

## FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK UNIT REVIEW

### Summary Report

The Site Visit of the Review Team for the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work took place from November 17-18, 2020. The Review Team consisted of:

*Dr. Kathy Hogarth, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Waterloo*

*Dr. Donald Fuchs, Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba*

*Dr. Peter Donahue, Director, Graduate Program Chair, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, King's University College*

*Dr. Virginia Tumaszyk, Vice Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Calgary*

Following the Site Visit, the Unit Review Team prepared a written report containing comments and recommendations. The Faculty of Social Work subsequently provided responses to the recommendations. General comments and the recommendations and responses follow.

#### General Comments of the Unit Review Team

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The Faculty of Social Work has historically had a provincial mandate for the delivery of Social Work education in Alberta. As a result, the Faculty offers a broad range of educational programming that includes BSW, MSW, and doctoral programs as well as certificate and continuing education opportunities delivered through a complex system, including regional campuses (Central & Northern Alberta Region, Calgary, and Southern Alberta Region). Over the last twenty years, the Faculty has grown considerably with the addition of programs such as the Learning Circles BSW that delivers undergraduate education in rural communities across Alberta, and MSW programs in both Lethbridge and Edmonton. At the same time, existing programs were expanded, including the development of a blended (online combined with two in-person residencies) delivery Virtual Learning Circles BSW program, a blended (online combined with in-person) delivery Leadership in Human Services MSW specialization, and their new stackable certificate MSW program. In 2014, the Alberta government funded both undergraduate and graduate enrolment growth, resulting in the immediate addition of 25 new MSW seats and 100 new BSW seats by 2017. Currently the Faculty delivers programming to just under 1,100 students across the province.

Through the review process it became increasingly evident that the University of Calgary and in particular the faculty of social work has considerable strengths. Among these is its reputation advantage. The University of Calgary and its Faculty of Social Work is uniquely situated in the province with offerings that are attractive provincially, nationally, and internationally. Since its inception and up until recently, the Faculty of Social Work provided the only social work degree program in the province. Occupying this unchallenged space for such a period of time helped to establish and solidify a reputation for the University of Calgary and the Faculty of Social Work within the province and beyond.

Having built such a great reputation in the communities where it is located and the province at large, one of the resultant strengths of the Faculty of Social Work is its community connections. These community connections are based in part on the fact that the Unit provides a service that cannot be had elsewhere and that the quality of the service they provide creates an environment where the community wants to rely on them. In other words, the great community connections enjoyed by the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary maintains a great balance of demands and supply. Community stakeholders enjoyed and wanted to maintain connections with the Faculty of Social Work. Likewise, those within the Faculty of Social Work welcomed the community connections and sought to enhance them creating an effective symbiotic relationship. As noted by a community stakeholder participant, “hands down faculty of social work is the best so my congratulations to the faculty of social work for their community leadership.” This is consistent with the self-study, which highlighted that strength is found in the relationships and profile the Faculty of Social Work has built with their external communities across Alberta, nationally, and internationally. Faculty members often serve on agency boards, attend community events, lead participatory research with community, provide research supports and collaborations.

The supportive nature of the Faculty of social work was a recurring theme reviewers heard throughout the review process. The strength of this supportiveness was identified in both the institutional support and the individual or personal support. Institutionally, the Faculty of social work is experienced as a place where researchers, Faculty, administration, students, external stakeholders can grow and thrive. Supportiveness was at times viewed as “wonderful collegiality,” and across students, Faculty, staff and community, the consistent supportiveness of the Unit came through. The faculty provides an outstanding level of institutional and personal support to its members. Students generally perceive the Faculty as supportive and responsive, and the level of support was constant even through the pandemic.

The creativity and innovation of the Faculty and its constituents were emphasized at various times throughout the review process. Creativity was seen as one of the factors that allowed Faculty and staff to come to terms with some of the challenges they encounter in the routine of their work and to pivot amidst the pandemic and through budget cuts. The very notion of “growth through focus” demands a level of creativity. This creativity factor is a key element in the newness of the Faculty’s leadership shifts resulting in some perceived “serious changes” with potentially high impact in the Unit. The field team noted creativity as a “definite strength” as they are encouraged and supported to engage in creative practices around practicums and to build new collaborations with the community, and to try new things. One of the innovations noted is exploring research practicums to do rotational models while feeling supported by leadership. Faculty also reflected creativity and innovation as a strength expressed through research. Furthermore, the “eclectic” nature of the Faculty, the fact that there are diverse expertise and worldviews, allows for the freedom to explore creative pedagogies and approaches to research.

With multiple locations, multiple modalities, and varying programmatic choices, the Social Work Program at the University of Calgary boasts accessibility at its best. It affords students both at the

center of the province and in remote areas, greater opportunities to access social work education. Once enrolled in a program, students have varying options to work towards completion, allowing for a great amount of flexibility.

It is worth noting that though these areas of strengths were clearly identified, there were equally clear indications of the threats to these strengths and the need for focused attention to these areas as will be made clearer in other parts of this report.

### **Faculty Response:**

The Faculty concurs with the strengths seen and articulated by our unit reviewers. We are pleased to see that the reviewers have recognized the strong advantage that our Faculty's "great reputation" within Alberta brings. This strength is particularly relevant given 1) a marked increase in non-geographical online social work programs and 2) changes to the post-secondary education model in Alberta that has seen two additional Bachelor-level social work programs created in the province. We plan to build on this strength through increased communication and program promotion.

The Unit Reviewers identified community connections as a strength and we agree that community connections is our Faculty of Social Work brand, both nationally and globally as well as internally within the University of Calgary. The Faculty of Social Work has been building community connections for over 50 years, as one of UCalgary's founding faculties. We have a deep commitment to community engagement and are proud of the ways our colleagues have cultivated a nurturing relationship with the local and global community context. Our Faculty stands out as a result. This engagement increasingly characterizes our work as an applied profession. We recognize that "communities" includes Alberta Health Services (AHS), Children's Services, and municipal, provincial, and national governments as some of our faculty work with people through these services. The building of even deeper connections with community is part of our strategic direction for supporting education and research within the Faculty.

We also concur with the reviewers' comments regarding the supportive nature of the Faculty. We are pleased to see that others recognize our commitment to a supportive workplace and learning organization. Our values underline our belief in supportiveness, and our key to our supportiveness is our listening, respect, and compassion for each other. We realize that for our Faculty to be supportive, the staff and academic staff within the Faculty must thrive and flourish. They need everyone's support. We often hear staff and academic staff saying, "what can I do to help?" offering their talents and skills to each other in whatever way they are able. Faculty members do see this as a strength, and there is a synergy and environment of support among researchers, Faculty, and administration. At the same time, we must remember that it is important that all staff and Faculty receive the necessary time and support for their workload to ensure that they can continue to support one another.

Creativity and innovation are also an agreed-on strength. Although we contain many diverse views and passions, our cohesive culture is a strength. The values and assumptions underlying creativity and innovation are an essential component of our identity as a unit and school and will unquestionably continue to evolve. Our Faculty's research is filling a gap in a unique way to address both local and global issues. We have colleagues engaging in arts for change, social innovation, and our field team is second to none in how they have managed field education. For example, during the challenging pandemic, other Canadian social work programs have been adopting the Faculty's Field Team's new model of self-directed practice. While the context for degree delivery of social work education may shift in Alberta, we remain committed to curricula and delivery models that are innovative and responsive to the needs of our communities.

We also resonate with the Faculty's brand being identified from its program accessibility. We provide flexible opportunities to access and complete social work education. Over the past 50 years, the Faculty of Social Work has worked to be as accessible as possible for students. Before the internet, we travelled into rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Alberta to offer our BSW or MSW. With our 20 years of experience in offering the mostly online BSW and currently offering most of our programs entirely online through the pandemic, we envision offering the BSW and MSW through various delivery methods. Our ability to consider various forms of delivery places us ahead of other social work programs in demonstrating our commitment to accessibility for students. Our robust face to face and online programs are competitive and accessible when compared to other social work programs in Canada. Today's students are, more than ever, juggling children, employment, and caregiving and require an accessible and compassionate program in order to succeed. There are multiple ways in which we can see accessibility enacted from admissions through accommodation. We also need to ensure that equitable flexibility is available for students across the board.

This review was conducted while our societal context was not typical. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on how we view our work and how we operate as a faculty. We have seen an increase in connectivity across our regions due to everyone being online. At the same time, our inability to have face-to-face interactions has meant we have had to find new ways to engage with each other. The Faculty continues to function well as a unit through our strong collegial culture and commitment to each other. We believe that Social Work is a significant contributor to the University of Calgary since 1967, serving as a model for creative curriculum development, distance and online education delivery, a supportive culture, community engagement, and community-based research, and that we remain a leading social work school in Canada.

## Reviewer Recommendations and Unit Response Follow-up

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## STRUCTURE (TWO BSW PROGRAMS)

***Recommendation 1:*** That the Faculty explore ways to streamline and integrate its BSW curricula to ensure consistency and quality of course content and field offerings over the different regional and local sites.

***Recommendation 2:*** That the Faculty explore the development of one BSW curriculum with regional electives to address local and regional needs e.g., rural, and remote social work practice, inner city, or urban poverty practice, or working with indigenous communities.

### **Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Social Work has been working through a curricular redesign process to align its BSW program under a single curriculum. This process began in August 2020.

The redesign will create a single, flexible, blended delivery, high-quality, accessible, faculty-wide supported program, with a planned implemented in Fall 2022. The redesigned BSW program will purposefully align with Faculty of Social Work strategic priorities and is being designed to make the most efficient use of Faculty resources. Regional electives are being considered as part of this process. The redesign of the BSW program will be informed by the recent redesign of the MSW program, with attention to continuity and connections between undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the Faculty of Social Work. The redesign process has been inclusive with students, Faculty and staff all having opportunities to participate and a comprehensive and intensive stakeholder engagement process ensuring that a breadth of diverse perspectives and recommendations are included.

The changing contexts of social work education and social work practice have encouraged the Faculty of Social Work to evaluate its priorities. The current priorities include ensuring that BSW graduates are able to understand and take action against Anti-Black racism and White supremacy. Our graduates also need a strong foundation of competency and understanding to work effectively and ethically with Indigenous peoples and communities. Additional priorities for the design of the new BSW program is on our faculty's commitment to the University of Calgary Indigenous Strategy and on our commitments to anti-racist social work practice, which are stated at: <https://fsw.ucalgary.ca/news/statement-anti-black-racism>.

Designing the new BSW involves adopting a creative approach to maintaining our presence in smaller cities in Alberta and continuing to nurture our close relationships with social work programs in Alberta colleges. We will continue to expand field education opportunities and to provide leadership in building the profession at provincial, national, and international levels. We are taking an innovative approach to creating a BSW program that will be accessible and attractive to social work students from Alberta, and also, accessible and attractive to students from across Canada and international students.

To respond to the need for a BSW program entrance from high school, the BSW Redesign also includes a plan to offer 4-year BSW program, proposed to start September 2022.

To follow best-practice in curriculum design, we have started with ensuring that the program-level outcomes (PLOs) are meeting the specific outcomes required for the Canadian Association of Social Work Educators (CASWE) accreditation process and adding outcomes that are unique to the University of Calgary. By building on the program level outcomes and mapping those directly to course outcomes, assessments and suggested learning activities, we can ensure consistency and quality of course content wherever a student is located.

## **REGIONALITY AND MULTIPLE LOCATIONS PROGRAMS**

***Recommendation 3:*** That as the Faculty engages in its strategic consultation and planning process, academic staff, support staff, students and community need to be updated on the changes that have already been made as the functional model is being rolled out.

***Recommendation 4:*** Meaningfully engage stakeholders in the ongoing planning processes for the further development and ongoing roll out of the new functional model of leadership and program delivery.

### **Faculty Response:**

As noted by the reviewers, the Faculty of Social Work has restructured to a less geographical and a more functional model of leadership and program delivery. Reconfiguring a few faculty administrative roles and more centralization of program delivery will allow a more streamlined use of resources and a more cohesive workplace. We have also started to expand our communications and advancement efforts with additional staff and focus in these areas.

Given the change experienced by staff and academic staff with this functional model and our current dynamic context, the Faculty aims to address uncertainty and concerns about the new functional model for delivering existing programs and operations across our regional sites. Maintaining unique and meaningful relationships with community partners and stakeholders across the province is vitally important. We are connected to a diverse representation of communities that should be honoured and not viewed as 'regionalism'. We have begun to engage faculty staff, students, and community stakeholders more extensively than before to determine the program delivery priorities for a functional and cohesive faculty model.

The functional model of program delivery will be a topic at our planning day in August, 2021.

## SESSIONAL/FTE RATIO

***Recommendation 5:*** That the Faculty review its current use of sessional instructors to identify ways and means for reducing the increasing numbers of courses currently delivered by sessional instructors

***Recommendation 6:*** That the Faculty work with central administration to create an institutional strategy to address the inequity created by the current practice of clawing back and reattributing retirement positions and that Faculty develop and implement a human resource renewal strategy to address the current and projected losses of administrative leadership capacity, academic knowledge, research, teaching and practice expertise.

### **Faculty Response:**

We agree that with our current large range of BSW delivery options in geographical locations throughout the province, it is difficult for full-time Faculty to deliver programs to all these smaller urban centres, and we could have an over-reliance on sessional instructors. We have well-qualified and experienced sessionals that enhance our programs and the quality of practice learning for students. We plan to create more part-time limited-term instructor positions (thus increasing their compensation) to reduce turnover which creates more workload for staff in orienting and supporting new sessionals. Our divergent BSW program offerings pose a challenge this way, and our new BSW will provide the opportunity to reduce our sessional reliance and to better streamline that program with the strengths of our Faculty. We need to be creative about our models and approaches to learning and teaching. For example, we can explore opportunities for sessionals to co-teach with faculty members to off-set workload concerns, because we need the strength of our full-time Faculty to be teaching our core courses.

The reviewers comment about the need to ensure retention of positions due to ongoing retirements occurring within the Faculty. The ageing and subsequent increases in full-time faculty retirements combined with the significant funding cutbacks of the provincial government has limited and slowed down the replacement of full-time Faculty. Not only that, but retirements also translate into a significant loss in knowledge, institutional memory, and expertise in the professoriate and support staff and have left a gap in the Clinical Specialization area. The losses of administrative leadership, teaching and research capacity will continue to make it more challenging to maintain academic programs, research productivity, and community engagement. The University of Calgary has been supportive in ensuring the Faculty has an allocation of the academic staff required, and we are confident this will continue.

## **PROVINCIAL BUDGET CUTS**

***Recommendation 5: The Faculty, in consultation with the centralized university and community partners, work with its academic and support staff to develop and implement a focused approach to diversifying its funding base in a way that aligns with the value proposition of the profession.***

### **Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Social Work will continue to explore ways to diversify our funding base. We will work to increase revenue by providing more modularized courses and stackable delivery of the MSW. We will also need to be competitive in Edmonton and Calgary and while maintaining our province-wide brand. We need to determine which site to operate in face-to-face and which ones to provide drop down and online offerings, with a concerted exploration of how we can engage with our university community partners in new and innovative ways. Shared certificates with other faculties could be a novel approach, perhaps through partnering with nursing, law, education, or departments such as psychology or sociology.

We want to maintain our community stakeholders' support and stay connected professionally to our communities across the faculty. We will build momentum by working together with our eager stakeholders to build social work education and research strength. We agree with the reviewers that our "community's goodwill and interest in collaborative partnerships with the Faculty could provide a significant resource as it moves forward with diversifying its funding base".

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING**

***Recommendation 6: That the Dean and administrative team delineate and communicate the rationale for the new administrative team leadership model and the implications of the change to a functional model.***

***Recommendation 7: That the administrative team communicate to academic staff, support staff, students, and community stakeholders the roles, functions, and benefits of new model.***

***Recommendation 8: That after one year a transparent and participatory review process be set up to examine the effectiveness of the functional based team leadership approach.***

### **Faculty Response:**

The review team observed that the new leadership team model has great potential to help the Faculty adapt and respond to major changes within the University and the community environments as well as to assist in improving the student experience at the Faculty's different sites. The change in the administrative structure of the Faculty was discussed with the previous Dean, and in order to align with the administrative structures of most other faculties and to create a more effective



structure for our entire faculty functioning, the administrative structure was revised July 1, 2020. This new administrative leadership model converted the Southern Alberta and Central & Northern Alberta regional associate deans to the undergraduate and graduate program associate deans. The communication and process around this shift from a regional geographical model to a functional model of administrative team leadership was not implemented as transparently as possible, partially due to the adjustments and focus required due to the context of the pandemic. Whether it was the development of the administrative leadership team model or the choice of administrative leaders, there were concerns this was not done in a consultative manner with the participation of the entire Faculty and stakeholders. In addition, as the new leadership team adapts to their roles and responsibilities, the reviewer's expressed concern about the change and the impact on the quality of the student experience and causing confusion and frustration for students, and academic and support staff. The potential implications of this change were not fully delineated and communicated to staff, students and the community, and therefore the rollout was inconsistent with the Faculty's model of openness and participatory decision making. The Faculty agrees that the communication of the rationale for the new administrative team leadership model and the change to a functional model could have been conducted in a more comprehensive and consultative manner. If it was possible to implement this change over again, it would be done using a more purposeful and comprehensive communication plan.

The Dean intends to develop more formal processes for the transparent and collective selection and succession planning of administrators. A new Strategic Director position will be hired in the Faculty to ensure these concerns are addressed, that processes are developed, that communication is open and as transparent as possible, that all stakeholders are properly consulted, that the entire faculty is engaged in making informed decisions based on data, and that our structures are aligned and implemented with our faculty-developed strategic plan. An upcoming faculty meeting will allocate time to discussing and understanding the roles, functions, and benefits of the new model.

To increase the staff voice in decision making, such as being able to vote on some matters, managers will need to help facilitate staff being able to participate fully, adjusting workload so staff aren't required to go to more meetings and still have to get the same amount of desk work done, which could be a discouraging factor and reduce participation in decision-making or joining committees.

## **COMMUNICATION**

***Recommendation 9: That the Dean and Administrative team review its current processes and resources with the aim of communicating more effectively with all its constituents.***

**Recommendation 10: Further, it is recommended that the Faculty develop and implement focused strategies to improve communication across the Faculty including students, support staff, academic staff and community stakeholders in all its delivery sites.**

**Faculty Response:**

With our complex array of programs across various regional sites and the contextual pandemic and budget cuts, the challenge to ensure communication amongst staff, students, and community stakeholders was apparent. We appreciate the concerns expressed by reviewers about the lack of clear communication regarding program delivery changes, the impact of budget cuts, and student advising and supports. Given our delivery across the province we pride ourselves on communication, however, yes there were some missteps, particularly during the spring/summer of 2020. And so, our Faculty has begun to provide more information about what is happening within at the Faculty and possible ways our stakeholders across the province can connect with the Faculty. The Dean has been providing a weekly email to staff and academic staff with operational updates. A newsletter for students, and one for staff and Faculty, are issued twice per month. A newsletter for community is issued monthly.

The faculty has started to implement a Stakeholder Engagement Plan for community professionals, employers, students, alumni, staff, and academic staff. Students are being engaged more to provide input to the curriculum, all faculty committees, and the Faculty's broader programmatic functioning. A Community Advisory committee with diverse representatives across Alberta, has begun to meet with the Dean and senior leadership to regularly advise the Faculty strategies and programs. To improve the communication among our geographical programs and to engage more sessional voices, we are hiring a new Communications Advisor to support our current Manager, Communications and Marketing. This way, the Manager can spend more purposeful time communicating with our key stakeholders on the things that matter most. We are also redeploying an existing internal staff member to support the website design and maintenance to ensure online engagement and accessibility. We are also hiring a new Strategic Director and, along with the Communications team, that Director will create a faculty-wide communication plan and coordinate the implementation of this plan over the next year.

**RESEARCH**

**Recommendation 11: That the Faculty align its strategic research priorities with the proposed research themes of the University's new Growth Through Focus Strategic Plan.**

**Recommendation 12: That the faculty work to increase connections with other research initiatives at other units at the University such as the O'Brian Institute, City of Calgary Mental Health Strategy and in the community to foster innovative collaborative interdisciplinary research partnerships.**

**Recommendation 13: That research capacity be adopted as major criteria in the succession planning and recruitment of new academic staff.**

**Recommendation 14: That the Faculty re-examine its workload policy to increase workload recognition of research activities that relate directly to the Faculty's and University's strategic directions.**

**Recommendation 15: That the Faculty continue to increase its internal supports for research proposal development and that it examine its current supports for the administration of research grants with a view to improving existing supports and increasing administrative supports where necessary.**

**Recommendation 16: That the Faculty include in its strategic research plan actions aimed at engaging graduate and undergraduate students in conducting research focused on the critical analysis of social work practice and social policy.**

**Faculty Response:**

Our research is a strength, both in terms of our overall research productivity and the extent to which the faculty has developed strong research partnerships across the country and internationally.

As academic staff retire, brief reductions in tri-council funding can occur. We have the opportunity to bring new Faculty into the research culture to maintain the research strength in the Faculty and are in the midst of hiring five new academic staff, aligning those hires to the new Growth through Focus and the University of Calgary's Eyes High strategy. We value the opportunities this brings to our Unit.

With the addition of new faculty members over the next few years, we anticipate that the Faculty's administrative load will be shared more. Researchers will be freed up and supported to find the time to apply for research funding and implement their research projects.

When examining the need for support for the administration of research grants, the Faculty plans to explore the best ways to support researchers in the implementation of their tri-council research projects, to better understand, value, and recognize researchers' work, and to adequately support research in the Faculty workload policy and assignment of workload. With work being more online, academic members outside of Calgary have been able to join even more research teams to engage in multidisciplinary projects.

We are increasing student engagement in research by offering more research practicum opportunities and provide Faculty incentives such a greater workload credit provided for supervision of research practicum.

Finally, the Faculty has redeployed a staff person from our Professional Development program to support our remarkable Research Facilitator. This person will assist with providing a range of supports to the faculty's researchers post award, and with the steps required to manage successful

grants, providing more support in administering the funds (i.e., budgeting, HR, payroll, annual reporting).

## **WORKLOAD**

**Recommendation 17: That the Faculty conducts a thorough review of its existing programs and operations against its core mission and the current fiscal realities to determine its future focus (What should we stop? What should we pause? What should we grow?)**

### **Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Social Work supports the recommendation to review our program offerings, particularly to assess if we can reasonably continue to offer our full complement of programs. This is work that has already begun. A vital part of this recommendation is to consider what the Faculty offers against our core mission and the current fiscal realities. For example, at the Master's level, to streamline, we are shifting to our new model of stackable certificates that lead to the MSW. Our new stackable graduate degree model has addressed gaps in that program and enhances the overall quality and accessibility of the MSW. We hiring a Strategic Director for the Faculty who will help lead the planning effort to move the faculty away from being reactive to being proactive and to respond to the recommendation for long-term strategic planning.

**Recommendation 18: The Faculty utilize the new position reallocation process implemented at the University of Calgary to argue for the retention of key academic positions. New hires will be critical to sustaining academic capacity in key substantive areas such as clinical programming, child protection, and social policy.**

### **Faculty Response:**

Since completing the self-study for our unit review we have redeployed two permanent positions and begun the process of hiring 4 more additional staff, and 4 more targeted academic staff, to address the reviewers' areas of concern: Communication, Research, Alignment with Strategy, EDI, and Field Education. The new Field Coordinator position will provide administrative support to our Field Office. The Research administrator will support Tri-Council research growth and support post grant within the Faculty. More hires are needed to support growth in our Professional Development program and our research infrastructure. Although these hires were planned in our 2021/22 budget submission to the University, which preceded the unit review reviewers' report, the unit review team's findings underscore the importance we have placed on hiring and planning for pending

retirements. The University of Calgary has shown support for the Faculty and we anticipate that it will continue.

At the time of writing, we have several Faculty hires in process. These include one Associate Professor position and three Assistant Professor positions, and a shared Canada Research Chair. We hope to leverage the regular academic positions to create community-based research professorships or chairs. We are also focusing on succession planning. In addition to our hiring at Associate and Assistant Professor levels in 2021, we are developing a long-term faculty-wide complement plan that outlines potential retirements across Faculty and staff personnel. This plan can rebuild our capacity among both staff and academic staff. Currently, our academic and staff numbers are low, and during the past few years, there have been significant shifts in the complexity of managing field placements, increased research expectations for Faculty, increases in enrollment expectations, and new and more complex educational programming.

**Recommendation 19: With the growth or planning of any new initiatives, the Faculty carefully considers the resource implications and provides them appropriately.**

**Faculty Response:**

The reviewers indicated that workload issues are a concern for Faculty, staff, and students. Although the current context (COVID19, budget constraints, administrative shifts, and institutional strategic priorities, and revenue generation) has continued to increase workload, we agree that any further initiatives need to be carefully considered and resourced appropriately. We believe the review team accurately captured the challenge of increasing research intensity within the Faculty at a time when enrolments have grown, and overall faculty numbers have decreased. This particular recommendation will be incorporated into ongoing discussions about how to support all of the academic roles within the Faculty in relation to the Faculty's and University's strategic directions and new curriculum models.

Further mentorship and coaching are planned for individual Faculty members to balance their research agendas with their teaching and service requirements. Additional formal on-boarding processes to assist new faculty will be explored to support new Faculty as they moved towards tenure and promotion. We are also in the process of updating our Faculty Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure.

As recommended, we have started planning more leadership workshops and training as well as accessing a series of seminars being designed with the University of Calgary HR Academic Leadership program. We will encourage managers to encourage professional development and leadership growth opportunities for staff.

**Recommendation 20: The faculty look for new opportunities to provide scholarships and bursaries to offset tuition hikes for students across their various programs.**

**Faculty Response:**

The reviewers may not have been informed so we will provide a bit more information on the significant amount that students in the Faculty of Social Work receive in scholarships. In 2019-2020 the awards received by our undergraduate students from University of Calgary and Alberta Student Aid scholarships or bursaries was \$435,030. Our Faculty collaborates with Undergraduate Awards in establishing new awards and our administrators and faculty members support each year our process of nominated awards. For our Faculty of Social Work Graduate students, we have a nearly a million dollars in scholarships provided to our students last year. We are constantly developing new scholarships and awards. For example, in March 2021, as affirmative action to recruit and retain more students of Black/African descent and lived experience, we have provided faculty funding to launch three new scholarships (two undergraduate and graduate) for Black students, which will provide a minimum of \$4,000 per year to Black students for a minimum of 12 years going forward.

**Recommendation 21: The Faculty invest in new ways to attract, engage, and retain field education partners and create new field education opportunities.**

**Faculty Response:**

A long-standing strength in the Faculty of Social Work is field education, a signature pedagogy for social work education. Our accreditation standards demand high-quality practicum placements for all BSW and MSW students. To manage this process, we have a field education team that is among the largest and most capable in Canada. We are becoming known for our leadership strength in both practice and research in experiential learning and field education. While field education is experiencing severe challenges across the country, our team has managed to retain and support hundreds of high-quality field placements across the province every year. We will continue to support them in doing so and explore innovative models of field education in partnership with the employers of our graduates.

We acknowledge our field education team's strength and their ability to manage the many demands in their roles while maintaining close ties to their field education partners and securing placements. We agree with the reviewers' report that Canadian field education programs have been placed under considerable strain. Finding quality practicum placements is increasingly difficult. We must compete with social work schools that offer distance programs from other locations and with other disciplines eager to build local, community service learning into student experiences. At the same time, placement agencies are increasingly pressured by their own demands, meaning that there are fewer field instructors available. Those who can supervise students have less time to provide high-quality supervision. We recognize that these factors have created considerable pressure for our field education team.

We are responding by hiring an additional Field Coordinator staff member. As well, our new Office Coordinator will also have a significant portion of their time to support the administrative work of the field team with the specialized AHS practicum system HSPnet. We are also in the process of hiring a two-year limited-term Instructor academic role which will include field coordination to respond to the recommendation by the reviewers to provide immediate support for field education across our regions.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

**Recommendations 21: That the University works closely with the Faculty of Social Work to explore how the Campus Mental Health Strategy can be better utilized to support the mental health needs of Faculty, staff, and students and that the appropriate resources be allocated to enable this.**

### **Faculty Response:**

We are moving forward on mental health in a good way now, specifically with our Faculty Mental Health Implementation committee which had its inaugural meeting in January 2021. It is acknowledged that colleagues across all of the staff categories (professorial, administrative, and management) and Faculty have been making outstanding contributions in recent years while feeling the strain of these increased expectations. This is the inevitable product of reduced staffing numbers during enrollment growth and increasing demands in areas such as research. The Faculty will need to explore solutions and collective responsibility, to ensure support and provide workplace accommodations for both the physical and mental health of our Faculty, staff, and students.

We must also acknowledge the severity or impact of COVID which has exacerbated people's mental health. We can identify, along with the reviewers, that staff and Faculty carry the mental and workload burden of the recent funding cuts, which have "materialized as reductions in human resources". We will leverage the Campus Mental Health Strategy and supports to assist us in this work through its building of "a community of caring".

**Recommendations 23: That all students, particularly those outside of the Calgary campus, be provided with more information and assistance in accessing and navigating mental health services and supports that already exist for them.**

### **Faculty Response:**

We agree with this recommendation and are exploring additional ways of providing access to mental health services for students within our Faculty, as well as determine specific service needs for those students studying outside of Calgary. Over the past month, we have been sending out a weekly practical tips and resources communication to students. We ensure that information on the University of Calgary's online mental health resources is available to all of our students. We can explore creative ways to provide specific mental health counsellors and services specifically to support students within our Social Work programs.

**Recommendations 24: That the Faculty review the existing student mental health supports and services to identify any gaps and barriers to accessing services and supports**

**Faculty Response:**

Student mental health concerns and sense of a “lack of connections between students on all campuses” is a significant concern, made worse by the current pandemic. To respond to the student leaders’ desire to have more “opportunities to interact provincially”, we will examine our student leadership, terms of reference, and SWSA structure to ensure the structure can facilitate provincial interaction. Although most Faculty and staff are supporting and accommodating students, the need for more consistency is indicated in the review. We will need to develop more initiatives to demonstrate that Faculty and staff care about students’ mental health, and do more to increase students’ awareness of the services that already exist, perhaps by inviting these services to present at each student orientation session.

**Recommendations 25: That clarification be sought with external service providers (i.e., those provided by the University of Alberta and the University of Lethbridge) to ensure University of Calgary Social work students are provided with the services they are entitled to receive.**

**Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Social Work is committed to ensuring that the mental health resources that are available to students, regardless of location, are promoted and made readily available. We have hired an assessor to collect data on student experiences and resources over this year. We can then respond to this data to determine the needs and resources required.

**Recommendations 26: That Faculty’s mental health strategy be integrated and implemented throughout its programming.**

**Faculty Response:**

The Faculty supports this recommendation and notes that the mental health strategy is not currently linked to the Faculty’s strategic plan in an actionable way. We are working to remedy this through the creation of a Faculty of Social Work’s Campus Mental Health Implementation Committee, which will be creating an action plan to tackle these issues at the faculty level this year.

## **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

**Recommendation 27: That the Faculty of social work develop or advocate for the development of matrices to measure the unit success outside of the traditional matrices.**

**Faculty Response:**



The Faculty of Social Work supports this recommendation and the development and use of metrics that honour the EDI and community-based work that signifies our unique profession. Since Spring 2020, we have been working on our anti-oppression, anti-racist, and EDI goals and will continue to engage our faculty and staff in this process. An equity audit is planned for the Faculty and a commitment to implementing an effective equity action plan, which our Equity Action Committee has started.

**Recommendation 28: That the Faculty create and implement clear and tangible strategies that acknowledge and account for the burden borne by students, staff and Faculty of equity deserving groups who are advancing EDI**

**Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Social Work shares the reviewer's concerns regarding EDI issues which are illustrative of the fact that Faculty, students, and staff from equity deserving groups carry a load that is unseen and unacknowledged. The Faculty is committed to reducing the burden of racialized staff and academics "to educate Whiteness, able-bodied-ness, heteronormativity and other forms of privilege while at the same time carrying the burden of exclusion, and constructed marginality within the program and the wider institution". The Faculty is working to create structures within the University of Calgary and the Faculty that can create clear paths that allow for visibility of that load. We can also aim to address not only whiteness, but also Heterosexuality, Able-Bodied and so on. As social workers, we are responsible for the change. We acknowledge that our Equity Action Committee and Anti-Black Racism Task Force meeting attendees are mostly racialized people and we must engage our white staff and academic staff. Our Faculty must increase its sensitivity to the ongoing trauma that participation by racialized staff in anti-racism work can create. As a faculty we need to ask what we can stop, postpone and delay in order to prioritize critical EDI work, and we need to invite everyone to be involved in the work.

In order to balance the other recommendations in this review (to decrease workload stress, to decrease the number of activities the faculty takes on, to enhance mental health, etc.) our EDI action must be sustainable, and not merely concentrated over the next few months. Structures and resources need to be created to support the EDI work. Staff also need to have time made in their workload to serve on these committees and in this work. We are committed to creatively bringing every voice and perspective to the conversation of equity.

**Recommendation 29: That the Faculty align its EDI practice with its strategic goals and challenge the normativity of Whiteness**

As a faculty and profession, social work is committed to principles of social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion and this work takes on many shapes and forms. We want to be able to engage in open, respectful dialogue and action to move EDI forward across the university community. It is important

to invite everyone in to a safe space where difficult conversations can happen and constructive next steps can be identified and embraced to support moving EDI forward.

Over the next few months, the Dean will work to find resources dedicated to anti-racist and intersectionality-grounded EDI in three areas: 1) leadership coaching, 2) facilitated faculty/staff dialogues, and 3) facilitated action planning. Firstly, by providing opportunities for the Dean and Associate Deans to have access to seasoned EDI leader coaches, they would be better equipped to lead vision and strategies for change, to manage difficult dynamics in interpersonal interactions, and to ensure the implementation of our action plan. The Dean has reached out to a consultant for additional training and guidance to complement current Indigenous Elder coaching. If the support is helpful, we will extend it to other faculty leaders. Secondly, we will gather resources to facilitate dialogues for our EDI and relational perspectives. The Dean plans to secure guidance from an expert facilitator in this area. Thirdly, we will engage internal and outside experts to support the Faculty's Equity Action Committee in their action planning and implementation for our faculty-wide EDI initiatives. All Staff and Academic Staff will be expected to participate.

**Recommendation 30: That the Faculty align its strategic plan and actions with the University's "ii' taa'poh'to'P Moving Forward Good Way" Indigenous Strategy**

**Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Social Work agrees with this recommendation and initiatives are underway. As we implement our Indigenous Social Work Circle (Scholars Program), we will continue to further engage Indigenous Elders in delivering courses and advising students. We will also continue to strengthen the inclusion of Elders in the Faculty's governance and planning processes. The Faculty will need to develop its Indigenous Strategy to align with the University's ii' taa'poh'to'p Indigenous strategy and the faculty's newly developing Strategic Plan. We very much support aligning our strategic plan with the University Indigenous strategy. We will consider appointing a position, possibly our new Indigenous scholar hire could serve in this capacity, specifically to provide oversight to ensure this work is undertaken.

## Conclusion

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The Faculty of Social Work believes the Unit Review Reviewers' Report accurately captured the Faculty's strengths and the challenges we face. We look forward to drawing from our strengths – Accessibility, Community Reputation, Supportive nature, etc. – to help our Faculty thrive, and to pivot in creative and innovative ways in order to address the challenges inherent in maintaining and

improving our world-class Faculty of Social Work. It is clear that the Faculty is entering a period of rebuilding and growth. We need to ensure everyone in the Faculty, including these new people, receives the mentorship and leadership training required to contribute to our academic community fully.

As a concluding statement, as we weather the pandemic, we may need to slow our Strategic Planning process and adjust the timeline for our BSW redesign to ensure we are maintaining our supportive culture for staff, academic staff, students, and our many stakeholders. As we juggle the competing demands of extensive, complex programming and the challenge of delivering accessible and community-based social work education across the province, we want to ensure that the Faculty is working to be more compassionate, more equitable, smarter, more focused and strategic, and retain the right people to sustain the quality of what we do.

The Faculty of Social Work is, on many metrics, the top Social Work faculty in Canada and a signature school for the University of Calgary. With some concrete actions in response to these key Unit Review recommendations, we will only be more vital. Over the next few years, we hope that the University of Calgary feels tremendous pride in housing our Faculty.

#### Follow-up

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The Review Team recommendations will be revisited mid-way through the cycle. At that point, the Faculty of Social Work will be required to report on its status in acting on the recommendations, providing explanations and timelines for those which have not been met. This interim report should be submitted to the Provost in August 2023, with the next full review scheduled in 2025-2026.