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Program Name: Social Work Diploma Program

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Chapter 1. Program Overview

This chapter provides a brief description of the program, its history and the scope of the review.

Program Description

Information from this section was obtained from the Social Work Program Outline, which is congruent with the University of Regina calendar.¹

The Aurora College Diploma in Social Work (Certificate in Social Work from the University of Regina) is a two-year program. Graduates may have their two years of credits applied toward the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree at the University of Regina or Yukon College. Please find attached the MOU with the University of Regina (2011). The agreement has been updated or amended each year up until 2019 when we graduated our last group of students.

The program is designed to be of particular relevance to the Northwest Territories and its social issues, cultural groups, and delivery systems and resources. The courses and the field practicums are planned to meet the educational needs of students who will be working in the North after completion of the program, as well as students who will be continuing their post-secondary studies. Program delivery is geared to meet the needs and characteristics of adult students.

The Social Work Program educates social workers in a northern, generalist practice, preparing them to work with individuals, families, groups and communities. The program teaches students a wide range of helping and intervention skills, with a solid foundation in social work values and ethics. Students will learn to work as agents of social change in a variety of settings.

Brief History of the Program

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.²

The program began as a Diploma program in 1982 situated at the Thebacha Campus of Aurora College in Fort Smith. In 1986, transfer credit was arranged with the University of Calgary. In 1997, provision of the program alternated between the Thebacha and Aurora Campuses in Inuvik. In 2001, the program entered into partnerships with the University of Regina and Yukon College. The program was overseen by the University of Regina and students could receive a Certificate in Social Work from the University of Regina and a Diploma in Social Work from Aurora College.

¹ Aurora College. *Social Work Diploma Program Outline*. (2018).

² Laratta, John. *Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report*. (Crowe Mackay LLP and Crowe Mackay Financial Services Limited, April 5, 2018).

In 2007, the Social Work Diploma program moved to the current location at the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus. The program has been a part of the School of Health and Human Services since 2011. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) provides funding and the legislative context for College operations through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE).

External Accreditation

N/A

Faculty adhered to BSW accreditation standards through alliance with the University of Regina. However, as a Diploma program Aurora College was not part of the BSW accreditation survey.

The Crowe-Mackay program review (2018) assessed the Social Work Diploma program against the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Accreditation Standards. The majority of accreditation standards were viewed as attainable based on the current curriculum of the diploma program.

Scope of the Review

A review of the Social Work Diploma Program was completed by Crowe Mackay Financial Services Limited.³

The following are recommendations from this review:

1. That Aurora College develop a BSW program that builds on the strengths of the existing Diploma program. Staff from that program should be tasked with developing the baccalaureate program.
2. That Aurora College, with the University of Regina, develop a transition plan that supports Social Work Diploma students who wish to obtain their BSW without leaving Yellowknife.
3. That an Advisory Committee be formed to help guide the planning, transition and implementation process.
4. That ECE consider retrofitting the current building until such time as a new campus is created.
5. That Aurora College support the program in continuing to collect administrative data on its Excel spreadsheets until the new administrative database for student records is completed. The existing data should be imported into the new database, ensuring that the same fields occur in both databases.

³ Ibid

6. That Aurora College improve their reporting to government regarding the Social Work program by providing them with annual reports that break down costs by program and provide an overview of each program.

These recommendations were not implemented as it was decided to discontinue the program pending a full foundational review of Aurora College. This foundational review was completed in 2018 and is attached. Also attached is the GNWT response to the foundational review.

The current program review is the first to undergo the college's new process for program reviews. These processes are presently still in draft form waiting for the continuous quality improvement process to be completed. The aim is that this new process will provide a more consistent evaluation based on the new, standardized review format so that future direction for social work education at Aurora College can be determined. Specifically, this review can help identify if recommendations made in the 2018 Crowe-Mackay Review still stand as appropriate and allows for further recommendations to be made. The new format for program review is attached. It remains in the draft format until we can trial and complete a program review to ensure the process is appropriate.

Recommendations from the Crowe-Mackay review that are outside of the scope of this review include housing, funding, and daycare.

Chapter 2. Program Currency and Connections

This chapter assesses the program's competitiveness as well as its connections with the discipline/sector, other academic units, and the community (as applicable). It also assesses student demand for the program.

Competitive Context – Labour Market Context

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.⁴

An aging population headed towards retirement and worker out-migration will result in job openings. The resident labour force does not have the skills to fill the openings that will occur. There are labour market disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people caused by differences in education opportunities, resulting in limited opportunities for Indigenous workers to qualify for occupations requiring a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree.⁵ 51.6% of students in the Social Work program were Indigenous. See figure 7 in Crowe Mackay report.

The labour market projections indicate that there will continue to be a need for social workers in the Northwest Territories. For university graduates, social work will be in the top ten jobs in demand and in the top three for diploma graduates.

On February 8, 2018, the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly announced an additional \$1.5 million to put more mental health workers in schools,⁶ which may mean an immediate increase in the number of social work positions and opportunities for graduates.

The Auditor General Report⁷ references the need to re-assess the resourcing of child protection positions to improve the outcomes for children and families. This recommendation strongly supports the need for northern social work graduates to move into these critical positions.

There are two other colleges in the North that offer comparable programs to the Social Work Diploma Program. Nunavut Arctic College offers a two-year (six-semester) Social Service Worker Diploma that is delivered in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. Yukon College offers a four-year BSW degree in partnership with the University of Regina. The program is accredited by the CASWE and is delivered in Whitehorse, Yukon.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ The Conference Board of Canada. *Labour Market Information Resource: Northwest Territories Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment*. (2016).

⁶ Government of the Northwest Territories. *Government of the Northwest Territories Releases 2018-2019 Budget*. (February 8, 2018). <https://www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/news/government-northwest-territories-releases-2018-2019-budget>

⁷ Office of the Auditor General of Canada. 2018 October Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly: Child and Family Services—Department of Health and Social Services and Health and Social Services Authorities. (Canada, 2014 and 2018). https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nwt_201810_e_43169.html

Please find attached a variety of postings for Social Work positions across the NWT that demonstrate the ongoing need.

Program's Connections to its Advisory Board (PAC)

The Social Work PAC was active from 2007 to 2012. Members included a former student, community social workers, social work employer, regional geographic representation, associated government department (ECE), and Aurora College staff/management.

Work included reviewing curriculum integrity and adaptations, connecting to mentorship and graduate employment supports (through GNWT Human Resources), and strong advocacy for a Year 1 general arts/science expansion with the goal of developing a BSW program.

The PAC experienced a change in membership and was inactive for a period of several years. The plan to resurrect this Advisory Committee, and to add a current student representative, was a program goal just prior to the program's suspension, as well as a recommendation made by the independent program review in 2018.

The most significant and consistent PAC recommendation was to move to a four-year BSW program. In response to this feedback, the Senior Instructor submitted a detailed proposal with costing/sequencing to senior management in 2008, and updated the costing again in 2011 and 2014. Their recommendation unfortunately was never actualized. The PAC was supportive of the idea to offer a range of Social Work elective courses in evenings to support the students in moving forward with their BSW. The PAC approved the request to delete SW 440 (a fourth - year counselling theories course, typically an elective in BSW) and replace it with SW 202 (a second year, required BSW course in critical thinking) to enhance students' ability to be successful in the third/fourth year courses in the curriculum.

During the years without an active Program Advisory Committee, faculty received ongoing feedback from community agencies and Northwest Territories communities through student participation in field practicum placements. Feedback from field supervisors was largely positive – many supervisors indicated a desire to hire the student following practicum completion. Themes for improvement in student skills included professional behaviour, proficiency in English language and written skills, and more academic maturity.

Program's Connections to the Discipline/Sector

As curriculum partners with the University of Regina, the Senior Instructor was an active member of several committees that maintained strong connections to the social work curriculum, program policies, and best practices for social work students. The Senior Instructor contributed to the following University of Regina committees:

- Undergraduate Studies Committee (monthly)
- Course Curriculum Review Committee
- Prior Learning and Recognition (PLAR) Committee
- Field Education Advisory Committee
- Course Sequencing Committee

Aurora College Social Work faculty visited the University of Regina in 2010 to build collegial relationships and put in place strategies for student success. The Dean of Social Work at the University of Regina visited Aurora College annually for convocation and meetings were held in person to discuss memorandum of understanding, program, and student needs. Aurora College social work faculty participated in one meeting per semester with other University of Regina undergraduate faculty (via Zoom technology) to share ideas and problem solve about course delivery, student issues, and teaching methodology.

Instructors all maintained current membership in the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada (ASWNC). This ensured membership in and connection to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (all resources, updates and national initiatives). ASWNC conferences ensured connections to relevant Indigenous guest speakers such as Cindy Blackstock (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society) and Cyndy Baskin (Ryerson University Social Work professor and author of *Strong Helpers' Teachings*). Four of the social work faculty contributed/continue to contribute their knowledge and skills as ASWNC Board members (Little, Fikowski, Fitzky, Rankin), and two faculty served terms as President of the ASWNC Board during their time as instructors in the Diploma program (V. Rankin and S. Little). As a board member with ASWNC, the Senior Instructor also chaired the Northwest Territories Regulation Committee which, in partnership with the GNWT Department of Health and Social Services, resulted in the establishment of the Northwest Territories *Social Work Profession Act* (2012).

Over the course of the Social Work Diploma Program, three faculty members were recognized for their contributions to northern social work practice by the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW). The following received the CASW *Distinguished Service Award* (Northern Canada):

- S. Little (2013)
- H. Fikowski (2016)
- S. Fitzky (2018)

The Senior Instructor attended the CASWE conference annually. This provided up-to-date information on social work education, opportunities for partnerships and collegial exchanges. The Senior Instructor also developed connections with senior instructors at Yukon College's BSW program and Nunavut Arctic College's Human Services Diploma program.

The relationship with Nunavut Arctic College was informal and collegial – The Senior Instructor of the Social Work Program at Aurora College met with the Senior Instructor of the Social Work Program at Nunavut Arctic College once or twice a year in Yellowknife; and the two Seniors Instructors shared resources regularly by email and telephone.

The relationship with Yukon College was more formal through the dual relationship with the University of Regina. Both Aurora College and Yukon College had a seat on the University of Regina Undergraduate Studies (UGS) Committee and each had their own formal contracts with University of Regina (Yukon College to deliver BSW, Aurora College to deliver CSW). Aurora College often consulted with Yukon College (colleague to colleague) with respect to the similar student population and northern issues. The Senior instructor also worked on several University of Regina committees with the BSW Coordinator (the Senior Instructor equivalent at Yukon College), thus providing opportunities to share ideas and resources.

Three of the Aurora College Social Work faculty and two of the Yukon College faculty also served on the Board of Directors for the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada (ASWNC) at various times during the program. The joint work on ASWNC provided many opportunities for collaborative work on a number of projects that related to and enhanced faculty work.

All social work faculty maintained their social work registration through the Department of Health and Social Services.

Faculty, particularly the Senior Instructor, maintained informal collegial connections with alumni. The Northwest Territories social work community is small and faculty often acted as employment or academic references as former students embarked on their careers in the Northwest Territories. Several social work diploma graduates, who continued their education to complete their BSW or MSW degree, returned to the College as social work field supervisors for new students engaged in practicum learning.

Program's Connections to Other Aurora College Academic Units

Up until the time of suspension, the Social Work Diploma program fell under the School of Health and Human Services with a shared Chair. The program developed strong, interdisciplinary connections within the School of Health and Human Services:

- Collaborated with Nursing, Nurse Practitioner, Rural and Remote Nursing, and Personal Support Worker (PSW) programs on subject matter in some courses (mental health, suicide prevention, intimate partner violence, and anti-oppressive practice)
- Collaborated with Nursing and PSW program on interdisciplinary assignments
- Integrated Nursing and PSW students into cultural camp course (day trips)

Program's Articulation and Credential Recognition Processes

Students earned a Diploma in Social Work from Aurora College and a concurrent Certificate in Social Work from the University of Regina. Students applied to both institutions for graduation and parchments.

Completion of the Certificate in Social Work (CSW) from the University of Regina confirmed that Aurora College social work students had completed 66 credits towards a 120 credit BSW degree. All Aurora College credits were recognized by the University of Regina. Aurora College credits were either direct University of Regina courses (English and all social work courses), taught at the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus, or assessed for transfer credit (psychology and Indigenous studies courses). University of Regina assessed students' credits already earned through other institutions, and applied them towards the BSW degree. Students also had the option to transfer Aurora College/University of Regina credits to Yukon College towards completion of BSW degree. University of Regina was the common curriculum partner and the degree-granting institution for both Yukon College and Aurora College.

The majority of Aurora College students chose to continue beyond the Social Work Diploma and they did this in one of three ways:

1. Continued to complete credits by distance (on-line),
2. Moved to Regina, SK to complete BSW, or
3. Moved to Whitehorse, YT to complete BSW.

A smaller proportion of students (1-2 every 5 years) transferred their credits to a different university to complete their BSW degree (Alberta or British Columbia).

Future plans for articulation were clearly stated by the University of Regina. From 2008 to the conclusion of the program, University of Regina Faculty of Social Work indicated through the Dean and the Undergraduate Studies Committee, their commitment to support Aurora College in developing a BSW program. At the last contract renewal, the University of Regina indicated the desire to eliminate the CSW at Aurora College and progress to a partnership on a BSW degree.

Program's Public Information and Community Outreach

The Social Work Program brochure (attached) was updated and used as promotional material. A Frequently Asked Questions 1-page handout was created to distribute at promotional events. Social work participated in the Yellowknife Trade Show Aurora College booth, outreach to two Yellowknife high schools, and travelled to Behchokò, Dettah and Ndilo to participate in youth job fairs.

Particular outreach was done to entry level social services staff to encourage them to try the Introduction to Social Work course as an evening course while working. Three of the students who attended the evening course went on to enroll in the Social Work Program at Aurora College. Faculty maintained regular involvement with field agencies and field supervisors. A radio PSA advertising the Aurora College Social Work program was recorded and broadcast. Several of those advertisements are attached.

Student Demand for the Program

Application numbers always matched or exceeded enrolment spaces (with the exception of 2011). Once applications were screened, the program typically had full enrolment and, in many years, a wait list.

There are a number of ways that prospective students could learn about the program. People can call the 1-800 number, the front office, the senior instructor, the registrar's office, or the program chair. Telephone inquiries continued beyond the announcement of the program ending. Today Aurora College also has created an email for prospective students to ask questions about programming. It is info@auroracollege.nt.ca. This email is checked by communications staff and then specific questions are forwarded to program heads.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary of Strengths:

- Program of particular relevance to the Northwest Territories
- High labour market demand for Social Workers in the Northwest Territories

- Program and Instructors have strong ties to the discipline of Social Work
- Program is connected to the other academic units in the School of Health and Human Services
- High student demand for a Social Work program

Summary of Recommendations:

- Form an Advisory Committee to guide the planning, transition and implementation process.

Chapter 3. Quality of Curriculum Design

This chapter examines the quality of the program's curriculum.

Assessment of the Curriculum

Information from this section was obtained from the Social Work Program Outline as well as individual course outlines.⁸

Overview of the Program

The Aurora College Social Work Program offers two years of general university studies and social work curriculum leading to a Diploma in Social Work (Certificate in Social Work from the University of Regina). Graduates may apply to have their two years of credits applied toward the BSW degree at the University of Regina or Yukon College. All Aurora College courses are able to be transferred credit for credit.

The program is designed to be of particular relevance to the Northwest Territories and its social issues, cultural groups, and delivery systems and resources. The courses and the field practicums are planned to meet the educational needs of students who will be working in the North after completion of the program, as well as students who will be continuing their post-secondary studies. Program delivery is geared to meet the needs and characteristics of adult, multi-cultural students.

The Social Work Program educates social workers in a northern, generalist practice, preparing them to work with individuals, families, groups and communities. The program teaches students a wide range of helping and intervention skills, with a solid foundation in social work values and ethics. Students will learn to work as agents of social change in a variety of settings.

To graduate, students must fulfil all course and program requirements; 13 courses and 3 practicums. See Appendix for Course Map.

Program Competencies

Students must satisfactorily demonstrate each of the following competencies by the end of the final practicum:

- Professional social work identity
- Generalist practice
- Reflective practice
- Competence with diversity
- Social policy and social justice

Learning Outcomes

The two-year Aurora College Social Work Diploma Program is intended to produce graduates who will have the knowledge and skills needed to:

⁸ Aurora College. *Social Work Diploma Program Outline*. (2018).
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1. Practice generalist social work with peoples from culturally diverse backgrounds, while maintaining a strong sense of professional values and ethics
2. Provide leadership in social change processes, using team work, community development and conflict resolution skills
3. Be a self-directed, self-motivated, and life-long learner with a questioning mind and a familiarity with inquiry approaches to learning
4. Be self-reflective, self-aware and open to clinical supervision to continue learning
5. Create and influence the future of social work practice at a political, social, and professional level by responding to and anticipating the changing needs of society
6. Meet the professional practice requirements as identified by the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada (ASWNC), CASW and CASWE

Credential-Level Specifications

The proficiency levels required for prerequisite and lower-level courses ladder logically to the next higher course. This is most clearly demonstrated in the learning outcomes for the two main practicums. In Practicum I, students are expected to participate in social services agency and learn through being exposed to social work, develop self-awareness as a beginning practitioner, develop critical thinking skills, and practice beginning social work skills. In Practicum II, students are expected to apply social work practice skills in the planned change process, demonstrate entry-level social work skills and competencies, describe the field placement, integrate theory and practice, and critically analyze the placement experience.

Degree-Level Standards (if applicable)

N/A

Admissions and Prerequisites

Applicants must have a Grade 12 diploma, with English 30-1 or 30-2 (English course requires a grade of 65% or higher).

Applicants who do not possess a Grade 12 diploma must have ALBE English 150 or 160 (65% or higher) and ALBE Math 140.

Aurora College recognizes prior learning experience, whether from an institution or from a work-related setting. Applicants should speak to the Registrar, or the Chair, School of Health and Human Services, regarding advanced credit and Prior Learning Assessment. Experience and knowledge will be considered for mature applicants, however, all applicants not meeting the entrance requirements will be required to take Aurora College Placement Exams. At present, Aurora College has instituted the CAT-5 Assessment tool for all programs.

Applicants will apply to the Admissions Office to ensure that they meet program eligibility requirements. As well, applicants must:

1. Complete an Aurora College entrance application;
2. Submit a letter of interest, indicating their reasons for applying to the program;
3. Submit two letters of reference, one work-related, one personal; and
4. Submit official transcripts.

Note: A criminal record check with vulnerable populations is required. A record of certain offences may prevent candidates from completing all elements of the program, in particular, securing field practicum placements.

Student Satisfaction with the Curriculum

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.⁹

A student satisfaction survey was conducted as part of the Crowe Mackay Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report. The survey had past students rate which factors contributed to their academic development and ability to be employed. As shown in Figure 1, the practicum, field culture camp, quality and qualifications of instructors and program content were rated as the most frequent factors that ‘totally’ contributed to the students’ academic development and employment. This is consistent with the input provided by current students who attended the focus group.

All of the survey respondents indicated that they would recommend the Social Work Diploma program to others. When asked what the strengths of the program are, current (as of 2018) and past students indicated the following:

- Knowledge and skills of the instructors
- Instructors’ concern for the students
- Northern experience and understanding of northern issues
- Small class size (largest class size was 7 students in 2014-2015; see figure 4)
- Understanding the needs of students, both personal and professional.

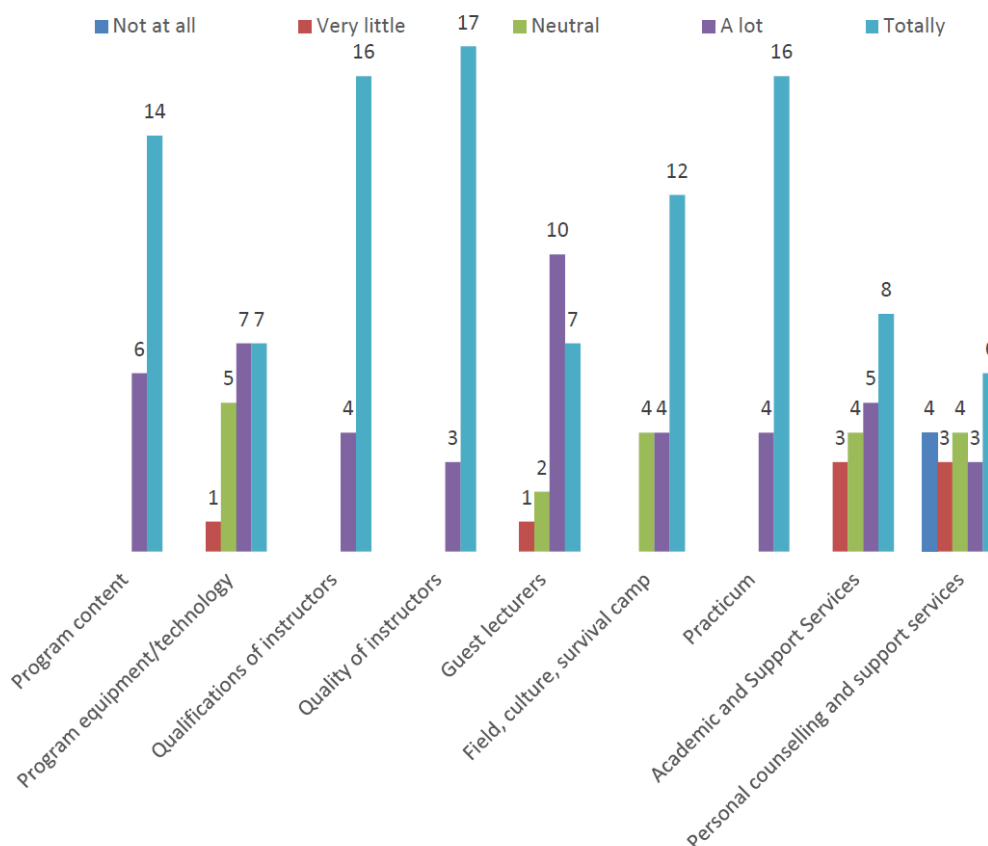
When asked what needs to be changed, current and past students were almost unanimous in the need for a BSW program in Yellowknife. Other changes included:

- More instructors
- Greater variety of courses
- Papers marked more quickly

The overwhelming emphasis was on the need for a BSW program located on a new campus. Survey respondents and interviewees spontaneously indicated this.

⁹ Laratta, John. *Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report*. (Crowe Mackay LLP and Crowe Mackay Financial Services Limited, April 5, 2018).
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Figure 1: Program Factors that Contributed to Academic Development/Employment



Faculty Satisfaction with the Curriculum

Annual curriculum reviews were held with all faculty at the conclusion of each teaching year (June) to map out sequencing, resources, teaching methodology, and student progression.

Overall, faculty were satisfied with the curriculum year to year and were able to advocate for course changes with the University of Regina. They also often expressed the need to improve sequencing of courses over the years along with expanding the diploma to a degree program.

Specific course changes that were advocated for by Aurora College with the University of Regina include the following:

- Aurora College request that the Cultural Camp course (SW 352) be reduced from 10 days (9 credits) to 7 days (6 credits) so that SW 350/Anti-Opressive SW Practice could be added. This was for better alignment with core competencies and the CASW Code of Ethics.
- University of Regina allowed SW 389 (Cultural Competence) and SW 352 (Cultural Camp) to continue, which were not required by the University of Regina but were viewed as critically important for northern students – both for Aurora College and Yukon College.
- Aurora College advocated for a shift from Athabasca University English (2 courses) and Intro Psychology to University of Regina English 100/110 and a locally generated Intro to Psychology course that would work for both University of Victoria Nursing and University of Regina Social Work.

- d) Aurora College was granted approval for the Indigenous Peoples of the Northwest Territories course to receive transfer credit as a Year 1 University of Regina Indigenous Studies course.
- e) Aurora College requested a shift from SW 440 (Counselling Theories and Skills) from a required course to an elective in order to make room for SW 202 (Critical Issues/Critical Thought) which is a required BSW and foundational skills course.
- f) The University of Regina was supportive in exploring the Social Work Diploma becoming a BSW degree.

The program pre-requisite of 70% GPA across social work courses was appreciated by faculty as an important gatekeeping mechanism. The pre-requisite helped to slow down students who needed to repeat a course due to personal challenges, mental health or social issues that significantly interfered with their ability to attend to the learning.

Career/Further Education Preparedness

Career Pathways

Areas of work include child welfare, hospitals, communities, justice department, shelters, drop-in centres, non-governmental organizations, and income assistance.

The majority of Diploma graduates continue to complete their BSW degree, so positions that ordinarily require a BSW degree for entry to practice are included. Diploma graduates typically complete their BSW degree by distance, one course at a time but a smaller percentage leave the Northwest Territories to complete their BSW at University of Regina or Yukon College.

Entry level social service worker positions include:

- Community support worker
- Developmental service worker
- Special needs assistant
- Income support worker
- Shelter worker
- Family and community social worker
- Drop-in centre worker
- Group home worker
- Youth worker
- Child and youth worker
- Addictions worker
- Behavioral management aide
- Case management aide
- Community social services worker (diploma plus experience)

- Probation officer (diploma plus experience)
- Family Preservation Worker (diploma plus experience)
- Community Wellness Worker (diploma plus experience)

Positions that ordinarily require a minimum of a BSW include:

- Community social services worker
- Family preservation worker
- Community social worker
- Life skills instructor
- Community development worker

Alumni Preparedness for Work/Further Education

A review of five years (2013 – 2018) identified a sample of 41 graduates from the Social Work Diploma Program. 32 graduates secured employment in the social services field (78%). Graduates are employed in the following positions:

- Child protection
- Substance use/harm reduction
- Medical social work
- Shelter worker
- Family support program
- Behavioural support worker
- Indigenous community government
- Correctional facility
- Probation
- NGO
- Workers Compensation and Safety Commission
- Income Assistance

Nine graduates did not gain employment in a social work job or the social services field following graduation. Four of the nine are pursuing further social work education full time.

Of the 41 Diploma graduates, 23 continued or are continuing their social work education (56%)

- 10 have completed their BSW degree (on line or relocated to BSW program out of territory)
- 13 are in progress (either on-line or relocated out of territory)

Discipline/Sector Feedback

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.¹⁰

A survey of employers was conducted by Crowe Mackay Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report. The survey found that over half of the eight employers were positive about hiring a graduate, two were neutral and only one was negative. That is similar for perceptions of competencies. Most employers felt that graduates do not require a lot of support to carry out their work, but only a few felt that graduates could move into a direct service position immediately. Faculty and employers provided examples of a few students who performed so well in their field placements that employers hired them. Although the numbers are too small to determine significant differences, there does not appear to be any real difference between the perception of government and non-government employers regarding program graduates as employees.

Sixteen of the respondents were field supervisors, with five being both supervisor and employer. Overall field supervisors are more positive about the students than employers.

Employers and field supervisors were asked what qualification their organization require for an entry-level position. Figure 15 shows their responses. Almost half require a diploma, while over half require a social work degree or a diploma plus several years' experience.

A number of field supervisors and employers who were interviewed indicated that there is a trend towards requiring a degree. Despite GNWT giving the license for diploma graduates to call themselves social workers, the GNWT has upgraded their requirements to needing a BSW for many entry level social work positions. These are the higher paying jobs with greater job security. This speaks to the need for Aurora College to develop a BSW program.

Survey respondents suggested the following changes to the program:

- More about dementia and end of life care
- Availability of evening teleconference options
- Expand it to a BSW program

Curriculum Development and Review Processes

Annual curriculum reviews were held with all faculty at the conclusion of each teaching year (June) to map out sequencing, resources, teaching methodology, and student progression. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina met with faculty annually during convocation week to review student success, curriculum adaptations, and curriculum issues. The Senior Instructor was the Aurora College representative on the University of Regina Undergraduate Studies (UGS) Committee and participated in monthly UGS meetings to remain current with curriculum requirements and contribute to modifications/sequencing decisions. Curriculum modifications were made in collaboration with University of Regina to support the articulation agreement and ensure students could continue to maximize their mobility towards BSW degree.

¹⁰ Ibid

Summary and Recommendations

Summary of Strengths:

- Program students valued knowledge and skills of instructors, instructors concern for students and support for students' individual needs, northern experience
- 78% of graduates found work in the field
- 56% of graduates went on to pursue further social work education

Summary of Recommendations:

- Develop a BSW program that builds on the strengths of the existing Diploma program.
- This was a clear and consistent recommendation from faculty, students, community, and university partners and recommended by the external reviewer in 2018.

Chapter 4. Quality of Instructional Design

This chapter assesses the quality of the program's instructional design.

Delivery Modes

This section was reported by former faculty.

Faculty consulted with Indigenous knowledge keepers and elders to integrate northern Indigenous perspectives and voices into specific program content (i.e. guest speakers) and overall program design (i.e., modifying assignments, delivering content on the land, acting on the TRC Calls to Action).

Instructors utilized a range of instructional methods, including: group discussion, small group work, case studies, skills lab, lecture, guest speakers, role play, debate, media resources, student presentations, research, reflective writing, seminar, field trips and on-the-land learning, Indigenous ceremony, talking circle, and Photovoice.

Faculty offered an average of two evening elective courses per year to support Diploma graduates in obtaining required BSW courses. These elective courses also provided credit options for Diploma students who may have departed from the full-time course sequence and who subsequently needed an additional course to maintain a full course load. At times, instructors used innovative delivery methods to reach the intended student audience:

- Distance course – SW 451 Research in SW was offered concurrently in classroom and remotely to accommodate students who were in practicum placements outside Yellowknife.
- SW 100 was offered as an evening class to community practitioners to introduce them to the program and invite them to consider enrolling in the program.
- The Learning Management System Moodle was introduced to students as a method of delivering and accessing course material in an asynchronous (and more accessible) manner.

Social work students brought a range of diverse learning styles, historical and intergenerational experiences with trauma, and immense social pressures such as intimate partner violence, substance use, mental health challenges, poverty, housing insecurity, food insecurity, and childbirth/childrearing/child care issues. Instructors needed to be attuned to individual student needs while still moving forward in a group learning setting. Laddering skills helped students to gradually build their skills and confidence over a semester or a series of courses. Instructors provided multiple activities within a class (oral, written, self-reflective, group) to allow students to work in a modality with which they had comfort, while still building skills in an area where they may feel greater challenge. Each student was assigned a faculty advisor and was offered a minimum of two meetings per semester, or more frequently if challenges were identified. In the case of trauma, grief, and mental health issues, students were supported and referred to more intense counselling services (on campus or in community). Faculty were flexible about due dates and allowing extensions for assignments. Where students had identified learning disabilities, accommodations were

supported (for example, lectures were recorded, handouts were printed larger/with fewer slides per page; tests/exams could be completed orally, with a reader support, with additional time, and/or in a quiet room). Cultural camp was adjusted for those with physical disabilities or chronic illness and medical deferrals or reduced course loads were supported as required. Faculty spent a great deal of time advocating with Student Financial Assistance for students who needed a reduced course load to deal with their stressors or exceptional learning needs.

The Social Work Diploma Program provided a range of learning modalities through which students built their knowledge, skills and confidence:

- in classroom,
- in skills lab (research, writing, and communication skills/role play labs),
- through field trips (Legislative Assembly for policy, Arctic Indigenous Wellness Camp and Dene Najo Urban Hide Camp),
- experiential learning during 7-day cultural camp and cultural day trips,
- in ceremony (smudging, talking circles, feeding the fire ceremony),
- at college training such as Non-violent Crisis Intervention,
- during field practicum placements, working directly with clients in community agency or government settings,
- exploring the community through mindfulness walks, photovoice assignments, and public meeting assignments,
- through volunteer opportunities such as the Social Justice Committee,
- by participating in special events such as Social Work Week, Addictions Awareness Week, Family Violence Awareness events (Take Back the Night, December 6 vigil), Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women testimony, and the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada Annual General Meeting.

Student satisfaction with program delivery

Students indicated their appreciation for face to face classroom experiences. Many students had experience with on-line (distance) delivery and the majority stated to faculty that they preferred the intimacy and safety of the small classroom and personal access to faculty. Students also appreciated the option of evening elective courses that supported their course load choices and helped them move forward towards their BSW degree. The most significant learning opportunities were reported following on-the-land learning experiences. This learning was transformational and grounding, for both Indigenous and new-comer/settler students.

Faculty satisfaction with program delivery

Social work faculty experienced satisfaction in expanding their teaching skills and delivering a wider range of modalities. The two faculty who taught from the onset of the program at Yellowknife/North Slave Campus made changes in their teaching methods over eleven years. For example, they relied less on large class lecture and became more comfortable with alternative world views, Indigenous approaches, experiential learning, co-teaching, and student self/peer assessment.

Assessment Methods

Faculty collaborated on developing clear evaluation rubrics and engaged in professional development and education to become more knowledgeable about best practices in evaluation methodology (Certificate in Adult Education program, professional development sessions, and peer collaboration with the School of Health and Human Services).

Students were given a detailed course syllabus at the beginning of every course that included rubrics that provided clear, accurate, and transparent information on how they would be evaluated. Please see appendix for SW 100 Course Syllabus.

Where an evaluation rubric was not included in the initial course syllabus, it was co-created with student input during class. The outcome is that students became more engaged in the evaluation process and had improved understanding of the skills upon which they would be evaluated.

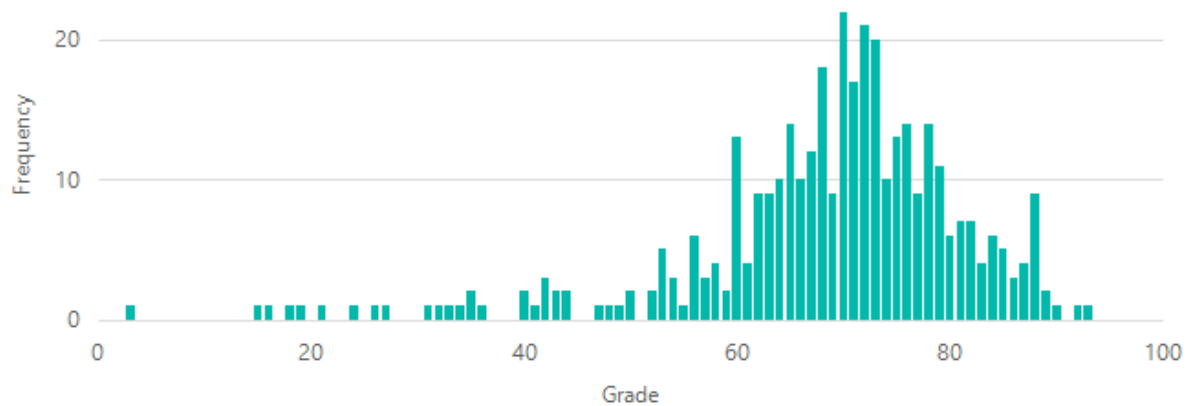
Course assignments were adapted to reflect the competencies and learning outcomes required. For example, in a social policy class, students were expected to understand how policies are made, see and critically evaluate social policy in the community. The assignment therefore requires students to attend a community meeting to observe and critically report on the outcomes. Please see appendix for 287-469 Social Policy Course Syllabus. In a communication skills class, students were expected to develop beginning counselling skills so the assignment required them to videotape a role play and critically assess their skills and areas for improvement. See appendix for SW 390 Communication Skills Course Syllabus.

Assessment and evaluation were tracked across faculty to ensure consistency in grading. Instructors would frequently seek a second opinion from their Aurora College peers, or on occasion, from University of Regina faculty who taught the same course. This was helpful in checking for quality grading and catching inconsistencies. Grading rubrics were shared amongst faculty and adapted to the specific course learning objectives.

Student Experience

Grade Distribution

Figure 2: Grade Distribution All Social Work Program Courses 2016-2018



Source: Data generated by PowerCampus student information system

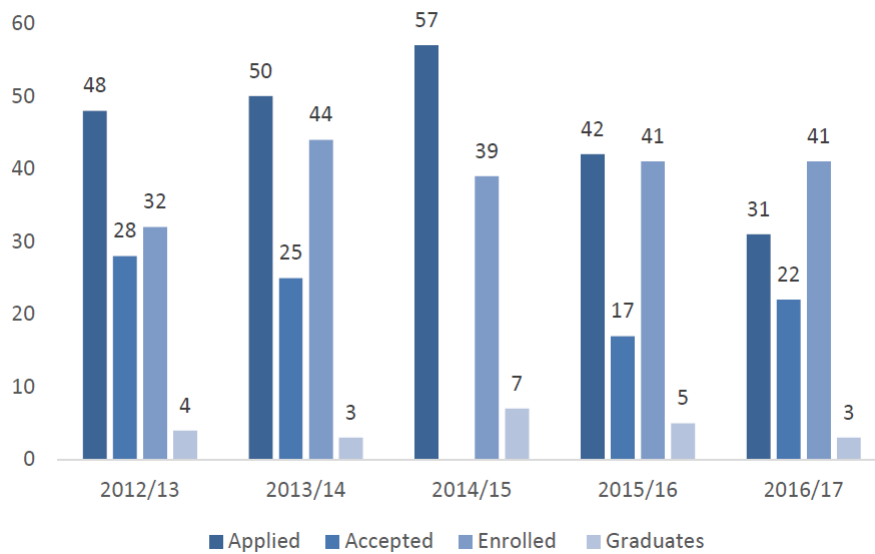
Retention and Graduation Rates

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.¹¹

Aurora College has opened up 30 seats in the Social Work Diploma Program. As shown in Figure 3, the number of students accepted annually into the program has varied from 16 to 28. The number enrolled in any given year is often more than double the number of accepted students, despite student withdrawals, because many students take longer than two years to complete the program. The number of graduates each year has been typically quite small, ranging from two to a maximum of sixteen. The numbers listed in the graph below includes both years of the program and are not separated into full time and part time students. These numbers include all groups.

¹¹ Ibid

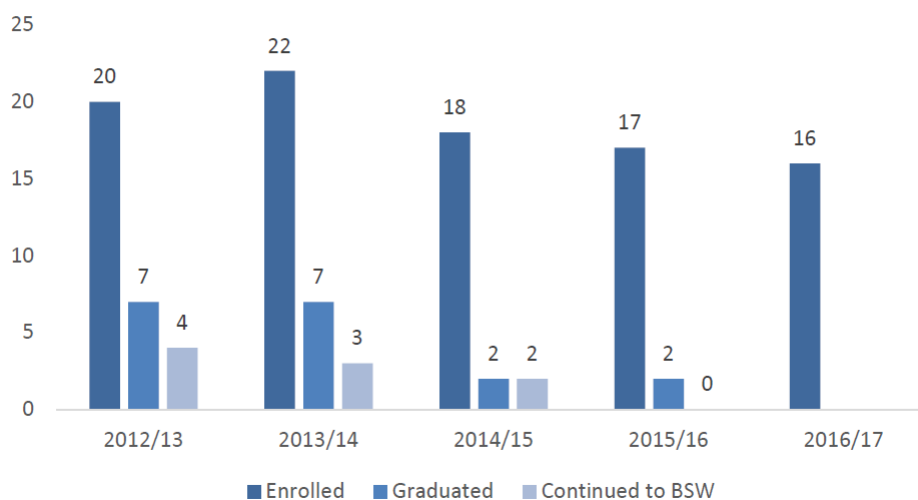
Figure 3: Numbers Applied, Accepted, Enrolled and Graduated



Source: Aurora College Statistics

There were low graduation rates, overall, which is of concern. It is partially the result of the length of time it takes for students to complete the program because many students are part-time as well as the high number of withdrawals each year. While most of the students are able to complete the program within two to three years, some students take as long as four years. With the large graduating class of 16 students in 2018/19, the total number over the span of the program was 41 graduates.

Figure 4: Numbers Enrolled, Graduated and Continued to BSW



Source: Social Work Diploma Program Statistics from 2013-2017

Student Outcomes

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final

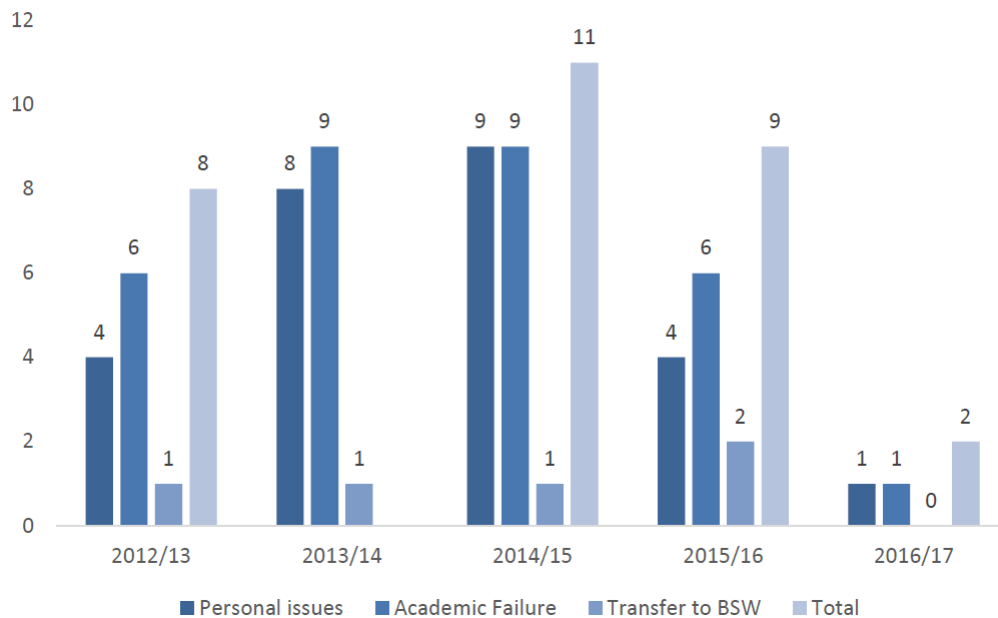
Report.¹²

Program statistics provide more detail regarding the enrolled students including reasons for withdrawal, whether a student is full-time or part-time, their gender, community of origin and ethnicity. Figure 5 shows that for most years the majority of students attended part-time.

Based on interviews with the faculty, this is usually because students have family responsibilities and need to work as well as go to school. The cost of living in Yellowknife is also quite high, requiring students to work to cover living costs.

There is substantial attrition of students each year, with a number of students dropping out. Most withdraw for personal reasons or academic failure. The number of reasons for withdrawal identified in Figure 6 exceed the total because each student who responded to the survey may have cited more than one reason for withdrawal. The vast majority withdraw for personal reasons or academic failure. According to the program faculty, many students return to continue the program once their issues are resolved. AS there is no time frame for completion, students return when they are able to and start where they left off. In other professional practice programs such as nursing, students have 7 years to complete their program as currency of skills are considered essential and this end date is set by the accrediting body for nursing education in Canada, namely Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN).

Figure 6: Reasons for Student Withdrawal



Source: Social Work Diploma Program Statistics

Personal issues related to withdrawal might include family crisis, death of a family member, grief, family violence, substance abuse, homelessness or not having sufficient income. Of concern is the high number of students withdrawing because of academic failure.

Both current students, past students and instructors indicated that withdrawal from the program is due to academic failure and is frequently linked to having personal issues as well, it is difficult to know whether it is also linked to students' lack of academic readiness

¹² Ibid

to undertake the program. Faculty indicated that students often expect a first-year work load in their courses and find they must take third- and fourth-year courses. See Appendix for Course Map and Comparison of Aurora College and University of Regina courses. This would be challenging for any student. Most interviewees also indicated that the academic demands of high schools in the different communities vary, with smaller communities not able to provide the same academic quality as the larger communities. This means substantial variation in the preparation of student undertaking the more demanding third- and fourth-year courses which are required in first and second year of the Diploma program. It will be important here to note that all NWT students are required to write departmental exams as part of their high school completion. This helps to assess students academically but does not help students prepare for the college workload. Departmental exams make up 30% of final grades while 70% come from classroom work.

Student Satisfaction with Instruction

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.¹³

A student satisfaction survey was conducted as part of the Crowe Mackay Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report. The survey had past students rate which factors contributed to their academic development and ability to be employed. The quality and qualifications of instructors was rated as factors that ‘totally’ contributed to the students’ academic development and employment. This is consistent with the input provided by current students (2018) who attended the focus group.

The survey respondents indicated that they would recommend the program based on the following instructor characteristics:

- Knowledge and skills of the instructors
- Instructors’ concern for the students
- Northern experience and understanding of northern issues
- Understanding the healing process needed by some of the students.

When asked what could be improved, current and past students had the following feedback pertaining to the instructors:

- More instructors
- Papers marked more quickly

Faculty Experience

Expertise and Qualifications

All of the instructors of courses in the Social Work program have Northern experience and are masters-prepared, in addition to other qualifications. The instructors for the social work core courses all have MSW degrees and are Registered Social Workers. The courses were taught primary by three full-time faculty members.

¹³ Ibid

Instructors in Core Social Work Courses:

Sandy Little, MSW, RSW (2007 – 2019)

Heather Fikowski, MSW, RSW (2007 – 2018)

Susan Fitzky, MSW, RSW (2012 – 2018)

Vanessa Rankin, MSW, RSW (2013 - 2016)

Bruce Stewart, MSW, MPhil, RSW (2008 - 2011)

Additional Faculty Expertise/Qualifications: In addition to Master of Social Work degrees, the social work faculty brought specialized clinical, research and teaching expertise in the following areas:

- S. Little
 - Suicide Prevention: Co-chair, Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) National Conference (Yellowknife, NT, 2007). Connections maintained to research and best practices in suicide prevention.
 - Children's Mental Health
 - Children's Mental Health Certificate (2004)
 - Anti-Poverty: Aurora College representative at the annual Northwest Territories Anti-Poverty Roundtable; member of Alternatives North social justice coalition.
 - Post-Secondary Teaching:
 - Certificate in Adult Education (2010)
 - Aurora College Instructional Excellence Award (2016)
- S. Fitzky
 - Child Welfare: Northwest Territories representative for the Prairie Child Welfare Consortium; provided a northern voice and leadership at teleconferences and conference symposia.
 - Food Security and Social Justice: leadership on food security initiatives as an active member of Alternatives North
 - Post-Secondary Teaching:
 - Certificate in Adult Education (in progress)
- H. Fikowski
 - Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): Research Associate at Aurora Research Institute (ARI); conducted and published extensive, northern IPV research. Presentations included International Federation of Social Work conference (Korea).
 - Contributing member of the Northwest Territories Coalition Against Family Violence.
 - Research:
 - Aurora College Research and Innovation Award (2018)
 - Post-Secondary Teaching:
 - Aurora College Instructional Excellence Award (2011)

Instructors for the auxiliary courses included the following qualifications: one MEd, one PsyD, one psychologist, two PhDs, and one PhD candidate.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary of Strengths:

- Diverse instructional delivery modes
- Assessment and evaluation tracked to ensure consistency in grading
- Course assignments adapted to reflect competencies and learning outcomes
- Qualified and experienced instructors

Summary of Recommendations:

- Improve social supports for students in order to increase student retention rates

Chapter 5. Quality of Services, Resources, and Facilities

This chapter assesses program services, resources and facilities from both the student and instructor perspective.

Description of Program Resources, Services and Facilities

Information from this section was obtained from the Aurora College Academic Calendar¹⁴ and input from former Senior Instructor.

Student Services provides personalized quality supports, resources and information. The specific services provided include: Orientation to college life, academic, career and personal counselling, employment counselling, financial information, personal development, referrals, cultural celebrations and ceremonies.

The Admissions Office is responsible for administering student admissions and registrations, course changes and maintaining student records.

The Office of the Registrar issues certificates, diplomas, transcripts and all other documents of recognition.

The Student Success Coordinator arranges academic assistance for students in the form of tutoring, workshops, a collection of resources and career counselling.

In terms of housing, Aurora College has a limited number of single and family accommodations available for out of-town students enrolled in full-time studies. However, across Aurora College full time students in multiyear programs receive priority for housing.

Counselling services are provided to assist students to develop their abilities and realize their full potential. Aurora College provides a trained counsellor to assist students with personal and social concerns. The counsellor offers workshops and presentations, as well as assistance in finding on-line and community resources, individual counselling and self-help materials. The counsellor is also an Indigenous knowledge keeper who practices traditional healing and ceremonies with students. Many of the social work students accessed and appreciated the sensitivity to Indigenous practices. There is no dedicated space within the college for traditional ceremonies, such as smudging, and there are many barriers to participation in a small building with shared ventilation and staff/students with environmental sensitivities. The building is rented and does not belong to Aurora College. Smudging is offered by the student counsellor upon request. A college-wide email is sent out to inform all staff and students when smudging is to take place in case of environmental sensitivities to mitigate the risk.

Aurora College's Student Life and Wellness programs arrange a variety of athletic, cultural, recreational and wellness activities designed ensure the students' education is holistic and

¹⁴ Aurora College. *2019-2020 Academic Calendar*. http://216.108.135.10/_live/documents/content/2019-20_Calendar.pdf
November 27, 2020

addresses the required balance of mind, body and spirit.

The library at the Yellowknife/North Slave Campus supports students and staff through a full range of library services. Library collections across the three campuses include 25,000+ books, journals, videos, government documents, and a wide array of electronic resources. Internet access and inter-library loan services are available.

Social work shared classroom space with all the School of Health and Human Services programs. Classes were held in a variety of spaces including large classroom (30+ students) and smaller classrooms (10+ students). Off site learning activities were arranged on regular basis (field trips, on-the-land learning such as Arctic Indigenous Wellness Camp and Dene Nahjo Urban Hide Camp).

Cultural camp space was graciously donated each year by the Yellowknife Dene First Nation. The Social Work Diploma program built a successful partnership with Yellowknife Education District 1 to borrow Cultural Camp supplies (canvas tents, tent poles and tipi poles, wood stoves, and cooking/wild game processing gear). Over the years, the social work program accumulated a valuable collection of resources for cultural camp including a 20-foot canvas tipi, fish nets, life jackets, a wilderness first aid kit, and storage bins.

Student Satisfaction with Program Resources, Services and Facilities

This section was obtained from the Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report.¹⁵

A survey of students was conducted by Crowe Mackay Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report asking students to rate a number of services. As shown in Figure 12, the response varied substantially, with Library services being the most appreciated. Students in the focus groups also indicated varied experience with the services. They noted that having an Indigenous counsellor on campus is helpful in assuring culturally appropriate content and responses to students.

Current and past students who had housing liked their housing. Students indicated that the waiting list for housing, the lack of access to housing for students already living in Yellowknife and the availability of housing only to full-time students often interfered with students' ability to attend school.

When asked what needs to be changed, current and past students recommended:

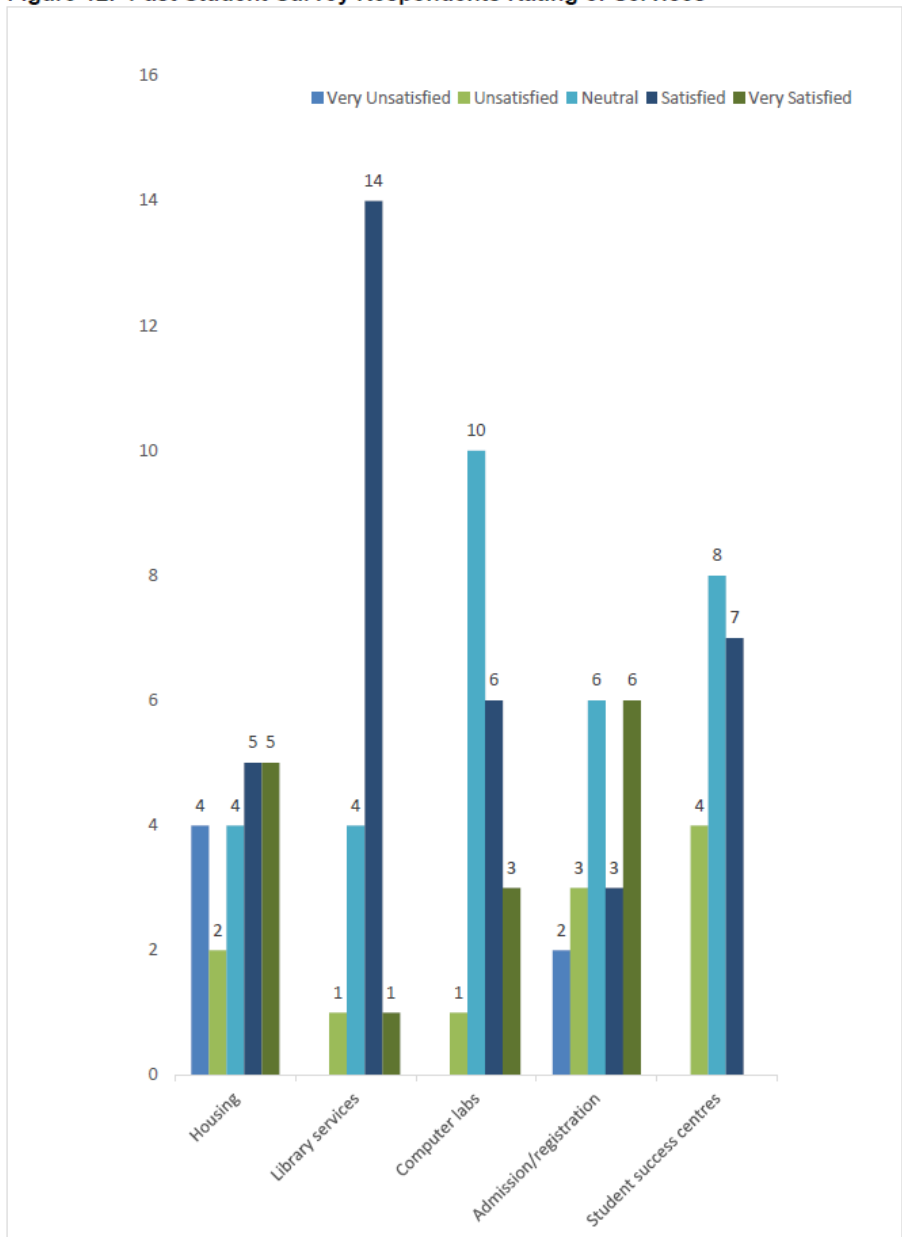
- On-site childcare
- Improved learning space
- Improved technology
- Improved access to housing.

Student satisfaction surveys obtained by Aurora College support the findings of the Crowe Mackay report. Respondents rated program content, quality of instructors, practicums, and

¹⁵ Laratta, John. *Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report*. (Crowe Mackay LLP and Crowe Mackay Financial Services Limited, April 5, 2018).
November 27, 2020

the library as either “extremely good” or “very good”. Respondents rated housing, sports and recreation, and childcare poorly. See appendix for Student Satisfaction Survey results.

Figure 12: Past Student Survey Respondents Rating of Services



Faculty Satisfaction with Program Resources, Services and Facilities

Social work faculty witnessed the impact of inadequate campus space on student success. Students struggled with housing insecurity, small classroom space, no meeting space, no cafeteria/eating space, and no access to campus child care or resident elder.

Housing was one of the most significant barriers to student success. Student housing was

prioritized for students outside Yellowknife, and frequently Yellowknife students experienced precarious housing or relative homelessness (living in a car, in an emergency shelter, or couch-surfing). Market rent in Yellowknife is prohibitive and vacancy rates are low.

The School of Health and Human Services was incredibly resourceful around space issues and faculty worked collaboratively and respectfully to manage few/small spaces for students.

Students and faculty had extensive support from the University of Regina in terms of course advising, student deferrals, requests to repeat courses, and teaching/curriculum supports. Both the University of Regina and Yukon College partners were in support of Aurora College developing a BSW program for northern students. This was communicated to senior management.

Elders and Indigenous resource people were crucial to the success of the social work curriculum, both in the classroom and on the land for cultural camp. There was no dedicated space for an elder to meet with students or for a knowledge keeper to host ceremonies. Although elders have met frequently with senior management at the college for reasons such as resource allocation and appropriate compensation, these issues continue to be problematic. The college is reviewing the issue of compensation for elders.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary of Strengths:

- Library offers full range of services, appreciated by students
- Indigenous counsellor on campus able to provide culturally appropriate supports
- Students with access to campus housing were satisfied with it

Recommendations:

- Moving forward, the College should revise the system for working with elders and traditional knowledge keepers to honour their contribution to students' learning.
- The College should review physical space, campus design, housing resources, and space for traditional activities and ceremonies (both on the land and on campus)
- Need for on-site childcare
- Improved access to housing
- Need for updated technology

Chapter 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the main conclusions drawn from the evidence gathered in the program review. This summary should include both the strengths of the program, and areas needing improvement. A complete list of the recommendations listed in the chapters above should also be provided.

Summary of Conclusions

- Program of particular relevance to the Northwest Territories
- High labour market demand for Social Workers in the Northwest Territories
- Program and Instructors have strong ties to the discipline of Social Work and are experienced Social Workers.
- Program is connected to the other academic units in the School of Health and Human Services, such as the Personal Support Worker Program and the Bachelor of Nursing Program. Interdisciplinary opportunities exist between these programs.
- High student demand for a Social Work program, as evidenced by the number of applicants each year shown in figure 3.
- Program students valued knowledge and skills of instructors, instructors concern for students and support for students' individual needs, northern experience
- 78% of graduates found work in the field
- 56% of graduates went on to pursue further social work education
- Diverse instructional delivery modes
- Assessment and evaluation tracked to ensure consistency in grading
- Course assignments adapted to reflect competencies and learning outcomes
- Qualified and experienced instructors
- Library offers full range of services, appreciated by students
- Indigenous counsellor on campus able to provide culturally appropriate supports
- Students with access to campus housing were satisfied with it
- Need for an advisory committee
- BSW is increasingly becoming the requirement for entry to practice
- High student withdrawal from the program due to personal issues
- The process of compensating elders for their time is inefficient on the college level (not specific to the program)
- The Yellowknife/North Slave campus offers inadequate space and resources

List of Recommendations

- Form an Advisory Committee made up of key stakeholders – including Indigenous groups, students, employers, Social Workers, and the representatives from the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada – to guide the planning, transition and implementation process.
- Develop a BSW program that builds on the strengths of the existing Diploma program. This was a clear and consistent recommendation from faculty, students, community, and university partners and recommended by the external reviewer in 2018.
- Improve social supports for students in order to increase student retention rates

- Moving forward, the College should attempt to revise the system for working with elders and traditional knowledge keepers
- The College should review physical space, campus design, housing resources, and space for traditional activities and ceremonies (both on the land and on campus)
- Need for on-site childcare
- Improved access to housing
- Need for updated technology, such as designated internet lines and smartboards for distance education

Although all of the recommendations are important, the following recommendations are beyond the scope of this review:

- Improve social supports for students in order to increase student retention rates
- The College should review physical space, campus design, housing resources, and space for traditional activities and ceremonies (both on the land and on campus)
- Need for on-site childcare
- Improved access to housing

Chapter 7. Responses from the Vice President / Chair of School of Health and Human Services



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November 25, 2020

Letter of Support for BEd Program Overview and Overall Recommendations

I joined Aurora College in September 2019, three years after it was announced that the Social Work Diploma Program would be suspended until a complete formal program review was completed. This review was to be completed by external reviewers. My involvement with the program has been limited to organizing this review.

I was involved in the drafting a new program review process and policy in late 2019. This process and policy remain in draft format and this program review will be the first to test the policy and identify any issues with the process. The process and policy are attached.

Other reviews that may help provide the context of the college environment and structure include a foundational review of Aurora College ordered by the GNWT along with the government response to that foundational review. Both were completed in 2018. The Social Work Program Review was top priority listed in the government response. Both of those documents will help to introduce the context.

Our first challenge with completing this review is that the first phase, the self study should be completed internally, typically by program people. However, as the program was suspended in 2017, there were no faculty members remaining who could participate in the self study. Aurora College reached out to a former senior instructor in the SW program to help with the writing of the self study. This individual along with another instructor, Kimberly MacKenzie worked together with the Chair of the School of Health and Human Services to complete the self study. Although Kimberly is a Nurse Practitioner with a Master's in Social Work, she has only taught one course in the program. I have attached both her resume and the resume of the Chair of the School of Health and Human Services.

As you have seen in the self study report there are a large number of vacancies in the field of Social Work here in the NWT. I had discussed with both of you in our introductory meetings that many of the higher level positions are typically filled with non-Northerners and Non-Indigenous individuals. Although our graduates were employed upon graduation, the majority of the graduates from the SW Diploma Program were employed in some of the lower level social work roles. A variety of job postings are attached.

Although we had a pathway for our students to continue their education through to a degree in Social Work with the University of Regina, few students took that pathway deciding to take a job rather than continue their education at a school so far away from home. Many of our students had young families and were reluctant to move their children away from their local support networks.

Although the mandate for Aurora College is to provide quality educational programs for Northerners to address labour market demands and contribute positively to their home communities, many Social Work graduates do not remain in the workforce in their home community due to the nature of the work and the difficulties encountered when attempting to work with members of their small communities. Many people within each small community are related and this causes other issues.

With respect to the curriculum there were three issues that stood out. The first was that the courses offered to our Aurora College students were at the third and fourth year level contributing to high attrition rates. The second was that students were forced to leave their small home community to study at one of our campus sites. The third issue was the question that has been raised many times. Many of the students were not well prepared for college programming and the K-12 system across the North did not provide consistent educational standards. Our mandate is not to fix the K-12 system but is to provide quality PSI educational programming. One example is that for years many small communities did not offer grade 12 in that community school and stopped at grade 9. Students in high school are required to take departmental exams as part of their graduation requirements. Presently 30% of their final grade comes from departmental exams and 70% comes from their classroom work.

There is no doubt in my mind that a Social Work program must be reinstated at Aurora College to meet the labour market demands in the field. The purpose of this review is to make recommendations for what type of program (credential), what pathway can a student follow to reach the higher requirements for Social Work positions, length of program, delivery methods both on campus and at the community level or online to increase access, what entrance requirements must a student have in order to be set up for success, who teaches the students, and indigenization of the curriculum to mirror the population of the residents of the NWT. One of the biggest issues for Aurora College is the consideration to offer a full program or partner with a Southern institution. We need to look at different models that may work for our students and our unique population and geography. We presently have a very effective partnership with UVIC in our Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program. It is a five school partnership in which Aurora College is a full and equal partner and students remain in the North for the four years of the program. There are many educational models that should be considered.

We are presently a community college but are transitioning to a polytechnic university so we need to prepare for the future as we begin to redevelop our programs, including social work. Most community colleges have established program advisory committees that provide ongoing input into the program to ensure the relevancy and currency of the program and resources. This would be an excellent starting point to re-establish this valuable program and demonstrate transparency to our community members. This type of advisory committee was missing as I reviewed the present state of this program.

There are many gaps in the information that has been gathered in this self study. Attached you have seen the Crowe MacKay Review which was completed in 2018 but was not accepted by the GNWT and was therefore not used to guide the program back. This self study began with identifying any gaps that appeared in that report. Another reason for some of the deficits is related to the fact that the program head and other faculty were no longer employed at Aurora

College and could not participate in the review.

I have focussed my comments on the gaps within this program but the program had many strengths and I would like to end by listing some of those that stood out. Students were prepared to be a licensed Social Worker under the Social Work Profession Act of the NWT (2012). Social work is anticipated to be one of the top three jobs in demand for our diploma graduates so reinstating the program makes good sense. The curriculum takes into account the NWT context and is appropriate for the NWT Indigenous population and is flexible about the time allowed to complete the program. However, this flexibility needs to be reviewed as it may also contribute to students not finishing their program. The inclusion of a number of Indigenous-specific courses provide relevancy for social workers practicing in the NWT. Providing post-secondary education within the NWT provides students from the NWT a chance to study closer to home. Aurora College will need to explore any new opportunities to increase access to students living in their smaller communities where campuses are not located and we may be able to take advantage of online learning due to lessons learned due to COVID in order to increase access to students living in these communities. Students benefitted from practicum experiences. Elders were included in courses. The library resources that were made available to the students were helpful and appreciated. Aurora College policy that provides students from across the NWT housing in Yellowknife is also a benefit to the students and provides an advantage for this program when students are moving away from their social support networks. When the program was running all instructors were qualified at the master's level and were praised for their ongoing dedication and support for students.

In closing I would say that the college is in a very different place then back in 2018 when the original program and foundational reviews were completed. Some of the issues that were raised have been addressed while others remain but have been brought to the foreground and plans have been started to address those needs. One example that comes to mind is the need for a new building in Yellowknife as space issues are increasing each year. In order to grow our programming and move towards a polytechnic university a new campus will have to be considered and planned. Our premier who was the Minister of Education at the time the GNWT ordered the foundational review is in full support of the move to a polytechnic university. We very much look forward to your recommendations.

Sincerely



Dr. Glenda Vardy Dell
Vice President Education & Training
Aurora College

February 13, 2020


Letter of Response to the Social Work Program Review Self-Study Report
Chair School of Health and Human Services

The purpose of this letter is to provide a respond to the Social Worker Program Self-Study Report. I would like to first provide some context related to the program, its most recent external program review and the current self-report. It was announced in Feb 2017 that the Social Work Diploma program would be sun-setting. This occurred the same month that I moved into the Chair role. It was decided at that time that there would be no new student admissions with the focus instead on providing current and previous students an opportunity to finish the program. A program review was also being planned.

Crowe Mackay Financial Services Limited completed a program review in 2018 as per the Aurora College external review process. As the Chair, I agree and support the recommendations made from this report: transitioning from a diploma to a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in the future (that builds on the strengths of the current program and ensures appropriate levelling of courses); forming a program Advisory Committee; improving the student records system; and continuing to consider the on-going program space needs. These recommendations were not implemented as a Foundational Review of Aurora College occurred and a new direction was made to transition Aurora College to a Polytechnic University. Program specific decisions were then deferred.

In November 2019, program faculty began to gather information to complete a self-study report as part of the new program review process for Aurora College. I was part of the three-person team gathering information for the self-study and much was gleaned from data collected from the Crowe-Mackay review. I also agree with the additional recommendations made from this self-study report. This review will help inform further program planning. As we move toward a Polytechnic University more degrees will be offered, I feel a BSW should be a priority based on the strength of the existing diploma program and labour market demands of social work positions in the Northwest Territories.

Your truly,



Jodi Brennan MN RN
Chair, School of Health and Human Services

Chapter 8. Appendices for Self-Study Report

Social Work Program Outline

University of Regina calendar

MOU between University of Regina and Aurora College

Laratta, John. Review of the Social Work Diploma Program Final Report. (Crowe Mackay LLP and Crowe Mackay Financial Services Limited, April 5, 2018).

Aurora College Foundational Review

Government Response to the Aurora College Foundational Review

Aurora College Program Review process and policy draft

The Conference Board of Canada. Labour Market Information Resource: Northwest Territories Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment. (2016).

https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/skills_4_success_-_labour_market_forecast_and_needs_assessment_-_resource.pdf

Government of the Northwest Territories. Government of the Northwest Territories Releases 2018-2019 Budget. (February 8, 2018). <https://www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/news/government-northwest-territories-releases-2018-2019-budget>

Office of the Auditor General of Canada. 2018 October Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly: Child and Family Services—Department of Health and Social Services and Health and Social Services Authorities. (Canada, 2014 and 2018).

https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nwt_201810_e_43169.html

Postings for a variety of SW positions

Detailed proposal of costing/sequencing 2008/11/14

Social Work Program Brochure

A radio PSA advertising AC SW Program

SW Program Course Map

SW 100 Course Syllabus

Social Policy Course Syllabus

SW 390 Communication Skills Course Syllabus

Course Map, Comparison of Aurora College to University of Regina Courses