EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This online survey of 2012 MSW graduates is part of an on-going evaluation process of the MSW Program at the UIUC School of Social Work. The purpose of the survey is to assess the graduates’ satisfaction with the MSW program, their professional experiences after graduation, and learning outcomes. Learning outcomes were measured by asking graduates to rate their level of competency on the core practice behaviors addressed in the MSW program. The survey instrument had 30 items in section I on general information and 45 items in section II regarding the ten Core Competencies. A total of 49 out of 136 graduates responded to the survey with 47 providing valid responses. This represents a responses rate of 34.6%. This is lower than the previous two years but is higher than before we implemented the online survey tool. The lower response rate may be due to the survey being conducted later than in previous years. The survey report is being disseminated to the MSW Committee and the faculty in order to review the strengths of the MSW program and to identify areas for improvement.

Section I presents general information. Three quarters of the respondents had taken education loans for their undergraduate and graduate study, and over half (53.2%) of them had over $25,000 overall student loan debt. Approximately 68% of respondents reported to have taken out student loan for their MSW education, and he majority (55%) borrowed over $25,000. More respondents worked in private agencies (59.1%) than those in public agencies (40.9%). Most graduates are currently working in urban settings (51.2%). Children/Youth and Families, and Low Income were the two most served population groups at over 50%. Emerging populations served included LGBT and people in incarceration. In responses of current employment, Behavioral Health (43.5%), consisting of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, was the largest field of practice followed by School Social Work (15.2%), Children Youth and Family Services (13.0%), and Health/Medical Social Work (10.9%). With regard to methods of practice, 74% of respondents reported working in Clinical/Direct Practice and 16% in Macro Practice. Seventy-eight percent of respondents are currently practicing in their concentration. As far as employment, slightly less than half (43.9%) were able to secure employment in the field of social work prior to graduation, and 87.8% reported obtaining employment in social work within six months of graduation. Graduates with full-time employment earned from $28,000 to $80,000 a year, with a median income of $39,150. Most of the respondents (80.5%) reported their current positions required a master’s level of education, whereas the rest (19.5%) required only a
bachelor’s degree. Regarding current licensure status, about one third (34.9%) of graduates have obtained their social work license. About half of the respondents (46%) reported being a member of NASW. In terms of satisfaction with the MSW program, most respondents (60.5%) reported “extremely satisfied” or “high degree of satisfaction”. By program of study, graduates from the Outreach program reported the greatest satisfaction (M=4.0). Graduates from the ALSC concentration had the highest degree of satisfaction (M=4.0) while those reporting the lowest satisfaction were in CYFS (M=3.4) and School Social Work (3.44) concentrations.

Section II analyzes core competencies measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The benchmark for each practice behavior was set at a score of 4 points or higher reported by at least 80% of the respondents. Highly-rated competencies in which all practice behaviors met the 80% benchmark included Identification with Social Work Profession (competency I), Application of Social Work Ethical Principles (competency II), Engage in diversity and difference issues in practice (Competency IV), “Apply knowledge of human behavior and social environment” (competency VII), and “Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities” (competency X).

Four competencies did not meet the benchmark. “Application of critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgment” (competency III); “Advance human rights and social and economic justice” (competency V); “Engage in research-informed practice, and practice-informed research” (competency VI); “Engage in policy practice to address social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services” (competency VIII); “Respond to contexts that shape practice” (competency IX);

Respondents provided detailed feedback on their experiences with the field practicum. They appreciated the supportive on-site supervisors, and the hands-on experiences gained from the practicum. They enjoyed the close relationships with classmates, and valued the networking opportunities at the school.