

A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS OF ADMISSION
IN A BACCALAUREATE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Social work programs shape the profession through their admission practices. Therefore, admission, as the entry point to social work programs, serves a highly important role in social work education. Though frequently addressed in the literature, admission and gatekeeping procedures continue to be significant problems of practice for social work educators. The author completed a stakeholder analysis of a baccalaureate social work program to seek stakeholder perspectives on admission practices by conducting interviews and focus groups with 53 participants representing seven stakeholder groups. Results suggest that external stakeholders such as field instructors, social service employers, and adjunct faculty members are not widely represented in the BSW admission process. Overwhelmingly, participants favored selective admission policies for social work programs. Four categories of stakeholder expectations for social work admission were found: gatekeeping for professional suitability, a process of self-reflection for students, an indicator of educational quality for the social work program, and progression of students' professional socialization as a social worker. Findings provide insights to inform faculty as they oversee social work admission. By framing admission as a function of students' professional socialization as well as an extension of the educational process, faculty may use admission more purposefully to further students' professional development. In addition, including external stakeholders in the admission process can promote greater diversity of reviewers and practice areas represented.