## INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE

The Social Work Student Research Community (SWSRC) at Wayne State University (WSU) faces challenges with engaging social work (SW) students in research. SWSRC has investigated barriers to engagement through a literature review & on-going participant evaluation, focusing on SW students’ hesitancies and confidence with research, in order to improve engagement.

Literature suggests that SW students are anxious to engage in research (Blakemore & Howard, 2015; Maschi, Probst, & Bradley, 2009). Studies show that students are hesitant or fear engaging because they are not confident with applying the research process to SW practice (Maschi, Probst, & Rombn, 2009; Morgenshtern, Freymond, Agyapong, & Greeson, 2011).

## METHODS & TASKS

### SWSRC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
- Logic model
- Workshop planning, promotion, & administration

### SWSRC EVALUATION PLANNING

**Developed by:** Kendra Wells  
**Primary questions:** Why are SW students participating (or not) in research? How can we increase engagement?  
**Targets:** Confidence, Attitudes, Barriers, & Hesitancies toward research  
**Monthly evaluations at workshops**  
**Respondents:** SWSRC participants in attendance  
**Administration:** In-person (Sept. 2017-April 2018)  
**Measured:** Attendance, Confidence, & Knowledge of research  
**Tool:** Open- and close-ended survey questions

**Year-end evaluations of Social Work students**  
**Respondents:** Social Work students  
**Administration:** Online; Snowball distribution; Targeted distribution to SWSRC online group (2013, 2014, 2018); BSW, MSW, PhD, & non-degree students  
**Measured:** Attendance, Confidence, Barriers, Hesitancies, Experience, & Importance to practice  
**Tool:** Open- and close-ended survey questions (Developed by: Melissa Schmidt & Dr. Joanne Smith-Darden)

## RESULTS

In 2018, students were asked about their previous experiences with research. Students who had research experience outside of the required curriculum, reported being more confident on 7/10 measures.

> [I'm] not confident in my ability to understand research enough to learn & practice it

When “ Experienced” students were asked how their engagement had impacted their learning, 8/9 responded positively

> I felt more confident & it helped with my overall learning & comprehension

**FIGURES**

**SWSRC ENGAGEMENT 2017-18**

- Average of 4 attendees per session
- 23 unique participants
- 169 online group members (Canvas)
- 5 SPSS tutorials
- 4 hands-on workshops
- SPSS tutorials had greatest attendance
- Most hands-on workshops had the greatest attendance
- Average of 22 attendees per session

In 2013, 2014, & 2018, students reported confidence in their ability to perform in the following research areas (N=290):

- Literature search 82%
- Hypothesis 73%
- Technology 71%
- Measurement 71%
- Design 60%
- Literature review 66%
- Analysis 50%
- Technology 71%
- Hypothesis 73%
- Literature review 66%
- Measurement 51%
- Design 60%

*Confidence was measured from 0-10: “Confident” was considered to be a response of 7+

Why are you hesitant to engage in research? (N=58, multiple responses per individual)

- Don’t know where to start 68%
- Am unsure of how to complete the research process 46%
- Don’t see it as applicable to practice 23%
- Unaware of opportunities 18%
- “Other” responses [N=18]  
  - Lack of confidence
  - Lack of knowledge
  - Lack of interest

45% (26/58) of students said that schedule or time constraints were a barrier to participation

*This was the largest response category

**CONCLUSIONS**

Based on findings from the 2013, 2014, & 2018 year-end surveys, monthly SWSRC surveys, & literature review, recommendations can be made to increase research’s engagement of social work students:

- Incorporate active research opportunities into curriculum
- Provide experience-based learning opportunities both in and outside of the classroom
- Give students more opportunities to present research findings

SWSRC has utilized some of these strategies in their extracurricular activities. Next steps should be to increase marketing of extracurricular research activities so that students are aware of opportunities and can schedule accordingly.

Additionally, students should be given more engagement opportunities in the classroom so that they can build knowledge & confidence, possibly making them more likely to engage in the extracurriculars.