

Graduate Connections Summer 2008

Western Michigan University, College of Health & Human Services
School of Social Work, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5354



Welcome to Graduate Connections!

the newsletter for School of Social Work Graduates

con·nec·tion (kə-'nek-shən) : the act of connecting; the state of being connected; a means of communication; a political, social, or professional relationship (Merriam Webster)

In May of 2008, after a very long gestation period, a new organization for graduates of the School of Social Work (SSW) was birthed. Several graduates of the program met to discuss developing an organization to meet the needs of graduates of the School of Social Work.

The group focused on being able to connect on a regular basis with other graduates for social purposes, networking purposes, educational purposes, and to foster a continuing sense of connection to the School of Social Work.



what's happening at the SSW,

One of the first things the group requested was a newsletter. Graduates would like a forum in which to learn about

what's happening with their colleagues, and what's happening in social work education and theory.

As such, we present *Graduate Connections*, which is the name of our newsletter and of our new graduate organization.

Please feel free to contribute what you would like to see highlighted here and take time to go online to http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/sw/alumni_update.htm to update us on where you are and what you are doing as a SSW graduate.

We look forward to making connections with other graduates, forming new relationships, restoring former relationships, and spending time with other social workers. We also plan to speak to the entering students at orientation in August, and to provide mentoring for students in the coming semesters.

Our next meeting is on July 15, 2008, at 7 p.m. at the Col-

lege of Health & Human Services. All are welcome and are encouraged to join us as we plan our first social event for the fall. To find out more about the organization or to RSVP, contact me, Melinda McCormick, Class of 2005, at 269-387-3158 or at melinda.m.mccormick@wmich.edu.

As part of its commitment to SSW graduates, the school has appointed me Coordinator of Alumni Relations. I look forward to working with you in the coming months to make this organization what you'd like it to be. In the fall, we are planning a reading and discussion group meeting for graduates. If you would like to suggest an article for discussion, please let me know.

We are working on an alumni page for the School's website. We hope to share job postings, event announcements, and other pertinent information for graduates. We'll let you know as soon as we have our page up and running, and we look forward to your contributions.

Gary Mathews, Ph.D.

ation, after undergoing a lengthy reaccreditation process.

The School is completing its second year of continuing education offerings. **Melinda McCormick, M.S.W.**, **Ronnie Tyson, M.S.W.**, and an active advisory board are usually presenting two continuing education opportunities per month. The response from the community has been

From the Desk of the Interim Director...



Social Work is continuing to thrive in spite of the Michigan economy, a large number of com-

peting programs, and the retirement of many important faculty members. My leadership as interim director began in July of 2006, when **Dr. Earlie Washington** was promoted to become Dean of the College of Health and Human Services.

Our program has received renewal of our accreditation from the Council of Social Work Edu-

Volume 1, Issue 1
Summer 2008

Inside this issue:

<i>More from the Interim Director</i>	2
<i>Social Work Licensure in Michigan</i>	3
<i>Hooding and Pinning Ceremony</i>	3
<i>Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative</i>	4

Special points of interest:

- *Culture and Race in Human Service Delivery continuing education event, July 25, 2008*
- *Continuing Education webpage at http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/sw/graduate/continuing_ed.htm*
- *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare celebrates 35 years in print*
- *Alumni update link on the SSW webpage*
- *Social Work Online Store coming soon!*



Don Cooney is running for Congress.

Run, Don. Run.

See Don run.

Culture and Race in Human Service Delivery

is the title of the July 25, 2008 continuing education event.

Dr. John Lee of Michigan State University, will offer his interactive presentation in the Motion Analysis Lab of the College of Health & Human Services from 9 a.m. to Noon. This experiential event comes highly recommended. Sign up to reserve your space soon!

From the Desk of the Interim Director (continued)...

Gary Mathews, Ph.D.

wonderful and we are happy to be of service to all of you who need to participate in continuing education for licensing purposes.

The undergraduate program is thriving. **Dr. Linda Reeser** is coordinating the undergraduate program. We are offering field trips to exotic lands such as Chicago and Detroit; the undergraduate student organization, Eta Eta Sigma, is very busy and received rave reviews from our site team. Our Hooding ceremony has always been open to undergraduates, but beginning this year, it has become the Hooding (for graduate students) and Pinning (for undergraduates) ceremony.

Two previously part-time positions have been expanded to full-time. **Mary Ellen Sartoris, M.S.W.**, is a member of the faculty located in Grand Rapids. One of her major roles is field coordination in the Grand Rapids region. **Melinda McCormick, M.S.W.**, is doing assessment tasks, is assistant editor of the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, and is alumni coordinator for the School of Social Work. Both are doing remarkably well and add immeasurably to the effectiveness of the School.

Our School is still actively involved in social action and social justice initiatives.

- **Dr. Don Cooney** is running for congress and is a long-serving Kalamazoo City Commissioner.
- The Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is a university-wide program started by **Dr. Yvonne Unrau** of our School. WMU will be providing scholarships to thirty-eight to forty

students who have aged out of foster care beginning in the Fall of 2008. There will be financial, intellectual, and emotional support provided for these students, and we expect that this will serve as a model for the whole country. (See back page for more details.)

- **Dr. Karen VanDeusen** is involved in an interdisciplinary project having to do with suicide prevention and suicide prevention education. This project focuses on both the campus community and the wider community and involves staff from many regional agencies.
- **Dr. Jim Henry** is still leading an interdisciplinary effort at meeting the assessment and training needs of students and staff through his child trauma assessment center (CTAC).
- Space does not permit a full exposition of our efforts, but we are all continuing to meet the mission of the SSW, which in part is to pursue social and economic justice and personal well-being for all people.

We are actively involved in scholarship and publication as well. **Dr. Robin McKinney** regularly publishes and presents at national conferences with students, providing mentorship as well as scholarship. **Drs. Linda Reeser** and **Susan Weinger** are presenting a paper in South Africa this summer, as are **Dr. Don Cooney** and student **Ms. Danielle Brown**.

Dr. Richard Grinnell is the current occupant of the Clair and Clarice Platt Jones/Helen Frays

Endowed Chair of Social Work Research. Rick is the author of the best selling social work research text in the world. It is currently in its 9th edition. He also coauthored the first statistics book for social workers in 1987; the first practicum book for social work students in 1992; the first program evaluation book for social workers in 1994; the first qualitative research text for social workers in 1994; and the first e-book on research methodology for social workers, which will be available soon.

The search for a permanent director of the school continues, after this past year's search ended without offering the position to any of the applicants. The school will find an acceptable candidate to assume the helm in the summer of 2009. The School of Social Work thanks all of those field instructors and members of the community who are participating in the search process.

To conclude, the School of Social Work is thriving. Our bid for reaccreditation has had a positive outcome. Our continuing education program is a success. The undergraduate program is participating as equals in the life of the school. Our faculty is not only walking the walk but also talking the talk. We invite you to stop in and say hello to us anytime.

The School of Social Work Offers Continuing Education

Last year, at the request of area alumni, the School of Social Work started researching the possibility of offering continuing education events for area professionals. Graduates of the SSW were unhappy having to travel across the state and pay high fees to obtain the educational credits they needed to maintain their social work licenses. As such, they turned to their Alma Mater and requested assistance.

A committee of interested faculty and staff began looking into requirements of the Michigan Continuing Education Collaborative and started the process of forming a Continuing Education Advisory Board. This board continues to be active and meets on a monthly basis to provide input and leadership to the continuing education efforts of the school.

The board is comprised of some SSW graduates, some field instructors, and other interested community professionals who want to contribute to the School's efforts.

The board has worked to set fees at a reasonable rate to encourage participation and make trainings accessible for social workers.

So far this year, we've had nine training events. We have events scheduled for July, September, and October, and we hope to add more. The School's goal is to offer two events per month, offering pain management and ethics events in both the spring and the fall.

This effort has been a boon to the community and has been great for bringing area professionals into the school to offer training events in their

areas of expertise.

If you know of a great presenter, or are interested in sharing your own expertise with your colleagues, contact Melinda McCormick at melinda.mccormick@wmich.edu.

To have Melinda add your name to her e-mail distribution list, e-mail her with your request. Melinda sends e-mails with information on events and reminders of registration deadlines on a regular basis.

To view our calendar of events or download flyers for upcoming events, go to http://www.wmich.edu/hhs/sw/graduate/continuing_ed.htm



This bronze medallion, a gift to the School from the Class of 2005, was recently featured in the Annual Report of the Council on Social Work Education. The SSW had the medallion made into a table which graces the entrance to the school.

Photo by Helen Beck

Beginning this year, our Hooding Ceremony has become the Hooding and Pinning Ceremony.

Hooding and Pinning Ceremony

After years of having the Hooding Ceremony for graduates of the School of Social Work, the Hooding Ceremony has gotten a new name and identity.

Over the years, many students have mistakenly thought that the Hooding Ceremony was only for Master of Social Work graduates. This year, the school decided to change that.

This year, the ceremony officially became the Hooding and Pinning ceremony, and Bachelor of Social Work

graduates received a bronze pin. Like with the Master's graduates, the Bachelor's graduates requested professors or instructors to pin them as part of the ceremony.

The leadership in the SSW is hopeful that making this change will help the bachelor level students know that they are an important part of the ceremony and the life of the School.

Nancy McFadden, SSW graduate and director of admissions and student services, worked to design a pin that



would be attractive and would be a worthy keepsake for students.

The actual pin is one inch in diameter.

Students strike a pose in one of Dr. Barb Barton's courses.

Photo by Helen Beck



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Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative

In April 2007 Western Michigan University joined more than twenty other Michigan colleges and universities at the Foster Care – Higher Education Summit, co-sponsored by the Michigan Campus Compact and the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the meeting was to share information and begin post-secondary educational planning for youth formerly in foster care in Michigan who have aged out of the system. Planning for the WMU Foster Youth & Higher Education Initiative began in the months following the initial summit meeting, but accelerated during the fall, 2007 semester after the planning team received support from WMU's President, Dr. John Dunn, to move forward with planning efforts.

The overall goal of the WMU Foster Youth & Higher Education Initiative is to increase opportunities for foster youth to pursue higher education and to

provide supports that promote success and well-being throughout the undergraduate experience at WMU. The initiative aims to create a community of scholars among WMU students who "aged out" of the foster care system. More than providing these students with an undergraduate education, we are developing a strategy to help former foster youth transition into adulthood through the experience of higher education.

The Foster Youth & Higher Education Initiative is a comprehensive effort that involves multiple partnerships across departments and units within our campus community, and between WMU and other community constituents, such as child welfare agencies and local colleges. The initiative has three major components that include student outreach and recruitment, student recruitment, and student career planning.

The Helen Beck Endowment Fund

In a ceremony in the SSW on June 19, Miss Helen Beck was presented with a very special award from the BSW Class of 2008. In honor of all of the help and wisdom Helen has offered students as the "face of the SSW," the students created an endowment fund in her name. The students also presented Helen with a special plaque, thanking her for being a "guiding light" for them as they go through the program. The ceremony was well-attended by students, faculty, and staff, and Miss Beck was honored by the students' generosity.

*When we have details on how to contribute to the **Helen Beck Endowment Fund**, we'll share them with you.*

Congratulations, Helen, and thank you for all you have done for all of us as we've gone through the program!

SSW Graduates in the News



Thon (William) Chol, a PP&A student, 2008 graduate, and member of the WMU Foster Youth & Higher Education Initiative's student advisory group, has been selected to participate in The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's (CCAI) Foster Youth Internship (FYI) Program.

This program is a competitive, highly esteemed Congressional Internship for young adults who

were in U.S. foster care at the time of their eighteenth birthday or who were adopted after their fourteenth birthday from the U.S. foster care system. The 2008 program will place 16 academically successful college students in the Washington, D.C. offices of Members of Congress.

Thon is currently participating in the internship program by working in the Washington, D.C. office of Senator Debbie Stabenow.

Thon was featured in the Grand Rapids Press and the Kalamazoo Gazette in late April. To view the article online, go to http://blog.mlive.com/grpress/2008/04/lost_boy_of_sudan_earns_master.html

Congratulations, Thon!