

March 11, 2010

TO: MSW Committee

FROM: Chair, FAMILIES CONCENTRATION CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: TERMINATION OF FAMILIES CONCENTRATION

With great sadness, I am recommending that the Families Concentration (FC) be discontinued at the conclusion of this semester. I have discussed this decision with each of the concentration faculty and they concur.

There are several factors that have led to this decision. The dominant issue is that the number of students selecting the concentration is below an acceptable number to offer even one section. The current cohort in S674 class this Spring semester consists of 9 FC students; the number of students who have currently indicated a plan to select the families concentration according to Sherry Gass are 9 students. By comparison, the number of students in the initial cohort was 19 students. This size is economically untenable.

The second reason is that our FC faculty have diminished in size as Eldon Marshall and Dave Westhuis are retired or retiring. This small size of FC faculty has become very challenging as we are working on competencies for the reaccreditation process. I met with professors Majewski, McGuire, and Bennett and they recommended that now would be an important time to discontinue the concentration as the competencies documentation is at a critical stage of pulling together the paperwork and, if the concentration is discontinuing, it would be most useful to end it now.

The third reason is that the field placement sites for FC students has been problematic as many agencies do not see family units or couples, they primarily work with individual clients. Carol Satre has been excellent at working with field placements but a common complaint by field students is that they are not seeing enough families where they can utilize the skills we are teaching.

We have had a great time developing and implementing the FC and believe that the students have been well trained and have been launched to productive careers. I have had social workers who were in our concentration that have given me feedback that the skills taught were invaluable.

I ask the support of the MSW Committee and the Faculty Senate as we conclude the FC. There continues to be a need for family content and I encourage each concentration to utilize the FC faculty in infusing the family content as deemed most useful.