PRAC minutes for 1/31/2013

Absent: C. Dellinger-Pate, T. Radice, J. Webb, R. Zipoli

Meeting began 9:45

PRAC recommends that UCF grant continuing approval for Social Work.

The Committee met with Dr. Elizabeth Keenan to discuss the expedited self-study from Social Work. The report is admirably thorough and succinct. Committee members were especially impressed with the competency map, student course survey, the use of SWOT for standard 16, and the department’s outreach and community relationships. Other departments/programs with expedited reviews might look to Social Work or Liberal Studies for models of how to approach standards 16 & 17.

One committee member stated: Social Work is meeting the aim of assessment precisely and that is they are assessing ...how their students understand the program and demonstrate the outcomes.

Committee members asked for more information about mindfulness activities mentioned in the report. Dr. Keenan provided an example of students keeping track during class of when they become distracted and what led to the distraction. Responses are later discussed by the group.

There was a brief discussion about alumni survey return rates and how to improve them; this is something many departments struggle with. We also briefly discussed the department requirement regarding motor skills and the ability to navigate in internship settings. Accommodations have been made so that all students can participate in field experience.

In response to a question about student involvement in research, Dr. Keenan shared with us that an undergraduate class is providing participant feedback on hybrid courses, but the majority of students in the program are commuters and almost all are working, which diminishes the time available for them to engage in activities beyond class. The department is encouraging Honors theses and trying to tie research methods more closely to internship experiences to make research more relevant for undergraduates. Most BSW students go onto an MSW programs and so are more focused on practice than research.

We also had a lengthy discussion about the division of faculty and resources between the undergraduate and graduate programs. Dr. Keenan explained that the department has an undergraduate coordinator and a graduate coordinator, plus a committee for each program. Some graduate faculty teach a section of an undergraduate course, so there is crossover, but faculty are assigned to either the undergraduate or graduate program with regard to program development.

As with many departments on campus, Social Work has suffered the loss of many full-time faculty with only a few being replaced. They have had 6 retirees, 4 of whom were replaced, one faculty member in the Dean’s office who has not been replaced, and another faculty member—one of the 4 full time faculty members assigned to the undergraduate program—is retiring. The current student:faculty ratio is approximately 60:1-42:1 (there is a question of whether, or how much, adjuncts are counted).
This is of special concern because Social Work’s accrediting body requires a 25:1 student:faculty ratio at the undergraduate level. The site visit will occur in March.

Meeting adjourned 10:55.

Submitted by S. Clerc