The Admissions Process: An Evaluation of Access for Minority Students at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College

Nireata D. Seals
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The Admissions Process: An Evaluation of Access for Minority Students at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College

Abstract
The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate minority access throughout the admissions processes at the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW) at Hunter College. In addition, the study determined what factors or barriers prevent minority applicant from applying, submitting, and completing their applications to the School of Social Work. The methodology used for this research was a participatory action research design that was adapted to accommodate and take advantage of the unique characteristics of American higher education. PAR is “grounded in a qualitative research paradigm whose purpose is to gain greater clarity and understating of a question, problem, or issue” (Stringer, 2007, p. 19). A focus group including current students and faculty developed a survey that was sent to 705 self-identified minority applicants the program from fall 2009 to fall 2011. There were 178 responses to the survey, and 23 inquiries to participating in a follow up focus group to discuss their admissions application experience. The results of the survey and focus groups indicated that minority applicants feel that the lack of communication, financial support, and lack of scheduling flexibility were barriers that prevented them from completing their applications. The survey and focus group members offered recommendations for the program. They indicated offering specialized information sessions on scholarships and financial planning, as well as providing more information at each stage of the application process could help increase minority application completion.

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The Admissions Process: An Evaluation of Access for Minority Students at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College

By

Nireata D. Seals

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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St. John Fisher College

August 2012
Dedication

I would like to thank my parents Nilon Seals Jr. and Gortha M. Seals, for encouraging me to pursue my education, and for teaching me the importance of a strong work ethic. In addition, for always telling me that I can do anything I want to do, but just do my best. To Mildred I. Perez, my love and wife, for providing me with the never-ending support to complete this degree, and for allowing me a “free pass” from home responsibilities for two-and a half years. To my supervisor Jacqueline B. Mondros, for the support, and flexibility to continue my education and for keeping the “bar raised high for me.” To my Executive Mentor, Celia P. Lloyd, you are right, “you cannot make this stuff up.” Thanks for your leadership and guidance. To my partners on this “journey”, Ellen Gambino and Johana Rivera, thanks for agreeing to do this with me. Also thanks to my team members for the laughter, creativity and reminding me that leadership is a full time job. Special thanks to Dr. Jerry Willis and Dr. Janice Kelly, for your suggestions, comments, support and pearls of wisdom, and for reading the many revisions of this document. To Robin Strauss, Pamela Kuhens, and Shirley Graham for your research assistance and the quick response rate, much appreciated. Last and certainly not least, I would like to thank my family for your support and encouragement, to the Seals, Hayes, Colclough, Travis, Vaughan and Mr. Juan Perez, and Mrs. Mildred Perez for my many blessings.
Biographical Sketch

Nireata D. Seals is currently the Director of Enrollment Management at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College/CUNY, in Manhattan, New York. Mrs. Seals is a graduate of Concordia University, where she received a B.A. in Behavioral Science with a concentration in Social Work. She received her M.A from New York University in Student Personnel Administration in Higher Education. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. program in Executive Leadership. Mrs. Seals pursued her research on the Admissions process at the Silberman School of Social Work under the direction of Dr. Jerry Willis and Dr. Janice Kelly and received the Ed.D degree in 2012.
Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate minority access throughout the admissions processes at the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW) at Hunter College. In addition, the study determined what factors or barriers prevent minority applicant from applying, submitting, and completing their applications to the School of Social Work. The methodology used for this research was a participatory action research design that was adapted to accommodate and take advantage of the unique characteristics of American higher education. PAR is "grounded in a qualitative research paradigm whose purpose is to gain greater clarity and understating of a question, problem, or issue" (Stringer, 2007, p. 19). A focus group including current students and faculty developed a survey that was sent to 705 self-identified minority applicants the program from fall 2009 to fall 2011. There were 178 responses to the survey, and 23 inquiries to participating in a follow up focus group to discuss their admissions application experience. The results of the survey and focus groups indicated that minority applicants feel that the lack of communication, financial support, and lack of scheduling flexibility were barriers that prevented them from completing their applications. The survey and focus group members offered recommendations for the program. They indicated offering specialized information sessions on scholarships and financial planning, as well as providing more information at each stage of the application process could help increase minority application completion.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief description of the dissertation topic, problem statement and theoretical rationale that supports the major ideas, problems, and recent findings regarding minority student access to graduate programs such as social work. The dissertation evaluated the admissions process for a graduate social work program in New York City using participatory action research methodology. The research identified ways to increase minority student enrollment at the Silberman School of Social Work (formally called Hunter College School of Social Work) and identified obstacles that prevented minority students from accessing the program.

Problem Statement

This research study evaluated access for minority students at the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW). In addition, the study contributed to our understanding of barriers minority students perceived when applying, and being admitted, to the program. The lack of a diverse pool of applicants affects classroom dynamics, the learning experiences of students, and the number of minority social workers in the workforce from SSSW. In 2004, the Center for Workforce Studies conducted a national study of licensed social workers. There were 4,487 respondents and 221 were from New York. In that sample, 87% of social workers in New York City were White, 7% were African American, and 6% were Hispanic. One conclusion of the study was that “licensed health care social workers are less racially and ethnically diverse than the U.S. civilian labor
force or the populations they serve” (Whitaker, Weismiller, Clark, and Wilson, 2006, p. 26).

While there was not a lot of demographic information on minority social workers in New York, the School of Social Work was concerned with how to effectively increase the number of minority applications and matriculating full-time students in the day program, maintaining the OYR population for the part-time evening program at SSSW, and how to increase awareness of the importance of passing the licensing exam. These two factors can enhance the workforce by increasing the number of social workers from minority backgrounds. These goals were validated by Smedley, Stith, and Nelson (2003) who stated “The healthcare workforce and its ability to deliver quality care for racial and ethnic minorities can be improved substantially by increasing the proportion of underrepresented U.S. racial and ethnic minorities among health professionals” (p. 1). In response to this need, SSSW investigated ways to generate student pipelines from a broad cross section of colleges and universities to increase the diversity in applications and the student body. By increasing or extending SSSW’s reach in the community, we hoped to generate more opportunities for diverse populations (Allen & Zepeda, 2007). However, when this study was conducted SSSW had not achieved its goal of annually admitting racially and ethnically diverse groups of students.

Until that goal is met, it is essential that SSSW continues its commitment to develop diverse pipelines. This is supported by the Alliance for Health Reform (AHR). The AHR is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides unbiased information on the nation’s health care problems to “elected officials and their staffs, journalists, policy analysts and advocates” (Alliance for Health Reform, 2011). The AHR has cited racial
and ethnic disparities as concerns in health care and has published several documents addressing the issue. AHR indicates that “as many as 83,000 deaths each year are attributed to racial and ethnic health disparities” (Alliance for Health Reform, 2011). The Alliance further states:

[The] language she speaks, and her household income are only some of the characteristics that can contribute to differences in the way different racial and ethnic minorities receive care (Alliance for Health Reform, 2011, p.109).

There is a need for more minority social workers in all aspects of care. However, the work of a social worker is not limited to health care. Social workers are in elementary and secondary schools, hospitals, government agencies, and in the classroom. Their practice and advocacy starts in social justice for all people marginalized by society. “Social Workers must learn how to acknowledge, recognize, confront, and address racism in the social work profession at the individual, agency, and institutional levels” (Copeland, 2005, p. 268). If SSSW develops a pipeline of diverse students and builds systems to support these students, then their success could support the diversification of the workforce. In addition, it could help increase the delivery of better social services to meet the needs of a diverse client population (Graziano, Solmon, and Berman, 2002). Copeland (2005) indicated we should increase the number of African Americans in the workplace, to bridge the gap of racial disparities. In addition, we should acknowledge that “linguistic barriers between patient and providers are reduced when ethnic matching occurs” (p. 268). Kennedy (2005) reinforced the concept by stating “patients who share the same race or ethnic background as their provider report higher levels of satisfaction with their care and greater participation in decision involving their health” (p. 2). The
first step toward a more diverse population of practicing social workers is increasing the
diversity of potential students who complete the admissions application and go through
the admissions process.

The Admissions Process

In fall 2008 the process to apply for admission to SSSW moved from a paper
application process to an online application process, provided by Hobson’s Inc. entitled
“ApplyYourself”. Hobson’s is a web-based application system that allows applicants to
manage their application via the web. Applicants have the opportunity to submit the
majority of the application online. The statement of purpose and letters of
recommendation can be uploaded directly into the system. Applicants can also review
the status of their application and supporting documentation, using the Apply Yourself
System (AYS). The system allows applicants the opportunity to save sections of the
application, which means they can stop at any time, and then continue the application
when convenient. When it is complete and they feel comfortable with the outcome, they
can then formally submit it.

The admissions staff is able to post messages and send emails to applicants
regarding the status of their application at every stage of the process. The admission
committee also uses the system to read applications and make initial assessments
regarding applications. In essence, AYS is a self-managed process by the applicant and
admissions department, and both have up-to-date information regarding the status of the
application.

There are five steps to the application process at SSSW.
Step 1: Complete and submit the online application. This process consists of creating an online account through the AYS, submitting names and email addresses of recommenders and uploading their “Statement of Purpose” (SOP) by the established deadline. The SOP is a 3-5 page statement answering specific questions regarding the applicants’ professional and/or volunteer experience related to social work.

Step 2: Applicants must submit a $125 application fee. The application fee can be paid online with the application, or by submitting a check or money order to the SSSW Admission Office. The application fee is waived for Veterans and for the first 10 applicants that request a waiver who can prove a financial hardship, such as: unemployment, or low income and high debt.

Step 3: Applicants must provide the admissions office with copies of their transcripts from all previous colleges attended. Since SSSW is associated with City University of New York (CUNY) and Hunter College, previous graduates of Hunter College are not required to submit a transcript.

Step 4: Most applicants are required to send “other supporting documentation” (see below for details).

Advanced Standing applicants must have completed a Bachelor’s degree in social work within 5 years of completing the application. Advanced Standing applicants are required to submit two core competency forms (Appendix A), one from their field instructor and another from their faculty advisor. The previous field instructor and faculty advisor rate the applicant based on the applicant’s skill level in ten core competency areas as described by the Council of Social Work Education. The
competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills” (CSWE, 2010, p. 3).

Applicants to the One Year Residency (OYR) Program must provide an Agency Agreement form (Appendix B) with their application. The One Year Residency Program was developed as an alternative pathway to the MSW degree at Hunter for minorities primarily, as well as immigrants and male students (Graziano et al., 2002). The OYR program is for applicants who have two years of full-time experience working at a social service agency. They must also currently be working full-time at a social services agency at the time of application. These applicants have the opportunity to take courses in the evening and on Saturday, and to use their current employer as their field placement site. The Agency Agreement form is an agreement between the agency and SSSW to use the applicant’s employment as their field placement site during the applicant’s second year of study. The agency also agrees to provide a field supervisor that is different from the applicant’s current supervisor, and provide the applicant with a different field placement opportunity.

The other type of applicants who may need to provide supporting documentation are international applicants. While the numbers are few, international students must provide evaluations of their foreign transcripts and often an original copy of their Bachelor’s degree. International applicants and other applicants who indicated English is not their native language may be required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Providing this type of supporting documentation can be a lengthy procedure.
Once the application is complete and all supporting documentation is submitted, it is reviewed by a member of the Admission Committee. The committee member will make an initial assessment of the application to either move it forward to the interview phase, or deny the application. If the application is denied, the Director of Enrollment Management will review it for a final decision. If the application meets the standard requirements for the program, the application is moved to step 5, the group interview. SSSW is the only school of social work in the region that requires an interview at the application stage of the process. All applicants are invited by email through the AYS to participate in the group interview process. This is a mandatory and important step in the process.

West and Ingram’s (2001) research suggested that admission policies and practices limit the number of minorities that have access to college, let alone graduate school. The goal of this research was to identify policy and procedures that might be changed to ensure that the admissions practices at SSSW enhance access for minority students.

The One Year Residence (OYR) was also evaluated along with the admissions process to improve minority access to campus. The OYR program was developed in 1972 at SSSW as an alternative program “to address the problem and bring about desired change allowing minority workers who have B.A. degrees an opportunity to upgrade their skills” (Graziano et al., 2002). The program is still in existence today. However given the financial crisis, it has become more difficult for agencies to fully support applicants as they have in the past. We have also witnessed an influx of OYR applications to our program over the three-year period based on specific admissions criteria to the program.
OYR applicants were required to have two-years full-time work experience, post Bachelor’s degree, and provide an Agency Agreement Form (Appendix B) of support. If they do not meet these requirement they cannot be admitted to the program. Their courses are offered during the evening hours, and on Saturday, while full-time students take courses in the day and afternoon hours. The admissions process for these applicants is ever-changing; the program and process for acceptance is under review.

The students that participate in the SSSW program are immersed in multi-cultural classroom discussions and provided a wide range of experiences interning in multi-cultural environments across New York City. Students engage in discussions around fighting oppression and racist behaviors within the classroom setting. These experiences within and outside the classroom prepare students to work within diverse environments. However, these experiences are limited when there are few or no minority students in the classroom during our full-time day program. Daniel’s (2011) interviewed 15 minority students enrolled in an urban school of social work; the students she interviewed indicated that they felt their White classmates were uncomfortable working with minority clients, because their experience with them (minorities) was limited to classroom discussions. This is another reason why the diversification of our applicants and student population in our full-time program is so important. The ultimate goal of the admissions process is to increase minority applications and enrollment, but there are barriers (Watson & Rycraft 2010). Few minority students actually apply to the program, which means any effort to increase minority enrollment must address that issue as well.

Longres and Seltzer (1994) indicate that individual and institutional racism contribute to the lack of minorities wishing to pursue a degree in social work. They also
state that mentoring from minority faculty and building those interpersonal relations might attract more minorities to social work. They further discuss the differences in communication, cultural differences, and status, as factors contributing to minority students’ ability to advance to careers in social work. “Cultural differences are likely to be apparent as minority and majority come together in the helping process.” (Longres & Seltzer, 1994, p.66). When minority applicants show an interest in the admissions process, administrators need to be sensitive to the applicants’ needs, and understand the cultural and communication differences. The admissions process and the policies of the organization both seem to play a major role in the lack of minority student applications.

McPherson (2010) offers some suggestions for the lack of degree attainment for undergraduate students, which seem to apply as well to graduate applicants:

Students often fail to meet their goals because they don’t have the money, don’t know that there is financial aid available, and don’t know how to access those funds. They also lack the academic preparation that would allow them to succeed in further study; they don’t know how to choose appropriate programs of study; and they don’t have adults to turn to who have the knowledge, experience, and confidence to guide them on successful paths (p. 1).

This statement refers to undergraduate students from low-income families; however, it could also apply to the potential graduate student population. McPherson (2010) goes on to suggest that more research needs to be conducted on the social context that prevents students from applying to and completing college. There are factors that students have no control over: poor undergraduate preparation, racism in the admissions
process, learning disabilities and other factors that go untreated, family and school violence, and lack of family or community support.

Bowen, Kurzweil and Tobin’s (2005) research suggests there are several gaps between African-Americans and other minority groups that lead to limitations on African-Americans’ educational success. While their research reveals that the United States has made some strides in increasing access, there is still work to do to ensure equitable access across gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. They contend that the goal of higher education is to prepare talented young people to assume productive roles in their societies (Bowen et al. 2005). How can minorities be productive citizens when they have not been given an equitable opportunity for success?

The Silberman School of Social Work is committed to increasing the number of minority students who apply and gain access to the social work program. In fall 2009, 1380 people submitted an application to SSSW, 249 of the applicants self-identified as African-American and 202 self-identified as Hispanic. In fall 2010, African-American applications dropped to 212, while Hispanics increased to 246. During the fall 2011 process, the department received 1648 applicants: only 183 were submitted from African-Americans and 197 from Hispanics. This indicates that submitted applications decreased for African-Americans by 13% and Hispanics by 19% from fall 2010 to fall 2011. The number of White applicants continues to increase from 705 in 2009, 777 in 2010, and 794 in 2011.

These numbers do not include individuals who started the application but did not submit it for consideration. These numbers do represent the ethnic breakdown of applicants that submitted their applications by the admissions deadline. Whites were in
the majority of those who submitted their application on time, while African-Americans and Hispanics lagged behind.

This dissertation examines the admissions process and factors that hindered minority students from submitting and completing their online application. In addition, surveys and focus groups were conducted with applicants and accepted students regarding their experience and perceptions of the admissions process. It also explored the admissions process with the stakeholders (i.e., applicants, students, faculty, and admissions staff and committee members), on how to develop operating procedures that focus on retaining minority students through successful application completion and acceptance.

**Methodological Framework**

This dissertation used participatory action research (PAR) to address a campus concern regarding the recruitment admissions access. PAR is “grounded in a qualitative research paradigm whose purpose is to gain greater clarity and understating of a question, problem, or issue” (Stringer, 2007, p. 19). PAR does not begin with a theory but rather with a set of questions and a problem that needs to be addressed. Moreover, it allows the researcher the unique opportunity to be an active participant within the research with stakeholders at the organization. Figure 1.1 demonstrates PAR’s cyclical process that allows room for action, intervention, reflection, and action again.
Participatory action research from the interpretive perspective “seeks to give voice to people who have previously been silent research subjects”, and “reveal and represent people’s experience” (Stringer, 2007, p. 170). Using PAR allowed the stakeholders, administrators, and other policymakers the opportunity to make informed decisions to benefit the people they serve (Stringer, 2007). SSSW was able to initiate change for the organization for minority applicants, based on information we received using the five steps of PAR. In addition, this qualitative approach clearly explained as well as described variables that prevented applicants from completing their application and attending SSSW. The data collected from all stakeholders offered suggestions and recommendations specifically for SSSW’s admissions process. For the purpose of this study, PAR addressed four critical questions regarding the admissions process, discussed later in the chapter.


Statement of Purpose

The study explored factors that prevented minority students from applying, completing their application, and attending the Silberman School of Social Work. The research sought to clarify what we know about barriers, and to assist the institution in developing plans to revise the recruitment and admissions process at SSSW. Accomplishing this goal will contribute to the larger goal of increasing minority representation in the field of social work. The findings of this study may also help other social work programs as they address the core problem – the limited number of minority students who graduate and enter the profession of social work.

Research Questions

This study examined the following questions:

The researcher developed the following research questions:

1. How does the recruitment and admissions process model at the School of Social Work support access for the School?

2. What aspects of the process could be revised, reformed, or restructured so that the goals of equity, access, and diversity are better achieved?

3. Are there variables that prevent minority applicants from submitting and completing their application by the deadline?

4. What changes in the application process could be implemented that promise to enhance minority application submission and completion of the application process?

5. Why do some minority students reject their acceptance to the School of Social Work?
6. Are there changes that could be made to the admissions and recruitment process that might reduce the number of minority students who decide not to attend after being accepted?

7. What factors do minority students perceive as barriers to degree application completion?

8. How can minority student application completion be increased at the School of Social Work?

The Silberman School of Social Work was the focus of the study; data was collected for applicants from fall 2009, fall 2010 and fall 2011.

**Potential Significance of the Study**

The SSSW has an opportunity to educate a diverse group of social work students and thus contribute to the diversity of the social work profession. Research conducted by Smedley, Stith, and Nelson (2003), indicates that the lack of cultural diversity among social workers is an issue that limits the ability of the profession to meet the needs of the clients it serves. A profession such as social work should be diverse, and include members who represent different perspectives, experiences, and viewpoints. Currently there are not enough members of minority groups who become social workers, which limits the effectiveness of the profession. Research conducted by AHR indicates that individuals in need of social services do not always receive proper care, sometimes due to the lack of minority social workers that speak their language, understand their culture, and understand their values.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were identified as significant.
Access- “Access to higher education refers to policies determining student admissions to postsecondary institutions” (Forest & Kinser, 2002, p. 19). Making higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds” (Institute for College Access and Success, 2011).

African-American- “A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa” (U.S Census Bureau, 2003). For the purpose of this study all persons that indicated Black or African-American in the field of race or ethnicity on their application will be considered African-American as their primary designation.

Minority- For the purpose of this study, all people that do not identify as White or Caucasian. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008) describes minority as African American, American Indians, Asian Americans, Chicano/Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other minorities. (Bowie & Hancock, 2000).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a brief description of the dissertation topic, problem statement and theoretical rationale, and an introduction to the major ideas, problems, and recent findings on the topic. Chapter 2 will introduce the empirical findings in the literature that address legal aspects of the admissions process, minority student recruitment, and review programs that retain minority students.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This chapter gives a brief historical prospective of SSSW and introduces the empirical findings in the literature and the laws that shaped admissions policies for minority applicants. To describe issues of access, the researcher began with the court cases and decisions that desegregated education where access was generally denied.

Access to Education for Minority Students

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons (NAACP) legal defense started the fight for the desegregation (and other key social justice issues) of education in the 1930’s (Rosenblum & Travis, 2009). In 1935, the Maryland Court of Appeals ordered the University of Maryland to admit an African American student, whose access was previously denied (Blackside Inc., 1987). In 1947, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that African American students had the rights to commence the study of law at state institutions at the same time as other students (Blackside Inc., 1987). These were the first recorded cases before civil rights, affirmative action, and diversity policies that identified the lack of access for some minorities into college.

It was not until 1954 when access and desegregation in the United States changed with the Supreme Court decision of 1954 Brown v. Board of Education. This decision allowed African Americans the right to an equal education under the law. Prior to this decision, African Americans who were college educated, attended traditionally black colleges (Duster, 2009 p.105). The full implementation of Brown v. the Board of
Education would take years to enforce across the nation. Even with the Supreme Court’s ruling on Brown v. the Board of Education, there were no plans or process dictating how to implement the changes to education (Rosenblum & Travis, 2009).

In 1978, the Regents of the University of California v. Bakke won the attention of the Supreme Court when a white person sued the University of California at Davis for admission. Mr. Bakke applied to the University of California at Davis twice for medical school and was denied twice. He later sued the University indicating that he was denied due to his race. The Supreme Court sided in his favor, because the University held 16 slots for disadvantage applicants based on their race only and could not prove that other factors were used to offer the 16 minority students acceptance to the school. In addition, it was proven that the University practices were unconstitutional, because they had a quota system set up for minority applicants. Several of the minority applicants scored lower than Mr. Bakke. It was also discovered that his application was not evaluated against the 16 minority applicants, but placed in the general pool. If not for the quota system Mr. Bakke might have been accepted.

The implication from this court case was that admission committees should not accept students solely based on race, but “could consider race as one among many factors in order to achieve a diverse student body” (Lauren, 2008, p. 81). It also “laid the foundation for affirmative action policies in higher education” and “precluded any justification of using race and ethnicity as factors in admission as a remedy for past societal discrimination” (Bollinger, 2003, p. 1590). It was not until 2003 that affirmative action, race based admissions process, and programs were challenged in the courts. The U.S. Supreme Court answered the call with two landmark cases: Gratz v. Bollinger and
Gutter v. Bollinger. These two cases “provided valuable information on how universities actually implement preferential admissions.” (Crawford, 2004, p. 51).

In Gratz v. Bollinger, two undergraduate students sued the University of Michigan for unfair admission practices. They indicated that the admissions point system denied them access to the college and that the process was unconstitutional. The court indicated that the admissions process violated their rights, because the process focused mainly on race and not other factors that lead to admissions. (Philip, 2011; Pidot, 2006).

The second case was Gutter v. Bollinger, in which Gutter sued the Michigan Law School over her 1995 graduate application. She indicated that the race based admissions process denied her because she was White. These two cases challenged affirmative action and race-based admissions processes and programs. The general question before the Supreme Court was whether such a policy is constitutional. The framework for answering the question has been indicated in previous decisions. Since the policy required the classification of people based on race or the ethnicity by a state agency, it is presumably a violation of the Constitution’s Equal Protection Clause. However, this presumption may be overridden, if the policy is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state interest (Crawford, 2004, p. 51). The idea of a compelling state interest is also debatable, however, in the case of Grutter, the compelling interest was the inclusion of minorities into a profession that lacked racial diversity. “The diversity rationale was thus the critical element in any constitutional defense of affirmative action in higher education” (Bollinger, 2003, p.1591).
SSSW History of Equity

The School of Social Work at Hunter College was established in 1958 during a time of civil unrest across the country. Schools and churches were being bombed, there were sit-ins, boycotts, riots and activists killed and kidnapped for their social justice work. While there were several forces opposing civil rights, the social work profession continued its work with the marginalized, minority, and oppressed populations. The social work profession strengthened “its support of the civil right movement, in spite of race riots, black nationalism, and growing political conservatism” (Trolander, 1997, p.111). Despite these facts, all institutions of higher learning were also experiencing its own brand of civil unrest in relation to desegregation, affirmative action and diversity and racial identity.

This same sentiment was reflected in Vigilante’s (1978) article on equity in the admissions process. She served as the former chairperson of the admissions process at SSSW for over 10 years. The article discussed the need for fair treatment in the admissions process (Stowell, 2004; West & Ingram, 2001; Spanierman, Neville, Liao, Hammer, & Wang, 2008). She believed that applicants should gain access to college based on established criteria with a consideration of race, life and work experience related to social work. She also suggested that when selecting new students, the admissions process should focus on equity rather than equality. This would ensure a diverse student body rich in experience and ethnicity. She defined equity as “the provision of opportunity as related to differential needs of identifiable groups; and equality refers to the provision of opportunity without reference to the needs of special groups” (Vigilante, 1978, p.83).
Vigilante was not the first to use equity in terms of fair treatment for individuals, prior to the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a behavioral psychologist by the name of John Stacy Adams, developed equity theory. Adams (1963) indicates that equity is not just about being fair; it is also about the relationships that are being built and most importantly the perception of inequality. Whenever two individuals exchange anything, there is the possibility that one or both of them will feel that the exchange was inequitable (Adams, 1963) so it is important to work toward a fair exchange. This echoes Vigilante’s ideas, searching for a fair exchange for minority students, and developing systems that give minorities opportunities to be successful despite a system rooted in racism.

Vigilante’s (1978) concept of opportunity is weaved throughout the review of the literature. Understanding the need for equity in the admissions process is a requirement identified in the article. Several schools of social work require new students to participate in field placement as early as the second week of school. Vigilante (1978) as well as Bollinger, (2003) and Pidot, (2006) suggests that there is a value in having applicants with diverse backgrounds, who possess relevant life experiences as these experiences can also enrich the learning environment for all students.

Similar to Vigilante (1978), current research by Zwick (2007), and Sternberg, Bonney, Gobora, Jarvin, Karelits, and Coffin, (2009) suggests that the admissions process should include other variables such as portfolios, essays, and interviews to increase college access to applicants who otherwise would not have the opportunity. If options are added to the process, applicants not accepted by traditional standards would have the opportunity to gain access to college.
SSSW is working to develop relationships with potential students early in the admissions process. Potential students are invited to the campus to meet with the director of enrollment services and the recruitment coordinator to discuss applying to the college. Potential students also have the opportunity to email or make an individual appointment to speak to someone about the programs offered. These actions start a relationship with potential students, however when the applicant is not accepted to the School of Social Work, there is a perception of unfairness. While the goal of admissions is to recruit and accept students, applicants also bring their own variables to the relationships that are unknown in the early stages of recruitment. Variables such as experience and grade point average are identified later in the relationship and may hinder access.

Stowell (2004) focuses her research on the applicant’s qualifications and fairness in the process from the viewpoint of assessment and decision making in admissions. In addition to Vigilante (1978), Stowell’s (2004) research questions equitable treatment of applicants and the possibility of bias in the process. Longres and Seltzer (1994) indicated that there are still racist practices associated with admissions and it is difficult to attract minority students, due to racism within the process. Recently a colleague explained how a staff member at her organization was called into an admissions interview at a social work school. She explained that she and the director had several conversations on the phone, and felt that she would not have a problem with meeting the woman in person. When she arrived for the meeting, she stated that when she introduced herself, she was sized up, and was quickly dismissed by the director. There are two sides to every situation, and the perception from the director was not gathered, however the perception of the applicant was that her ethnicity was the reason that she was not accepted.
The assumption in the example above is that some race-based bias on the part of the admission director may exist. This applicant seemed qualified before the in-person interviews; however felt that her race played a role in the denial of her application to that particular school of social work. The admissions process and practices should not be dependent on one administrator making the decision for the campus. The campus should develop a team approach to assess students for admission, and to retain minority students. Having more involvement with faculty and other administrators would ensure that the campus is trying to eliminate individual biases.

**Diversity**

Several articles (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002; Dodge & Derwin, 2008; Sternberg et al. 2009; Vigilante, 1978) discuss the importance of diversity in college and that being in a diverse college environment has outcomes that positively affect the workforce. Jayakumar (2008) offers the theory of impact diversity from his research, which indicates White students’ experiences in a diverse environment produce positive outcomes as well. Jayakumar (2008) also discussed the “viability of the cross-cultural workforce” and stated that “one central argument for continuing affirmative action rest on the notion that increasing representation of students of color on college and university campuses improves all students’ preparation for citizenship and the workforce” (p. 624).

According to Gurin et al. (2002), the function of diversity in higher education is to increase access to higher education and foster student academic and social growth. They discuss three elements of diversity and the effects on educational outcomes: structural diversity, interactional diversity, and classroom diversity. First, structural diversity is the number of minority students represented in an institution. Secondly, interactional
diversity refers to the extent and quality of the engagement with people of diverse backgrounds. Thirdly, classroom diversity describes the quality of time spent with students from diverse backgrounds in and out of the classroom (Gurin et al. 2002).

Gurin et al. (2002) believe that affirmative action based practices by colleges and universities are important standards that should continue. Studies by Stowell (2004) and Gurin et al. (2002) question the application assessments and ask how the admissions process measures success and how the researchers remove biases.

Moxley, Najor-Durack, and Dumbrigue (2000) offer strategies for schools to design a plan that offers access to non-traditional students through the admissions process for schools of social work. These strategies strengthen the application of students who do not possess adequate undergraduate grade point averages (GPA) to justify admission. Moxley et al. (2000) could be viewed as a continuation of Vigilante’s theory of “equity”. This article offers strategies that allow candidates the opportunity to compete in a selective admissions process. West and Ingram’s (2001) research suggests that admission policies and practices limit the number of minorities who have access to college, let alone graduate school. West and Ingram (2001) offer recommendations on policies, ensuring a “more coherent, transparent and equitable” (p.3) admissions process.

An article by Dodge and Derwin (2008) discusses differences in admission criteria for traditional and non-traditional students. Dodge and Derwin ask whether the admission criteria can forecast student success. They challenge the traditional method of selection by asking if the applicant’s undergraduate GPA and entrance test scores are true predictors of student success.
Three books provided historical context related to the admissions process. They offer significant support and insight to the research topic and problem statement. Steinberg (2002) gained open access to the selection process at Wesleyan. He chronicles his experiences through the work of one admissions counselor and the applications of several high school seniors. His goal in writing the book is to dispel the mysteries of the admissions process at a very selective college. Golden (2006) writes on his two-year investigation that admission practices still favor more affluent families. His research indicates that families with good financial background and influence have more opportunities for educational success. Mickelson (2003) substantiates this claim, by saying “even if racial discrimination in education were to be obliterated, a racial gap still would exist because blacks (and most other minorities) are poorer than whites” (p.1059). Racism is a vicious cycle, which is weaved through out all U.S. educational institutions, at every level. Further, Bowen, et al. (2005) discuss important issues in higher education. They dedicate several sections of the book to the admissions process, its reformation, and race sensitive selection in admissions.

**Critical Race Theory**

When evaluating access in higher education, the struggle of African American and Hispanics cannot be ignored. It is for this reason that Critical Race Theory (CRT) is central to the investigation of the admissions process and policy at SSSW. CRT “stresses in particular the importance of the voice of people of color, a voice framed by racism and at variance with the mainstream culture” (Cole, 2009, p. 9). When viewing the process through the lens of Critical Race Theory, there is an assumption that race or racism has hindered the process of acceptance to higher education.
Daniel’s (2007) research involved conducting phone interviews with 15 minority students from the SSSW. Seven themes emerged from her interviews. However, upon further review several major themes from her research can be grouped together. Based on the perception of the students each is individually important.

1. Racial and Cultural Isolation - Research draws parallels between the number of minority social workers and the lack of minority faculty teaching at the graduate level. Interviewees felt isolated due to a lack of minority students and faculty at the organization.

2. Lack of Relevance of the Curriculum to Minority Issues - Interviewees felt there was an absence of minority perspective within the curriculum and in the classroom. In addition, due to the lack of minority students within the classroom, current minority students did not have anyone to share or discuss common experiences within the classroom.

3. Invisibility and Distance from Program Staff - Some interviewees expressed concern over White faculty, students, and administrators not seeing them as individuals. Their perception was that school administrators did not understand the difficulty and hardship they were undertaking, with regard to career, family and finances.

4. Interactions with Faculty - Minority students did not feel that they could fully discuss program challenges with White faculty, and therefore had to learn other ways to work through the program.

5. Mentoring and Support - Interviewees indicated that having minority faculty as mentors and for general support was critical to their success in the program.
6. Interaction with Peers - Due to the lack of diversity in the graduate program, students relied on each other for support and assistance, largely because they did not feel comfortable with White faculty.

7. Race and Supervision in Field Placement - Interviewees expressed concerns with discussing race and race issues with supervisors in field placement. Sometimes issues were not seen as critical or were ignored by field supervisors. The perception was that issues of race should not be ignored. When in those situations, students did not feel supported, when discussing ongoing race concerns in the field.

These same sentiments were echoed in Bourke’s (2010) focus group interviews with 40 Black students at a predominantly White institution. The students identified the same sense of isolation and the perception of being invisible in the classroom and within the curriculum. However, the students also included having to deal with campus stereotypes such as: minorities were accepted to campus based on athletic scholarships; all African Americans know Black History better than the instructor does; and that African Americans are not scholars.

Marxism and Critical Race Theory are both theories of social injustices toward a class of people. The goal of both is to identify injustice and take the necessary steps to change the way society views a particular issue or population of people. If Marxism is viewed “as a systematic and radical understanding of the social world” (Bailey, 2005 p.143); then it is the researcher’s hope to evaluate SSSW’s role in the 21st century. Further research will be conducted to expand the knowledge and understanding of CRT
as well as other theories that can support diversity and outcomes at the graduate school levels.

Identity

Chickering (1969) has made numerous contributions to higher education and the study of student development and administrative programming. A central idea in Chickering and Reisser’s (1993), work is that the college or university is uniquely suited to promote the development of human potential. No other institution is in a better position to do so (Garfield & David, 1986, p.483). In no other place can the mind be evaluated, manipulated and developed for the betterment of all human kind. Chickering and Reisser’s seven vectors are: (identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose and developing integrity) are based in identity development. Chickering believed in working with the whole student in their environment.

Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) stated that the Seven Vectors of human development occur during adolescence and early adulthood. “The purpose of the seven vectors was to illustrate how a student’s development in the university setting can affect him or her emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually in a college environment, particularly in the formation of identity” (Abiddin & Ismail, 2012, p. 217). This indicates that more than one factor affects the developmental growth of students while in college. In general, the vectors indicated students come to college with several different levels of understanding, and ways of handling situations.

Chickering’s (1969) vectors were “revisited” in 1993 in collaboration with Reisser. Their work influenced the impact of college on students include: the clarity of
objectives on the college campus and consistency of messages being sent to students, the size of the school, and the extent to which the school promotes interaction, curriculum, and teaching; each student needs opportunities to try things on campus in order to develop themselves. Living arrangements are also a factor that influence growth, such as living in a residence hall versus commuting. The social environment with peer and friends may also produce a change from the norm. If students have advisors and mentors to guide direct them, this interaction can have positive outcomes. The college years are a time when the definition and re-definition of identity becomes more important.

Students who come from minority backgrounds may have a more intense struggle with the resolution of identity. One of the most prominent theorists in this area of study is William Cross (1991). His theory represents a new approach to the conception of Black identity. Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1947) were among the first theorists to research the psychosocial development of African-American people. Cross (1991) formulates his theory around the psychological process of identity formation, social constructs, and ethnic identity. The crux of their theory was the idea of internalized self-hate, in which an individual is believed to move from lesser to greater degrees of identification in the African American culture (Cross, 1991).

Both Chickering’s (1993) and Cross’s (1991) ways of approaching the subject of identity are similar; however they are working with two different populations. Chickering’s (1993) model is a general approach that applies to the entire student body whereas Cross’s (1991) model focuses on African-Americans. They both take the developmental approach, with both paying particular attention to late adolescence. It should be noted that Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) model could serve as the
foundation for Cross’s (1991). Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) model focuses on the external while Cross’s (1991) model works on the internal aspect of an individual. Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) model reflects the environment and its influence on the person whereas Cross (1991) deals with the student before they enters college with perceptions about self. In Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) model, you can actually see the external environment through interaction; the change seems physical as well as psychosocial.

While it is harder to see the effects of Cross’s (1991) model, it can be evaluated by the quality of interactions with peers, faculty and self-reporting. Students experience something new and find that they have been changed by the college experience. These experiences are internalized by students, causing them to re-evaluate their feelings and attitudes about the environment. Cross’s (1991) model is just one example of why applicants may not complete the application process or accept the opportunity that SSSW could provide. Applicants who do not engage in the process due to their own internalized processing, may miss opportunities to be successful. In Chickering and Reisser’s “model the applicant is engaged with everyone involved in the process. If an applicant has an issue with the admission process, they are on the phone engaging in the environment.

Programs and the Development

The literature indicates that minority students are unfortunately disadvantaged in every step of the admissions process. Through the years, several colleges and universities have developed programs to increase diversity on campus. Programs such as The Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK), Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), and EXCEL all assist students once they have been
accepted to college. These “access intervention programs” offer extra incentives such as scholarships and summer preparatory courses to prepare at-risk students for college-level academic work” (Bergin, et al., 2007, p.728).

Colleges and universities have also revamped their admission practices to be equitable to all races by including creative writing samples as well as review of real world experience as it relates to their field of study. There is less focus on grade point averages and test scores, but more focus on the individual. Admissions departments are also moving out of the office and into the classroom by providing workshops on the application process for students, and providing writing workshops, during the summer to help prepare students. Bergin, et al. (2007) discuss the EXCEL program and the initiatives that were developed to improve enrollment in higher education. The EXCEL program is an early intervention program that targets students in 8th grade.

Another early intervention program was developed at Tufts University entitled the Kaleidoscope Project. It includes admissions measuring tools that have been successful at predicting academic performance. It focuses “on identifying not skills but rather personality variables associated with academic success and leadership roles” (Sternberg et al. 2009, p. 5). More colleges and universities need to move toward this model of admissions.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the history of laws that related to race based admissions practices in the United States. Brown v. Board of Education, Grutter v. Bollinger, and Gratz v. Bollinger were landmark cases that lead the way for affirmative action programs to diversify higher education. This chapter also briefly reviewed the concepts of equity,
diversity, critical race theory, and identity as it relates to minority students and minority students perceptions of their college environment. Finally, this chapter reviewed early intervention programs as they relate to admissions and student success.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

This chapter details the research study methodology. Topics covered include the research questions that guided the study, the research design, the types of data that were collected and the methods of analysis. It provides an explanation for the type of action research design used for this study, and defines the variables that prevent minorities from gaining access to graduate education at the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW).

This action research study included the use of both quantitative and qualitative data to study access for minority applicants at SSSW. The quantitative facet of the research identified factors leading to the disparities in application completion among minority groups and explored the reasons for those disparities. The purpose of the qualitative research was to gain an understanding of the admissions process and barriers that prevented minorities from applying and gaining access. The qualitative research was gathered via a survey and focus groups provided by previous applicants. In addition, the admission committee members also provided information regarding applications received for the fall 2012 term. Current students were also eager to supply commentary on their experiences with the admission application and process.

The research for this dissertation evaluated access, applicant diversity and the admissions process at SSSW for minority applicants. The research also examined factors that prevented minority students from applying, completing their applications, and attending SSSW. Further, it identified strategies to increase minority representation in
the field of social work. The researcher gained insight as to why minority applicants, and particularly African-American students, do not complete their application by the deadline at the same rate as White applicants.

**Type of Research Design**

Kurt Lewin (1946) first used the phrase action research because he was concerned about how to facilitate exploring and solving social and cultural problems in real world settings. He conceived action research as a way to help practitioners make realistic discoveries about a particular problem at their organization or setting. “Lewin developed action research as a way of improving professional practice.” (Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010, p. 226). Action Research is also a “systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives” (Stringer, 2007, p. 6). Action research allows the researcher to study the organization’s issues while continuing to work within the organization environment (Ferrance, 2000).

In order for research to be considered action research, it requires three major components:

- systematic research in a real world setting,
- participation by stakeholders in that setting, and
- action to address the real world problem or issue (Greenwood & Morten, 1998).

One way to think about action research is in a three step recurring process of “look, think, and act” as proposed by Stringer (2007, p. 9). Within this broad conceptual framework several types of action research have emerged over the last 60 plus years.
O’Brien (2001) suggests there are four current types of actions research: Traditional, Contextual, Radical, and Educational. Ferrance (2000) also proposes four different types of action research used in the field of education: Individual, Collaborative, School-wide, and District-wide. There are also typologies of action research based on which ideological or paradigmatic base the action researchers use – such as Positivist, Interpretivist, or Critical Theory (Willis, et al. 2010; Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

There are also many models for action research. For the purpose of this study, a collaborative action research model with five-phases of inquiry was used to study in an educational setting (Ferrance, 2000):

- Step One: Identification of problem areas;
- Step Two: Collection and organization of data;
- Step Three: Interpretation of data;
- Step Four: Action based on data; and
- Step Five: Reflection.

Collaborative action research provided the flexibility to gather information from a wide range of stakeholders, students, faculty, staff, and other administrators. This type of “collective support can create energy, a diverse range of potentially good ideas and a creative opportunity to learn from others” (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007, p. 341). They also indicate that having the experience and expertise from others invested in the process, brings a diversity of thought that allows for change. Every member of the college community had an opportunity to collaborate and to reflect on barriers that prevent minority student access through the admissions process.
Within each phase of the action research inquiry process, data was collected, evaluated, and subjected to constant reflection to ensure that the study moved in the right direction (Lewin, 1946). The first step in this form of inquiry is to identify a problem area. When I started working as the Director of Enrollment Management at the SSSW in the fall of 2008, I was given three departmental objectives: develop an enrollment management department/team, increase applications and enrollment numbers, and increase minority participation into our program.

**Identification of Problem**

During several early conversations with the Dean, she indicated that she wanted to understand why minority students would want to attend more expense private graduate programs when SSSW’s tuition was one-third of the price. This conversation prompted an early review of admission data to assess how many minorities actually completed their online applications, and then to assess how many completed their application by the deadline. After a preliminary review of the data, I tentatively concluded that minority applicants to the social work graduate program were less likely to complete their applications than White applicants.

Considering the diversity of New York City’s population, these results were astonishing, raised several questions, and suggested the beginnings of two possible paths of inquiry for the school and research. The first would address the question, are minority applicants not completing their applications on time? The second would be concerned with what can the SSSW do to increase the numbers of minorities completing their application on time. It was important to discuss and confirm these issues with the admissions committee and to conduct further research.
Collecting and Organization of Data

The second step in the inquiry was to collect and organize the current data. A focus group (FG1) of current students and faculty was developed to review current admissions practices and surveys previously conducted by the school. Another goal was to design a survey that would incorporate the two general questions presented above and further investigate the four research questions:

The researcher developed the following research questions:

1. How does the recruitment and admissions process model at the School of Social Work support access for the School?
2. What aspects of the process could be revised, reformed, or restructured so that the goals of equity, access, and diversity are better achieved?
3. Are there variables that prevent minority applicants from submitting and completing their applications by the deadline?
4. What changes in the application process could be implemented that promise to enhance minority application submission and completion of the applications process?
5. Why do some minority students reject their acceptance to the School of Social Work?
6. Are there changes that could be made to the admissions and recruitment process that might reduce the number of minority students who decide not to attend after being accepted?
7. What factors do minority students perceive as barriers to degree application completion?
8. How can minority student application completion be increased at the School of Social Work?

Data were also collected through conversations with current students and individual discussions with the admissions committee members. Additional library research and inquiries with potential students were gathered through campus “Information Sessions”. This provided a foundation to develop a plan to address the concerns and issues of potential minority applicants. Current student feedback was also instrumental in providing a frame of reference in understanding barriers for students who chose to attend. The admissions focus groups evaluated previously created admissions surveys and discussed ways of gathering information from minority applicants who did not submit an application and/or complete the application process. This focus group used quantitative data to clarify the research problem that would assist in answering four of the research questions. The focus group decided that the best way to reach the majority of previous applicants was to send the survey out electronically as well as through the normal post office mail system.

Due to the circular and collaborative nature of this action research design, the admission focus group participants moved the collection and organization of data in different directions. Some discussions began to focus on their own experiences regarding the admissions process, and feelings regarding the organization. The student participants felt comfortable enough to discuss their current issues and concerns with the organization. Ferrance (2000) states that there are three basic themes of action research: “empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation and acquisition of knowledge, and social change” (p. 9). It was important that the admissions focus group
participants felt empowered and free to develop strategies to facilitate action and improvements for the organization. It was often a challenge to stay focused on the admissions process when participants wanted to discuss other campus issues.

However, through the discussions, more questions emerged. One participant wanted a comparison of the number of minorities with non-submitted applications, with minority applicants who withdrew or did not complete their application and the number of applicant that were accepted but withdrew after being accepted.

The results of this inquiry revealed that the “Incomplete or Withdrawn” applicants should be the focus of the research and not Non-submitted minority applications. As the researcher pursued answers to these questions, it changed the focus of the research.

However, a basic principle of action research is that it is recursive and flexible. Adhering to this basic principle means that the direction of the research and the methodology may change as the stakeholders work through the different stages of inquiry.

The admission focus group developed a survey with 31 questions, of which seven required type written responses. In order to verify the usability for the survey, the focus group suggested that a modified draft of the survey (Appendix C) be sent to current students via the students’ social network page. Brooke (1996) states that “the usability of any tool or system has to be viewed in terms of the content in which it is used, and its appropriateness to that context (p. 189).” Because current students have completed the admissions process, we valued their feedback as experts. The staff and faculty do not have access to the student network page, so the student participants of the FG1 shared the modified survey with their classmates via a link using Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online system that allows you to create and design surveys.
Thirty current students responded to the draft survey, made recommendations, and rated each question on its usefulness. A final copy of the survey was sent to the focus group members for their approval. Once approval was received, the survey was sent to all self-identified minority applicants who did not complete their applications, withdrew their application, or withdrew their applications after they had been accepted. At the end of the survey, participants who answered a series of specific questions were asked to participate in a focus group (FG2) to further discuss the application process and the barriers that may have prevented their completion. An IPod Shuffle was raffled at the end of each of these focus groups as an incentive to entice more participation. A seasoned admissions’ committee member and group work faculty adjunct was hired to conduct the focus group discussions. The facilitator and researcher met prior to the focus group (FG2) sessions to review the parameters and questions for the focus group. By conducting in-person focus group interviews, the participants agreed to engage in open dialog with the facilitator. This open dialog would lead to rich verbal data that cannot be captured by a survey (Frey & Oishi, 1995). The researcher served as the co-facilitator of one group and the facilitator of another. Due to the low show rate for the first focus group, participants who indicated an interest were emailed again to participate in a second interview, facilitated by the researcher. There were several types of quantitative and qualitative data collected for this action research study. The sources of the quantitative data collected were the Apply Yourself system, data spreadsheets created by the admissions office, and the survey. The sources of the qualitative data were the survey, focus group discussions, and conversations and emails from the admission committee members, current students, and faculty.
Interpretation of Data

Interpretation of data is the third step in the five phases of action research inquiry. The goal of this phase is to analyze and identify major themes collected from the data (Ferrance, 2000). The data collected were divided into two groups: data that can be quantified and qualitative data such as participants’ opinions and perspectives on their admissions experience. An overall set of conclusions was developed from all the data collected, including the review of current literature, committee discussions, and information obtained from contacts with other institutions.

After careful collection, organization and interpretation of the data, the intention is to design a plan of action that will make changes to the admissions process, policy and department. This is the fourth stage of action research in education; action based on data. Ferrance (2000) does not recommend making several, but to select one and evaluate its effect on the process. She argues that over time, the evaluation of other variables can be conducted to assess their effectiveness. Even one cycle of an action research project can take many months if not years. For that reason and the time constraints on the completion of my dissertation, I have decided to end the “dissertation research” at the point where the plan has been developed. In reflecting on some of the results of the data, small “quick fix” initiatives were created and will be discussed further in Chapter 4. The fourth step will describe what is tentatively planned after the plan is implemented even though these steps in the action research process will not be a part of the dissertation. However, this is not the end point of the action research process.

The fifth step is entitled “evaluate results” or “reflection”. I prefer the term “evaluate results” because reflection is an integral part of each phase in action research; it
is not something that happens only at the end of the process. At this step the intervention is evaluated for its effectiveness. The primary question is whether it has actually improved the process. “If there is improvement, does the data clearly provide the supporting evidence? If not, what changes can be made to the actions to elicit better results?” (Ferrance, 2000, p. 12).

The “next step” then gives the researcher and team the opportunity to identify additional questions or improvements that were identified as a result of reflection and evaluation. Action research is a recursive process in a constant state of movement. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) describe the process as “gathering data, feeding it back to those concerned, analyzing the data, planning action, taking action and evaluating” thus leading back to further data gathering so the process can start all over again.

**Research Context**

Hunter College is the largest senior college in the City University of New York (CUNY) system. The CUNY system is comprised of 24 colleges, 11 of which are senior colleges and 6 of which are community colleges. Hunter College houses five schools: the Silberman School of Social Work, the Schools of Arts and Science, Education, Public Health Professions, and Nursing. The School of Social Work was established in 1958 at Hunter College, and was renamed the Lois V. and Samuel J. Silberman School of Social Work in 2011. It is currently recognized as the oldest and largest public school of social work in New York City. The Silberman School of Social Work is currently one of sixteen graduate schools offering a MSW in social work education the State of New York. It is one of ten programs in New York City; the others are Adelphi University, Columbia University, Fordham University, Lehman College, Long Island University:
Research Participants

The first focus group (FG1) met for a total of four in-person meetings and follow-ups were conducted by email. The focus group consisted of two female faculty members, six female students and one male student. One faculty member was from a minority group and the other was not. All students identified as minority students or students of color. The faculty participated in all meetings, however due to scheduling issues, two students did not participate in all sessions.

The students of FG1 selected the students who participated in the review and evaluation of the survey. The faculty indicated that they would share the survey with their students as well. Thirty current students started the survey, twenty-eight completed the survey and one person chose not to participate. The ethnicities of the reviewer group were the following: Eight identified as White, non-Hispanic, six identified as African American, Black, non-Hispanic, four identified at Latino/Hispanic, while two others identified as Dominican and Puerto Rican, three participants identified as Multiple Race ethnicity, two identified as Asian American and another two identified as Other. There were 27 female participants and one male participant.

The participants for the survey were selected by using the Apply Yourself System (AYS) data supplied by the graduate admission office. The researcher’s universe of 4,655 applicants was narrowed by filtering only the applicants that identified as minority students who did not have a Student Information Management System (SIMS) upload date in the AYS. SIMS is the database used at SSSW where all pertinent student data are
stored, such as address, age, registration information, ethnicity, etc. When an applicant is accepted to SSSW, a date is added to the system and used as an indicator to upload the new student’s information into the college’s main database SIMS. The admissions department removes the date for all newly accepted students who withdraw after being accepted. The quantitative data in this section included all minority students who were accepted, had incomplete applications, withdrew or withdrew after being accepted from fall 2009 to fall 2011. The survey was mailed and emailed out to 705 participants. Two hundred applicants started the survey and 178 completed the survey. There were also 18 completed surveys returned and manually entered into Qualtrics.

As indicated, survey participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group to further discuss what barriers may have hindered their access to SSSW. Twenty-three survey participants indicated their interest in participating in a focus group (FG2) to further discuss their experience. There were a total of 4 participants in FG2 and so another focus group (FG3) was conducted and two additional applicants participated. Despite the low numbers, information received was very informative and provided rich data to help improve the admissions process. In addition to applicants, current students, faculty, and the admission committee was asked for their feedback on minority applications for the fall 2012 process. The admission committee facilitators provided feedback on three questions:

1. Were there any key factors that stood out about applicants this year?
2. Did you notice any difference in minority student applications?
3. What do you think we could do to improve the quality of applicants in the future?
The overall impression of the admissions pool varied this year, one facilitator stated: “As a group the minority applications did not seem to have as good an educational background, lower GPA’s, and essays tended to lack greater depth in terms of why they wanted to come to Hunter.” Another wrote: “Largely, some candidates who seem very motivated (even some with decent cumulative average) and might go on to become social workers, yet they have serious problems with writing”. This was a general concern across the board with the facilitators who participated in the meeting. There were other informal discussions with students and faculty that spoke to their concerns along with suggestions that will also be synthesized further in Chapter 4.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

A formal request was made to the Dean of the SSSW to access contact information on previous college inquiries, applicants and current students at the SSSW. The admissions AYS allows authorized user access to download any information from the student applications. The names and phone numbers remained confidential. The email addresses will not be shared or made public for any other purpose than this dissertation. All surveys were conducted electronically through an encrypted version of Qualtrics. Two types of surveys were created: the first was the survey created by FG1 (Appendix D) and the second was the survey created for the current students to evaluate the questions (Appendix C). The modified draft of the survey was designed using Fink (1995). Fink (1995) indicates that a question is “purposeful” when you can easily identify the relationship between the question and the purpose of the survey. If the questions on the survey provide meaning, then they will be coded and distributed for each cohort of participants.
In order to ensure the confidentiality and safety of each participant, the researcher informed all participants of the aim and purpose of the study. All data collected for the use of this study will be securely contained and coded to maintain anonymity. The raw data collected containing participants’ personal information will not be made public, nor will information be shared that might be connected to a particular individual (Stringer, 2007). The research will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a secure location at SSSW.

**Data Analysis**

The focus groups conversations and survey results were transcribed and read several times to gain a broad knowledge of the conversations. The transcribed information was imported into Excel for analysis. Further the qualitative data from the focus groups was analyzed using several methods from Ryan and Bernard (2003): (a) cutting and sorting and identifying (b) discovering themes and subthemes, by analysis of word repetitions, and key-words-in contexts; (c) building hierarchies of themes, (d) winnowing themes into manageable few and (e) linking themes into theoretical models. The qualitative data from the survey was used to verify and support focus group information. The quantitative data, primarily demographic and survey data, were analyzed using Qualtrics and SPSS Crosstabs. All data collected from the survey was analyzed with the survey analysis procedures available in SPSS, including the crosstabs option. The quantitative data, primarily demographic and survey data, were analyzed using the SPSS Crosstabs procedure. Data will be presented in tabular form and where appropriate Fisher’s Exact test will be used to determine the statistical significance of comparisons between two variables (Race and Deadline) that each contain two categories (Race: White, Non-White and Deadline: Met, Did Not Meet).
Summary

In conclusion, the researcher used Ferrance’s (2000) approach to educational inquiry to address a problem in the organization using a collaborative action research design. The research design used a five phase collaborative process to identify a problem, collect and organize data, interpret the data, determine a course of action, and then evaluate the intervention. The initial goal of the research was to better understand the admissions process and the issues minority students experience in the process. The intermediate goal was for the admissions team to develop a plan for revising and reforming the recruitment and admissions process with the goal of admitting and retaining more qualified minority applicants. The final goal, which is not a part of this dissertation, will be to implement the plan and evaluate it as the first cycle in what could be a multi-cycle action research project. “Most action research documents how an educational problem was identified, understood, and solved by practitioners” (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005, p. 44), and for this reason, action research is the model used for this dissertation.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction and Problem Statement

This chapter will reintroduce the research questions and provides answers to the research questions based on the quantitative and qualitative data provided by previous applicants to the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW). In addition, it will supply participant demographics data as well as an analysis of the findings. The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the data collected. The study identified themes, patterns and trends that prevent minority students from applying, completing their applications and attending the program. Participants of the research refer to Hunter, at the time of their application the school was call Hunter College School of Social Work, it was renamed in 2011 and became the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW) at Hunter College. This chapter will also include comments on previous implemented changes based on the research results. Participatory Action Research (PAR) supports the idea of making immediate changes to the problem as the data was collected and analyzed.

Research Questions

The researcher developed the following research questions:

1. How does the recruitment and admissions process model at the School of Social Work support access for the School?

2. What aspects of the process could be revised, reformed, or restructured so that the goals of equity, access, and diversity are better achieved?
3. Are there variables that prevent minority applicants from submitting and completing their application by the deadline?

4. What changes in the application process could be implemented that promises to enhance minority application submission and completion of the application process?

5. Why do some minority students reject their acceptance to the School of Social Work?

6. Are there changes that could be made to the admissions and recruitment process that might reduce the number of minority students who decide not to attend after being accepted?

7. What factors do minority students perceive as barriers to degree application completion?

8. How can minority student application completion be increased at the School of Social Work?

**Participants Demographics**

For the last three years over 4714 prospective students submitted applications to the fall 2009, fall 2010 and fall 2011 terms at SSSW. For the purpose of this study, only the data currently accessible in the campus official applicant database (Apply Yourself System or AYS) was used. Table 4.1 summarizes the remaining 4655 participants for the study. The 59 applicants not included in the study were either moved to the spring Accelerated Program, applied to the wrong school and were moved to that school, or their record was deleted because the applicant was seeking an undergraduate degree.
Table 4.1

Applicant Gender for Total Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3,877</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,655</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey participants were identified by sorting the data in Excel and the applicants that identified as White non-Hispanic were removed. For the purpose of this study, any person that identified as a minority was included. In 2008 the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) described minority as African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Chicano/Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other minorities. CSWE currently uses the term underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. For the purpose of this study, the term minorities will continue to be used. Table 4.2 identifies the gender breakdown of the survey participants. Applicants that identified as “blank” were included, to incorporate minorities that were reluctant of identifying themselves; doing so increased the number of participants from 231 to 705.
Table 4.2

Applicant Gender for Study Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Study Population Frequency</th>
<th>Study Population Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two hundred participants responded to the survey. One hundred and ninety-one participants commented on their commitment to participate in the survey. One hundred and eighty indicated they would be willing to complete the survey and 11 responses indicated they would not be willing to participate. In total, 178 participants completed the survey by using Qualtrics or by mailing the survey back to the researcher. Any surveys mailed back were entered into the Qualtrics system manually by the researcher.

Survey participants that were accepted to SSSW and chose not to attend were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group to further discuss their experience with the admissions process. Twenty-three people responded to the survey and six previous applicants participated in a focus group.

Data Analysis and Findings

Research Question 1: How does the recruitment and admissions process model at the School of Social Work support access for the School? There were two questions on the survey that spoke to recruitment:
1. Did you participate in a Silberman “Information Session” or meet with a Student Ambassador or member of the Admission staff?

2. Did you find the Information Session helpful?

Table 4.3 describes the survey participant’s participation in the campus information sessions. Forty-four percent of the survey participants indicated that they participated in an information session or that they met with a Student Ambassador or staff member. Fifty-five percent of survey participants indicated they did not participate in an information session or met with a Student Ambassador or staff member. Eight percent commented the reason why they did not participate was due to some type of miscommunication.

Table 4.3

*Information Session Participation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>99 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>14 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One participant wrote: “I called about making an appointment to do so around my work schedule and was told I could only come during office hours and that I could not make an appointment. The lady on the phone was not very friendly or helpful”. Seven of the 14 respondents to this question stated they were “not aware”, or that they did not know participating in an information session was an option. Three of the other respondents indicated they had participated and the other responses varied.
Prior to the study initiatives are in place to support access for minority applicants. Currently recruitment activities are conducted at urban colleges and social services agencies across New York City. Information packets regarding our program are mailed out to the “Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge” (SEEK) and Higher Education Opportunity Programs (HEOP) throughout New York City. The SEEK and HEOP programs typically advise at-risk minority students and assist minority students in making life choices for their educational careers. Some have viewed social work as an educational option to graduated education.

In addition to mailing out packets, Information Sessions are conducted once a month to inform potential applicants about campus programs, admissions requirements, and give potential students an opportunity to visit the campus. Potential applicants have the opportunity to access the “event” page on the SSSW website and register to participate in a session. The information presented in the session is then emailed to all participants who registered online. These sessions are held in the evening to accommodate potential applicant’s work schedules.

Based on the research there were several small initiatives added during the 2012 term to increase information and communication with minority applicants. Some were initiated as a result of survey responses, focus groups, and discussion with admission committee members. The first was the extension of the application deadline for One-Year Residency (OYR) applicants. Research indicated that this large minority population had difficulty completing their applications and supplying all supporting documentation. It was determined that extending the deadline for that program would give applicants more time to submit all the required forms, and gain permission from their agencies to
conduct the fieldwork. In addition, the admissions department added specialized information sessions for OYR applicants. These sessions were targeted to minority students who are currently working at social services agencies. Four sessions were conducted prior to their application deadline. Sixty-eight potential applicants participated in these sessions.

**Research Question 2**: What aspects of the process could be revised, reformed, or restructured so that the goals of equity, access, and diversity are better achieved? Fifty-two percent of survey participants indicated they did not find the application challenging (Table 4.7). Several commented on sections of the process that need to be revised and restructured. Survey participants cited a lack of communication, the dissemination of information and the lack of responsiveness as major areas of concern for the process. One survey participant wrote:

> My application process with Hunter was one of the worst and most unprofessional exchanges I have ever had with an institution. Bottom line, the way Hunter treated me and many others I've spoken to who went through the application process, is disrespectful to those trying to form a relationship with the school and earn a degree.

The focus group and survey participants offered several recommendations to increase access and restructure the process for minority students. When asked their overall impression of the process, 101 survey participants responded. Fifty-two participants had positive experiences, 43 had negative responses and offered suggestions for improvements.
The data in Table 4.4 indicates that the admissions department needs to address the concerns of communication and responsiveness for minority applicants. Communicating the steps of the application process and what is expected for the group interview needs to be available to prospective applicants. One survey participant stated:

None of the other schools I applied to required an interview as part of the application process. Applicants should have been told about this element from the beginning, and should have been notified sooner. By the time Hunter contacted me to schedule an interview, I had already been accepted to all the other schools that I had applied to, and been given financial aid packages as well.

Another applicant indicated similar concerns regarding non-responsiveness from the admissions department. There are just two examples for the last of outreach from the department. The admissions process has changed in the last three years. Now that the application process is online, it becomes the applicants’ responsibility to go back to their online application and check the status. The department no longer sends out letter of denial, only letter of acceptance. Another survey participant stated:
I submitted my application and never heard back from the school - no acceptance or rejection. I got accepted to CUSSW (Columbia University School of Social Work) and New York University (NYU) so made my decision with those options. No response from Hunter gave me the impression it was disorganized.

The data have identified patterns of deficit in services offered by the department. The admissions process had not changed in 4 years; minor initiatives have started to address the concerns of the research. Chickering (1993) stated “college students need different levels of structure and support” (p. 443). The admissions department needs to hire more front line staff to support the applicant’s needs.

The department was able to hire a part-time staff member to assist in the processing of applications and follow-up with applicants. The new staff member was hired part-time in July 2012, and unfortunately, we will not know the effect of his presence on customer service for this study. Table 4.5 identifies the number of applications received and the current number of staff charged with responding to the needs of such a large population, a proposal needs to be submitted for additional staff.

Table 4.5

*Application to Staff Ratio*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Department Staffing</th>
<th>Applicants per Staff</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fall 2009| 1433         | 6                   | 238                  | 16.6%
| Fall 2010| 1630         | 6                   | 271                  | 16.6%
| Fall 2011| 1651         | 6                   | 275                  | 16.6%
| Fall 2012| 1654         | 7                   | 236                  | 14.2%
We are also investigating an online advisement system to assist with the volume of applications we receive each term. SSSW was also asked to participate in a pilot of a communication system connected to the AYS. This system will provide SSSW the opportunity to have the system send out automated communication to applicants based on the status of their applications. Chickering and Reisser (1993) states “Automation of the more mundane advising task, such as reviewing transcripts, checking prerequisite, and monitoring progress, frees up academic advisors to spent more time building mentoring relationships” (p 442). Several survey participants indicated that they did not know the steps of the process nor did they receive a response from SSSW regarding the status of their application. This system should help to repair the breakdown in communication.

The admissions office has also started planning application workshops to assist potential students complete their applications. However based on the data, an intensive customer service plan needs to be developed to further address the concerns of minority applicants.

Research Question 3: Are there variables that prevent minority applicants from submitting and completing their applications by the deadline? The focus groups offered 12 thematic categories (Application, Finance/Financial Assistance, Flexibility, Group Interview, Information Sessions, Licensure, Method, Minorities/Race, OYR Program, Personal Statement, Part-Time Program, Tuition Reimbursement) and seven thematic subcategories (Personal Experience, Communication, Completion of [application and other items] Feedback, References, Essay, Technology) from highest to low, that emerged from analyzing the data. Several categories overlap: for example issues raised
with the application overlap “statement of purpose,” “references,” and “essay,” as well as “communication” overlapping with “feedback,” and “technology”.

Focus group and survey participants also indicated several variables prevented them from submitting and completing their applications. The 19 categories analyzed in combination with the survey and three of the categories dominated the results: lack of communication, a need for more financial aid/assistance and flexibility. The lack of communication was a concern throughout the all the survey results. Another example is in the fall of 2009 the application was changed to an electronic format without prior notification to applicants. Several survey applicants indicated they found the online application frustrating and felt a paper application option should be given.

Another concern was with the application and communication was the difficulty of reaching a staff member if questions or issues arose about the system or application. The survey and focus group participants indicated communication issues also dealt with the areas of the application that the applicant did not have control. For example, applicants do not have control over when their recommendation letters and when transcripts will be mailed to the department. Two survey applicants indicated that their paperwork was not submitted on time by their recommender or agency.

The flexibility responses overlap with the need for a part-time program, and allowing students the flexibility to take classes throughout the day or evening; instead of “blocked” times. Currently day students can only take day courses and OYR students can only take evening courses. Special scheduling request are limited and accommodated however not all students take advantage of the option. The survey and focus group participants indicated this as a reason for not attending the MSW program at SSSW.
In addition, when asked which sections of the application were the most challenging, most responded that the application was not challenging, however 19% indicated that paying the application fee is the most challenging. Paying the application fee by the deadline is perceived to be a barrier to application completion. Survey participants as well as focus group participants indicated that the cost of the application could be seen as an issue, when applicants are applying to more than one school. The category of financial assistance was verified through the focus groups. If an applicant is applying to our top competitors: Columbia University, New York University or Fordham, the cost to apply is dramatically lower. Applying to the top schools could cost a total of $310. Table 4.6 indicates the application fees from our top competitors.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silberman School of Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following was stated by one of the participants of the focus groups, she indicated that she thinks Hunter has one of the most expensive applications, and the data states that she is correct.

One of the things I tried to figure out and one of the things that I think is a hindrance on application is the cost of the application. It’s probably one of the
most expensive applications I’ve ever seen and I think that’s more of a CUNY thing as opposed to a specific Hunter thing. I feel that as a School of Social Work I think there should be some sort of help in that regard in terms of students, because one of the well known facts of this field is you don’t get into this field to make money, so I don’t feel that going into this field and learning how to be good in this field that I need to submit all this money that I don’t really have.

The three thematic categories and one subcategory that stood out across all data provided were Application, Finance/Financial Assistance, Flexibility, and Communication. These variables emerged as themes that have prevented minority applicants from submitting and completing the application by the deadline

**Application.** Participants indicated both positive and negative experiences with the application process. Table 4.7 identifies the areas of the application the survey participants found challenging. Some found it challenging and overwhelming while 52% of respondents did not find it challenging at all. Thirty-one respondents indicated they found paying the application fee to be challenging.
Table 4.7

_Challenging Sections of the Application_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplying Transcripts</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Agreement Form</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Process</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Fee</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Supporting Documentation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not find it challenging</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One focus group participant discussed her concerns about the application fee:

Well I mean it felt like it (application fee) was a little pricey but at the same time I think it was the same price as all the other schools, they were all around the same price. So it just, it’s like it was a choice if you really want to do something, it helped kind of solidify if you wanted to do that (come to SSSW).

However, it is important to note a number of the survey participants indicated that the process of waiting for a response and being notified about the outcome was a challenge. Several participants had heard back from other schools regarding their acceptance before SSSW was able review the application or offer the applicant an interview. One survey participant wrote:
I did not hear from Hunter about the first round of interviews until it was too late and I had accepted Columbia’s offer already. For some reason there was a huge delay. I only applied to Columbia so not having a guarantee that I would get into Hunter I had to go with Columbia. But my heart was at Hunter.

Providing information in a timely manner was a theme for the majority of survey participants. Their concerns ranged from receiving information regarding the stages of the application process, timely invitations to the group interview process, and information regarding financial aid and scholarships. Another applicant wrote:

I did complete the application process however; the school did not get back to me in a timely manner and lost communications. I attempted to do the Skype interview however; the school did not get back to me.

The study revealed a constant theme which was the lack of communication and follow-up from the admissions department with applicants.

**Finance/Financial Assistance.** Several participants in the survey indicated they received financial aid packets from other schools, which included scholarship and financial aid availability, but did not hear from Hunter. Readings from the literature on admission and enrollment management indicated “developing communication strategies and joint processes can reduce some of the barriers” (Kerlin, 2008. p 135).

**Flexibility.** Several participants indicated the program and curriculum needed to be more flexible in terms of working students. The lack of flexibility theme was seen throughout the data, in reference to a lack of flexibility with scheduling. Participants discussed wanting to study part-time, in most cases to work in the evening or day. However, that is not an option for students accepted into the full-time day program.
Students accepted into the full-time day program are required to take classes two days a week, and participate in field placement (at an agency) three days a week. One focus group participant addressed this reoccurring theme with the following statement:

An issue that I’ve heard [from] people who haven’t even come here complain about which is the inflexibility of being here. This program is horribly, horribly inflexible. I hate to put it that way but it is. It makes it so impossible to work, to live your life.

The inflexibility of the schedule and the request for a part-time program were identified as barriers to several applicants not completing their applications. In the data, the two thematic categories were presented synonymously with one another. Participants also discussed wanting the flexibility of taking classes at different times of the day. Currently, full-time day students are required to take all courses during the day hours (typically 9 am-4 pm). Special permission is required to take courses outside of their major method or at different times. Evening courses are reserved for One-Year Residency (OYR) students.

**Communication.** There was an overwhelming response to the lack of communication offered by the admissions department. The lack of communication and responsiveness was indicated in all areas of the process. Some respondents indicated they tried to contact the admissions office several times and never received a response. Others indicated that if they did reach someone, the person was not helpful or was rushed off the phone. When asked if there was anything that “would have helped you complete your application,” one survey participant put it this way:
If admissions office had been more responsive. It was so hard to get information or support. No one ever followed up with my question. People were rude. Process, specially [the] interview process, was unclear. I wish I would have felt more connected and supported and cared about. It was so bureaucratic and impersonal.

From the survey data, 118 participants indicated they completed their applications by the deadline; another 25 participants indicated they did not, and the remaining 27 could not remember. Table 4.8 shows the comparisons between White and Minority applicants. A Fisher's Exact test shows a statistically significant difference between the White and Minorities groups ($\chi^2 = 189.917$, df = 1, p < .05). A Fisher Exact test was used oppose to Chi Square because it is comparing two variables that contain two categories, this two-by-two cross tabulation a better method of comparison.

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Minorities</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not meet deadline</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>1,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met deadline</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>2,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,465</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,574</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4,039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from AYS indicate that applicants who submitted their initial application on or before February 5th of each application cycle (August 1 to July 31) were counted as meeting the deadline.
Figure 4.1. Number of Minority and White Applicants Who Met or Did Not Meet the Deadline.

Table 4.9 identifies applicants based on ethnicity who did not meet the deadline. Proportionally, White applicants were more likely to meet the deadline. A higher number of minority than White applicants (135) failed to meet the deadline, more White than minority applicants (1,026) met the deadline.
Table 4.9

*Number of Applicants by Ethnicity Who Met or Did Not Meet the February 5th Deadline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Asian or Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>White Non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not meet deadline</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met deadline</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>2465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two deadlines in the admissions process. The first was the date required to submit the online application, which is February 5th. The second deadline refers to the date all supporting documentations were due; such as transcripts; application fee; letters of recommendation. To submit all supporting documentation on time, it must be received by April 1. Table 10 shows the comparisons between White and Minority applicants with overall percentages who did and did not meet the April 1 deadline. A Fisher's Exact test showed a statistically significant difference between the White and Minorities groups ($X^2 = 103.143$, df = 1, p < .05).
Table: 4.10

Number of Minority and White Applicants Who Met or Did Not Meet the April 1st Deadline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did not meet deadline</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Minorities</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met deadline</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>2,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,914</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 represents the number of applicants who did or did not meet the application deadline. A high number of minorities than White applicants failed to meet the deadline; more White than minority applicants met the deadline.

Figure: 4.2. Number of Minority and White Applicants Who Met or Did Not Meet the April 1st Deadline.
Table 4.11 represents a breakdown of minorities by ethnicity and completion deadline met. Proportionally, White applicants were more likely to meet the April 1\textsuperscript{st} completion deadline than minority applicants. Future questions will address ongoing initiatives that have occurred to assist minority applicants.

**Table 4.11**

*Number of Applicants by Ethnicity Who Met or Did Not Meet the April 1\textsuperscript{st} Deadline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Did not meet</th>
<th>Met deadline</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>1,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>2,565</td>
<td>3,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicants who never completed their application (337) or who withdrew their application (52) were not included in this analysis. Applicants who submitted their initial application paperwork after April 1\textsuperscript{st} of the application cycle (i.e., submissions falling on or between the dates April 2 to July 31) were counted as not meeting the deadline.

**Research Question 4**: What changes in the application process could be implemented that promises to enhance minority application submission and completion of the application process? Participants from the research made several recommendations for improvements to the admissions process. Additional suggestions were added from meetings with the admission committee and focus group participants.
• Develop a communication system for calls and applicant follow-up.

• Offer specialized Information Sessions on scholarships and financial aid. Invite financial aid staff from the main campus to speak to applicants about financing their graduate education.

• Offer specialized Information Session regarding the OYR program, with faculty and students from each method.

• Offer workshops on completing and submitting the application in the computer lab for applicants who do not have high-speed internet access.

• Offer writing workshop to assist with writing the “Statement of Purpose”.

In addition to these suggestions, the administration is also looking at ways to assist applicants with the payment of their application fee and commitment deposit to the school. Nineteen percent of survey participants indicated that paying the application fee was an issue, yet the school has no control over the current cost of the application fee. The school is trying to think of other ways to help students pay the application fee by reaching out to alumni. The idea is to ask alumni to donate specifically for a new student’s application fees or commitment deposits.

**Research Question 5:** Why do some minority students reject their acceptance to the School of Social Work? Survey participants, who were accepted and chose not to attend SSSW, indicated their primary reason for not attending was a lack of financial support and scholarships. Despite the low tuition, accepted minority applicants declined their acceptance to the school citing financial cost, program inflexibility, reputation/future opportunities in other graduate program, and customer services as concerns.
Survey participants that were accepted to Silberman and chose not to attend were asked why they did not attend. Table 4.12 describes the all the reasons indicated on the survey. Lack of financial aid or scholarships ranked the highest among the 49 responses. Participants in the “Other” category indicated that they deferred, relocated, did not attend because of lack of follow-up from admission, or found the program’s lack of flexibility unworkable.

Table 4.12

*Survey Participants Who were Accepted and Chose not to Attend Silberman School of Social Work*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application Fee</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment Deposit</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Financial Support</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Scholarship</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship from Another</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Tuition</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey also asked participants to name the other schools they attended, if they did not attend SSSW. Ninety-three participants responded and indicated 23 other schools
attended. Three of the participants indicated that they are currently attending SSSW. This assumes the three participants withdrew at one point in the admissions process, reapplied and were later accepted. Table 4.13 reflects the other schools they attended listed in order of most respondents. Other schools such as: Boricua College, Boston College, Bryn Mawr College, San Francisco State College, SUNY Binghamton, Temple University, University of Berkeley, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, Touro College, University at California Los Angeles, University of Central Florida, University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, and Washington University, only had one response each.

Table 4.13

*Other Schools Attended by Survey Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordham University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehman College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stony Brook College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelphi University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeshiva University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 93 responses to the question of “other activities” regarding the type of activity the participant engaged in if they did not attend another school of social work. Thirty-seven respondents indicated they were still active in the social service profession.

**Research Question 6:** Are there changes that could be made to the admissions and recruitment process that might reduce the number of minority students who decide not to attend after being accepted? The data indicated two areas of potential improvements to increase minority participation in the program: increased efforts to enforce better communication/follow-up and financial planning.

The survey was filled with comments regarding the lack of communication and follow-up by the department. Focus group participants and survey respondents reported this same issue throughout the survey. The example below was from one participant.

The response time of Silberman School of Social Work was too slow. It took forever for a decision to be made. It also took some length in time for someone to contact me for a group interview and even after the interview it took some time for a final decision of acceptance to be sent to me. In all, the response time was not too comfortable and whenever a call was made to school personnel, they were not welcoming and presented to be very busy and not too pleasant.

Better communication and early contact with financial aid/education can be offered to new minority students. The office also needs to investigate a mentoring program of some type that connects the newly accepted minority student to a mentor right away. The mentor can serve as an advisor offering guidance and support throughout the applicant’s two years in the program.
As indicated previously in this chapter, a stronger relationship needs to be built with the department of Financial Aid. Currently, newly accepted students need to register for classes before scholarships and financial aid can be awarded. Having the financial aid office offer workshops at SSSW can provide applicants with basic cost information. This would provide applicants the opportunity to make more informed decisions about attending. One participant commented:

The Silberman School took the longest to put together a financial aid package for me. While I wanted to seriously consider Silberman, I was unable to do so when I received financial packages from five other graduate social work schools that needed me to make a timely acceptance decision. I was still waiting for Silberman to send me financial aid information when I accepted Bryn Mawr College's Graduate School of Social Work offer.

**Research Question 7:** What factors do minority students perceive as barriers to application completion and access? The lack of communication and follow-up remains a key obstacle in preventing minority students from submitting and completing the application. If an applicant is not able to build a relationship with the admissions department, they are not invested in the school to move their application forward, as stated by a survey participant “I didn't feel that some people in the admissions office communicated effectively in answering some of my questions. I felt that sometimes I walked away feeling frustrated.”

There were survey applicants who expressed positive experiences completing the application and process; however, their responses were not expressed with the same intensity and volume as the negative replies. During the focus group, participants
indicated that writing the “Statement of Purpose” could be viewed as a challenge if the applicant did not have adequate support with writing the statement. A focus group participant indicated that she knew alumni from the program and other social workers who helped her complete her application and write her statement.

The focus groups identified perception as another barrier to minority applicants completing the application. The perception that SSSW is a difficult school to get into was stated in the focus groups. In addition, OYR applicants who participated in the specialized information sessions indicated the same perception. Several stated that their co-workers told them the program was very difficult to get into. A focus group participant stated:

The perception that I got was that this school (SSSW) was absolutely impossible to get into…the perception was that this was the most illustrious program that it was virtually beyond reproach and no one could touch it. You had an easier time getting into Columbia or NYU.

The focus group participant later stated, that the while the perception was that SSSW was difficult to get into; no one really knew why it was so difficult. Another participant in that same group indicated that she knew she was getting in SSSW “hook or crook” and did not listen to the negative. She later stated:

I was getting in, but I knew that, I mean let’s be honest, I’m Black, I’m female I have a resume, you know, I knew I was getting in, in one deal, but I think that if you don’t have I think that some of my girlfriends that applied here and didn’t get in they were white and had no experience and that was the fear that I was hearing.
You know, if you applied for Hunter and you’re White you better have volunteered somewhere before you applied.

The OYR Information Session participants had similar responses; they stated they heard the program was difficult to get into from their co-workers; however they had no idea why.

**Research Question 8:** How can minority student application completion, be increased at the School of Social Work? A survey participant suggested that having advisors to assist applicants complete the application and learn more about program options would have helped her complete the application. She further stated: “As a first member of my family, it was difficult to find anyone I knew that had gone through the process and that could fully guide me.” Chickering (1993) agrees was a problem and states that the admissions advisors may not see the impact of their work, but nevertheless has a key role in helping applicants achieve their education as well as career goals. Building these early relationships with the admissions department will enhance the students’ experience. The advisor “sets the stage” for the journey of the new students.

The goal at this stage starts with better customer services for all applicants and targeted mentoring and services for minority students. A major message across the focus groups and survey data was the lack of communication. Focus group participants felt that a good resource for communication for prospective students is the schools’ website. It is important that the website and other electronic communication is clear and accurate (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

**Other results.** One hundred and sixty-four survey participants responded to the question of what attracted them to SSSW. The top five responses were: reputation, cost,
field experience, diversity, and major methods specifically Clinical Practice with Individuals and Families and Community Organizing, Planning and Development. The Silberman School of Social work has the most reasonable cost in tuition of all the 16 schools of social work in the New York Metropolitan area. Given today’s social and economic climate, individuals seeking graduate education, prepare and plan more than ever before. Keeping the economic climate in mind when reviewing our program offerings we cannot ask prospective students to quit a full-time or part-time job to attend school regardless of the cost.

Focus groups as well as survey participants indicated our programs and course schedule is inflexible, and does not allow them the opportunity to work in order to pay tuition. Several indicated that they were not aware, until orientation that they could not work a full-time job and attend our full-time program. The question of “How do you expect me to live, without working” has been asked, and we really do not have a good answer. The need for a flexible scheduling option, like a part-time program, which was mentioned several times in the focus group and on the survey. Developing a part-time program has been discussed however there that has been no movement. In the spirit of participatory action research (PAR), more voices are needed to add a diversity of thought within each elements of the process.

In the past, the role of the admissions department was to enroll new students. This model has been successful in the past. The office was not concerned with advisement, field placement or the other academic support services. Today, “staffing and related services must be attuned to the different backgrounds and needs of our potential students” (Kerlin, 2008, p. 134).
During one focus group a participant wanted to know the difference between the minorities that had applied and the minorities that did not complete their applications from fall 2009 to 2011. He wanted to identify the target population early within the process. Through an analysis of the data, it was discovered that we had a large number of minorities submitting their applications however, they were not completing them. This was a surprise that changed the focus of the research. I could not begin to research pipelines or disparities in the field of social work if I could not understand the institutionalized barriers that the department was creating. The second assumption was that minority applicants were not applying to the program. Based on archival data from the admissions department, 1842 minorities applied to the program for the fall 2009, fall 2010 and fall 2011 terms; there was an increase in the number of minorities that registered during those terms.

Table 4.14

Applied and Registered Minorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minority Applications</th>
<th>Minority Application</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Minorities Registered</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>1433</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>1651</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4714</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Results

In response to this school’s problem, the study analyzed the barriers that prevent minority applicants from submitting and completing their applications and developed minor initiatives to assist in minority access. The analysis of the data has dispelled two assumptions by the administration about the lack of minority applications at SSSW. The first assumption was that minority candidates were not applying to SSSW because of childcare or other personal issues, which made graduate education an unattainable option. This was true for the 85 survey participants that replied to the question about children, however, 89% indicated that childcare was not a barrier to attending the program. Some survey and focus group members did list personal reasons that were accompanied by one or more variables such as finance, lack of communication with the staff, a scheduling issue or lack of flexibility. This discovery will let the administration focus on other barriers that are preventing applications from moving forward within the process.

There was also an underlying assumption by the admissions department that placed all access responsibility on the applicant. The department has placed information on the web, sends out electronic communications, conducts an information session each month, and uses technology to reach a wide audience. In addition, we have had over 1842 minorities applying to the program; however, the number of minorities who completed the application is our weakness. We can no longer indicate success in admissions by the number of total students that register. The review of the data revealed an “internal contradiction between what we do and what we say” (Tierney, 2008. p. 17). We are working on an assumption that if we meet our targets of 420 to 430 students each fall term then we are successful. If we truly want to increase the number of minority
students in the program, we need to make that our target. We need to focus on building lasting relationships with applicants in the three problem areas: communication, financial and flexibility.

Being in a social service environment requires a social service approach to enrollment. Instead of blaming the applicant, the process and department could view the applicant through a service industry lens. Chickering and Reisser (1993) indicated programs that provide student services should view the operations from the prospective of the student, or applicant in our case. Developing a customer service approach to the process and assisting applicants with their “basic needs” of the application, could ensure more satisfied applicants. Based on an analysis of the data, the admissions department was one of the barriers that prevented minority applicants from continuing the application; there was a lack of communication and services from the admission department. Further results addressed the need to develop a comprehensive plan of action with all stakeholders in continuous reflection and assessment to address the communication, flexible, and financial concerns of future applicants.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter provides a brief introduction of the problem statement and an extended discussion of the implications of the research. It also discusses limitations of the study and recommendations for future research. The analysis of data from the focus groups and survey was very helpful in identifying barriers that have prevented minority access to the field of social work through admission and completion of the graduate social work program at the Silberman School of Social Work. The analysis also identified revisions and improvements for all major aspects of the admissions process and department that might enhance the diversity of students who are admitted to and complete the program at SSSW.

In Chapter 1 the initial problem statement indicated the dissertation would focus on identifying and exploring barriers that prevented minority applicants from applying, completing the application, and being admitted to the Silberman School of Social Work (SSSW). However, the research results indicated few applicants experienced barriers when applying. Instead, the results pointed to another area as a source of problems for applicants. When issues developed and applicants needed help and support to complete the application they did not always receive it in a timely and helpful format. In fact, the data indicates that some did not receive the help at all. Data from Table 4.14 showed that SSSW was only converting a third of the minority applications into students. That meant the school had a substantial number of minority applicants, but fewer were completing the application. Without completing the application, there was no possibility of being
accepted and joining the program. Based on the results of this study, a major goal for the immediate future is to make the admissions department a part of the solution and not the problem, as the focus group and survey results implied.

Originally, I wanted to review and discuss ways to increase the number of minorities within the social work workforces, based on the national study conducted by the Center for Workforce Studies in 2004. In that sample, 87% of social workers in New York City were White, 7% were African American and 6% were Hispanic. While these numbers are still astonishing to me, and researching the concept of pipelines to the social work profession still seems important for future research; it was not fully evaluated in this study. It was mentioned in one of the focus group discussions; however, it was overshadowed by the concerns about lack of communication, limited information about financial assistance, and inflexibility within the process.

In addition, it would be difficult to evaluate generating pipelines to Silberman, without evaluating barriers that prevent minority applicants from completing the application. From fall 2009-2011, 1864 minority applicants applied based on our reputation, website, and information sessions, and a third were accepted to the school. Our focus needed to shift to increasing our conversion rate of minority applications. Thus, the focus of the research shifted somewhat from the problem indicated in Chapter 1.

**Reflection on Findings**

The findings have already informed professional practice in terms of the admissions process at the SSSW. After analyzing the survey responses and data from the focus groups there was a sense of urgency to change sections of the admissions process
immediately. There were several small initiatives discussed in Chapter 4 that addressed
the urgency for change within the process to enhance policy and practice. However,
进一步 action is needed to address policy and staffing concerns. The research findings
have moved the concerns out of the admissions office to upper administration. Any
changes regarding faculty, scheduling and the hiring of new staff will need to be
addressed with the Dean and other senior staff. In addition, some findings have moved
me to not only to think outside the box but also to be more assertive in requesting
assistance and support for the office. Issues in four areas of concern seem particularly
important to address:

  Communication. Concerns regarding the lack of communication were a major
theme in the research results. The department has been able to hire a part-time employee
to assist with customer service calls and follow-up. The hope is that the new staff
member will be able to move into a full-time position and assist in distributing the
workload for the team. This additional staff member currently plays an integral role in
increasing effective communication with applicants. In addition, we will continue to
recruit and hire Student Ambassadors to increase information and communication from
the office. Our goal is to begin to develop other prospects relative to student workers.
We have several students who have federal work-study grants and are not able to use all
the funds because students are in the field practicum between the hours of 9am to 5pm
three days a week, and are in classes during the other two days. In thinking outside the
box, the admissions office could hire current students to work in the department from
6pm to 9pm, to call applicants regarding their applications. Perhaps, this initiative can
develop into the first call center for SSSW.
Currently LaGuardia Community College has developed an electronic means of communication with prospective students. They have online Admission Chat sessions for potential students as well as an electronic “Ask a Question” system on their website. Both are options for communicating with potential students regarding their often urgent questions regarding the process and their application. These two types of communication might eliminate the need for potential students to visit the campus to get information or to call the admissions office during peak demand periods. If we are able to hire current students under the federal work-study program we would be able to offer them an opportunity to gain some financial support while attending the MSW program.

Developing an online advisement communication initiative has been added to the enrollment strategic plan. I, as Director of Admissions, will draft a proposal for further discussion and review with the Dean and other stakeholders.

Another new initiative is the creation of teams. In an ongoing effort to increase the quality and timeliness of communication, the department staff has been divided into teams. There are two staff members who work on marketing, communication, and recruitment. Two other staff members will work on application processing and following up on incomplete applications. Often working in teams will make the work feel less daunting because there is assistance (Graziano, et al., 2002). It is also important to have staff work in teams because it will allow for diversity of thought. For several years the admissions process has been conducted in the same standard way, but team work may encourage different prospective. For example, one staff member may have a very structured way of processing an application. If a step in their process is interrupted, the staff member is delayed and not able to continue the process quickly and move on to the
next application. Having more than one staff person involved in the process and
decision-making may provide an opportunity for more action than inaction and quicker
follow up for applicants. There are many possible ways to process an application, having
more than one person work in, and review, the process may provide new ideas and
opportunities of growth for the department.

Another aspect of the communications process that has already changed is the
specialized information sessions we offer. Starting January 2012 we offered specialized
Information Sessions on the One Year Residency (OYR) program. During these special
sessions, I focused on answering questions regarding their perceptions of getting into
SSSW. I also shared with them enrollment data on the acceptance rates of OYR
applicants, as well as provide information about applying and completing their
applications. In addition, I discussed writing the “statement of purpose”, and in the
future will include samples of statements and articles that provide helpful hints and
recommendations for successful graduate writing. The OYR student population is very
diverse. During the four sessions, 59 potential students participated and the majority
represented a minority group and were female.

It was interesting to learn about their perceptions of getting into the program. The
majority of participants indicated they were told by fellow employees that SSSW is
difficult to get into, and that they should not apply. The department will continue to work
to remove that perception as a barrier to access at SSSW. By continuing these sessions
and changing perceptions, the OYR population should increase. These individuals are
currently working at agencies and have experience in the field, there is no reason why
they should not apply and have the opportunity to continue their graduation at SSSW.
Interview process. Several members of the admission committee will work to evaluate the group interview process. We are the only school of social work in New York City that requires a group interview as part of the admissions process. Survey and focus group participants indicated they were either confused or intimidated by the process. The Dean has also recommended the review of competency-based interviewing; where specific questions are asked of applicants that allow for additional engagement and assessment during the interview. We need to evaluate whether moving away from the group interview model is cost effective and realistic. The admissions process is continuously being evaluated and currently a priority is the question of what changes we can make to the interview process to make it less intimidating and confusing.

For the fall term the number of applications we receive is increasing, for fall 2012 the school received over 1650 applications, and more than half were interviewed. The admission committee will meet to discuss the evaluation and selection of the application as well as the interview process. In reviewing competency-based interviewing we would need to change the group interview process of 10 to 12 applicants to an environment with fewer participants, perhaps 5 or 6.

Financial aid/assistance. In addition to increasing communication, we are working on ways to increase the availability of information regarding financial aid and financial assistance. I am investigating and requesting the financial aid staff from the main campus to provide workshops for potential students to learn how to finance their graduate education. The workshops can be conducted at the main campus or SSSW or can be incorporated in our current information sessions with break-out sessions for more individualized assistance. Additionally, finding other sources of scholarship funds for
minority students is essential if we wish to increase the minority population in our full-time day program. Focus group participants mentioned offering specialized information sessions regarding the OYR program, with faculty and students from the part-time program. Focus group participants also mentioned having a representative from each of the program method areas: Clinical Practice with Individuals and Families, Community Organizing Planning and Development, Organizational Management and Leadership and Group Work. The more information we can provide applicants the better their ability to make a more informed decision regarding applying, and attending SSSW.

**Flexibility.** There are two areas of concern regarding increasing course and scheduling flexibility. The first is the concern with field placement. Student are in classes two days a week and in field placement three days a week. This schedule does not leave room for flexibility within the schedule. Survey and focus group participants stated having flexible class offerings would provide more flexibility to allow students to financially support their education. For example, students taking courses in the daytime hours should have the option to take evening courses, once the OYR students have completed their registration. If they are working a non-traditional work schedule, evening students should have the opportunity to take courses in the daytime.

As an example of flexibility, Fordham offers courses in several formats and time frames: part-time, online and on the weekend. Fordham’s part-time plan gives students the opportunity to complete the program in a three or four year plan, completing only 14 hours per week of field placement. The schedule gives students the opportunity to take two courses per term during their first year and three courses in the following years, including field work. If this option was available to a small cohort of potential SSSW
students each year, it would likely benefit students and enhance the diversity growth of the student population.

In order to facilitate a part-time, online or weekend program, the faculty would need to feel comfortable teaching in these formats. The faculty are a powerful force in any educational organization. It is my impression that the faculty at SSSW are willing to take risks and engage students through many different teaching platforms and formats. However, financial resources would be needed to support the development and deployment of new schedule alternatives and new teaching approaches. Faculty leadership and involvement in the process would, of course, be critical. Henderson (2008) states, “harnessing the power of the faculty” is important for admissions initiatives, their power will be critical in moving SSSW into the next century of innovative admissions practices.

**Unanticipated Findings**

Several surprises arose during the research process. For example, a number of survey participants reached out after receiving the research survey. They wanted to ask questions about either reapplying or following up on the status on their previous application. Several survey participants stated they did not know the final status of their application and wanted to come in to discuss their options. Some of the applications were a year or two old, and the department is only required to keep an incomplete application for two years after submission. I was surprised at the number of applicants who had not checked the status of their online application, prior to the research survey. The status of their application is available to them through the online application system but some students clearly did not know how to access that information. In addition, I was
surprised at the level of attention they required years after applying. For example, one
survey participant’s application was incomplete from fall 2011 because she had not
submitted all required supporting documentation. She made an appointment to speak to
me regarding her application and followed up every week until all her documents were
received.

Another surprise was the increased time demands of the research. The
methodology of PAR (Participatory Action Research) required me, to be “on-duty” all
the time. In addition to starting the admissions process for a new cohort of students for
the fall 2012 term, I felt inundated with questions from previous students who received
the survey and from current students and faculty who wanted to know more about the
research. In addition, current students and faculty wanted to discuss their admissions
experience and ask questions regarding the admissions process. One African American
student wanted to discuss the reasons why there were so few minority students in our
accelerated program. Her narrative was not included in the research, but spoke to the
need of additional support for potential applicants at all levels of the admissions process.
She expressed the same sentiments as a focus group member who stated that she had
other social workers review her application material before submitting it to SSSW.

Several faculty announced my research study in their courses. One student asked
me to participate in his research study on minority students at SSSW, and another
emailed me about data on Asian students at SSSW. In addition, some faculty members
provided me with books, articles and other material related to the topic of my research.
PAR requires the researcher to be fully engaged in the process at all times and to be
engaged with the community of stakeholders. It also required a great deal of organization
to record all the information received. There were moments during the process when I felt overwhelmed with the information faculty as well as previous and current students wanted to share.

Finally, the outcomes from the research overlapped with the daily work, and revealed changes to the process that seemed crucial. In the role of the researcher, more patience was required than in the role of director of the department. Conducting research at my organization within my department was often a difficult challenge.

Limitations

The following limitations applied to this research:

1. The study is limited to the Silberman School of Social Work which is the largest public school of social work in New York City.

2. Many applicants started or submitted applications while still studying for their undergraduate degree and by the time this research began their undergraduate email account was incorrect or outdated. The lack of updated information limited the number of electronic responses received from the survey.

3. The process that designated student applications as either incomplete, or accepted and registered was changed after the system implementation in 2008. This means the classification may not have always been correct. The AYS allows applicants to submit multiple applications for admissions. Some applicants may have submitted an application that was incomplete in one year, and then submitted another application the following year that was accepted. Such applicants may have received duplicate surveys or mailings.
4. There were 705 surveys emailed and mailed to self-identified minority applicants. The survey produced a 25% response rate. There were 23 participants interested in the focus group, however only six participated.

In addition to the limitations noted above, there were also a number of regrets associated with the process. The first was with the mailing of the survey. The first focus groups felt the survey should be mailed out to the 705 participants. The weight of the survey made the cost to mail them very expensive. In hindsight it would be cost effective to set up an account with the post office so that postage would be charged only when a survey was returned. In this study I included a pre-stamped envelope with each survey mailed. It cost $846.00 to mail out the survey with a return envelope, and I only had 14 participants mail the survey back. In addition to this cost, there was also a cost of conducting focus groups. At the end of each focus group, an IPod Shuffle was raffled; two focus groups were conducted with the hopes of yielding more participants. Unfortunately, the focus group participation was of low; with only 6 participants.

Another regret was the learning curve needed to use NVivo to the full working potential of the program. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis package that facilitates coding and retrieval procedures that identifies themes, patterns, and relationships within qualitative data. I participated in an online training of the system in January. However, I did not start my research until June, making the NVivo training ineffective because so much time had passed without using the program. Also, due to the acceleration of the Ed.D program, it was quicker to analyze the data in SPSS and EXCEL. However, I did use the NVivo to store all my notes from the initial meetings with the focus group participants that created the survey. I also included the narratives from current students; I
wanted to capture their stories and feelings about the process. I would have liked to spend more time reviewing data in NVivo, and using the system to its’ full capacity.

**Recommendations**

There are several actions based on the study that are currently in motion and have been discussed in Chapters 4 and in this chapter. For future research, I would recommend comparing cost and ethnic breakdown at the other 16 schools of social work in New York. It would be interesting to know if the other programs have the same concerns about the lack of diversity in their full-time programs. I also believe a systematic study is needed of the alternatives for delivering graduate social work programs in formats that would support a more diverse student population.

It would also be interesting to follow-up on student affordability across schools at our top competitors (Columbia, New York University, Fordham). How are students in these expensive programs able to afford tuition and living expensive, when their tuition rates are much higher than SSSW? It would also be ideal to develop a list of best practices in admissions from the other schools for social work in New York City. What works, what doesn’t work, and what would they change if money and politics were not an issue?

**Conclusion**

The findings from this study have already become a catalyst for change. This change is not based on speculation or excuses but on knowledge developed from previous applicants and current students who were willing to share their experiences and stories. For the researcher, it was a true test in collaboration, cooperation and patience. The amount of data and information received was overwhelming at times and difficult to
process. Once the notices from IRB (Appendix E) were approved and posted, minority students currently in the program started to approach me with questions regarding the research. Each person wanted to tell me his or her story in reference to their admission or enrollment experience. In addition to the students, there were faculty who were equally supportive of the research.

This participatory action research project identified three targeted areas in which to focus; communication, financial assistance, and flexibility. It also offered suggestions for improvement based on identified weaknesses and shortcomings in the admissions process.

While many changes have already been made in the admissions process that were based on the results of this research, a major outcome of the study will be the development of a proposal that will become the blueprint for standard operating procedures for the admissions department. The blueprint will be organized under the umbrella of access and customer services. In addition to creating the action plan for the department, an assessment tool will be created to assess student satisfaction with the admissions process. The assessment tool could give us the opportunity to track customer service satisfaction with the department throughout the year, thereby allowing us to continuously adjust and make improvements as the year progresses. This research thus has the opportunity to change the way enrollment services operates and change policy and processes in the future. Roman (2007) reminds us that:

Admission officers play a role in setting the stage for student retention by advising, counseling and teaching students early on about not only all the
opportunities that higher education in general and their institution in particular
offer, but the requirements that go with capitalizing on those opportunities (p. 22).

The admissions process is ever changing, and is constantly in motion. Our goal is
to ensure that we provide information to assist potential students to make informed
decisions, and provide them with the best customer services possible. In moving the
department forward, I want each potential applicant to feel satisfied with the interaction
and knowledge they received from the department.
References


Appendix A

Graduate Admission Application Form
School of Social Work - AS Program
Faculty Advisor and Field Instructor Core Competencies Form

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT

Please provide your evaluator with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, so that the recommendation can be returned directly to you and included in your application packet. Applicants who waive their right of access must submit recommendations in an envelope that is sealed and signed by the evaluator.

Name of Applicant ______________________ Phone:_________________ Date _____________

I hereby waive my right of access, under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, to this letter or recommendation in connection with my application for graduate admission to Hunter College.

<table>
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<th>Signature of Applicant</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Note that signing this statement is optional. Under law, refusal to sign the statement cannot be used against you in the admission process.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE EVALUATOR

Please rate the level of skill in under each category by checking the box next to Highly Skilled, Skilled, Above Average Level of Skill, Not Very Skilled, Not at all Skilled or No Option to Observe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Professional Identity</th>
<th>Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Advocate for client access to the services of social work</td>
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| Additional Comments     | |

|                         | 2. Practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual |
|                         | professional development                                               |
|                         | (Select one only)                                                      |
|                         | □ Highly Skilled                                                       |
|                         | □ Skilled                                                              |
|                         | □ Average Level of Skill                                               |
|                         | □ Not very Skilled                                                     |
|                         | □ Not at all Skilled                                                   |
|                         | □ No Option to Observe                                                 |

| Additional Comments     | |

99
3. **Attend to professional roles and boundaries**  
   (Select one only)  
   - [ ] Highly Skilled  
   - [ ] Skilled  
   - [ ] Average Level of Skill  
   - [ ] Not very Skilled  
   - [ ] Not at all Skilled  
   - [ ] No Option to Observe  
   - Additional Comments

4. **Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication**  
   (Select one only)  
   - [ ] Highly Skilled  
   - [ ] Skilled  
   - [ ] Average Level of Skill  
   - [ ] Not very Skilled  
   - [ ] Not at all Skilled  
   - [ ] No Option to Observe  
   - Additional Comments

5. **Engage in life long learning**  
   (Select one only)  
   - [ ] Highly Skilled  
   - [ ] Skilled  
   - [ ] Average Level of Skill  
   - [ ] Not very Skilled  
   - [ ] Not at all Skilled  
   - [ ] No Option to Observe  
   - Additional Comments

6. **Use supervision and consultation**  
   (Select one only)  
   - [ ] Highly Skilled  
   - [ ] Skilled  
   - [ ] Average Level of Skill  
   - [ ] Not very Skilled  
   - [ ] Not at all Skilled  
   - [ ] No Option to Observe  
   - Additional Comments

**B. Ethics-Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice**

7. **Recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice**  
   (Select one only)  
   - [ ] Highly Skilled  
   - [ ] Skilled  
   - [ ] Average Level of Skill  
   - [ ] Not very Skilled  
   - [ ] Not at all Skilled  
   - [ ] No Option to Observe  
   - Additional Comments

8. **Make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of

9. Tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts
   (Select one only)
   - Highly Skilled
   - Skilled
   - Average Level of Skill
   - Not very Skilled
   - Not at all Skilled
   - No Option to Observe

10. Apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions
    (Select one only)
    - Highly Skilled
    - Skilled
    - Average Level of Skill
    - Not very Skilled
    - Not at all Skilled
    - No Option to Observe

C. Critical Thinking - Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments

11. Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom
    (Select one only)
    - Highly Skilled
    - Skilled
    - Average Level of Skill
    - Not very Skilled
    - Not at all Skilled
    - No Option to Observe

12. Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation
    (Select one only)
    - Highly Skilled
    - Skilled
    - Average Level of Skill
    - Not very Skilled
    - Not at all Skilled
    - No Option to Observe
13. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues
   (Select one only)
   - Highly Skilled
   - Skilled
   - Average Level of Skill
   - Not very Skilled
   - Not at all Skilled
   - No Option to Observe

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<tr>
<th>D. Diversity - Engage diversity and difference in practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>14. Recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power</td>
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   (Select one only)
   - Highly Skilled
   - Skilled
   - Average Level of Skill
   - Not very Skilled
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   - No Option to Observe

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<tr>
<th>15. Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups</th>
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| (Select one only)
   - Highly Skilled
   - Skilled
   - Average Level of Skill
   - Not very Skilled
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   - No Option to Observe

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<tr>
<th>16. Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences</th>
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| (Select one only)
   - Highly Skilled
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   - Average Level of Skill
   - Not very Skilled
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<th>17. View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants</th>
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| (Select one only)
   - Highly Skilled
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### E. Human Rights and Social Justice - Advocate for reduction in the disparities of access for services, resources, social capital

18. Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination

(Select one only)
- Highly Skilled
- Skilled
- Average Level of Skill
- Not very Skilled
- Not at all Skilled
- No Option to Observe

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19. Advocate for human rights and social and economic justice

(Select one only)
- Highly Skilled
- Skilled
- Average Level of Skill
- Not very Skilled
- Not at all Skilled
- No Option to Observe

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20. Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice

(Select one only)
- Highly Skilled
- Skilled
- Average Level of Skill
- Not very Skilled
- Not at all Skilled
- No Option to Observe

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### F. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research

21. Use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry

(Select one only)
- Highly Skilled
- Skilled
- Average Level of Skill
- Not very Skilled
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22. Use research evidence to inform practice

(Select one only)
- Highly Skilled
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- Average Level of Skill
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<td><strong>G. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.</strong></td>
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<td>23. Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation</td>
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<td>24. Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment</td>
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<td><strong>H. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services</strong></td>
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<td>25. Analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being</td>
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<td>26. Collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action</td>
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<td><strong>I. Respond to contexts that shape practice</strong></td>
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<td>27. Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services</td>
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| | Average Level of Skill  
| Not very Skilled  
| Not at all Skilled  
| No Option to Observe  
| 28. Provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services  
| (Select one only)  
| Highly Skilled  
| Skilled  
| Average Level of Skill  
| Not very Skilled  
| Not at all Skilled  
| No Option to Observe  
| J. Engagement - Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities  
| 29. Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities  
| (Select one only)  
| Highly Skilled  
| Skilled  
| Average Level of Skill  
| Not very Skilled  
| Not at all Skilled  
| No Option to Observe  
| 30. Use empathy and other interpersonal skills  
| (Select one only)  
| Highly Skilled  
| Skilled  
| Average Level of Skill  
| Not very Skilled  
| Not at all Skilled  
| No Option to Observe  
| 31. Develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes  
| (Select one only)  
| Highly Skilled  
| Skilled  
| Average Level of Skill  
| Not very Skilled  
| Not at all Skilled  
| No Option to Observe  

K. Assessment
<table>
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<th>32. Collect, organize, and interpret client data** (Select one only)</th>
<th>**Additional Comments</th>
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<th>33. Assess client strengths and limitations** (Select one only)</th>
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<tr>
<th>34. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives** (Select one only)</th>
<th>**Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Highly Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Average Level of Skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Not very Skilled</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Not at all Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ No Option to Observe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>35. Select appropriate intervention strategies** (Select one only)</th>
<th>**Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Highly Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Average Level of Skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Not very Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Not at all Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ No Option to Observe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L. Intervention Apply strategies at relevant levels of intervention in order to effect change</th>
<th>**Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>36. Initiate actions to achieve organizational goals** (Select one only)</th>
<th>**Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Highly Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Skilled</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Average Level of Skill</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Not very Skilled</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Not at all Skilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ No Option to Observe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>37. Implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities** (Select one only)</th>
<th>**Additional Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### 38. Help clients resolve problems
(Select one only)
- [ ] Highly Skilled
- [ ] Skilled
- [ ] Average Level of Skill
- [ ] Not very Skilled
- [ ] Not at all Skilled
- [ ] No Option to Observe

### 39. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients
(Select one only)
- [ ] Highly Skilled
- [ ] Skilled
- [ ] Average Level of Skill
- [ ] Not very Skilled
- [ ] Not at all Skilled
- [ ] No Option to Observe

### 40. Facilitate transitions and ending
(Select one only)
- [ ] Highly Skilled
- [ ] Skilled
- [ ] Average Level of Skill
- [ ] Not very Skilled
- [ ] Not at all Skilled
- [ ] No Option to Observe

### M. Evaluation

#### 41. Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions
(Select one only)
- [ ] Highly Skilled
- [ ] Skilled
- [ ] Average Level of Skill
- [ ] Not very Skilled
- [ ] Not at all Skilled
- [ ] No Option to Observe

Additional Comments
Other Comments:

Please Print

Name __________________________  Title / Position ____________________________

Agency ______________________________________________________________________

Telephone & Email

_____________________________________________________________________________

Signature ______________________________________  Date ________________________
Appendix B

OYR Agency Executive Sponsorship Form

Please provide your evaluator with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, so that the form can be returned directly to you and included in your application packet.

Name of Applicant ____________________________ Phone: __________________ Date __________

Current Number of Hours Worked Per Week: __________

I One Year Residence Agreement:
Acceptance into the OYR One-Year Residence Program is contingent upon agency sponsorship. The signing of this form will represent the agency’s commitment to cooperate with the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College in developing and implementing an appropriate field placement plan and to provide some flexibility of scheduling for applicants to attend classes.

• The agency can offer sponsorship________

• The agency cannot offer sponsorship_______

II Practice Method Declaration:
The development of advanced competence is required in one or more of the following social work practice methods: individuals and family, group work, management and community organization and planning. OYR students choose their methods based on their employment responsibilities. Please indicate from the list below which method best describes the majority of your employee’s current work responsibilities. Selecting a method indicates the agency’s capacity to support the student/employee in this method during their field placement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical Practice with Individual and Families</th>
<th>Group Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case management/service coordination</td>
<td>Development and facilitation of group interventions. Provide group oriented interventions/ works with groups of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual, pair and/or family interventions____</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Management and Leadership</th>
<th>Community Organization , Planning and Development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory responsibilities</td>
<td>Community based activities and outreachCommunity/neighborhood advocacy and collaboration.________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planner, analyst, manager______</td>
<td>_________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name ____________________________ Title / Position ____________________________
Agency Name__________________________ Agency Contract #:__________________________
(Grant apps only)
Telephone and Email Address ____________________________

Signature ____________________________ Date __________
ONE YEAR RESIDENCY PROGRAM

The OYR Program has provided increased access to professional career ladders for many qualified baccalaureate level agency workers since its inception in 1971. The program is open to applicants who meet admission requirements and have a minimum of two years of full time employment in a human service organization or carry human services responsibilities in their job. The applicant must provide supervisory or direct care of individuals, families, groups, or communities. Admission is available to either an OYR program with admission in the fall (24 to 30 months in duration), or an 18-24 month accelerated program with admission in the spring for student who are applying for the Clinical Practice with Individuals and Families method.

Course requirements are the same as for our Two Year Program. Courses are available at a variety of times to accommodate the working student. In this model, the student’s field work requirements are met at the agency of employment. As a result the student is able to remain employed full time while completing the 60 credits required for the MSW degree.

Practicum Requirements: The School will collaborate with the agency to create a mutually acceptable plan for the field practicum. The field work experience should provide opportunities for enhanced learning in a distinct social work role consistent with the student’s course of study. Field Instruction must be provided by a qualified field instructor who is not the student’s current supervisor. If an onsite field instructor is not available, the School is willing to work with agencies to arrange field instruction. The field instructor must be a licensed master social worker (LMSW) or clinical social worker (LCSW) or its equivalent if not in New York State. Completion of the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) is also a requirement (the SIFI may be taken concurrently with the student’s practicum).
Hello Silberman Social Work Student!

Thank you for your interest and desire to be a part of my doctoral study. The purpose of this research study is to examine what barriers prevent minority students from starting, and completing an application as well as enrolling in the school after being accepted. Your input will help validate the content of the survey and future interview questions for a final focus group. In this judgment-qualification, you will independently review the survey instrument and interview questions, and rate each item of relevance according to the content domain. Please review consent form letter and sign. Please evaluate each of the following survey and interview questions. Use the checklist below for each question to expedite your assessment—a key is provided. Rate each question 1, 2, 3, or 4 based on your knowledge and experience. Select only one. Comments are optional in the space provided for each survey question. You do not need to answer the questions of the survey.

4= VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT
3= RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION
2= UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: Rewrite
1= NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire

Some of the questions may appear to be out of order, however, the "skip" option has been turned off in order for you to review each question. Thank you for sharing your time and expertise. I sincerely appreciate your assistance. I look forward to sharing the results of this study with you.

Sincerely,

Nireata Seals
Doctoral Candidate at St. John Fisher College
nireata_seals@yahoo.com 212 396-7625
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Hunter College School of Social Work
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT
Project Title:
The Admissions Process: An evaluation of access for minority students at the Silberman School of Social Work.
CUNY UI - Institutional Review Board Approval Date: January 30, 2012 Expiration Date: January 29, 2013 Coordinator Initials:

Principal Investigator:
Nireata Seals
Director of Enrollment Management
Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College
2180 Third Avenue, Room: 719
New York, New York, 10035
212.396.7625

Site where study is to be conducted:
The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, 2180 Third Avenue, New York, New York. 10035.

Introduction/Purpose:
You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is conducted under the direction of Nireata Seals, Director of Enrollment Management, at the Silberman School of Social Work. The purpose of this research study is to examine what barriers prevent minority students from starting, and completing an application as well as enrolling in the school after being accepted. The results of this study may assist the School of Social Work in developing policy and practices that assist in increasing minority student representation at the school. The research might also help in the development of an admissions model used by other schools of social work and graduate programs. Audio recordings will be used for this phase of the study.

Procedures:
This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. We ask that you review each question and verify its usefulness. Possible Discomforts and Risks: Your participation in this survey may involve discussing your feelings and experience with the admissions process. While participating in this survey you may encounter anxiety and stress associated with your experience. To minimize these risks you can withdraw from the study at anytime. If you are upset as a result of this study you should contact the Wellness Center at Hunter College (212) 772.4882 or CUNY Work/Life Program (1.800.833.8707).

Benefits: There are no direct benefits. However, participating in the study may increase general knowledge of the admission process and recruitment.

Alternatives: There will be no alternates for this group.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can decide at any time not to complete the survey.

Financial Considerations: Participation in this study will involve no cost to the subject.
Confidentiality:
The data obtained from you will be collected via written documentation. The collected data will be accessible to Dr. Jacqueline Mondros, Dean at the School of Social Work and the PI. The researcher will protect your confidentiality by coding the data, securely storing the data. The collected data will be stored in a locked storage box in my office or locked box in my home. Any documents kept in paper format, on a computer, will be stored on a USB storage unit and kept in a locked box. The consent form will be kept separate from data to ensure confidentiality.

Contact Questions/Persons:
If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Nireata Seals at 212 396-7625. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the, the Hunter College HRPP Office at 212.650.3053 or IRB@hunter.cuny.edu.

Statement of Consent:
"I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntary agree to participate in this study. By signing this form I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise be entitled. I will be given a copy of this statement."

☐ Yes, I would like to participate in reviewing and validating this survey (1)
☐ No thank you. (2)

Answer If CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK Hunter College School of Social... No thank you. Is Selected
Sorry you are not interested in participating in this survey. Thank you and have a great day.

Q1 Gender
☐ Male (1)
☐ Female (2)
☐ Transgender (3)
☐ Transgender History (4)

Q1b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 1
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4)
☐ Comments (5) ____________________
Q2 Ethnicity
- African American (Black Non-Hispanic) (1)
- American Indian/ Native American (2)
- Asian American (3)
- Chicano/Mexican American (4)
- Latino/Hispanic (5)
- Pacific Islander (6)
- Multiple Race/Ethnicity (7)
- White (Non-Hispanic) (8)
- Other (9)

Q2b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 2
- 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
- 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
- 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
- 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4)
- Comments (5)

Q3 What is your current status?
- Single (1)
- Married (2)
- Divorced (3)
- Separated (4)
- Widowed (5)
- Living w/ partner (6)

Q3b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 3
- 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
- 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
- 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
- 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4)
- Comments (5)

Q4 How many children do you have (including step-children)?
- 0 (1)
- 1 (2)
- 2 (3)
- 3 (4)
- 4 (5)
- 5 (6)
- 6 (7)
- 7 (8)
- 8 (9)
- 9 (10)
Q4b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 4
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q5 Was child care a barrier to you attending Hunter College School of Social Work?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q5b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 5
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q6 Have you attended classes on a non-matriculated bases?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q6b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 6
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q7 Did taking a non-matriculated class lead you to applying for one of our programs.
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q7b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 7
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q8 Which Program or Pathway were you interested in?
☐ Two-Year Program (1)
☐ One-Year Residence Program (2)
☐ Advanced Standing Program (3)
☐ Dual Degree/Bank Street (4)
☐ Accelerated Program (5)
Q8b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 8
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q9 Did you participate in a Hunter College School of Social Work "Information Session" or College Fair with the School?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q9b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 9
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q10 Did you find the Information Session helpful?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ Don't Remember (2)
☐ No (3)

Q10b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 10
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q11 What attracted you to the Hunter College School of Social Work (now known as Silberman School of Social Work)?

Q11b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 11
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________
Q12 Are you more or less likely to attend the School based on it's current location at 119th Street as compared to 79th street?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>very likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Somewhat Unlikely</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>119 Street</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 12
- 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
- 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
- 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
- 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) _________________
- Comments (5) _________________

Q13 Has the name change affected your decision to apply?
- Yes (1) _________________
- No (2)

Q13b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 13
- 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
- 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
- 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
- 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) _________________
- Comments (5) _________________

Q14 Are you the first in your family to go to graduate school?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q14b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 14
- 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
- 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
- 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
- 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) _________________
- Comments (5) _________________

Q15 Are you currently working?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q15b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 15
- 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
- 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
- 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
- 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) _________________
- Comments (5) _________________
Q16 Are you currently working in the field of social work?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q16b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 16
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q17 Where are you currently working?

Q17b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 17
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q18 Are you currently attending or did you attend another school of social work?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q18a If yes, which school did you attend?

Q18b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 18
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q19 If you did not attend another school of social work, in what activities were you engaged?

Q19b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 19
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q20 Did you submit your application by the February 5th. deadline?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q20a If not, what were the reasons why you were not able to submit your application by the deadline?
Q20b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 20
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q21 Did you complete your application (meaning you submitted all supporting documentation)?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q21b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 21
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q22 Were there any reasons that prevented you from completing the admissions process at the School of Social Work?

Q22b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 22
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q23 Were there parts of the application you found challenging?
☐ Supplying Transcripts (1)
☐ Recommendations (2)
☐ Agency Agreement Form (3)
☐ Statement of Purpose (4)
☐ Interview Process (5)
☐ Application Fee (6)
☐ Other supporting documentation (7)
☐ Other (8) ____________________

Q23b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 23
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q24 What was your overall impression of the application process?
Q24b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 24
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q25 Are there any factors that would have helped you complete your application with the School of Social Work?

Q25b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 25
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q26 Please check all that apply. The following reasons why you did not attend the Hunter College School of Social Work at Hunter College.
☐ Tuition (1)
☐ Financial (2)
☐ Application Fee (3)
☐ Commitment Deposit (4)
☐ Scholarship (5)
☐ Scholarship from another school (6)
☐ Other (7)

Q26a Please explain Other, from above.

Q26b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 26
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q27 Were you accepted to Hunter College School of Social Work?
☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q27b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 27
☐ 4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐ 3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐ 2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐ 1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐ Comments (5) ____________________

Q28 What was the final status of your application.
☐ Accepted (1)
☐ Incomplete (2)
☐ Withdrew (3)

Q28a Thank you for your participation in this survey.
Q28b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 28
☐  4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐  3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐  2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐  1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐  Comments (5) ____________________

Q29 If you were accepted to Hunter College School of Social Work at Hunter College and chose not to attend, please indicate reason below.

Q29b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 29
☐  4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐  3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐  2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐  1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐  Comments (5) ____________________

Q30 Would you be interested in participating in a focus group to discuss the admission process at the Hunter College School of Social Work further?
❖  Yes (1)
❖  No (2)

Q30b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 30
☐  4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐  3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐  2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐  1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐  Comments (5) ____________________

Q31 You indicated that you would be interested in participating in a focus group to further discuss the recruitment and admissions process at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. If you are selected to participate in the focus group, you could be eligible to win an IPOD Shuffle. Please supply your contact information below (name, email address and phone number). Thank you.

Q31b COMMENTS FOR QUESTION 31
☐  4=VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT (1)
☐  3=RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION (2)
☐  2=UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: rewrite (3)
☐  1=NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire (4) ____________________
☐  Comments (5) ____________________

Q32 Your overall comments about the survey.
Appendix D

School of Social Work Admissions Survey
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK Hunter College School of Social Work
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT
Project Title: The Admissions Process: An evaluation of access for minority students at the Silberman School of Social Work.

CUNY UI - Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: January 30, 2012 Expiration Date: January 29, 2013
Coordinator Initials:
Principal Investigator (PI):
   Nireata Seals, Director of Enrollment Management
   Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College
   2180 Third Avenue, Room: 719
   New York, New York, 10035
   212.396.7625
   nseals@hunter.cuny.edu or ns01135@sjfc.edu

Site where study is to be conducted:
The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, 2180 Third Avenue, New York, New York. 10035.

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is conducted under the direction of Nireata Seals, Director of Enrollment Management, at the Silberman School of Social Work. The purpose of this research study is to examine what barriers prevent minority students from starting, and completing an application as well as enrolling in the school after being accepted. The results of this study may assist the School of Social Work in developing policy and practices that assist in increasing minority student representation at the school. The research might also help in the development of an admissions model that could be used by other schools of social work and graduate programs. This survey is being sent to about 1000 applicants that were not able to complete their application for admissions.

Procedures: This survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. We ask that you answer as many of the questions as possible.

Possible Discomforts and Risks: Your participation in this survey may involve discussing your feelings and experience with the admissions process. While participating in this survey, you may encounter anxiety and stress associated with your experience. To minimize these risks you can withdraw from the study at any time. If you are upset as a result of this study, you should contact the Wellness Center at Hunter College (212) 772.4882 or CUNY Work/Life Program (1.800.833.8707). We are making every effort to ensure that no one knows what your responses were on the survey.

Qualtrics is a well-known company that collects data for online survey research. The researchers have purchased an encrypted version of their product to reduce the risk to subjects that their responses will be viewed by unauthorized persons. However, the study is not being run from a secure http server such as those used to handle credit card transactions, so there is a small
possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized third parties, such as computer hackers. Qualtrics provides a security statement with a promise to protect your data and adhere to industry standards. Data security is very important to us at Qualtrics. Many of our clients demand the highest levels of data security and have tested our system to be sure it meets their standards. In each case, we have surpassed expectations and received high praise from elite companies. Qualtrics has SAS 70 Certification and meets the rigorous privacy standards imposed on health care records by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). All Qualtrics accounts are hidden behind passwords and all data is protected with real-time data replication.

**Benefits:** There are no direct benefits. However, participating in the study may increase general knowledge of the admission process and recruitment.

**Alternatives:** To not participate in this study/focus group session.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can decide at any time not to complete the survey. **Financial Considerations:** Participation in this study will involve no cost to the subject.

**Confidentiality:** The data obtained from you will be collected via written documentation. The collected data will be accessible to Dr. Jacqueline Mondros, Dean at the School of Social Work and the Principal Investigator (PI). The researcher will protect your confidentiality by coding the data and securely storing the data. The collected data will be stored in a locked storage box in the PI's office or locked box in the PI's home. Any documents kept on paper will be converted into an electronic format. All electronic information will be stored on a USB storage device. The consent form will be kept in a separate locked box from data to ensure confidentiality. Original paper documents and the USB storage device will be kept in their appropriate lockboxes for 3 years.

**Contact Questions/Persons:** If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Nireata Seals at 212 396-7625. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Hunter College HRPP Office at 212.650.3053 or hrpp@hunter.cuny.edu.

**Statement of Consent:** "I have read and understand the above description of this research. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the Principal Investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

By choosing "yes" below, I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise be entitled. I understand that I am free to print this page for my records."

- Yes, I would like to participate in this survey
- No thank you.

**Q3 Gender**
- Male
- Female
- Transgender
Q4 Ethnicity
- African American
- American Indian/ Native American
- Asian American
- Black (Non-Hispanic)
- Chicano/Mexican American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Pacific Islander
- Multiple Race/Ethnicity
- White (Non-Hispanic)
- Other ____________________

Q5 What is your current status?
- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Living w/ partner

Q6 How many children do you have (including step-children)?
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

Q7 Was child care a barrier to you attending Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College?
- Yes
- No

Q8 Have you attended classes at Silberman on a non-matriculated basis?
- Yes
- No

Q9 Did taking a non-matriculated class lead you to applying to one of our graduate-level social work programs?
- Yes
- No
Q10 Which Program or Pathway were you interested in?
- Two-Year Program
- One-Year Residence Program
- Advanced Standing Program
- Dual Degree/Bank Street
- Accelerated Program
- Do not remember

Q11 Did you participate in a Silberman "Information Session" or meet with a Student Ambassador or member of the Admission's staff?
- Yes
- No
- Comment ____________________

Q12 Did you find the Information Session helpful?
- Very Helpful
- Somewhat Helpful
- Neutral
- Somewhat Not Helpful
- Not Helpful at All

Q13 What attracted you to the Silberman School of Social Work?

Q15 Has the name change affected your decision to apply?
- Yes, please explain. ____________________
- No

Q14 How likely are you to attend Silberman based on its current location at 119th Street as compared to 79th Street?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>119 Street Location</th>
<th>Less Likely</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>More Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q16 Are you the first in your family to apply to graduate school?
- Yes
- No

Q17 Are you currently employed?
- Yes
- No

Q18 Are you currently working in the field of social work?
- Yes
- No

Q19 Are you currently attending or did you attend another school of social work?
- Yes
- No

Q20 If yes, which school did you attend?
Q21 If you did not attend another school of social work, in what other social work activities were you engaged in during the past year.

Q22 Did you submit your application by the February 5th deadline?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
   ☐ Do not remember

Q23 If not, what were the reasons that you were not able to submit your application by the deadline?

Q24 Did you complete your application (meaning you submitted all supporting documentation)?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

Q25 Were there reasons that prevented you from completing the admissions process?
   ☐ Yes, please explain. ____________________
   ☐ No

Q26 Did you find the application challenging? If so which parts.
   ☐ Supplying Transcripts
   ☐ Recommendations
   ☐ Agency Agreement Form
   ☐ Statement of Purpose
   ☐ Interview Process
   ☐ Application Fee
   ☐ Other supporting documentation
   ☐ Other ____________________
   ☐ I did not find it challenging

Q28 Is there anything you can think of that would have helped you complete the application process?

Q30 What was the final status of your application?
   ☐ Accepted
   ☐ Incomplete
   ☐ Withdrew
   ☐ Other ____________________

Q27 Were you accepted to the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No
Q28 Why did you choose not to attend the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College? Please check all that apply.

☐ Application Fee
☐ Commitment Deposit
☐ Lack of Financial Support
☐ Lack of Scholarship
☐ Location
☐ Scholarship from another school
☐ Tuition
☐ Other ____________________

Q29 If you were accepted to Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College and chose not to attend, please indicate reason below.

Q30 What was your overall impression of the application process?

Q31 Would you be interested in participating in a focus group to further discuss the admission process at the Silberman School of Social Work?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Q32 You indicated that you would be interested in participating in a focus group to further discuss the recruitment and admissions process at the Silberman School of Social Work. If you are selected to participate in the focus group, you could be eligible to win an IPOD Shuffle.

Please email me at ns01135@sjfc.edu or nseals@hunter.cuny.edu or call me at 212 396-7625 with your contact information.
January 27, 2012

Nireata Seals
9 Lorenz Ave
New Rochelle, NY 10801

Dear Ms. Seals:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, “The Admissions Process: An evaluation of access at Silberman School of Social Work.”

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at 385-5262 or by e-mail to emerges@sjfc.edu, or if unable to reach me, please contact the IRB Administrator, Jamie Mosca, at 385-8318, e-mail jmosca@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen M. Merges, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

EMjlm

Copy: OAA IRB
IRB: Approve expedited.doc
Human Research Protections Program
Hunter College (CUNY) HRPP Office

DATE: January 31, 2012
TO: Nireata Seals, MA
FROM: Hunter College (CUNY) HRPP Office
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 30, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: January 26, 2013
RISK LEVEL: Minimal Risk
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University Integrated IRB has APPROVED your research. This approval is based on an appropriate risk-benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance of the participant’s understanding, followed by a signed consent form(s). Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Stipulations:

- Modification/Amendment requests must be submitted for Phases 2 and 3 of the study, along with the recruitment materials and informed consent documents pertaining to each. As of now, approval for Phase 1 has been granted.

Please note that any modifications/changes to the approved materials must be approved by this IRB prior to implementation. Please use the appropriate modification submission form for this request.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS (UPS) involving risks to subjects or others, NON-COMPLIANCE issues, and SUBJECT COMPLAINTS must be reported promptly to this office. All sponsor reporting requirements must also be followed. Please use the appropriate submission form for this report.

This research must receive continuing review and final IRB approval before the expiration date. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for the IRB to conduct its review and obtain final IRB approval by that expiration date. Please use the appropriate continuation...
DATE: May 31, 2012

TO: Ninata Seals, MA
FROM: Hunter College (CUNY) HRPP Office

PROJECT TITLE: [297040-2] The Admission Process: An evaluation of access for minority students at the Silberman School of Social Work

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: May 30, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: January 29, 2013
RISK LEVEL: Minimal Risk
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University Integrated IRB has APPROVED your research. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance of the participant’s understanding, followed by a signed consent form(s). Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any modifications/changes to the approved materials must be approved by this IRB prior to implementation. Please use the appropriate modification submission form for this request.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS (UPS) involving risks to subjects or others, NON-COMPLIANCE issues, and SUBJECT COMPLAINTS must be reported promptly to this office. All sponsor reporting requirements must also be followed. Please use the appropriate submission form for this report.

This research must receive continuing review and final IRB approval before the expiration date of January 29, 2013. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for the IRB to conduct its review and obtain final IRB approval by that expiration date. Please use the appropriate continuation submission forms for this procedure. PLEASE NOTE: The regulations do not allow for any grace period or extension of approvals.

If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Leon at (212) 650-3053 or sleon@hunter.cuny.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.