



Council for Standards in
Human Service Education

Bulletin

*Highlighting best practices in
human service education*

Susan Kinsella, Ph.D.
Editor

A Message from the President

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It has been a year since my last message to you, and 2020 was a year for the history book! Beginning in March 2020, programs quickly implemented innovative approaches to practicum experiences to ensure that the benefits of practicum were not lost. We have heard from several programs about the approaches they took when students had to switch from in-person to virtual placements almost overnight. Just a reminder to all programs - please be sure you have documented the efforts you made to make the transition for students from in-person to virtual. That will be important to include in your narrative for your next self-study.

When programs were adjusting to the changes, the CSHSE Board was adjusting as well.

- Program site visits moved to virtual visits, and change is still in place. The CSHSE Board anticipates resuming in-person visits in the spring of 2022; but that is dependent on COVID and whether the numbers of cases are still increasing.
- The CSHSE Board approved revisions to the associate degree program as well as to the bachelor's degree program. The revisions were effective July 2020 and are posted on the CSHSE website.

The June 2021 Board meeting also signaled changes on the Board. Retiring Board members included Adrienne Bey, who has been serving as the Board Treasurer, and Lynne Kellner, the VP for Publications. Board members assuming those positions are Nicole Jackson Walker, Treasurer, and Susan Kinsella, VP for Publications. I want to thank Adrienne and Lynne for their years of service and an extraordinary amount of time they each committed to the Board! I also want to welcome Susan and Nicole into those positions!

Finally, the Board continues to look for ways to streamline the self-study process for programs. Some accreditation bodies have chosen to implement online electronic submissions. We will be surveying programs to solicit your ideas. In the meantime, if your university has experience with other types of accreditations that require online submissions, please drop me a note and let me know what the university has experienced, both positive and negative. Remember, the CSHSE Board is here to support programs in ensuring culturally competent, quality education for tomorrow's human service professionals!

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Academic Learning & Professional Development through Simulated Avatar Experiences

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Undergraduate Human Services programs often provide a robust curriculum to students who are working toward earning their bachelor's degree. At Saint Leo University the program offers both traditional and accelerated paths for completing the degree in as little as two years. The structure consists of an interdisciplinary approach which includes core courses in human services, sociology, psychology, and criminal justice, to name a few. The human service courses focus on developing helping skills, conducting interviews, problem solving, identifying intervention/prevention strategies, practicing case management, making referrals, and understanding research. In addition, students gain practical experience by completing a field placement (internship). To help students achieve the goal of earning a degree, faculty offer a matrix and degree completion plan (DCP) which provides students with a guide; an individual roadmap, of the core courses needed to complete the program as well as the anticipated timeframe for completion.

The program is offered on ground and online at several education centers. The student body tends to be working adults. They may be first generation degree seeking students, transfer students who have an associate degree, and students with some college experience. Regardless of whether their degree or college credits were recent or previously completed, many students require remedial work to assist them with their academic studies.

Administrators and faculty regularly seek new innovative ways to enhance student learning and professional development across the program such as hosting academic writing workshops and career fairs. New technologies offer students the opportunity to develop new online practice skills. One recent addition to assist with this initiative was the introduction of various types of simulated experiences featuring Avatars that allow for student-client or student-employer role play (<https://youtu.be/K7I9J6ui7Sg>). These types of learning experiences not only enhance student learning but increase student engagement and retention as well as align with the rigorous principles set by the Council for Standards in Human Service Education.



Saint Leo University Human Services Students Role Play Simulated Experience with Avatars NOV 2020
<https://youtu.be/K7I9J6ui7Sg>

The simulated experience allows the program to adapt and respond to student concerns about learning, skill development and feedback during this Covid-19 period. In addition to providing case scenarios that cover a variety of human services topics such as homelessness, unemployment, ethical issues, assessment, case management, referrals and more; the simulated experience helps the department address students concerns related to and heightened by the pandemic. The use of this technology also provides an opportunity for students to build skills through practice.

Seeing the positive impact of the simulated experience on student engagement and enhanced learning, this type of role play will continue as a best practice across the program starting this academic school year. Fall-I will mark the introduction of a new type of simulated experience; the unfolding case scenario. It will mirror real-life situations that marginalized, underserved, and low income individuals and/or families face. At the beginning of the simulated role play experience, faculty will share a brief interaction about the avatar to set the tone for the session. Afterwards, students will be encouraged to build skills through engagement with the client. Once the session concludes, a debriefing is held where each aspect of the session is disseminated and discussed.

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Academic Learning & Professional Development ...

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This client-worker interaction provides students with the opportunity to identify and/or develop a working theory, as well as work with the client to problem solve; identify barriers, strengths resources and natural supports; discuss a variety of interventions, treatment options; make referrals; practice using interpersonal/communicative skills, setting goals, completing individual service plans, etc., These can be utilized to help empower individuals and families toward achieving optimal levels of functionality by resolving conflict, problems, or situations that create instability. There are two additional simulated experiences held Spring-1 and Spring-2, with each adding another situation for the students to use critical thinking skills in working with the client to pursue alternative(s) that help the client sustain, maintain and thrive.

Being able to utilize the simulated experience helps build skills through role play in preparation for the

interview. This ensures that students receive learning experiences that meet CSHSE Standards with graduates ready for the human services profession. Many of our community partners and field placement (internship) providers have consistently complimented our undergraduate program for its well-rounded students who are internship and job ready, making them a great fit for their agencies. For some students, the internship will be their first professional human services job. Learning how to engage others and be prepared for an array of scenarios is directly related to practicing with avatars through the simulated experience and with our community service projects. The skills that students learn through the simulated experience can be utilized with clients in a variety of settings such as, hospitals, child welfare agencies, courts, schools, and in the community. Moreover, they will be competent and confident in being able to initiate and sustain a helping relationship with a diverse range of clients.

COVID-19 Response from Madison College

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Cemil Nuriler, MSW, LCSW-SA, HS-BCP
Papa Fall, MSW, LCSW
Marco Torrez-Miranda, MSSW, LCSW, SUDS

Madison College, Madison, Wisconsin

In early spring 2020, the COVID-19 virus swept through our nation. It necessitated an abrupt transition to new formats of teaching and learning. In a matter of weeks, the faculty of the Human Services program at Madison College had to re-conceptualize, develop, and roll out teaching strategies that maintained the integrity of our program while ensuring student well-being was at the center of decisions made. From required service-learning components in first-year courses to year-long academic internships, the pandemic impacted our program's courses in different ways.

One of our first-year courses, Introduction to Human Services, included 45 service-learning hours. With the force of the pandemic, this assignment was not sustainable. Nevertheless, we strove to adapt it to ensure a meaningful and active learning experience. Since we could not escape the pandemic, we incorporated it into the assignment. We developed an agency interview and exploration project that focused on agency responses to COVID-19. The project promoted student creativity, cultural analysis of best service practices, and active application of the course content.

While initially concerned that this revision would compromise student training, the outcome was a pleasant surprise. Not only did the project create a meaningful learning experience, but students also offered astute and perspicacious analyses of agencies and their services. They shared their excitement at witnessing how agencies adapt during a pandemic to address community needs. Many expressed a deeper understanding of the vital role of a human services provider in a pandemic. They remarked they now felt an even greater passion and motivation to work in this field.

Additionally, considering the diverse circumstances of our students and their varying needs amidst unprecedented times, a team of faculty developed an alternative curriculum to internship requirements. Students unable to complete a traditional internship experience could opt into an academic course that provided equitable opportunities to nurture their budding skill set. With the aid of technology,

community partnerships, and student engagement with faculty, learning opportunities emulated internship exposure while maintaining their safety.

This experience allowed faculty to use and refine best practices and strategies for online teaching and learning while ensuring we were graduating students best prepared to enter the workforce. Some students opted for a traditional internship experience with the required safety precautions. Agencies adapted to digital-based approaches to serve their client populations, which allowed us to maintain our relationship with these agencies and observe their shifts in practice modalities. This experience guided our curriculum development to be inclusive of innovative approaches in service delivery to best prepare our incoming students for the future of service provision and our field.

Although the pandemic has devastated many college communities, Madison College quickly responded with innovative ways to support all faculty and students to be ready to teach and learn in these extraordinary times. Faculty were required to complete a "Preparing to Teach Online" course. Madison College invested in classroom technology tools to engage students and increased student access to technology. Madison College embraced these new formats and shifted into this unique teaching and learning culture.

This incoming year will present additional challenges. Students and faculty will be asked to be flexible and gracious in the continued face of change. Our students need us, especially those from marginalized and historically underserved backgrounds. The Human Services Program at Madison College is fully committed to serving students and our communities. The program recognizes that when there is high faculty turnover each year students suffer. We have gained invaluable experience teaching remotely during the past 18 months. We are excited to continue to be there for our students as we navigate the future of higher education, our field, and service provision. Undoubtedly, we are stronger together.

From Contingency Plans to New Opportunities

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East Tennessee State University

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, academic programs faced some unique challenges that warranted creative problem-solving skills. These challenges also presented struggles for students, staff and faculty members. Students were stressed about meeting field requirements, faculty were presented with higher workloads, and everyone was struggling to balance work and life. What was home became work, and vice versa.

In March of 2020, East Tennessee State University had its earliest Coronavirus conversations as an institution. While we awaited concrete information for university policy and procedure, we used a regularly scheduled meeting to become acquainted with Zoom should we need to start meeting remotely. However, there was no time to come up with contingency plans for students working at field sites as they had already begun closing and asking students not to return. Some students had been suspended from fieldwork at sites that restricted access to only essential personnel. Other students were told that they could continue with their fieldwork but would have to do so remotely from home. While some students had these opportunities, the faculty in the Human Services Program at ETSU had to get creative with students who still needed field hours. Some solutions were to create alternative assignments for student field placements and work with site supervisors to create virtual internships where possible.

During the summer of 2020, our program was moving our field placement paperwork process through the electronic system Tevera. Though this was not a brand new project for our program, it could not have come at a better time. Our incredible team worked to move our paperwork process to this online system which streamlined documents. Students were able to submit their site contracts to their field supervisor electronically and the paperwork could be verified, checked, and signed in real time. Site supervisors provided supervision of remote fieldwork through video conferencing, email, and phone. We were also able to conduct field site visits virtually. All these changes and adjustments opened incredible opportunities for program efficiency.

In August of 2020, field sites were more prepared to offer virtual internships to students. Our human service students were able to assist with a 24/7 crime victim crisis hotline, create marketing materials, and manage program outreach via social media. While there were virtual opportunities, they were limited. For students still needing supplemental hours, we had them complete alternate assignments to meet their requirements. These assignments included student conducted interviews with human services professionals and reflection exercises that asked students to think critically and reflectively on their adaptability in a time of crisis. As we moved into spring of 2021, we were able to offer students a choice between completing virtual hours and an alternate assignment. Regardless of the option, student reflection papers revealed they found all these opportunities meaningful. An overall theme that emerged from student reflections was pride in being able to help others during a really difficult time. Students also found meaning in observing other human services professionals and their care for others during this crisis, which affirmed their decision to choose human services as a career path.

As we navigate spaces with fewer restrictions placed on field experience, instructors and site supervisors are considering practicum and internship and what, if any, flexibility might need to be offered with the emerging Delta variant. The way in which we consider field placements, from the availability of placements in the community to preparation for remote fieldwork as needed, has shifted and will continue to shift. Overall, the pandemic has forced our program to fundamentally evaluate the way we deliver value to students while ensuring that faculty and staff have the resources and support they need to perform their jobs safely and effectively. We remind ourselves and our students of the incredible importance of self-care.

Innovation Note

Sequencing Instruction and Student Learning through the e-Portfolio

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The practicum stands as a central form of learning for students in human services education. Given the number of credits a program devotes to this form of instruction, it deserves considerable attention and related innovation in human services education. Over the prior academic year, and into the present, the University of Alaska Anchorage Department of Human Services has invested in the instructional sequencing of practicum learning and in the coordination of this sequence with student electronic portfolios. The instructional sequence offers students, faculty, and field instructors insight into how the department delivers practicum instruction and it also clarifies for those stakeholders the learning aims of practicum. The student electronic portfolio which links to this sequence recognizes the potential of learners in communicating the scope and depth of their professional development across a maximum of four courses. This involves two courses in practicum at the 200 level of instruction, both required for the associate degree, and two 400 level courses, both required at the bachelor's degree level. One of these courses is devoted to advance practice learning and the other to the capstone project students complete for the Bachelor of Human Services. What the department refers to as its Practicum Roadmap lays out key instructional facets of practicum. Students and their field instructors can use the Roadmap as a tool for steering student experiential learning in the field.

Soon the Roadmap (still in its formative stages of

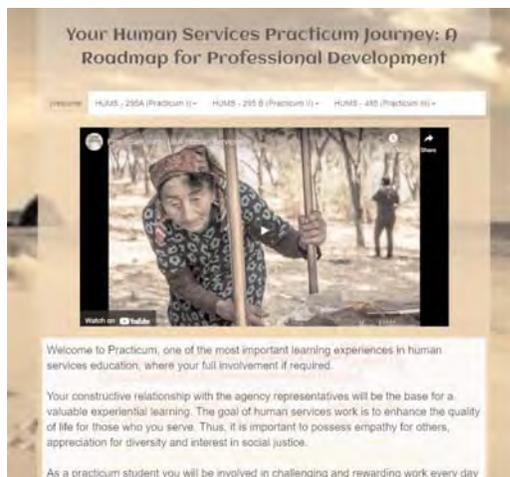


Figure 1 Link to Journey Portfolio – version 1.0

development) will be available online to anyone who is interested. The central building block of the Roadmap is the practicum course. The required courses are sequenced so they illuminate expectations of professional learning, across two-degree programs (i.e. the AAS and the BHS). A principal aim is to amplify professional development competencies in key areas ranging from knowledge of the practicum organization in which a student is placed to ethics and action research. If you review the figure at the end of the article, the arc of instruction takes students through experiential learning to (1) document their learning gains, (2) reflect on their learning, (3) interpret their learning gains and the setbacks they experience, and (4) construct a professional sense of self grounding in the history, traditions, practices, ethics and aims of the human services profession.

The students construct this learning using their own e-portfolios. They initiate their construction in the first course in which they document aspects of the human service organization in which they undertake practicum and where they advance their technological literacy. Over the remaining courses they expand, deepen, and explicate the content of their e-portfolios. Students are required to advance the aesthetics of their electronic portfolios using multi-media tools and writing. The visual, emotional, and academic aspect of their learning and their gains, compose the aesthetic the student communicates electronically.

Although each practicum course incorporates principles and effective practices of intensive professional writing since employers in Alaskan expect these skills from graduates. However, students do not write papers. Alternatively, they prepare *pages* of their e-portfolios that meet word requirements the instructor establishes for each assignment. Authorship of those pages enables students to engage their electronic portfolios as evolving working products of each course. At various milestones within a course, students present their e-portfolios to colleagues, faculty, and field instructors as they illustrate their personal and professional development in rich and encompassing ways. Here multi-media tools figure into the electronic

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Innovation Note Sequencing Instruction and ...

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portfolios in important ways. Podcasts, digital videos, original photographs, recordings of self-reflection, and documents they author, can portray their learning. Given the assignments, each course requires that students must represent their learning using digital

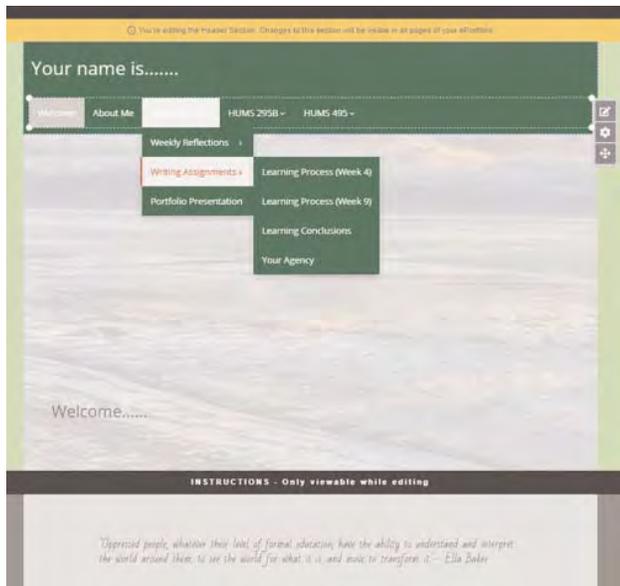


Figure 2 Student portfolio template – version 1

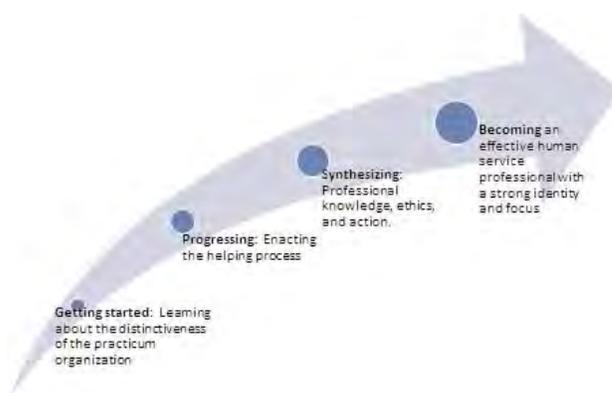
tools. Their learning must be coherent. A student's achievement of this coherence is the hallmark of their professional advancement and development within human services.

Student learning incorporates the progression of professional development within and across courses. We return to this progression to emphasize instructional intent. The progression involves:

- An initial appreciation of the organization in which the student undertakes practicum (Human Services 295A). Students must come to understand the context in which the organization operates, the social issues it addresses, the needs of the priority populations it assists, and the methods inherent in the organization's helping process. Students also reflect on what they appreciate about the organization's role in human services.
- A deepening of the helping process that falls within the boundaries of organizational purpose and how the student enacts this helping process in their practicum (Human Services 295B). Students capture within their portfolios how they enact the helping process and the competencies they gain from assisting others.

- An appreciation of the ethical challenges students experience within their practicum setting (Human Services 495). Although students learn about ethics of human service practice in earlier courses, their consideration of ethical issues intensifies. In addition, students reflect on career possibilities in human services, and further develop their potential career directions.
- A growing insight into the helping process within community and organizational contexts links to the students' competence in framing, planning, and implementing action projects within their practicum settings (Human Services 496). This growing insight enables students to complete their capstone projects for the bachelor's degree.

As the development of the Roadmap progresses, the student's electronic portfolio will likely become the capstone. It can contain the arc of students' learning in practicum, capture their evolving insight into the helping process, facilitate their awareness of ethics in daily practice, and capture their contributions to organizational knowledge through project-based action research. Ultimately, if anyone should ask, and hopefully employers will pose such a question, "Who are you as a human service professional?" students can say "Let me show you. This is how I have evolved as a professional, and here is what I can contribute." This is the aim of the Roadmap, and the student electronic portfolio that flows from it.



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