

A Multigenerational Mentored Project Approach to Achieving Social Work Gerontology Competencies

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Introduction: Some MSW programs require a “culminating experience” which may take the form of an integrative project. The goal is to integrate foundation and concentration knowledge, competencies, and skills. How does one define the project and assess outcomes? To answer these questions, a multigenerational, mentored approach will be described and results of a content analysis of student projects presented.

Methods: This project is a collaboration with a California Senior Legislator (CSL) who served as the mentor/task supervisor for three MSW students at CSU Bakersfield. After choosing an older adult related topic, students met with the faculty supervisor once a week and with the CSL collaborator monthly. Students conducted extensive legislative research and in depth interviews with key stakeholders guided by the CSL mentor. The main project outcome is an integrated research report. Topics to date include mental health service access, long term care (LTC) insurance, and the LTC ombudsman program. A content analysis that identified the competencies and skills demonstrated in the projects was conducted. The CalSWEC’s advanced Aging Initiative competencies were used for the analysis.

Results/Conclusions: Not surprisingly, the highest percentage of mastery found in the reports was in the social policy domain. Lowest levels were in the advanced practice domain. The worth of this project lies more in the relationship of the student to the CSL mentor and the instilling of a lifelong commitment to advocacy to an older adult population. Use of this type of project as an integrative culminating experience may be well suited to MSW programs with a macro practice focus.

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