a department has spawned a number of relevant and successful certificate programs in addressing specific needs with particular populations. The direct care certificate program in developmental disabilities and the alcohol and substance abuse counseling certificate program were generated by the Human Services Department when it was clearly seen that such shorter term and more specialized education and training was needed. The success of these programs can be seen both by their continued support and even growth, especially in the substance abuse area. One area going forward will be canvassing human services agencies for new short-term certificate programs which address their needs. An added benefit is that these certificate programs have been feeders into the Associate Degree.

Before considering the program itself, it is very important to reflect on the recent past, present, and potential future of the human services field. The trend has been very clear – funding for programs has dropped, agencies have closed or been merged with others, salaries for direct care human service workers has stagnated (actually dropped in real dollars when accounting for inflation), and the criteria/job requirements for such workers is both inconsistent and difficult to project into the future. At the present time, entry level human service workers may be hired with a high school diploma, with a certificate or Associates degree, and receive similar wages. These wages generally are very low and require such workers to put in extra hours and/or work a second job. One of the reasons for the attrition in our Associate Degree may be linked to the knowledge our students gain over time in the program of such conditions and potential challenges in the workforce. Much of this information has been gleaned through interviews with advisees. Also, this correlates highly with the large attrition rates found in human services agencies as described by our Advisory Board and other sources. When the Associate's Degree was first instituted, that degree meant a great deal more than it does today, and combined with the declining support in the human services field, this degrees been compromised. Unless or until the field, and society in general, realizes the importance of this work and compensates these workers in a more equitable way, the draw and retention of such students will be difficult.

When we look at the numbers of students entering the Human Services Career (our original program) and Transfer program, we see a fairly equal distribution of students, although the Career program has more students. Part of this choice may be attributed to the less stringent requirements in the career program (i.e. less math and lab science courses). However, the transfer program must be considered to be more important in today's job market, when we realize that many of the students will need to transfer, and in fact do transfer, especially to social work programs. A BSW and MSW have now become the degrees of greater desire, both as seen in student narratives and as they exit the program. Over the years, we have made a number of changes in terms of the curriculum to accommodate students' desire to transfer and that the program be transferable. While maintaining a core essential set of skill related courses and those related directly to the field, we have also maximized the number of liberal arts courses as well. So, going forward, it is imperative that the Human Services Transfer program be maintained and that vigorous efforts continue in terms of articulation agreements with local baccalaureate programs. It is premature, given the numbers and interest in the career program, to make any changes at this point.

Looking beyond the Associate's Degree, the recent past and present demands in the workforce have prompted us to step up our efforts to partner with local human service agencies. Building on the success of our certificate programs, and noticing the issues many agencies are facing, we have had a number of discussions with agencies in the area around providing courses and/or certificate programs either in their facilities or on campus. Many agencies are interested in such partnerships, especially given the needs they have with their new workforce demographics. One of the challenges of course, is finding, and we hope either through grants or the collaboration of several agencies pooling their funds together, we might be able to offer such courses and programs in the near future. We are already planning this venture with one local agency with the help of the business and industry department, and have for the past year had discussions with the second agency which is attempting to get a grant to help fund their program. We are hopeful that such programs will be developed as there is both a need and desire within our department and from local agencies.

SECTION II: PROGRAM MISSION AND SUPPORT OF COLLEGE'S STRATEGIC PLAN

1. State the mission of the program.

The mission of the Human Services Program is to provide a dynamic educational environment in which students can gain the knowledge and skills required by paraprofessionals or entry-level human service workers and/or prepare for transfer to a baccalaureate program. The program offers students a strong academic curriculum coupled with an emphasis on ethics and community service. It is dedicated to raising the overall quality of human services work in the community by

upgrading the skills of those currently in the field as well as those who have no experience but a strong desire to enter human services or social work. A strong focus can be detected in the implementation of skills found in the human services national skills standards and offering a combination of academic and practicum experiences to students.

2. Middlesex Community College’s Strategic Directions are in italics below. Provide examples of how your program’s mission and the work that is done within your program support these directions as appropriate.

| <i>Improve access and advance student success by strengthening evidence-based practices and resource allocation.</i> | <i>Foster greater college engagement through improved communication, personal connections and collaborative partnerships.</i> | <i>Drive innovation, enrich community and broaden the learning experience for all by fulfilling our shared responsibility for diversity.</i> | <i>Empower all members of the college community to be educators, mentors, advocates and life-long learners.</i> | <i>Transform learning by integrating academic, workplace and global experiences to meet personal, professional and community needs.</i> | <i>Build partnerships that stimulate innovation and address the educational, social, economic and workforce development needs of our communities.</i> |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| Title III Course Guide for the Introduction to Human Services course implemented both online and in class. Strategies for Success New Student Advising Guide developed and disseminated. | All HUS students are now advised by the two full-time HUS faculty. Two new partnerships have been initiated with local human services agencies for the purposes of offering courses and certificates to agency staff. Outdated information has | The HUS program has evolved to become one of the most diverse majors on campus (see Institutional Research data). New initiatives focusing on strengths-based testing and advising will be recommended and tested | | National Skill Standards incorporated into capstone course. Supervised Field Placement is capstone course which incorporates knowledge and skills learned previously and practiced/mastered in community settings. Program balances theoretical knowledge, skill building and experiential | Students begin with introductory skills in communication and counseling and learn to master necessary human service skills to be able to work in a human service agency upon completion of program. Partnerships with human service |

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| | <p>been revised and corrected with several MCC offices, including Registrar, Enrollment, Publications and Advising</p> | <p>upon completion of this review. National skills standards have been incorporated into capstone course, Supervised Field Placement.</p> | | <p>learning.</p> | <p>agencies allow opportunities for students to master counseling and case management skills in the field placement. Advisory Boards from the area give guidance as to present workforce needs which are incorporated into required courses.</p> |
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SECTION III: STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)

3. Identify your Program Student Learning Outcomes – what should graduates of your program be able to do with the cumulative knowledge, skills, abilities and ways of thinking they have developed as a student in your program? As appropriate, consult professional standards and articulation agreements/vertical alignment with transfer institutions as you develop your PSLOs.
 - Demonstrate basic counseling skills, including active listening, paraphrasing, confronting and engaging clients
 - Discuss the theory of human services, the current operation of the service system, and major issues facing human services in the United States
 - Define career options in human services and demonstrate the significant differences in prevention and treatment programs serving various populations;
 - Demonstrate ability to work with diverse populations
 - Explain and discuss fundamental psychological concepts
 - Examine the principles and concepts of society’s social problems and develop and analyze strategies for change
 - Discuss and demonstrate group process and inter-personal relations as it applies in the work place and for clinical use in the field
 - Apply the Direct Support Skill Standards in their coursework and field work
 - Develop research and writing skills, particularly those needed for accurate record keeping
 - Apply knowledge acquired in the program as a foundation for continued study
4. Provide the PSLO you will assess this year, as part of this program review, and the one you are likely to assess in the next few years, prior to your next program review

| | |
|---------|---|
| 2013-14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply the Direct Support Skill Standards in their coursework and field work |
| 2016-17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate ability to work with diverse populations |

5. If applicable, discuss any changes you have made to your PSLOs since your last program review.

No changes have been made to PSLO's since last program review. Intensive values were used during this period of time since the last review and all Human Services students have been able to satisfy all intensive values with core HUS courses. It should be noted here that for a majority of the time since the last review, no coordinator or chair was in place leading the program. Administrative duties were taken up by the Deans of that time. A coordinator was put into place two years ago and since that time no changes in regards to the PSLO's have been made.

6. Map the way in which your program currently provides opportunities for students to progress towards achievement of each Program Student Learning Outcome, by noting in which courses the outcomes are Introduced (I), Developed (D), and where students are expected to demonstrate Competency (C).

Note:

- **This is an exercise to create a map of what "is", not what "should be". It is an opportunity for faculty teaching in your program to think about and come to consensus on which program learning outcomes their course(s) currently support, and to what degree. Once this map of "what is" has been created, as a group you can identify gaps that you want to address to better enable student achievement of your goals for their learning.**
- **At the Competency level, PSLOs and ISLOs should be reflected within the course outcomes on all syllabi for that course.**

Curriculum Map:

| PSLO | ISLO supported by PSLO | HUS 101 Intro to Human Services | PSY 101 Intro to Psychology | HUS 200 Intro to Counseling Skills | HUS 152 Current Issues in Human Services | HUS 153 Supervised Field Placement | Course PSY 153 Community Psychology | Course PSY 160 Dynamics of Interpersonal Relations |
|---|--|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Use basic counsel skills | Oral Comm. | Introduced | | Developed | | Competency | | Developed |
| Discuss knowledge of human services field | Oral Communication Social Resp. CT | Introduced | | | Competency | Competency | Developed | Developed |
| Describe & differentiate b/t career options | CT, PPD PPD | Introduced | Developed | | Competency | Competency | Developed | |
| Work w diverse populations | Multicult., Global, Soc. Resp. | Introduced | Introduced | Developed | Developed | Competency | Developed | Developed |
| Explain psych concepts | CT | | Introduced | Developed | Competency | | | Developed |
| Develop & analyze strategies for | Soc. Respon, CT | Introduced | | | | | | |

| PSLO | ISLO supported by PSLO | HUS 101 Intro to Human Services | PSY 101 Intro to Psychology | HUS 200 Intro to Counseling Skills | HUS 152 Current Issues in Human Services | HUS 153 Supervised Field Placement | Course PSY 153 Community Psychology | Course PSY 160 Dynamics of Interpersonal Relations |
|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| change | | | | | Developed | | Competency | |
| Use group process professionally | PPD | Introduced | | | | Competency | | Developed |
| Use skill standards | PPD CT | Introduced | | | Developed | Competency | | |
| Apply research & writing skills for record keeping | Written Comm. CT, PPD | Introduced | | Developed | | Competency | | Developed |

7. Does your Curriculum Map suggest a need to make changes to the **availability** and/or **sequencing of** opportunities for students to develop and achieve any PSLO within the program? If so, please explain.

The availability and sequencing of courses has been an outstanding issue for some time now. A major issue lies within the highly-fluctuating enrollments noted in the summary. Upper level, HUS-designated courses (i.e. Counseling Skills, Current Issues and Supervised Field Placement) are offered once per year and only in Lowell. This has created some issues for students in scheduling their courses given their timelines (i.e. work schedules, ability and motivation to come to Lowell, taking courses on a part-time basis, receiving timely and effective advising and registering for classes early). Some consideration has been made to increase offerings (at night or multiple semesters, etc.) but this scheduling can be challenging with inconsistent enrolments, high numbers of part-time students and some Bedford-based students who will not shift to the Lowell campus to take the core HUS courses.

There is one area we hope to strengthen since the loss of a second field placement course and the experience most of our students have had with service learning. Arguably, it is impossible to get too much practical experience in a field as broad as human services. To further develop several PSLO's, the program has decided to require one service learning experience for every student. Most students already have at least one service learning experience by the time they graduate, especially in the Community Psychology course. Invariably, this has been a very positive experience for our students and helps prepare them for their field placement. We are confident this requirement will strengthen the curriculum, allow students an additional opportunity to work in the community and experience a new population to serve. In the process several PSLO's will be developed and career options may be clarified.

8. Referring back to your Curriculum Map for each PSLO, please provide at least one course-level student learning outcome (SLO) from syllabi from a wide range of sections for every course that supports that PSLO at a Competency level. If no such course-level SLOs are available, discuss how this will be addressed within the program. Also discuss how your program can or does ensure consistent opportunities among all sections of each Competency-level course for students to demonstrate their achievement of your program goals for student learning.

| PSLO | Course Supporting at Competency Level | Course SLO | What evidence of student achievement of this course SLO is used to determine that students have achieved this SLO? How is that evidence obtained? Please describe and include in Appendix examples of the prompts that generate this evidence (assignment/project descriptions, exam questions, etc.). |
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| Basic Counseling | HUS 153 Competency | Develop and practice individual and group counseling skills | Journal writing |
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| | | | |
| Knowledge of the HS field | PSY 153 Competency | Develop Professional Competencies based upon the Community Support Skill Standards | Selection of Internship site Journal writing Site supervisor assessment |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Career | HUS 152 Competency | Students will meet with professionals in the mental health field and explore career options and issues directly with primary practitioners | Weekly response paper |
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| Diversity | HUS 152 Competency | Students will identify the basic social and political factors impacting human services | Weekly response papers |
| | | | |
| Diversity | HUS 153 | Develop cultural | Journals, portfolio |

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|--|--------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| | Competency | competence in order to work with a diverse population | |
| Explain psych concepts | HUS 152 Competency | Students will identify the psychological factors that impact human services in the community | Weekly response/research paper |
| Use group process | HUS 153 Competency | Develop and practice individual and group counseling skills Develop the skills needed to work with a team | Journal portfolio |
| Skill standards | HUS 153 Competency | Develop professional competencies based upon the Community Support Skill Standards | Journal portfolio |
| Research and Writing skill/documentation | HUS 152 Competency | Students will demonstrate their use of basic computer research skills Students will distinguish academic sources of information from general newspaper, magazine and website information Students will demonstrate critical thinking in analyzing the information presented in class Students will write clearly about the human service issues presented each week | Weekly response paper |
| Research and Writing/Documentation | HUS 153 Competency | Develop and practice the writing skills required for human service record and chart maintenance | Journals, portfolio |

Given the relatively small number of students taking courses listed at the competency level for the PSLO's, there is virtually no issue around consistency between sections as all upper-level courses have only one section offered. There is only one section Supervised Field Placement and Seminar, one section of Introduction to Counseling Skills and Current Issues in Human Services each year. The only course which may be involved would be Dynamics of Interpersonal Relations where two sections of the course are offered each semester by two different instructors.

9. Referring back to your Curriculum Map, are there any ISLOs not supported to Competency levels within the program? If so, please describe how students in your program experience adequate opportunities to develop and achieve Competency with this (these) outcome(s), or please provide a plan for how this will be addressed.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Written and Oral Communication <i>For example...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written assignments • Oral presentations • Use of relevant information literacy skills • Effective use of technology | <p>Critical Thinking <i>For example...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis • Synthesis • Evaluation • Creative thinking • Development of logical conclusions |
| <p>Quantitative Literacy <i>For example...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation • Representation • Calculation • Application/Analysis • Communication of quantitative information | <p>Multicultural and Global Literacy <i>For example...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural knowledge • Global issues • Interactions that build diversity awareness • Diverse forms of creative expression • Aesthetic Appreciation • Historical, political, and economic perspective |
| <p>Social Responsibility <i>For example...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Civic engagement • Social justice • Ethical frameworks • Social policy frameworks | <p>Personal and Professional Development <i>For example...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of academic goals • Career Readiness • Self Assessment • Responsibility for learning and personal development • Professionalism • Leadership • Wellness • Collaboration |

Quantitative literacy is the only PSLO not supported within the core HUS offerings. We expect the math requirement and revised Gen Ed curriculum to cover this PSLO.

Assessment

10. For your assessment project, you have two choices:

- a. Identify one or more cumulative assignments or capstone projects that significant numbers of students in your program generate to demonstrate their competency with **two or more** PSLOs. Use your curriculum map to identify the courses that require students to demonstrate these PSLOs at a **Competency** level.

OR

- b. Identify **two or more** PSLOs that you want to assess student competency with, using your curriculum map to identify those courses (preferably **Competency** level for the PSLOs, at a minimum **Developing** level)

NOTE: *We will ask you to undertake another programmatic assessment project in 2016-17.*

- c. The two PSLO's below were identified in assessing students' competency level:

- Apply the Direct Support Skill Standards in their coursework and field work
- Demonstrate ability to work with diverse populations

It is essential that students be able to leave the program not only having gained knowledge about the human services field and relevant psychological concepts, as well as being introduced to a variety of practical skills necessary in the field. In the final analysis, it is most important that students are able to demonstrate competency in key areas and the committee and Advisory Board have agreed that the Direct Support Skill Standards are invaluable in the workplace. It is also well known that human services workers will be called upon to understand and be able to work with a diverse group of individuals, be they staff or clients. At the end of our program, students take a capstone course, Supervised Field Placement and Seminar, and from it we took a sample of required journal entries throughout the semester which document these skills standards.

Formulate a plan to collect full sets student work (artifacts) from above assignment(s)/project(s) that are representative (e.g. students who take courses on campuses, day and evening/weekend) of your program's graduates. From these full sets of student work, you will want to select a random sample that is still representative of your graduates but can be assessed during one department meeting (or other time) by a group of your faculty. How will you evaluate the work – do you have, or will you need to create a rubric or set of criteria/checklist by which to evaluate student work?

Questions to consider:

- Is there a way to capture students' perceptions of their learning with these assignments/projects to complement faculty evaluations of that learning?
- How can you maximize faculty/staff involvement in this process?

11. Describe your process (use the following prompts as helpful):

- What did you do?
- Which courses contributed artifacts?
- How representative of your overall student population was this sample?
- What were the artifacts?
- How did you select a smaller random sample to assess?
- What criteria did you use to assess student learning and achievement?
- Were the faculty doing the assessment work representative of your program/department?
- How did you create time to do this assessment work?

Since the decision to identify the above PSLO's fall squarely within the capstone course, Supervised Field Placement and Seminar (HUS 153), it was necessary to focus on the only two sections offered that particular semester in Lowell, the only campus the course is offered. The project does allow us to hone in on high impact practices, namely an internship (community-based learning) which is writing intensive and involves a portfolio. The fifteen required journal entries fits into the extensive portfolio project, allowing for a substantial documentation of work related to the skill standards in a workplace environment. It also happens to be a seminar with a maximum enrollment of 12 students, allowing for rich weekly discussions on practical matters related to their internship. The project also allows an examination of those who will likely become our graduates as this is one of the last courses they take before graduation.

The department decided to focus on the two PSLO's mentioned above, one of which involves several skill standards (see Appendix). It was agreed that these PSLO's were extremely important and that every student should be able to demonstrate competency in several of these areas before getting their degree. A decision was made to use the journal entry portion of the portfolio as the artifacts to be assessed, and specifically look at the sections which involve the skill standards. It should be noted here that the portfolio is a rich and dense document, one which the student builds weekly into a product which could involve almost 100 pages (see Appendix for portfolio required structure). The population sampled represents those students who have completed most of the core human services courses, so they are a highly selected group. For this assessment exercise, a sampling of journal entries were chosen at random, with every student having at least one entry included and entries taken after each student attempted at least 3 journals. Most entries were culled from the second portion of the semester. A total of 25 journal entries were examined with most attempting to identify

more than one skill standard (over 85%). A randomized sample of completed portfolios and journals were collected and copied, removing names of students.

The two full-time faculty in the department participated in the project. Julie Mirras teaches the course and fairly recently re-structured the dimensions of the portfolio as a requirement of the course. Professor Mirras regularly sent weeks of journal entries to the department chair and a handful of completed portfolios. (The entries were already corrected, feedback given and then copies made without student's names attached to them.) Bob Fera, Department Chair, used a fair portion of the summer, culling through the documents (it should be noted that there were over one hundred journal entries coming from every student in the seminar, and four completed portfolios). Not all standards were assessed but a sampling of those required, namely participant empowerment, documentation/communication and a burnout prevention plan.

In order to create a legitimate assessment tool, we started with The Community Support Skills Standards document created by Human Service Research Institute (HSRI) in response to a need to develop standards for Human Services workers. We then used the Individual Learning Plan document provided to students which ranked entries from: **1. Needs improvement, 2. Advanced and, 3. Proficient**; collecting representative comments as well. A checklist from the HSRI synopsis of variables was used, taking into consideration the individual skill standards, how they were documented by students, language which indicated competency, and mention of contact, nature of contact and level of awareness, understanding and effectiveness in relating to diverse populations. In the future, a committee (rather than one assessor) will be formed and a rubric or more objective measure will be used to validate that the skill standards have been met.

12. What Did You Learn?

Several lessons came from this assessment exercise. First, the level of writing was quite impressive. It was noticeable how effective the vast majority of students were in communicating their experiences. It is commonplace for journals to be looser and less proficient in terms of using language, but most of these entries were excellent in terms of using proper grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, organization of ideas. This immediately shows that students have strong communication skills as they leave the program, in this case, in written form. It also demonstrated the value of the structure required and explained in the directions for the journal assignment. Further, a distinction was noticed and needs to be emphasized in the instructions to students between demonstrating effective communication skills via the journal entries and demonstrating mastery or showing proficiency in the following skill standards: 1) communication/documentation, 2) participant empowerment, and 3) burn out prevention plan skill standards.

The structure and expectations of the journals are clear, relevant, and effective as far as they go in terms of requiring students to document their experiences in a number of ways, further developing competencies such as communication, documentation skills, empathic understanding (which eventually supports working with diversity), reflection, critical thinking/analysis and personal growth. At the same time, we learned that the

identification and treatment of additional standards need to be included and made clear in the assignment instructions. The instructions for the course (see Appendix) require that each journal entry *demonstrate mastery of a skills standard*, have a section for *objective observation* (practicing documentation and objectivity), *subjective interpretation* (demanding reflection, personal awareness and analysis, critical thinking, areas around personal and professional growth), and *perspective reflection* where the student needed to put themselves in the place of the client experiencing a challenge, crisis or need. This requires the student to put themselves in the client's shoes, asking for understanding and departing from one's own experience or set of values. Clearly, it was seen over and over again that this structure was followed and proved invaluable in most cases in reaching the intended goals.

In the field placement course, a minimum of four skill standards must be demonstrated in the journal entries, with 15 entries required throughout the semester (collected weekly). At least four skill standards are required: participant empowerment, documentation/communication, a burnout prevention plan, along with one other one chosen by the student. Students were allowed to choose others from the list of skill standards (see Appendix). Several other skill standards such as crisis management, advocacy, and community living skills were seen with great prevalence in assessing student journal entries. Much of the additional choices were based on either personal preference or the kinds of experiences available to the student intern at the placement site. Given student's placements, it is virtually impossible to write about every skill standard listed.

Upon immediate examination and assessment of the entire batch, it became clear that the requirements for the assignment were followed consistently, the entries were substantial and the content was impressive. Clearly, students were not only having important exchanges in their placement with clients, but were very effective in recalling them and documenting them in a way which developed documentation skills, objectivity, and the ability to both detach themselves from the experience and re-experience the event from the perspective of the client. A competent human service worker needs to be detached, objective, aware of their perspective and the clients, as well as how effectively they are communicating with the client. For the most part, the journal entries demonstrated these variables very clearly.

It should be noted here that the fifteen journal entries are a substantial portion of the portfolio which is required for the Supervised Field Placement and Seminar course. The portfolio also requires a personal introduction statement, a confidentiality disclaimer, a resume, certifications earned and one's most recent transcript. In sum, the portfolio represents a tremendous amount of work which the student has either earned in previous courses or trainings and recent lessons leading to competencies in the skill standards. (journal entries and sample portfolios will be on display for the external reviewer and others who wish to examine them). Finally it cannot be overemphasized that this portfolio, developed by Professor Mirras via a grant several years ago, represents one of the most impressive documents we have in the department and is a radical and most positive development from past practices/expectations/requirements

in this course. So, in one sense, we decided to examine one of the strongest aspects of the program to see how it is working and if/how it could be enhanced.

First and foremost, it was clear that every student was able to follow the instructions and meet the requirements in terms of the structure of the journal entry. Since the reader was able to sample some entries from every student (anonymously) in the seminar, it was clear that the vast majority, if not every student, was very capable of consistently producing journal entries which demonstrated proficiency in one or more areas. Overall, relatively few (approximately 25%) showed a need for some improvement in any one area, and most of these were seen in entries where students attempted to demonstrate proficiency or mastery in more than one skill standard.

A few areas of concern were noticed at the outset of assessing the chosen batch of journal entries: an inconsistency in the number of standards identified and attempted. Although there may be some overlap with the standards and/or activities with participants wherein two standards may be met at the same time, approximately 40% of the journal entries attempted more than one standard at a time. This is not unusual in and of itself, and several students were able to manage the additional standards identified in some way. Over 25% attempted three or more standards in one entry. The majority of those entries indicated some area of needing improvement given the incompleteness of one or more standards being identified and attempted. The entire batch, however, demonstrated a level of proficiency or mastery in this challenging section, exemplifying a more than sufficient skill in being able to accurately reflect on a situation they were involved with another in attempting to help change a behavior, empower or use any one of the other skill standards.

Of the 15 entries examined which identified participant empowerment, a third of them did so singularly while the remainder attempted that skill standard and one other. Over 66% were able to be assessed as being proficient or advanced in participant empowerment, promoting participant involvement, giving them information about self-advocacy and human rights and/or having helped a participant develop a strategy to make informed choices. Strategies identified ranged from: 'helping a participant register to vote because it was very important to him, that he liked politics and wanted someone to represent him and those with mental disabilities' to educating a participant (who was obese and diabetic) about a health and wellness group, breaking it down into steps that were understandable and the benefits of attending the group leading her to go to a meeting, and assisting a participant in getting the assistance she needed, especially in math, on a computer program to complete her GED online. Many concrete examples could be seen here in the objective observation section which depicted participation empowerment.

In assessing the communication/documentation skill standard, fourteen journal entries were identified. Only one entry of the fifteen identified the standard exclusively, and less than 25% used exact quotes and/or a transcript between the student and participant. Most entries vaguely referred to communication between the two individuals indicating a need for improvement simply in terms of providing more data. The entries which used direct quotes/transcripts were deemed either proficient or

advanced in terms of the effectiveness of their communication, showing a recognition and adaptation to the participant's style, an effective use of terminology and way of giving and receiving feedback. It was difficult or impossible to assess the bulk of the entries which listed communication as a standard given the lack of information provided. It appeared that these entries entered communication as an afterthought. Two important lessons which may be culled from this assessment are: it appears to be more effective to focus exclusively on this one standard (communication) in a journal entry and provide a transcript, a set of quotes or a description of the interaction, as well as a reflection of the dialogue to be able to fully demonstrate proficiency or advanced status with this standard. It would be very helpful to add a guideline which would require a specific way in which this information may be documented. Also, a new requirement which would create a limit for how many standards may be taken on in one journal entry could be created and made clear in the instructions for the journal entries.

The requirement and execution of the burnout prevention plan was found to be exemplary. First, it is well-known in the human services field that burnout is a common problem but one that can be avoided. Too often, caretakers look to others first and take care of their needs last. Requiring students to look at this issue and prepare for it in advance is essential to their future livelihood. The structure of this assignment having three sections, namely, warning signs, how the student usually copes with stress and how the student will work on preventing burnout is simple, concrete and elegant. Every burnout prevention plan met at least the proficiency standard by including several warning signs experienced by the student (i.e. fatigue/feeling over-tired, sleep problems, irritability, headaches, specific ways they cope with stress (i.e. from negative ones like overeating, shopping too much, sleeping too much to effective ones like taking a long walk, meditating, spending time with friends, listening to music), and a variety of very healthy ways of preventing burnout (i.e. developing an exercise regime, setting realistic goals, connecting with others for support, taking breaks, not taking things personally, meditating). It was a pleasure to examine these entries knowing these students have reflected on their behaviors honestly and have arrived at very positive ways of coping to prevent burnout when they enter the field, or utilize them now if they are presently working in the field.

The issue of diversity is demonstrated both in the journals (by way of writing about others different from them be it in regards to their mental disabilities/issues, economic status, ethnic background, age, etc.) and in the demographic make-up of the students in the seminar. The issue of diversity was first documented in the institutional data section and becomes more evident and dynamic in the courses, especially those of an experiential nature (i.e. Dynamics of Interpersonal Relations, Counseling Skills, and this seminar). As reported by the instructor, the student make-up in this seminar includes traditional age and returning students, male and female students, those of Caucasian, Cambodian, Russian, Hispanic and African-American background. Further, the clients served at the placements include individuals who were elderly, adolescents, those with mental illness, substance abuse and dependency issues, developmental disabilities, dementia, homelessness, poverty, single parents and a variety of other issues. These variables allow students to share their practicum experiences, cultural backgrounds and influences, personal reactions and most effective ways of relating as a human

service worker. So, exposure to diverse populations and conversations with many different groups is the norm in this program, as much as this may not be documented or assessed well here.

Again, the structure of the journal entries requires students to reflect on their experience, practice empathy and master new approaches in helping. This style of learning is also reinforced in the seminar, and given its maximum size of 12 students, allows for personal and profound dialogues. It is important to state that although these features reflect more on the teaching and learning about diversity, it is clearly important (and will be the subject of further investigation) that assessing the outcomes of students via an objective measure is needed and anticipated in the near future.

13. How Can You Use What You Learned?

If your results suggest that there is room for improvement, consider:

- Do students have adequate opportunities to develop **Competency** for these outcomes? Refer to the courses that support these outcomes at a **Developing** level on your curriculum map. In those courses, what are the ways in which students are working with and producing work for which they receive constructive feedback in preparation for their cumulative demonstration of **Competency** in later courses?
- What are some possible improvement strategies? Please describe, then note as part of your action plan in **SECTION VII**, the Summary section of this document.

The assessor was pleasantly surprised by the level of writing shown in the journal entries, confirming a mastery of written communication. It is clear that required courses which students had taken previous to the seminar allowed them to become competent in expressing themselves, most evidently in the journals but also, indirectly, in reading their entries, how they communicated with their clients and staff. Since most of our core HUS courses require a substantial amount of writing and/or practice in counseling and communication skills, it is heartening to see the work pay off in the journal entries collected and reviewed from this group. Communication skills were seen to have been mastered in written form, and through their writing about their practicum experiences, one can see several skill standards mastered as well. The reporting on a diverse group of individuals in a way which exemplified respect, understanding and a desire to assist in effective ways, demonstrates a competency in working with diverse individuals. The journals clearly show a mastery of being able to be objective, document experiences accurately, be able to experience empathy of a client and be reflective and analytical about one's experience. An added highlight was the consistent and substantial feedback given by the instructor which reinforced these competencies or asked the student to reflect on areas which needed additional work.

Parenthetically it can be inferred that given the diverse make-up of the seminar students, their weekly meetings allowed opportunities to work together in a constructive manner, furthering the outcome of working with diverse populations.

Although discussions within the seminar are confidential, it was reported that students expressed mutual respect for each other and those they served in the community, representing an extremely diverse group of individuals, in terms of age, ethnic background, and issues presented. In the future, the program will assess more specifically and objectively (i.e. via rubrics or checklists) the ways students understand, appreciate and are able to work with diverse groups. More assignments and assessment measures need to be created to insure our students are proficient in the learning outcome of working effectively with diverse groups, as opposed to simply being exposed to them.

One area which we learned in assessing the entries was the level of inconsistency on the part of students in taking on skill standards for each entry. Virtually every journal entry which focused on one skill standard, or there was a naturally overlapping additional standard which accompanied an exercise or intervention was rated as proficient or advanced where there were several entries where three or more standards were identified and attempted which needed some improvement. Some standards may need to be identified and demonstrated independently and in a more structured manner. For example, the communication standard may need to stand alone and provide a more structured set of data and reflection afterwards. Finally, a newly-formed committee will attempt to look at ways to limit entries to one or two standards per entry and have even more concrete suggestions in identifying and providing evidence to achieve proficiency in each standard attempted.

More work can be seen going forward to improve student achievement and outcomes, especially as they pertain to the skills standards and learning outcomes. More experience and practice outside the classroom will expose students to diverse groups and require communication skills, decision-making, relationship building and a number of important competencies of human service workers. It will be recommended that all students be required to undertake a service learning experience before they take the field placement class, ideally after the Counseling Skills course. Further, although it may be challenging, it will be important to consider documenting more skill standards in the field placement journals or other assignments in that course. Finally, the use of portfolios and the products assessed are exemplary. The committee will consider taking another step in developing these documents into e-portfolios.

One final important lesson must be addressed. The assessment process itself will be improved by developing a committee of full-time and adjunct faculty to review a subset of portfolios and journals in terms of properly covering the skill standards. An objective measure will be used with the support of the Dean of Assessment. This will aid in insuring the skill standards have been properly met by all majors.

SECTION IV: PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

14. The following instructional practices and strategies have been described as high impact educational practices. Please discuss them in the context of your own program. Feel free to discuss additional high impact practices not mentioned here. Have you done any research within your program to determine the actual impact on student success that these or other high impact practices are having? If you are finding these high impact practices to be effective strategies for engaging students and increasing student success, how will you scale such practices up and out to support more students within your program? (This information should be noted as part of your action plan in **SECTION VII**, the Summary section of this document.)

- **FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS AND EXPERIENCES**
- **COMMON INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCES**
- **LEARNING COMMUNITIES**
- **WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES**
- **COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS**
- **UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH**
- **DIVERSITY/GLOBAL LEARNING**
- **SERVICE LEARNING, COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING**
- **INTERNSHIPS**
- **CAPSTONE COURSES AND PROJECT**
- **EPORTFOLIOS**

Several high impact practices have been instituted since the last program review. It is encouraging that both full-time and part-time professors have been involved in these initiatives. Although no formal studies have been made to assess the impact of these recent practices, much anecdotal evidence from faculty and students suggest the practices have been effective. Retention rates in a number of courses are higher (i.e. Introduction to Human Services, Counseling Skills, Supervised Field Placement) as compared to the overall college retention course rates.

New Advising Guide for Human Services Students Developed and Disseminated

A new Human Services Advising Guide (please see Appendix) has been developed under the Strategies for Success initiative. This advising guide should help interested and new students become acquainted with the program its options, course requirements, potential career paths and other information to help guide the student in making decisions about this field and their fit within it. Further, students need to be informed early on about the need to take certain courses in Lowell in the day time and the best way to proceed through the program as this has been a source of concern and conflict for some students who would like to take all their courses in Bedford. Also, students need to be better prepared for their field placement experience both through the advising process and within courses which serve as prerequisites for field

placement, especially the Counseling Skills course. A module needs to be developed, along with at least one individual meeting with their advisor, to explore possible interests and potential human service agency matches.

New Strategies for Success Course Guide Developed and Integrated into Introduction to Human Services Course

As a means of improving achievement, persistence, retention and engagement, two faculty members have undergone training since the last program review using the Introduction to Human Services course to develop a Course Guide (see Appendix). This intensive training came under the Strategies for Success Title III grant. The course was redesigned to incorporate Core Student Success Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, organization and self-assessment. Although only a few courses can be studied since the training, retention rates in these sections, both in class and online have improved.

Experiential Learning and Capstone Course as Keys to Program

One other area that deserves attention is that of hands-on, skill-building experiences in the field for our students. In the past, students had both two semesters of field placement experience and sites that were reliable and consistent. In the past several years, the program has both scaled down the requirement to one semester of field experience, primarily to strengthen the transfer program, and seen more difficulty securing solid field placement sites. This correlates with the difficulties seen generally in the human services field. Going forward, the program needs to be more vigilant and do more outreach in terms of finding solid field placement sites for our students. Also, it is become clear that greater exposure to the field is important for our students and the value of a service learning component is evident. The program therefore, working with the service learning office, will request that a service learning requirement be installed into the associate's degree. One other area which may be considered and needs more research is apprenticeships. This area has become available, and potentially a valued way of training future human service workers.

A capstone course in the program is the Supervised Field Placement and Seminar. Students not only get real-world experience in the field working at a human services agency, they also give back something valuable to the community. Further, students must document their work and receive intensive value credit for the writing they do. Also, they are able to master several essential areas found in the National Community Support Skills Standards such as counseling, case management, documentation, advocacy, and crisis intervention skills. They are able to become clearer about career goals working in the 'real world'. Many are offered paid staff positions upon completion of their field placement. Finally, students complete a portfolio as a part of the Supervised Field Placement which documents knowledge and competency in the 12 National Community Support Skill Standards (see Appendix for sample portfolios).

Research and Writing Components

To follow-up on the writing component, our Current Issues course is a high impact course when seen from a number of angles. First, it was one of the first non-Humanities courses to receive writing intensive value credit. Second, different human services professionals make presentations each week, giving students both a variety of perspectives, populations served in human services and career possibilities as they listen to social workers, supervisors, administrators, counselors, advocates and others. Finally, students are required to search out and write each week on a piece of research which corresponds to that week's presentation, building both on students' research and writing skills.

Diversity within the Program

Diversity is one of the great strengths in the program, both in terms of having one of the most diverse groups of students when looking at age and ethnic backgrounds, but also in terms of coverage of this issue in a number of courses (i.e. Introduction to Human Services, Community Psychology, Dynamics of Interpersonal Relations, Counseling Skills). One substantial difference in diversity between our majors and the college enrollment in total is the percentage of individuals designated as Hispanic, up to 28% for HUS majors vs. 16% for MCC overall. The program's diverse background not only provides a dynamic and challenging learning environment but also helps to prepare students to enter the human services field. Finally, students are exposed to a diverse group when they do their field placement and these issues are discussed in the seminar portion of the capstone course.

- 15.** Have any of the courses in this program been designated as Gen Ed courses as a result of MCC's revision of General Education? If so, please discuss any program impact of this work. How are part-time faculty incorporated into the discussion of course strategies to support and assess ISLO development? Are there teaching and learning strategies that have been found to be particularly effective? Have co-curricular activities been embedded in course content that have had an impact on student learning?

No new courses have been designated as General Education courses since the last review.

- 16.** Do all students in your program, regardless of campus, day/evening, and/or modality of instruction, have equal access to the high impact practices and student success strategies that your program offers to at least some of its students? If not, discuss how you can increase **equity** for all students in your program. (Include in your action plan as appropriate.)

All students are required to take the core HUS courses (i.e. Counseling Skills, Supervised Field Placement, Current Issues in Human Services) in the daytime in Lowell. This is both a strength and challenge in the program as some students leave the program (those in the Bedford area) while others gain tremendously from leaving suburban areas to experience the diversity and complete the capstone course. Some sections of Introduction to Human Services are just beginning to use the newly designed Course Guide. This will need to be further developed as adjuncts teach the course in the coming year. Due to a number of requests and many students working in the daytime, particularly those in the human services field, it is a worthwhile experiment to offer an extra section on alternating semesters in Bedford in the evening for HUS courses presently only offered in Bedford in the day.

SECTION V: INSTITUTIONAL DATA

The Institutional Research Office provides programs with a standard data packet, but is happy to generate additional data as needed. Please use the provided data packet to respond to the following questions:

- 17.** Is enrollment in your program steady, increasing, or declining? Discuss as necessary.

In a word, enrollments have been increasing dramatically over the past few years (the most recent enrollment data for Fall 2013 which just arrived showed a substantial increase of Human Services majors over last year, 194 total majors, surpassing the targeted goal, and more majors in several years). This is in stark contrast from the data last seen in the previous program review when enrollments were at one of its lowest points, at times far less than half of today's totals. Further, when one looks at the enrollment pattern over the past 20 years, there is a very uneven stream of students in the Human Services program, and correlative uneven graduation rates. What is especially confounding is the difficulty in trying to assess and understand the unevenness of enrollees in the program over this period of time.

When analyzing the institutional data from fall 2007 through fall 2011 for the Human Services majors what is most striking is the phenomenal growth in student numbers over this period of time. Even though the human services career program and human services transfer program experienced two years of reduction in eventual enrollment, the combined growth over this period of time compared to the last program review demonstrates an overall 100% increase in total student headcount. When looking at the application trends over the last five years, we see only one year where there is a decrease in applications (Fall 2010), but the remaining years we see a significant increase in applications ranging from 5% to 40% over this period of time.

Entering Human Services students come to the college needing more developmental courses than the college at large in Math, Reading and Writing. Whereas between 54-59% 50% of entering students college-wide need a developmental Math course, between 70-80% of Human Services students place into such a course. The number of students needing a developmental reading course (an average of 22% over the last four years compared to an average of 17.5% overall) is not that much different than the number we see for all other entering students, and in fact, fewer human service students take reading courses upon entering into the college. In terms of writing, Human Services students are very close to the norm of all other students entering the college where almost 50% take English Composition as their first English course compared to between 54-59% college-wide.

For the Fall 2011 semester over 175 students were enrolled in the combined programs including the direct support certificate program. When considering the last five years of data accumulated, a few trends can be noted: application rate, enrollment, and student headcount while uneven, demonstrate an extraordinary growth over this period of time. Parenthetically, it must be noted that this growth is uneven, and historically has also shown itself to be unpredictable. To think that in 2006 the total enrollment in Human Services was approximately 75 students and today we are closer to 200 students suggests a greater interest in pursuing human services and social work as a career. These increased numbers can be seen both in terms of additional sections of human service courses offered, larger numbers in courses, and increased advising loads of our two full-time faculty members, averaging over 80 students per semester for each advisor.

In looking at the numbers more specifically, one can see dramatic growth demographically as well. The Human Services program now has approximately 50% of its students as non-Caucasian. Over the past few years the largest growth group can be seen in the Hispanic population reaching approximately 25% of HUS majors. Also, more students are nontraditional when looking at those coming right from high school. So over this time, the program has grown not only in numbers but also in terms of diversity. This diversity both in terms of a variety of ages and ethnic background may be seen as one of its great strengths. What continues to be seen in terms of enrollment is the extraordinary ratio of women to men, demonstrating a 4:1 margin. This figure correlates roughly with what we see in the workforce in the human services field. Finally, it is interesting to note the number of credit hours students are attempting over the past few years back that type of data clearly a trend has emerged where well over 50% of our students are taking less than 12 credits. (Later on we may deduce or wonder about the significance of this trend in terms of graduation rate.) However, course completion rates do not seem to suffer from this trend as most human service courses have an 80 to 90% successful course completion rate, not counting the Introduction to Human Services course which includes nine human service majors. It is interesting to note that this course has the lowest successful course completion rate ranging anywhere from 32% to 82% over the last five years and must be remembered that non-human services majors may now take this course.

Over the past five years these two degree programs (HS Career and Transfer) have increased or decreased significantly with no real pattern or explanation for these variations. For some years, the career program and transfer program would increase substantially such as Fall 2009, where in 2011 the transfer program group by over 40% while the career program lost approximately 20% of its headcount. Still, cumulatively the numbers in both programs are roughly equivalent after having periods of time where the career program might dominate in terms of numbers by 20 or 30%. That is no longer the case. To

extrapolate a bit more there is one noticeable trend if we use the Head Count Full-time Equivalent conversion rate trend where we see more students in the human services transfer program than in the career program. For example, in the Fall 2011 the human services transfer program HC/FTE was 46, as compared to the career programs 39. This represented a gain of seven students from Fall 2010 for the transfer program and a loss of 11 students from the career program since fall 2010. So although it may be difficult to project too much into the future, it does appear that the transfer program is generating more HC FTE students.

18. Does your program enrollment demographic data mirror the overall MCC student demographics? Discuss as necessary.

Please see narrative above. In looking at application and enrollment data of the Human Service program compared to the college over the years 2008-2011, there is a substantial disparity between the college's FTE Enrollment Count and that for HUS majors (especially in the transfer program). For example, in Fall 2009, the college had a 3.0% increase while the program had a 43% increase. In Fall 2010, the numbers were reversed dramatically as the college had a drop of 3.3% and the program a drop of 45%. Finally, the most recent figures show an astounding increase of majors at nearly 33% while the college dropped 1%. If one were to look back to the last program review figures, one would see consecutive years of dropping enrollments for HUS majors, reaching all-time lows. So, it is encouraging to note that the data, except for one year (2010), shows comparatively greater increases for HUS majors as compared to the college as a whole.

19. Are there courses in your program with lower than desired completion rates? Discuss as necessary.

There is not a noticeable difference in completion rates in terms of comparing courses to other courses in the college except when considering entry-level students vs. more advanced majors. Overall, the college has a 75% course completion rate while human service majors complete their major courses between 74-100%. It is especially interesting to note the high completion rate of the upper-level HUS courses, namely Current Issues in Human Services, Supervised Field Placement and Counseling Skills where the completion rate is between 74-100% compared to the Introduction to Human Services course which runs between 68-80%. In fact, a number of required HUS courses (i.e. Current Issues, Supervised Field Placement, Counseling Skills, Dynamics of Interpersonal Relations, to name a few) have higher completion rates than most other courses at the college. As stated before, attrition is more an issue between semesters not within the semester. Overall, it can be said that the course completion rates are quite satisfactory when compared to the college and community college students in general.

20. How do your graduation/transfer rates compare to the overall MCC graduation/transfer rates? Are you satisfied with your program completion/attrition rates? Discuss as necessary.

Attrition and retention issues need to be analyzed here. It is clear from the Institutional Research data that relatively few Human Services students who initially claim this major actually complete the program. Since the last program review, one can see an average of 12-15 graduates per year even though the program may have had anywhere between 75-175 students at any one point in the combined Career and Transfer Option (over the past five years). As stated before, some years had a much more robust enrollment while a few years back HUS declared majors were leaner. In any case, the number of graduates can be seen to be substantially lower than the total number of declared majors. Explanations for such high attrition have been mentioned before but need to be stated again, along with others as well:

- Many students declare Human Services as a major early on (upon entering the college) with a generalized sense of wanting to be a helper but with little or no knowledge of the field, including requirements, roles and wages for entry level positions;
- The more knowledge some students gain about the field and the low wages present in many positions (some which may be gotten without a degree), the greater the chances they will switch majors (i.e. to Psychology, Allied Health, Liberal Arts);
- Some students will leave the program and enter the field without a degree, since the human services field has few requirements upon entry as a direct care worker or residential counselor;
- Many students are natural helpers and have been the identified caretaker in their family. When a family crisis arises, they are expected to drop their academic plans and take on full time care-taking duties in their nuclear or extended family.
- More and more of our students are coming directly from agencies and programs as former clients or consumers, bringing with them a number of challenging personal issues, along with less than adequate support systems/coping skills, which may interfere with their academic progress. The stress of college life on top of outside pressures and un-reconciled issues become overwhelming for some students, necessitating withdrawal.
- Some students change majors when they fully realize that they must come to the Lowell campus to take some of the required courses and/or have difficulty

managing their workload, family responsibilities and a field placement (12 hours per week for one semester). Alongside that is some misinformation about the possibility of taking courses at night (one can see some students listed as 'evening students') to complete the program, confusing the AACC program offerings with the day HUS Associate courses.

- The program deliberately attempts to challenge students in the classroom with high academic standards, along with experiential learning opportunities. Some students who may do well in the field given their strong social/emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills, may struggle with traditional academic courses, especially, but not exclusively, the all-college math requirement.
- Some students begin to see later on that this field is not for them via the Counseling Skills course or the Supervised field Placement.
- Some students have a variety of challenges, be they personal, financial, familial, situational, when in combination, take them away from the college.

Faculty in the program has grappled with the issue of attrition and relatively low rates of graduation for some time now. Our hypothesis was that much of the attrition came about as students learned more about the field and challenges attendant to low wage positions. In an attempt to learn more about the new Human Services mindset, namely their knowledge of human services as a field and the level of career development brought forward, a list of questions was distributed to Introduction to Human Services students (3 sections with over 50 responses) in the Fall 2012 semester. The following is a summary of the responses collected:

Students come to the human services program from a variety of places but with similar motivations and sense of self. Some come directly out of high school, but many are returning adult students, having been away from high school anywhere from a few to several years. Students express a few significant motivations for declaring human services as their major, namely having had personal experience with human service agencies, wanting to be a helper, and either they or family members having had some experience either directly or indirectly with human service agencies. Some of our students come directly from working in the human services field, having been hired without a degree but now seeing that they need further education and training to further their career. Many of our students see themselves either as past caretakers or hoping to be helpers in the field. The phrase 'I want to help others' or 'I have always been a helper' , 'I see myself as a helper' or "I have always been the caretaker in my family or friends always come to me for advice' comes up again and again in narratives collected in our Introduction to Human Services course offered the Fall of 2012.

Although students quickly and almost uniformly express a desire to be a helper, they have a very vague sense of what type of career and what the human services field offers. Although a number of them may have been consumers by way of getting assistance from a variety of human service agencies including shelters, substance abuse facilities, adolescent treatment programs, federal assistance programs, or watching their elders in nursing homes they still are uncertain as to where they may want to work or what kind of career may be possible for them as they enter the program. Many express a hope in clarifying their career goals and the opportunities in the human services field by way of taking courses in human services, especially the introductory course. Those who already work in the field see this program as a way of advancing their career and are already clear about the population they would like to work with and the agencies they would like to work for in the future.

From our student narratives, a number of variables become clear in terms of trying to understand the motivations, backgrounds and hopes of our students. Most have some experience with human service agencies. Some are already working in the field and others are certain they would like to work in the human services field. Also, what comes up again and again is the desire to transfer to bachelor degree programs, most notably in social work, followed by human services as a major. In fact approximately 50% of the students report a desire to be a social worker and well over 50% reported a desire to get at least a Bachelor's degree if not a Master's degree in the field. The students report a desire to work with a variety of populations, most notably adolescents, the elderly, substance abusers and those who have been abused in some way. It is also noteworthy to see a new group of students expressing an interest in working with veterans, having been a veteran and or having volunteered in a veteran center or knowing of veterans who need assistance.

The responses to this questionnaire confirm a few important issues in trying to understand our students and this program. First, most of our students see themselves as helpers or wanting to be helpers, yet have little sense beyond what that may mean in terms of her career. Second, many of them have experience in human services, having been a consumer, knowing someone who is received services, or presently working in the field. Also, this program and specifically this introductory course, provides an important learning experience in terms of clarifying career goals, the history and present landscape in human services, opportunities in the field, further education and training that is needed and where they may fit in the future. The opportunity for self-reflection and gaining knowledge helps the student to see whether this program and field will be a good fit for them or not. This has implications in terms of completion and attrition, given that a number of students will opt out of the program the more they learn about it (i.e. salaries, roles, agency challenges, etc.) and about themselves (i.e. necessary skills, original assumptions and experiences which led them to a program like this

but now seeing other areas of interest where helping may be involved such as allied health programs which have higher salaries).

One variable which is hard to sort out from the numbers but which is known to faculty members via advising and student self-reports are the varied and challenging backgrounds are students come from, some of which have a strong bearing on attrition. Many students enter the program with very little knowledge of the field but a strong desire to help others. Many students have directly or indirectly received support from human service or social service programs. Some are very early on in their own recovery from personal or family challenges. At times, this is a positive and motivating factor while others are not ready for the overall demands college life and the program necessitates.

SECTION VI: EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVES

21. NATIONAL BEST PRACTICE: It is as important for us to look beyond our walls as within our walls for new ideas.

Ever since we began our curriculum planning for the Certificate Program for Direct Support Workers over 15 years ago, initially with Lifelinks, Inc. and then adopted as a model for a state-wide initiative funded by the then Department of Mental Retardation, there has been one set of standards we have relied on and woven through our program of courses. Twelve essential competencies comprise the National Community Support Skill Standards. This national best practice which has been operational for approximately two decades now and originating out of the University of Minnesota (now called the College of Direct Support) and the Human Services Research Institute is the Community Skill Standards, found here: <http://www.collegeofdirectsupport.com/CDS50/content/CDSContent/csss.htm> and in the Appendix. These skill standards are essential for human service workers, have been recommended by the National Organization of Human Services, adopted by many colleges and human service agencies, and are demonstrated in our students' portfolios upon completion of their capstone course, Supervised Field Placement and Seminar. The program will continue to highlight these skill standards within the HUS designated courses, and require students to demonstrate and document their master via the portfolio process.

Further, it is interesting to compare a number of Human Service programs in the area in terms of curriculum. Looking at Bunker Hill Community College, North Shore Community College, Northern Essex Community College, and Mount Wachusett Community College one can see a tremendous variety of curriculums in their associate degrees. Each program does have in common an Introductory course, a Counseling or Helping skills or Treatment course, however most other courses are quite varied in terms of human service curricula electives and required courses.

Some programs have more specific human service courses while others have far fewer. Some programs have one field placement or practicum while others have two field placements. Some programs require a number of lifespan psychology courses (childhood, adolescent and/or gerontology) while others do not. Some programs require a group dynamics course while others do not. Some programs have a capstone course and/or seminar while others do not. What is most interesting are the number of specifically human service designated courses that are offered from college to college ranging anywhere from a handful to eight or nine courses. Therefore it is easy to deduce that some associate degrees are more geared towards practitioner rather than transfer goals.

The range and variety of offerings seem to indicate little or no general consensus as to what constitutes a Human Services Associates Degree. This may be due to the mission of each program or college aiming to produce graduates who are immediately entering the human services field as practitioners, whereas others may be looking for graduates to transfer into bachelor degree programs. Further, given that there are no licensing or credentialing bodies in human services, and also the history and evolution in this field, it is easy to see why there are so many differences in curriculum offerings and requirements in attaining an Associate's degree in human services at nearby community colleges.

The challenge is made even clearer here when considering neighboring community college human service programs in terms of whether to offer more or less human service courses, as opposed to offering a more liberal arts/transfer oriented program. Since the inception of the human services associate degree, much has changed. Originally, when this program and others were created around 40 years ago, the community mental health movement prompted a great need for direct care mental health workers in residential settings and community mental health centers. New forms of training were needed for a large group of patients being released from psychiatric institutions. As time has gone on, funding of such programs has diminished, salaries have stagnated, and a new pool of workers has largely been imported from other countries. Thus, more students are looking towards bachelor degree programs in human services, social work, and other applied psychology fields to secure a position as a social worker, case manager, counselor, intake worker or other roles which will provide a living wage. This external development over time challenges the community college to develop programs which will facilitate the associate degree graduate to transfer more easily. Otherwise, certificate programs, more focused on specific populations and roles with fewer required courses, have been and are being developed. A certificate programs in substance abuse counseling, developmental disabilities, childcare workers, gerontology workers, adolescent counselors have been and or are being operated at Middlesex and other neighboring community colleges. At MCC, we have developed and continue to offer two such certificate programs, one for substance abuse counseling and one directed towards direct care workers in the field of developmental disabilities.

22. Identify **labor/market trends** that may impact current and future graduates of this program, based on input from advisory boards, focus group meetings with recent graduates, and national and regional data. Discuss changes to the program that these market trends may suggest. Some possible sources for such data include:

The outlook for jobs in the human services field is listed as bright and promising according to O-Net Online: <http://online.onetcenter.org>. The following related positions were listed as having a bright outlook: social workers, school social

workers, social and human services assistants, mental health counselors, counselors, substance abuse counselors, and health educators. As was stated before from the Advisory Board, high attrition rates allow for many openings but many of these entry level positions are low wage jobs. Many of our students are recognizing these trends and realizing they will need to transfer and get a bachelor's or graduate degree to make a livable wage. We see here the influences of social forces and public policy, necessitating such positions but funding them at very low rates. A graduate can easily obtain a position but would need to work overtime and/or move on to another degree to significantly advance their position and wages.

23. ADVISORY BOARD: Describe how you have incorporated your Advisory Board into this self study, and provide examples of some of their input that you have found most valuable.

The program review has been the major focal point at both advisory board meetings during the 2012-13, Academic Year. The Chair has also sought out information from Board members who could not make meetings. The Board examined the curriculum in detail and agreed that it was consistent with the needs they see in the workforce. They affirmed the issues around the high rates of staff attrition (anywhere between 33-50+%), lack of agreed upon qualifications for entry level workers and dilemmas facing graduates. They supported the trend of students going on for their Bachelor's degree, and beyond, especially in social work. Funding and staffing continue to plague Board members and their peers at other human service agencies.

24. EXTERNAL CONSULTANT (if applicable): After you have completed the self study and received feedback from an external consultant, please summarize that feedback, in terms of program strengths, areas needing improvement, and useful recommendations. Include a copy of the external consultant's report in the Appendices for this program review, and incorporate relevant information into the Summary section on the next page.

SECTION VII: PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY

A. Program Strengths

(Bulleted List with reference to the question(s) numbers in the program review where this strength is explained.)

- A tremendously diverse group of students, across many ethnic origins and ages
- Several very skilled and dedicated full-time and adjunct faculty with many years of experience both in teaching at the community college level and working in the human services field. Professors have many years as practitioners in the human services field.
- Three faculty members trained to teach online courses with several HUS or PSY required courses being offered either in class or online (Introduction to Human Services, Introduction to Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Community Psychology)
- A trend towards growing numbers indicating human services as a major
- A solid, proven curriculum over time which balances skill building courses with experiential
- learning, historical and theoretical knowledge of the field with accompanying liberal arts courses
- Full-time faculty who serve as academic advisors for all human service students
- A history of responding to agency needs by way of creating courses and certificate programs for specific populations and the present work being done to create a certificate program and/or training courses for a local agency (Eliot HS)
- A good balance of traditional, face-to-face courses and web-based courses.
- A revamped advisory board which better reflects solid local agencies and human services graduates.
- Two full-time faculty members who have also served as Human Services Department Chair, as well as teaching in and coordinating certificate programs.
- The development of modules and artifacts which demonstrate learning in standards which correspond to the Human Services National Skill Standards.

- The existence of an approved transfer program, articulation agreements and the development of further articulation agreements with local baccalaureate programs to help students transfer more easily.
- The opening up of several HUS courses to non-majors, allowing other MCC students the opportunity to learn about the field, develop counseling skills and/or switch majors to Human Services.
- Effective and ongoing collaborations with Business and Industry division and human service agencies, allowing for new certificate opportunities, and field placement opportunities, and job prospects.
- The development of several outstanding adjunct instructors teaching core courses as evidenced by recent student evaluations, classroom observations and informal focus groups.
- A program which both strongly encourages (i.e. service learning) and requires (i.e. Supervised Field Placement and Seminar) students to learn and give back to those with a variety of needs within their community.
- The development of two new program resources, namely the new Course Guide in Introduction to Human Services course and the new Advising Guide.

B. Program Action Plan for Improvements, Budgetary Implications, Timelines. Program Review is both evaluative and forward-thinking, offering the opportunity to set future directions for the program.

| Action Items (Reference the question in the program review where this need is explained.) | Proposed Plans for Improvement (Bulleted list of suggestions.) | Financial Needs to Make Improvements | Proposed Timelines for Implementation |
|---|--|---|---|
| 13. Require one semester of service learning for all Human Services students | Meet with Service Learning Coordinator Propose to Division Dean and appropriate committee | 0 | 2013 Academic Year to apply for students entering Fall 2014 |
| 17. Add one HUS course per semester in the evening in Bedford to allow greater access of students | Schedule one additional HUS course in the evening in Bedford | 0 | 2013-14 |
| 1. Finalize articulation | Meet with Kim Burns and draft final copy | 0 | 2013-15 |

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| agreement with UMASS/Lowell and add one more articulation agreement | Present to UMASS/Lowell Department Chair and seek appropriate signatures Meet with staff at Salem State | | |
| 13. Pilot Strengths-Based Inventory and advising with HUS students | Meet with Advising and Enrollment Offices | 0 | Plan 2013-14 Implementation for 2014-2015 |
| Develop Field Placement list and guidelines and introduce to students in Counseling Skills or Community Psychology | Meet with faculty and Advisory Board to develop list and guidelines | 0 | 2013-14 |
| 22. Conduct exit interviews and outreach efforts to students who leave program to better understand attrition issues | Meet with academic advisors and faculty to coordinate protocol and collection/analysis of information | 0 | 2014-15 |
| 15. Form Committee and utilize an objective assessment methodology for future assessment work. | Meet with faculty and Dean of Assessment to develop objective assessment methodology. | 0 | 2014-15 |
| 19. Develop a number of mechanisms to provide interested Human Services applicants information about the field and career options to help develop accurate picture of career possibilities | Meet with the Enrollment Center, Advising Center and Publications to insure accurate career information is disseminated early | 0 | 2013-15 |

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| 19. Develop a more comprehensive webpage for interested students and majors | Work with HUS faculty and Publications | 0 | 2014-15 |
| 15. Conduct study on effectiveness of high impact practices on retention | Meet with Phyllis Gleason on 1 credit course, possibly in service-learning | 0 | 2014-15 |
| I. Investigate workforce needs and develop curriculum for a new short-term certificate program | Conduct meetings with faculty, Business and Industry and Advisory Board | 0 | 2014-16 |
| Develop recommendations for future of HS Career program based upon institutional data and student input. | Request Institutional Data, meet with Advisory Board and students regarding the viability of the Career Option | 0 | 2014-15 |