FROM THE DEAN

Since the founding of our Institute of Gerontology in 1979 as a center of research and training, GSSW has been a leader in shaping the social work response to our country’s rapidly aging demographic and the urgent need for practitioners with gerontology expertise. In this issue of GSSW Magazine, several of our faculty members, alumni and students shine a light on our cutting-edge approaches to pedagogy and research, as we prepare our students to meet the needs of our elders and their caregivers.

We are also excited about the potential of GSSW’s growing partnership with the University of Denver’s new Knobel Center for the Study of Aging and the opportunities it offers to participate in interdisciplinary gerontological research.

As you probably know, the University of Denver is commemorating the 150th anniversary of its founding with a series of academic and social events throughout 2014. It was gratifying to see so many members of the GSSW community at the University’s first Sesquicentennial event, hosted by our school in January. I want to express my sincere gratitude to Clinical Associate Professor Ann Pettila for her outstanding efforts in bringing Russian genocide survivor, Hazan Hasanova, to our school, where his lecture allowed us all to seek effective educational strategies to respond to and help prevent such devastating atrocities across the world. Click here to visit GSSW’s homepage for links to additional Sesquicentennial events and to upcoming events here at our school.

I want to congratulate all of the distinguished GSSW graduates who were honored at the Colorado Social Work Month celebration on March 6. You’ll find their names and photos in the Alumni News section of this magazine.

GSSW increasingly relies upon email and our e-newsletters to keep our alumni, donors and friends updated about our school. To ensure that these communications continue to reach you, click here be sure to provide us with your current email address.

Thank you for your interest in our school.

Sincerely,

James Herbert Williams, PhD, MSW
Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair

This and all past issues of our magazine are online. Click here to view all issues online. You can also scan this barcode to read GSSW Magazine on your smartphone or tablet computer.

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GSSW Hosts
Inaugural Sesquicentennial Event

GSSW was honored to host the first official event of the University of Denver’s 2014 Sesquicentennial year. Hasyan Hasanova, Cipitor and interpreter of Bosnian’s Srebrenica Potocari Cemetery and Memorial Chapel, presented a lecture on January 29, entitled “Surviving the Srebrenica Genocide.” One of the 1995 genocide’s survivors, Hasanova illustrated his powerful first-person account of the tragedy with photos and maps.

Chancellor Robert Coombe joined Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams in welcoming the audience of nearly 300 guests to the Boettcher Foundation Community Room to capacity. In addition to describing his own harrowing escape and devastating personal losses, Hasanova’s lecture sought to provoke discussion of America’s educational and civic duty in the midst of worldwide atrocities like the Bosnian genocide.

Hasanova’s lecture was followed by a reception featuring traditional Bosnian fare. The event was funded in part, through DU’s Sesquicentennial Provost Fund.

Following the assault on Srebrenica by Bosnian Serb forces in 1995, Hasanova and several family members joined thousands of other men and boys on the 100-kilometer “Death March” to the free territory of Tuca. Only a fraction of the men survived the six-day walk; Hasanova’s father, twin brother and uncle were killed along the way.

Despite the wealth of media reports and other information available at the time, the world community remained mostly indifferent to the Bosnian genocide. The U.S. government under both Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton initially chose isolationist policies, citing the lack of U.S. interests at stake in the conflict.

This was Hasanova’s first visit to the United States, arranged largely through the efforts of Clinical Associate Professor Ann Pettila, GSSW’s Director of Field Education and Director of International Service Learning Bosnia and Herzegovina (ISL BiH), DU’s oldest service learning program. Each summer, Hasanova meets with ISL BiH students who travel to Bosnia with Pettila, and with students enrolled in her MSW course, “The Social Work Response in Post-War Bosnia.”
“Rise Up!” was held on the evening of March 14 at the Denver Indian Center, marking the fifth year for this community-led event that attracts more than 300 participants annually. Rise Up! featured onsite rapid HIV testing, food and live entertainment by Chicana poet Jessica Helen Lopez and award-winning singer Radilla Cody, a Navajo model and anti-domestic violence activist. The event was timed to honor National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (March 10) and National HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (March 21). In addition to GSSW, the event’s co-sponsors included Cafe Cultura, the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center, Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights, Les Servicios de la Raza, Youth HIV Advocacy Coalition (a program of Children’s Hospital Colorado), Sisters of Color United for Education, Latinos Integrating Sexuality Teaching Others Safe Sex and Branching Seeds of Resistance.

GSSW Hosts NASW Colorado Chapter Workshops

The Colorado Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers kicked off its 2014 Workshop Series on February 29 with a presentation by Associate Professor Stacey Freedenthal, PhD, LCSW, entitled “Using the New DSM in Practice: Challenges and Changes.” All of the workshops in the series are being held at GSSW. Participants earn Continuing Education Credits (CECs) and Professional Development Hours (PDHs) that count toward the requirements for Colorado social work licensure renewal.

Freedenthal’s workshop addressed significant changes in the new version, released last May of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5). Her presentation provided an overview of the changes from DSM IV which was released nearly 20 years ago. She also discussed potential challenges that providers may encounter as they navigate the new diagnostic manual.

The NASW/CO workshop series continued on March 12 with “Trauma and the Body: The Theory and Practice of Sensorimotor Psychotherapy,” a presentation by Kerikin Minton. PhD, a founding trainer of Colorado’s Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute. Minton discussed how and why to use the body and somatic experience while working with clients who have suffered from trauma.

“Creating Cultural Competence:” a workshop presented on April 2 by human service administrative consultant Phyllis Dodson Cegla. UDMSW focused on the benefits of diversity and cultural competency in human service organizations. Among the topics Cegla addressed were relationships between tribal human service organizations and neighboring organizations.

REGISTER NOW for the fourth and final workshop in the NASW-CO series: “The Wonder of Girls: Understanding the Nature, Nurture, and Culture of Girls,” to be held in the Boettcher Foundation Community Room of Craig Hall, 2148 South High Street in Denver, on Wednesday, April 23, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Presenters will be best-selling author Michael Gurian, a marriage and family counselor at Providence House, Denver; Berkheiser, a professor in counseling and educational psychology at Indiana University. Entitled “Let’s Not Wait: Research Driven Approaches for Reducing Racial Disparities in School Discipline,” the lecture was co-sponsored by Denver Public Schools and Padres y Jóvenes Unidos. Denver-based organization that advocates for educational excellence, racial justice for youth, immigrant rights and quality healthcare for all.

Racial disparities in the types and frequency of school discipline are “enduring and expanding,” Skiba noted, with the largest increase in school suspensions occurring among black students, particularly males, between 1973 and 2010. Multiple studies have shown that the reasons for school suspensions are highly subjective, he said, and the effects of race remain even when poverty is taken out of the equation. Yet Skiba sees Denver Public Schools as being “on the cutting edge” in reducing racial disparities in school discipline and noted that other cities are starting to join this effort.

Skiba is director of the Equity Project, a research consortium offering evidence-based information to educators and policymakers on equity in special education and school discipline. He has worked with schools across the country disseminated numerous federal and state research grants, and published extensively in the areas of school violence, school discipline, classroom management and equity in education.

“Discipline disparities are the footprints of our past,” Skiba said in concluding his talk. “It’s time that we implement measures to erase those footprints from the sand.”

Click here to register.
In the coming years, few other demographic shifts will be as impactful as the growth of our aging population. Along with many other nations across the world, the United States is facing an enormous growth in the number of older adults, in part because people are living longer, healthier lives. In Colorado, for example, 155 people turn 65 every day and, by 2040, almost 20 percent of Coloradans will be age 65 or older.

Social workers are needed to help re-envision how every societal institution responds to this demographic imperative and its impact on work, retirement, education, health care and families. GSSW is committed to finding creative practice approaches and preparing students to be leaders in this growing field of practice.

“Although I am not working primarily with older adults right now, many of my clients are over 65,” says Segio Aguilar (MSW ’12), a substance use disorder specialist and case manager with the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program in Los Angeles. “The program provides rental assistance for homeless veterans, along with case management and clinical services.

That is an exciting time to become a geriatric social worker,” says concentration MSW student Andrew Steward. “The need has never been greater, and in my time at GSSW, I have been challenged to expand my understanding of the increasing need for aging services from multiple levels of intervention. Due to my field practicum experience with Kaiser Permanente Geropsychiatry Services, I am confident in my ability to provide an empathic response to patients and their families, as well as professional referrals to community resources.”

Social workers have a long history of working with older adults and their families to promote independence, quality of life and wellbeing. Our core value that respects the dignity and worth of people of all ages continues to guide our holistic and strengths-based approach to aging. Social workers in aging is not a disease, pathology or a problem. Aging is a developmental stage of life that is socially influenced, builds from all prior experiences in one’s life and is full of diversity. Later life can be filled with meaning, purpose and vitality despite the challenges of health changes and loss.

“Aging is a universal circumstance which will eventually touch all of us,” explains concentration MSW student Jennifer Kuntz. “I have been able to see myself in the lives of those I serve. I feel a compassion and respect for the clients I work with, and I know they are teaching me as much as I am able to help them.”

More gerontological social workers—those professionals who are trained in the field of aging—are needed to ensure that the positive experiences of aging are shared by all older adults, regardless of finances, health status, access to resources and privilege. Already, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that 70,000 gerontological social workers will be needed nationwide by 2020. Furthermore, a 2006 survey by the National Association of Social Workers demonstrated that 75 percent of licensed social workers work with older adults in some capacity, regardless of whether gerontology is their chosen specialization or whether they have any prior training in the field of aging.

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There are many examples of the ways gerontological social workers re-envision our social institutions. Social workers play an integral role in new movements for proactive aging; aging-friendly communities and comprehensive health and wellness programs. They also work with advocacy groups for historically underserved populations, like Colorado’s Latino Age Wave and the nationwide SAGE Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders network.

For more than 50 years, GSSW’s Institute of Gerontology and its former director, Professor Emerita Eileen Cox, have received recognition for providing leadership in the field of aging. More recent GSSW initiatives include expanded community-engaged research and the 2006 creation of the PROGRESS Program, with its unique intersectorial field internship model. See p. 7-8.

GSSW’s new MSW curriculum includes an Aging Services and Policy concentration that prepares students to practice across the continuum of services with skills in clinical interventions, care management, family and group work, program and policy development, advocacy and administration. We have developed new courses on intergenerational justice, aging policy, brief family intervention strategies, care management and resources to promote community living. Because these courses also may be taken as electives by students in other MSW concentrations, we have the ability to impart gerontological skills and values to students planning to enter any field of social work practice.

“I look forward to applying the theoretical knowledge I will gain from my concentration to my clinical practice with the aging population and their families,” says PROGRESS student Bhavna Kangri-Sullivan, who has selected the Health and Wellness concentration and is completing an internship at St. Anselm Hospice.

Opportunities also exist for students in the Aging Services and Policy concentration to broaden their expertise through one of GSSW’s three certificate programs: animal-assisted social work, couples and family therapy, and social work with Latinos/Latinas.

Throughout our new Aging Services and Policy concentration, we emphasize applied and community-engaged learning activities. Examples include:

• Writing opinion editorials, developing fact sheets and policy briefs and preparing testimonials for policy advocacy

• Role-playing and critiquing standardized assessments about physical functioning, social isolation, mental health, cognitive impairments and caregiving needs

• Role-playing and preparing trainings on clinical interventions designed for older adults and their families

• Identifying and visiting the variety of community resources for older adults

Thanks to the extensive efforts of our faculty and the field education teams, GSSW students interested in gerontological social work have a wealth of internship options offering both clinical and community social work experiences. Settings vary widely from hospitals and hospices to outpatient clinics, psychiatric settings, disease-specific service agencies related to dementia and stroke, community-based social service agencies, housing programs, the Veterans Administration, policy and program administration (including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging), and programs focused on wellness and productive aging.

GSSW also continues to offer opportunities related to gerontology in its teaching- and research-focused PhD program. Recent doctoral research has examined informal kinship care, relationships between companion animals and older adults, online social support and communication among older adults, caregiving for chronically ill older adults, social work interventions with incarcerated older adults, subsidized housing for older refugees, family involvement within assisted living settings, web-based chronic disease self-management among older adults, perceptions of aging-in-place among low-income older adults, and micro social work interventions to overcome disparities among marginalized older adults.

As a member of the GSSW community and a gerontological social worker for close to 15 years, I find this to be an exciting and rewarding time for social work and aging. Each year, when I teach the course on assessment and interventions in aging, I become re-energized about the future prospects for students who are interested in gerontological social work.

Our students share this excitement as well. “Working with older adults allows me to view the world differently and live a better life,” says PROGRESS student Michelle Kato, an intern at the nonprofit continuum-of-care organization, Shalom Care.

We have historically been small, but close, cohorts of students and colleagues, brought together by our passion for working with older adults to improve the meaning, quality of life and opportunity for self-determination as we all age. These cohorts are building our future network of professionals and responding to the demographic imperative of our aging society. We have a lot of work and opportunity ahead of us, and invite others to consider how they can join in our efforts for re-envisioning our social institutions for our longer lives.

Assistant Professor Leslie Hasche focuses on clinical social work practice related to gerontology and mental health. Her research is aimed at improving care for older adults with depression; a crucial need of promoting their independence and quality of life.
Supporting Productive Aging: New Roles for Social Workers

by Assistant Professor Jennifer Greenfield

Bill is a 72-year-old retired teacher. When he retired in 2009, he knew that although he was ending a long career, he wasn’t ready to sit still. In the five years since he left his paid work, Bill has become heavily involved in volunteer work in his community. He serves on a board of advisors at the college where he received his Bachelor’s degree, he is an appointed member of his city’s Planning Commission, and he frequently drives an aging neighbor of advisors at the college where he received his Bachelor’s degree, he is an appointed member of his city’s Planning Commission, and he frequently drives an aging neighbor.

Some older adults volunteer in formal roles through local nonprofit organizations, religious institutions, political groups or other organizations. Others may choose informal roles, such as helping neighbors or serving as a caregiver for a family member or friend. Still others choose paid work—by continuing in their careers past the traditional retirement age, choosing to switch careers (sometimes these are called “encore careers”) or in developing and coordinating these types of programs.

Too often, when the words “older adult” or “senior” are used, they seek out, or find themselves in, productive roles, and experience negative impacts to their health and mental health. Yet those in low-wage industries are far more likely to need to work longer because they lack access to retirement savings programs. Therefore, while productive engagement among older adults can be seen as a “win-win” for older adults and their communities, pressure to continue in these “productive” roles can exacerbate life-long disparities.

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As the number of older adults grows in the coming years, social workers can be instrumental in supporting older adults as they seek out, or find themselves in, productive roles, and in developing programs that engage older adults in service to their communities.

According to many sources, including the Stanford Foundation’s Geriatric Social Work Initiative, social work with older adults and their caregivers is a rapidly growing specialty, and there will continue to be numerous opportunities for employment for those who have specialized training in work with the aging population. In fact, geriatric social work ranks as one of the top 20 careers in terms of growth potential.

Clinical practice settings vary widely from hospitals and hospices to outpatient clinics, psychiatric settings, social service agencies, housing programs and programs focused on wellness. And there are numerous community practice opportunities as well, in program development, advocacy and social policy.

The rapidly increasing need for geriatric social workers was the driving force behind the creation of the Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education (HPPAE), a national initiative that recruits and trains the next generation of MSW social workers specializing in gerontology. Supported by the John A. Hartford Foundation, and developed by the Social Work Leadership Institute at the New York Academy of Medicine, HPPAE currently works with universities and community-based agencies in 33 states to develop educational models that fit local needs.

Nearly 80 percent of HPPAE graduates have gone on to careers in the aging field, and the goal of the program is to fulfill the need for 70,000 “aging savvy” professional social workers by the year 2020.

GSSW’s HPPAE is called PROGRESS (Providing Real Opportunities for Growth-Build Experience in Social Work). It is currently funded in part by a Hartford Foundation grant. PROGRESS started in 2009 as a program for second year and advanced-standing MSW students who are curious about, or committed to, geriatric social work. Twenty-three student scholars graduated in the first three years. Reinstituted in 2011, PROGRESS continues the mission of exposing students to a variety of field experiences, helping to ensure the well-being of older adults and their family members in our community and beyond. By June 2014, there will be 37 PROGRESS alumni, with a likelihood of nearly 70 by 2020.

In addition to a competency-based curriculum, PROGRESS includes an innovative rotational field internship model that allows students to experience a variety of agencies serving older adults. Students spend the majority of their field placement time at their “hub” internship site, and they are supervised by a primary MSW field instructor who is employed at that site. In my role as the PROGRESS coordinator, I work with students to select the other aging service agencies where they complete their required field rotations.

“It is exciting to be surrounded by colleagues that share a passion for geriatric social work and feel connected to an engaged community of learners,” says PROGRESS student Katrina Norris, who’s completing her internship at the Department of Veterans Affairs Denver VA Medical Center.

PROGRESS students also participate in leadership projects, for example, assisting with special aging-focused events and developing our new brochure describing the gerontology-related learning programs at GSSW. Each year, special activities enable PROGRESS students to interact and get to know each other. Cohorts of students have visited a grief center/funeral home and an assisted living residence, and they have invited seniors to Craig Hall to play indoor croquet. All MSW students are welcome to join any of our group activities, including networking and social events.

Community partnerships are a key component of the PROGRESS program. Experienced field instructors in carefully selected field agencies mentor and give practical experience describing the complex of different systems that work together to support older adults.

太喜欢和PRG的很多学生和校友们一起工作，虽然我们都在不同的地方，但是我们总是在一起。
Strong Partnerships Empower GSSW Students: A Field Agency Perspective

by Jennie L. Creasey (GSSW ’97), LCSW, professional senior services coordinator, Jewish Family Service

Jewish Family Service of Colorado Senior Solutions department’s vibrant staff and services thrive because of our many strong community partnerships. Our relationship with the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) is one of those valuable partnerships.

I have a long history with both Jewish Family Service and DU. Backing up a bit, after taking a 16-year life detour, I majored in sociology and minored in women’s studies at the University of Denver and was awarded my BA in 1995. That same year, I was thrilled to start as a student at the Graduate School of Social Work focusing on the field of gerontology. In a class of more than 150 students, there was one other student who shared my passion for working in aging services. For my foundation year field placement, I was assigned to the Seniors Solutions department of Jewish Family Service. Fast forward to today, as an LCSW, I now serve as our department’s professional senior services coordinator and am very proud of my close to 15 years of service to the Senior Solutions department of Jewish Family Service. Recently we surveyed the students we have hosted in our department since 2000. One of the PROGRESS students shared these thoughts: “I entered the field of gerontology upon graduating and have remained in this area of focus. I strongly feel that my internship with the Jewish Family Service Senior Solutions department prepared me extremely well for working with older adults and their families. This internship experience opened my eyes to the value of serving older adults and has an irrevocable impact on both my personal and professional life.”

In 2011, GSSW established PROGRESS as an ongoing program offering and, once again, we were glad to take on the active role. Our PROGRESS student this year, Eric Strother, as students before him, works with some of our most vulnerable, isolated clients who are often facing difficult losses and transitions. Eric makes regular home visits and connects his clients to resources and provides emotional support with warmth and professionalism.

One of my favorite parts of my job is being a field instructor. It is deeply satisfying to see the growth of social work students interested in the field of gerontology as a result of programs such as PROGRESS and departments like ours offering rich field experiences. Over the years, our department has been a strong catalyst for our other agency departments to develop their own internship programs. One of my favorite ways to support this is by being a field instructor. I am deeply thankful to have had the opportunity to work with and mentor these students and look forward to continuing this work in the future.

DU’s Knoebel Center Promotes Research and Training

DU’s new Knoebel Center for the Study of Aging is already helping to identify ways to increase healthy aging. It also supports complementary research and scholarship in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as well as interdisciplinary study with GSSW and the Graduate School of Professional Psychology.

“We expect this to be a center of excellence in the area,” explains Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams, who co-chaired the ideas group for the Knoebel Center. “It will have an impact on the world of aging science, social science and education, where there’s a synergy of knowledge development and training.”

The center supported recent research by Assistant Professor Leslie Hauch and Department of Psychology Associate Professor Anne DePrince on elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. The results of their initial study helped them obtain funding from the National Institute of Justice for their project, “The Impact of a Seminar: Collaborative for Older Adults on Criminal Justice and Victim Outcomes: A Randomized-Control, Longitudinal Design.”

Social Work with Older Adults Brings Joy, Inspiration

Those of us who have chosen to specialize in social work with older adults know that we’re preparing for careers that are not only personally rewarding, but also in increasing high demand. Here’s how two of our graduates are using their gerontology knowledge and skills since earning their MSW degrees.

Laurel Okasaki-Cardos, MSW ’07, LCSW, found a niche for herself through her experience with the PROGRESS program. The internship rotations “changed my life and career in ways I never thought possible,” she says. While she’d formed a close bond with her grandparents over the years, PROGRESS opened these passions into a new career path. She realized that her “old soul” and clinical skills in working with families made her a natural in working in the field of aging. “While I’d always loved older adults, I never fully realized the joy and reward of working with this client population.”

At GSSW, Okasaki-Cardos completed the Animal-Assisted Social Work certificate, discovering the power of animals in the lives of her clients. Her career led her to work for the Alzheimer’s Association, Innovage and the Denver Hospice. Okasaki-Cardos now shares her passion for aging and advocacy with the broader community, serving as a GSSW adjunct faculty member and the community educator for Denver’s Life Quality Institute, which advances the understanding and quality of palliative care.

“There is something inspiring, even spiritual, about listening to a person who has lived a long life tell their story,” says Valerie Cattany, MSW ’98, LCSW. “There is a sort of ‘reflectionary’ tone, sometimes a ‘letting go’ and maybe a forgiving tone to most of the stories I’ve heard.”

Cattany works in foster care before transitioning to the field of aging. She remembers walking with a hospice patient whose goal was to stay independent for as long as possible. “I realized that, if we are lucky enough to grow old, we will have to make tough decisions while all the while longing to stay independent until the last possible moment.”

As an oncology social worker at the Colorado Blood Cancer Institute at Presbyterian St. Luke’s Medical Center, Cattany makes time to hear the stories of her patients. “I get the feeling sometimes that I’m here at just the right moment to capture the words, the emotion, the regret and the joy, things that can be sort of into their place. To have a career that enables me to glimpse the character—maybe even the soul—through the stories of someone sitting in front of me makes me very honored to be a social worker.”
A new MSW course, taught during fall quarter by Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams, gave nine students the opportunity to learn firsthand about issues facing South African citizens and communities. The course was entitled “South Africa—Social Justice/Social Work, Global Learning Through Community and NGO Immersion and Internships.” Adjunct Professor Bruce Guarney, MSW, LCSW, acted as the teaching assistant, and digital instruction specialist Ethan Crawford videotaped much of the trip for a film series he is creating about GSSW’s international courses and internships.

The course was conducted in partnership with Educo Africa, a South African wilderness-based experiential learning organization in Cape Town. In addition to assigned reading and daily reflective learning discussions, students engaged in community immersion activities. Participated in historical community tours and completed four-day service-learning internships with local service providers. There on-campus classes preceded the two-week trip that began on November 21.

“I chose to travel to South Africa in order to gain a global perspective on social work and engage with individuals from various communities,” says concentration student Baby Crouch. “The opportunity to intern with Afrika Tikkun in Cape Town’s Delft Township provided just that. I had the honor of joining a remarkable team of family support workers who revealed to me the true meaning of what community empowerment looks like on the ground.”

Afrika Tikkun is an NGO (non-governmental organization) that provides education, health and social services to children, youth and their families in South African townships. Advanced standing student Aaron Earley says he also benefited from his internship with the organization.

“We joined the agency’s Family Support Team while they conducted home visits to check on their clients,” Earley explains. “We were able to gain a firsthand perspective of the issues families are facing, while also seeing the incredible work being done by NGOs throughout the townships. This experience opened our eyes to the intense hardships, while also providing a sense of hope for the future of South Africa.”

Prior to their internships, the students spent four days with the Educo Africa group in the Great Whitehorse Nature Reserve. The challenges of the wilderness experience helped the participants build trust and laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of South African culture.

“A beautiful space was established in the wilderness in which lessons were learned, and personal aspects of my life,” he says. “While I had a copyright understanding of such issues as extreme poverty, disease and unemployment, this experiential course allowed me to feel the plight of impoverished communities on an emotional level. I was deeply struck by the notion and importance of fundamental, personal connections and relationships.”

Advanced standing student Molly Blaine was similarly moved by what she experienced. “Two months ago, South Africa was only a place on the map, a land far away I couldn’t picture in my head,” she explains. “Today, my heart is full of love and knowledge for the land, social workers and people of South Africa. I was shaken by the number of social problems and social issues that the South African social workers work with on a daily basis. The social workers we observed were compassionate, kindhearted and considerate of all of their clients, unlike anything I have ever seen before.”

Living in the wilderness also gave students valuable time away from modern “conveniences,” so they could fully focus on what they were experiencing. “Before we began our hike, we were required to leave our phones and watches behind,” Earley explains. “Throughout the four days, we were completely disconnected. We were unable to know what time it was, slept without tests and drank from the streams. The purpose of this was to be present—not knowing the time or where we were going, not thinking about the past or the future, but rather to be in the moment.”

The South Africa course had a life-changing emotional impact on Four Corners concentration student Jason St. Mary. “The experience gave me an opportunity to grow in both the professional and personal aspects of my life,” he says. “While I had a copyright understanding of such issues as extreme poverty, disease and unemployment, this experiential course allowed me to feel the plight of impoverished communities on an emotional level. I was deeply struck by the notion and importance of fundamental, personal connections and relationships.”

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The South Africa course had a life-changing emotional impact on Four Corners concentration student Jason St. Mary. “The experience gave me an opportunity to grow in both the professional and personal aspects of my life,” he says. “While I had a copyright understanding of such issues as extreme poverty, disease and unemployment, this experiential course allowed me to feel the plight of impoverished communities on an emotional level. I was deeply struck by the notion and importance of fundamental, personal connections and relationships.”

“I chose to travel to South Africa in order to gain a global perspective on social work and engage with individuals from various communities,” says concentration student Baby Crouch. “The opportunity to intern with Afrika Tikkun in Cape Town’s Delft Township provided just that. I had the honor of joining a remarkable team of family support workers who revealed to me the true meaning of what community empowerment looks like on the ground.”

Afrika Tikkun is an NGO (non-governmental organization) that provides education, health and social services to children, youth and their families in South African townships. Advanced standing student Aaron Earley says he also benefited from his internship with the organization.

“We joined the agency’s Family Support Team while they conducted home visits to check on their clients,” Earley explains. “We were able to gain a firsthand perspective of the issues families are facing, while also seeing the incredible work being done by NGOs throughout the townships. This experience opened our eyes to the intense hardships, while also providing a sense of hope for the future of South Africa.”

Prior to their internships, the students spent four days with the Educo Africa group in the Great Whitehorse Nature Reserve. The challenges of the wilderness experience helped the participants build trust and laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of South African culture.

“A beautiful space was established in the wilderness in which lessons were learned, and personal aspects of my life,” he says. “While I had a copyright understanding of such issues as extreme poverty, disease and unemployment, this experiential course allowed me to feel the plight of impoverished communities on an emotional level. I was deeply struck by the notion and importance of fundamental, personal connections and relationships.”

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Prior to their internships, the students spent four days with the Educo Africa group in the Great Whitehorse Nature Reserve. The challenges of the wilderness experience helped the participants build trust and laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of South African culture.
Growing up, I was one of those children whose heart broke into a million pieces whenever I saw people in pain. I struggled to wrap my mind around why pain was a necessary part of life, as all of the adults around me would constantly suggest. More than that, I never understood why someone would intentionally inflict pain on another human being. It just didn’t make sense to me. Why was all of this violence necessary and furthermore, why was no one doing anything to stop it?

I became particularly passionate about violence against women and children during the 11 years my family cared for foster children. My foster siblings had experienced abuse at the hands of people who were supposed to love and take care of them. All of this violence was happening behind closed doors in my own community, and I had no idea it was occurring. My commitment to do something to address this issue became more intense than ever before. I have spent my life up to this point trying to figure out what I can do to prevent interpersonal violence and support the people who are directly affected by it.

At the end of my foundation year at GSSW, I learned about leadership positions with Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund); that were opening for graduate-level students across the nation. As an international nonprofit organization, Futures Without Violence had launched its new Campus Leadership Program to spur creative, student-led action to enhance curriculum, improve university policy and raise awareness about relationship violence, sexual assault and reproductive coercion with the goal of creating safer campuses and altering violence-tolerant campus cultures.

Having an opportunity to work for an organization like Futures Without Violence is exactly what I had always dreamed of. I was one of almost 50 students from across the country who applied for the leadership positions, and I was thrilled to be among the 12 graduate students selected for the Campus Leadership Program’s inaugural cohort. We came from various disciplines including social work, medicine, anthropology, counseling and public health. Each of us was tasked with improving our college’s awareness levels and responses to violence against women. We created customized plans to challenge campus culture and implement lasting change that could be re-created on other campuses.

In my role as a Campus Leadership Fellow this year, I have developed and implemented curriculum at GSSW, preparing our graduates to be able to effect fully to respond to domestic violence. I have also created educational materials that have been distributed across campus, planned a campus-wide educational event on healthy sexuality, relationships and consent, and distributed across campus, planned a campus-wide educational event on healthy sexuality, relationships and consent, and distributed educational materials to our college’s awareness levels and responses to domestic violence. Mares is completing her concentration year internship at the Farmington Community Based Outpatient Clinic, where eligible veterans receive primary care.

Concentration year MSW student Andrew Steward received the Inspiring Hope Award in Educational Achievement from the National Council for Behavioral Health (NCBHH). The award recognizes individuals who have shown extraordinary tenacity and courage in battling serious mental illness and are living full lives and pursuing their goals. The award will be presented on May 8 at the NCBHH Annual Conference on May 6.

Four Corners MSW student Cathy Mares participated in the Second Annual San Juan County Homeless Stand Down held last October at San Juan College in Farmington, New Mexico. The event provided information, guidance and services designed to help homeless veterans and others regain productive, self-supportive lifestyles. Mares is completing her concentration year internship at the Farmington Community Based Outpatient Clinic, where eligible veterans receive primary care.

The course is designed to give students an understanding of the issues that military families face and how to apply that understanding to clinical interventions with these families. It also examines individual service member’s concerns, spousal/partner relationships and family dynamics surrounding deployment, active duty and returning home permanently or between deployments.

A new Four Corners MSW course, “Understanding and Working with Military Families,” was offered for the first time during winter quarter. The class was taught by U.S. Army/New Mexico Army National Guard Sergeant E-5 Albert Gomez, MSW, 12, himself a Four Corners graduate.

GSW’s Western Colorado MSW Program is now accepting applications from Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates for its one-year advanced standing degree program, set to begin in Glenwood Springs this July. The first cohort of 10 two-year MSW students entered the Western Colorado program in September. The advanced standing students who join the program this summer will complete their degrees in one calendar year and graduate along with the two-year students in June 2015. GSW offers the same advanced standing option to BSW graduates who apply to the on-campus MSW program and to the Four Corners MSW program in Durango, Colorado.

Prospective students with a baccalaureate degree in an academic discipline other than social work may apply in October 2014 for the two-year MSW cohort that will begin the Western Colorado program in September 2015. Operated in partnership with Colorado Mountain College, the innovative Western Colorado program is designed to meet the needs of rural and mountain communities, using an educational model similar to GSW’s highly successful Four Corners program that has operated in Durango since 2002. A Friday evening and Saturday class schedule has been arranged to accommodate the needs of working professionals.

GSW hosted an online webinar for prospective Western Colorado students on March 3. Another group of prospective students attended an on-site information session on March 14. For information about applying to the Western Colorado MSW Program as an advanced standing or two-year student, click here.


The following papers, workshops and posters were presented in November 2013 at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting in Dallas, TX.


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Peer-Reviewed Presentations


Faculty Highlights

Four Faculty Members Named to SSWR Fellows Inaugural Class

Associate Professors Inna Altschul and Stacey Freedenthal, Assistant Professor Kim Bender, and Professor Jeff Jensen, Philip D. and Eleanor G. Winn Professor for Children and Youth at Risk and GSSW’s Associate Dean for Research, were invited to join the inaugural class of Fellows of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR). The honors were announced on January 17 at the SSWR 2014 Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

SSWR Fellows are members who, “by their individual accomplishments, leadership and contribution to SSWR as a scientific society,” have furthered the Society’s mission “to advance, disseminate and translate research that addresses issues of social work practice and policy and promotes a diverse, equitable and just society.” The inaugural SSWR Fellows comprise approximately three percent of the Society’s membership. The Fellows maintain their status as long as they are current members of SSSW.

In February, Dean and Milton Morris Endowed Chair James Herbert Williams (right) attended a conference at the University of Chicago entitled “Social Work and the Affordable Care Act: Maximizing the Professor’s Role in Health Reform.” Other conference cosponsors included:Washington University in St. Louis and University of South Carolina.

Clinical Associate Professor Michael Talamantes has been selected to participate in “ExCEL in Social Work: Excellence in Cancer Education & Leadership—2014,” an intensive educational program for oncology social workers to be held on April 21-22 in Philadelphia, PA. Offered through a collaborative partnership between the City of Hope, the Association of Oncology Social Work and the Association of Pediatric Oncology Social Workers, the training is designed to improve the delivery of psychosocial care for oncology patients. Talamantes, one of nearly 200 applicants to the program, was selected because of his demonstrated leadership in the field.

Appointments and Promotions

GSSW congratulates Walter LaMendola, who was promoted to the rank of Professor Emeritus by the University’s Board of Trustees in January. LaMendola retired from the GSSW faculty in June 2013.

Robin Leake and Julie McCrae were appointed Research Associate Professors effective on January 1. Both continue to hold positions at GSSW’s Butler Institute for Families, in addition to their faculty appointments.

Leake, who serves as Butler’s Director of Research and Evaluation, holds a PhD in Social/Health Psychology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She oversees the design and implementation of all Butler Institute projects, including four Children’s Bureau Grants funded by the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), a division of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Leake also serves as the lead evaluator for the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute and the National Resource Center for Tribes. With more than 15 years of experience in social science research and program and training evaluation, Leake has expertise in research design, selection and development of instruments, data collection, analysis and interpretation, utilization-focused reporting, grant writing, consulting and project management.

A research scientist at the Butler Institute since 2010, McCrae holds a PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has extensive experience in social sciences research and evaluation. Her work has encompassed early childhood development and mental health following contact with child welfare, child welfare training evaluation, and implementation strategies to adopt new practice in child welfare. She has led numerous research projects, including a statewide study of developmental screening in child welfare services, pathways to disproportionality in child welfare, and mental health outcomes of maltreated children following usual care services. Prior to joining the Butler Institute, McCrae was Research Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, where she worked with the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program to develop research capacity in statewide training evaluation and targeted research programs.

Both Leake and McCrae have authored numerous publications and presentations, and they are both members of the California Social Work Education Consortium Training Evaluation Symposium and the Society for Social Work and Research.

Butler Institute Research Analyst Shauna Rienks was appointed as Research Assistant Professor effective on February 1. She joined the Institute in January 2013 and continues to hold her position there.

Rienks’ areas of research expertise include couple and family relationships as they impact development across the lifespan, schools as a context for child and adolescent development, and self and social identity with an emphasis on gender, ethnicity and culture. She earned her MA and PhD from the University of Denver in developmental psychology with a specialization in quantitative methods. Prior to joining Butler, Rienks worked as researcher on a federally-funded randomized controlled trial evaluating an intervention designed to help couples with low income improve communication, problem-solving, coping and parenting skills. Her expertise includes project management, research design, measurement, curriculum development, grant writing, consulting and analyses with complex longitudinal datasets.

Dean James Herbert Williams has appointed Associate Professor Inna Altschul as Director of Program Assessment and Evaluation, effective on June 1. She replaces Associate Professor Marian Bussey, who has held the position since 2010.

Williams has also appointed Associate Professor Michele Hanna as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, effective on July 1. She replaces Associate Professor Jean East, who has held the position since 2010.

Talamantes

Selected for ExCEL Program

Beltrán Runs to Commemorate SAND CREEK

On November 30, 2013, Assistant Professor Ramona Beltrán participated in the 15th Annual Sand Creek Massacre Healing Run, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Colorado’s notorious Sand Creek massacre. The massacre, during which more than 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho (most of them women, children and elderly men) were slaughtered by volunteer troops, took place on November 29, 1864. The annual three-day run covers 180 miles from the site of the massacre on Colorado’s eastern plains to the Colorado State Capitol building in Denver. Beltrán and several other University of Denver faculty members completed the final segment of the event.

A Chicana of Sonoran Yaqui descent, Beltrán is part of a 21-member committee studying DG founder John Evans’ role in the massacre. Other committee members include DG faculty and students from several departments and schools, as well as representatives from the IILF School of Theology and four Native American tribes.

Joining the runners at Denver’s historic Riverside Cemetery on Brighton Blvd. and continuing to the Capitol steps, a Chicana of Sonoran Yaqui descent, Beltrán is part of a 21-member committee studying DG founder John Evans’ role in the massacre. Other committee members include DG faculty and students from several departments and schools, as well as representatives from the IILF School of Theology and four Native American tribes.

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Ellingson Conducts Research in Australia

Clinical Associate Professor Wanda Ellingson, director of GSSW’s Four Corners MSW Program, traveled to Brisbane, Australia, during fall quarter, where she compared the Four Corners Native Peoples curriculum and that of the Australian Catholic University Centre for Indigenous Education and Research. She studied the colonization and assimilation of Australia’s aboriginal peoples, and contrasted their experiences with those of Native Americans in a comparison course. The course will be added to the curriculum of both the Four Corners and on-campus MSW programs. Ellingson’s research was supported by a grant from the University of Denver’s Office of Internationalization.

Tedeschi Discusses Human-Animal Relationships

Clinical Professor Philip Tedeschi, Executive Director of GSSW’s Institute for Human-Animal Connection, was interviewed twice this winter on VoiceAmerica’s national live radio talk show, “The Wild World.” The first broadcast, entitled The Changing Paradigm of Human and Non-Human Relationships, occurred on December 23. The second interview, conducted on February 17, focused on the Colorado LINK Project and the relationship between animal cruelty and human security. Both broadcasts are archived online. Click here to view.

On January 31, Tedeschi was interviewed on KDNO News Channel 13 in Colorado Springs regarding an animal cruelty case, and he is quoted extensively in an online article about his retirement from GSSW. He replaces Patti Elizalde who recently retired. Hunt is Navajo, Choctaw and Taos, and she grew up on the Navajo Reservation in Fort Defiance, AZ. She has lived in Durango since 1992 and has worked in a variety of settings including the mental health center, the health department, and behavioral health and adolescent and adult drug court programs. Hunt earned her MSW from the Four Corners Program in 2006.

The Bridge Project hired Heidi Nelson as its new Development Director in February. Nelson oversees the donor and development process, working closely with Bridge administrative staff, board of directors and Executive Director. Originally from Wisconsin, Nelson has a bachelor’s degree in sociology from the University of Utah. Before joining Bridge, she worked with state-level entities throughout the country, developing assessment models on behalf of ACT, Inc. “Joining a team like the Bridge Project has been a goal of mine for several years,” says Nelson. “There is no better role for me than one in which I can help give educational opportunities to underserved populations.”

Admission Assistant Nick Ota-Wang will attend the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education on April 26, 2014, at Cal Poly Pomona.
Butler Institute Evaluates Literacy Program

Housed within the Graduate School of Social Work for the past 20 years, the Butler Institute works to strengthen programs and systems that serve children and families, through organizational capacity-building, professional development and evaluation.

The institute is leveraging its unique content and methodological expertise to study the role of implementation fidelity on program outcomes. As part of its cross-site evaluation responsibilities, Butler is not only conducting research across all of the funded early language and literacy interventions, but also providing technical assistance to funded programs and their local evaluators on implementation science and evaluation capacity-building.

Each program funded through the Mile High United Way SIF grant is conducting its own impact evaluation using rigorous research designs that will empirically demonstrate the program’s effect on child outcomes. In addition to its cross-site role on this project, Butler also is conducting one of these local SIF program evaluations.

Child data from these evaluations (including demographics, the extent of program exposure and literacy outcomes) are being uploaded into a cross-site database at Butler for impact analyses across all the funded early language and literacy outcomes. Butler Institute for Families is exploring as part of a five-year, cross-site evaluation of Mile High United Way’s Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Early Literacy Initiative. Among the programs funded by the initiative is GSSW’s own Bridge Project, which provides one-on-one and small group tutoring to children in two of the Denver public housing neighborhoods Bridge serves.

Research shows that middle school students are more likely to attend programs that provide them with leadership opportunities, and that students who are critically engaged are more likely to achieve academically in high school and graduate from college. With the assistance of GSSW Assistant Professor Yolanda Anyon and financial support from 2A City and County of Denver Out of School Time funding, the Bridge Project has launched the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning Program (YELL) for its middle school participants.

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Developed by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, the YELL leadership development curriculum includes communication and interpersonal skills, critical reflection and positive involvement in community research and action.

For more information about Butler’s work on the Mile High United Way cross-site evaluation, click here to email Meg Franko. To learn more about the Butler Institute for Families, click here.

Bridge Leadership Program Impacting Kids and Communities

While there are significant risks in the lives of all Bridge Project participants, middle school students tend to display the greatest risk for disengaging from school, becoming a dropout and having poor academic achievement. Now an innovative program, based on positive youth development theory and research, is helping these at-risk students become change agents for their communities and the Bridge Project itself.

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Seven GSSW interns are facilitating two hours of YELL curriculum-based activities weekly at each of the four public housing neighborhoods Bridge serves. Anyon meets with the interns on a weekly basis to plan and appropriately modify lessons from the curriculum, and to troubleshoot any issues and/or challenges the interns are facing. In the coming months, youth in the YELL program will work in groups to identify an issue of concern they want to address, either at Bridge or in their communities. They’ll decide on a research method and way to collect necessary data, develop a plan of action, and ultimately take action to make the change.

At the same time the YELL program is making a positive difference in the lives of at-risk youth, the youth are changing their communities for the better through leadership, action and voice!

A GSSW community outreach initiative, the Bridge Project is designed to break the cycle of poverty by providing educational and career opportunities to children, youth and families in four of Denver’s public housing neighborhoods. Click here to learn more.

Registration is now open. The cost for a foursome is $2,500 and includes golf, breakfast, goodie bag, drinks on the course, luncheon and a special gift you’ve just got to see! For more information about registration or sponsorship, please contact Heidi Nelson, Bridge Project Development Director, at 303-871-2735 or click here to email Heidi.
Dear Alumni and Friends:

The demographics are staggering. By the year 2020, one in six Americans will be age 65 or over. In order to effectively care for older adults, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the need for geriatric social workers to increase by 60,000 to 70,000. Social workers are systems experts, helpers and agents of change. The role geriatric social workers will play in helping family caregivers navigate the often complicated maze of health and mental health networks is becoming increasingly important.

The Graduate School of Social Work is a leader in proactively addressing this rapidly increasing need through the unique curriculum options, faculty expertise, community outreach and cutting-edge research described in this issue of GSSW Magazine. GSSW is committed to increasing scholarship support so that students pursuing the dream of becoming social workers in gerontology and other practice fields can do so with as little debt as possible. Please join us in helping to meet the needs of older adults and their caregivers by supporting the students who will serve them in the years ahead.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Lynda Ricketson
Director of Development and Alumni Giving

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GSSW’s Four Corners MSW program recently received another generous donation from the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation. The foundation established a scholarship fund in 2012 for Native American Four Corners students. The additional funds will be used to support recruitment of additional Native American students, including the filming of a recruitment video later this year.

“It’s the mission of our foundation to support Native Americans in Four Corners states in health and health education, including social work,” explains Dr. Henry Hooper, the foundation’s board president. “It’s so unusual to have a private university like DU offering a program like this, and we also know there’s a major need in the area for professionals who can provide leadership roles, both on- and off-campus. We’ve been so pleased with the way the program has introduced a Native American focus into its classes, and that fits our mission very well.”

As the associate vice president for academic affairs and graduate dean at Northern Arizona University, Hooper was already working with John and Sophie Ottens when they established their foundation in 1998. When both John and Sophie passed away two years later, Hooper became president of what is now the foundation’s four-member board of directors.

“We do site visits before we provide any funding, and we were impressed by the enthusiasm that Wanda (Four Corners Director Wanda Ellingson) and the faculty have for the program,” Hooper says. “The students are so motivated, working full-time and then driving in bad weather over mountain passes to attend classes on weekends. We want to help people stay in the program by providing the financial assistance they really need.”

GSSW salutes Dr. Hooper and the support that the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation provides for Native American students and tribal communities in the Four Corners area.

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Dear Alumni and Friends:

Social workers meet the needs of individuals across the lifespan and across all socio-economic lines—from children and families, to at-risk youth, homeless populations, veterans, communities, cancer survivors and the elderly.

As this issue of GSSW Magazine demonstrates, the need for social workers is growing by 20 percent in the coming decade. As a businessperson, I believe an investment in a trained workforce is a wise one.

My wife Teresa and I believe so much in the power of social work and the training provided by the Graduate School of Social Work that we established the Gary and Trena Youtz Family Foundation Endowed Scholarship so that there will be a perpetual source of support for students pursuing their dream of becoming social workers.

Please join us in making a difference for GSSW students and the many people they will serve during their careers.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Youtz
Chair, Board of Visitors

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Clinical Professor Philip Tedeschi, III, Executive Director of GSSW’s Institute for Human-Animal Connection, accepts a donation check from Robert Hartell, President and Chief Executive Officer of Chuck & Don’s Pet Food Outlet. The donation, which includes funds raised in Colorado Chuck & Don’s stores during its recent “Paw Print Sheltering” campaign, supports a statewide effort to establish pet-friendly family abuse shelters.

Contact Lynda Ricketson
Director of Development and Alumni Giving
303-871-7599 | email

Supporting our Students . . .

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

In 1924, DU completed the on-campus portion of its jubilee Campaign to recognize 60 years of educating students who make a difference in the world. Pledges totalling $165,000 were made by almost 100 percent of students, faculty and employers—a truly impressive participation rate.

Just seven years later, at the height of America’s Great Depression, a coalition of agencies and donors joined forces with the Community Chest and the Denver chapter of the American Association of Social Workers to found the first social work training program in the Rocky Mountain West. It was another remarkable feat, given the severe economic constraints of the time. Today, more than 6,000 GSSW graduates are providing social work leadership across the nation and around the world.

As we celebrate DU’s sesquicentennial, your support for scholarship aid is critical to keeping GSSW’s top-quality graduate education within the financial reach of tomorrow’s social work leaders. Whether you are a first-time or long-time GSSW donor, your generous participation is key to ensuring a promising future for our students, our profession and the clients we serve. Thank you!
Dear Fellow Graduates:  

In early March, it was my great pleasure to see so many of our notable alumni honored at the annual Colorado Social Work Month celebration in Denver. In addition to the three alumni awards bestowed by GSSW, five other alumni were honored by Metropolitan State University of Denver, the Colorado Society for Clinical Social Workers and the Colorado Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Congratulations to all and one:

This is an especially exciting time to be at DU as the University celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding. In January, GSSW was honored to host the first of many 2014 Sesquicentennial events, and it was rewarding to see so many of you at the powerful and moving lecture by Roxann Lowdermilk’s son, Hassan Nasarzadeh. There are many more lectures, social events and special activities planned during the year, so please take a moment to click here to check the Sesquicentennial event calendar. There’s a link to the calendar at the top of this page. I also encourage you to use the power of social media to connect with your classmates and other alumni by clicking on the link to DU’s new Pioneer Network. You can sign onto the network using your LinkedIn account—or, if you don’t already have a LinkedIn account, the Pioneer Network page will show you how to create one.

As always, you’ll find a list of upcoming GSSW events and continuing professional development opportunities on the school’s website. Meanwhile, thanks to everyone who participated in the 2013 Alumni Survey; you’ll find the results on the following page. Please continue to send us your personal and professional news via email, and attach a photo if you’d like. If you don’t have computer access, feel free to drop us a line at the address on the back of this magazine. Either way, we’ll be sure to include your news in the Class Notes section of our next magazine. And please be sure to update your address and email information here.

Sincerely,

Hope Enrico Wisneski (MSW ’00)  
Alumni Association President

The following 2013 GSSW Alumni Awards were presented at the Colorado Social Work Month Celebration held on March 6 at the Courtyard by Marriott Denver Cherry Creek.

GSSW Service Award  
This award is presented to an alumna/us who has contributed to or served the Graduate School of Social Work as a noteworthy and significant fashion, through personal effort and/or financial contribution.

In addition to a long and distinguished social work career in substance abuse, mental health and criminal justice, Yoko Felter, MSW ’81, LCSW, CACIII, has provided countless hours of service to GSSW over the past 25 years. First appointed to MAC (the Minority Advisory Committee) by Dean LeVonne McCummins, Felter continued her service under Dean Emerita Judy Jones, then under Dean Emerita Catherine Alter. (The committee was renamed the Multicultural Commission during Alter’s deanship.) Today, as a member of ACCORD (the Advisory Council on Racial Diversity), Felter plays an active role in helping new faculty members, attending the majority of their colloquium presentations and providing valuable perspectives as the school continues its effort to increase faculty diversity. Felter previously served on GSSW’s Alumni Council, was a member of the 70th and 75th anniversary planning committees, and served on the board of the Denver International Program, a nonprofit agency housed at GSSW for many years. A GSSW donor herself, Felter also participated in a fundraiser telephone for the school.

Felter is the director and owner of the Dry Creek Treatment Center, a Denver-based outpatient alcohol treatment facility, and she has served on numerous statewide and community boards.

Community Service Award  
This award is presented to an alumna/us who has demonstrated significant and continuous volunteer involvement in major community activities and/or charitable causes, above and beyond his/her/her employed position.

Kimberly Gardner MSW ’95, LCSW, LAC, has focused her professional career on advocacy and services for children and families. As lead clinical supervisor at the Intermountain Community Mental Health Center in Helena, Montana, Gardner plans and implements innovative and effective therapeutic school-based programs. Additionally, she serves as board secretary of the Montana Chapter of National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and previously chaired its Ethics Committee. As the current chair of the organization’s Clinical Supervision Task Force, Gardner has taken a leadership role in conducting the first three 20-hour clinical supervisor training courses, enabling the first 120 clinical supervisors to meet the state’s “Qualified Supervisor” criteria. In May 2013, Montana Governor Steve Bullock appointed Gardner to serve on the state’s Board of Social Work Examiners and Professional Counselors through December 2016.

Gardner was nominated for her award by NASW Montana’s director, John Wilkinson (MSW ’72). His nomination reads, in part, “I know our profession and association have and continue to greatly benefit from Kim’s tireless, effective and largely unrecognized dedication, commitment and service to Montana’s social workers.”

Robert L. Hawkins Social Work Achievement Award  
This award is presented to an alumna/us who has demonstrated professional achievement by being named executive director, manager, chairperson of the board, etc., of a social work agency or organization; or by reaching a level of prominence in education, practice or politics, etc. or by receiving national recognition in the field of social work. This award is named in honor of Robert L. Hawkins, MSW ’67, who rose through the ranks at Colorado Psychiatric Institute in Pueblo, eventually becoming the first social worker appointed as its Superintendent. Under Hawkins’ leadership, the Institute became a model psychiatric treatment facility.

In her roles as a GSSW field supervisor and field liaison, Jeanne Orrben, MSW ’78, has worked with at least 100 MSW students over the years. A majority of the students have been interns at GSSW’s Bridge Project, a nonprofit that seeks to break the cycle of poverty by providing educational and career opportunities to children, youth and families in four of Denver’s public housing neighborhoods. Orrben served as the Bridge Project’s Columbine site director from 1997 to 2005; then as Bridge program director from 2005 to 2007. She previously held positions at Denver Catholic Charities, the American Cancer Society, the Courtyard by Marriott Denver Cherry Creek.

Orrben was nominated for her award by the Board of Social Workers, the Colorado Metropolitan Social Workers (CMASW) and its Clinical Social Workers. Orrben was nominated for her award by Bridge Project executive director, Clinical Assistant Professor Molly Calhoun (MSW ’03), whom Orrben supervised during Calhoun’s foundation year internship at Bridge. “The lessons that I learned from Jeanne continue to be the foundation of my work in our community as well as the foundation of what the Bridge Project was built upon,” wrote Calhoun in her nomination. “Jeanne used her experience as an organizer, her faith and her passion for children and communities to quietly and gracefully change the path for hundreds of children and youth who attend the Bridge every day.”

Five other GSSW alumni also received awards at the Colorado Social Work Month Celebration in March.

Please continue to send us your personal and professional news via email, and attach a photo if you’d like. If you don’t have computer access, feel free to drop us a line at the address on the back of this magazine. Either way, we’ll be sure to include your news in the Class Notes section of our next magazine. And please be sure to update your address and email information here.

Sincerely,

Alumni Association President Hope Enrico Wisneski (MSW ’00) and Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Jean Felter (R) congratulate Yoko Felter on receiving the 2013 GSSW Award for her award by NASW Montana’s director, John Wilkinson (MSW ’72). His nomination reads, in part, “I know our profession and association have and continue to greatly benefit from Kim’s tireless, effective and largely unrecognized dedication, commitment and service to Montana’s social workers.”
GSSW’s 2013 Alumni Survey last fall received 739 responses—722 MSW graduates (an 11 percent return rate, close to the national average) and 17 PhD graduates (a 29 percent return rate). We asked not only about demographics, jobs and salaries, but also about the curriculum and fundamental program goals, such as use of evidence-based practice, life-long learning and preparation for practice in a diverse society. Here are a few of the highlights.

**MSW Highlights**

A majority (95 percent) of MSW alumni were working in social work at the time of the survey. Another nine percent were working in other fields. 24 percent were retired and three percent were seeking a job. Many graduates had a job at the time of graduation (50 percent of graduates prior to 2001, and 42 percent since 2002). By six months after graduation, over 40 percent of graduates prior to 2001 were employed, and 88 percent of graduates since 2002. Ninety-seven percent of all MSW graduates had a job within one year. What this means is that while finding a social work job takes longer now than it used to, eventually nearly everyone who seeks a job finds one. Where do our graduates practice? Since fields of practice often overlap, we provided space for both a primary and secondary field of practice. Combining those answers, we find that the largest group of graduates (39 percent) works in mental health, including victim services and domestic violence. Twenty-six percent work in child welfare, 29 percent in substance abuse services, 20 percent in family services and 19 percent in health. Between five percent and 15 percent work in either school social work, aging services, corrections, community planning, developmental disabilities and welfare/TANF services. What are the primary practice frameworks among our alumni? The most commonly chosen framework was empowerment/strengths (36 percent). Other frameworks, in order of frequency: are cognitive/behavioral, family systems, multicultural, psychodynamic, group work and community practice. Because our graduates may have held many positions during their careers, our question about job function allowed multiple answers. So the following percentages add up to more than 100 percent. Seventy-two percent of MSW graduates worked either as a counselor, case manager or therapist. Fifty-eight percent had also worked in administration, management or program development, and 28 percent had worked in community development, advocacy or policy. A large percentage of graduates (55 percent) donate time and effort to volunteers work, over and above their human services jobs. The most common areas of volunteer work were health/mental health advocacy, social justice advocacy, environmental advocacy or church-related work. A majority of alumni (81 percent) felt GSSW had prepared them for multicultural work with diverse clients: “I find that many of the persons I work with have been marginalized in some way,” one graduate wrote. “The awareness-raising that was encouraged in the program has helped me to understand diversity within [these] populations.”

“Diversity was at the heart of both my bachelors and masters programs,” commented another graduate, “and I have facilitated many trainings to staff around diversity.”

As the social work profession has moved towards evidence-based practice, we found a majority of our alumni have been active in keeping up with the evidence. The most common ways to stay current were through seminars and conferences (29 percent), colleagues (23 percent), professional websites (18 percent), online journal articles (16 percent) and books (15 percent). Alumni defined “evidence” very broadly and included learning from the clients themselves what worked and what didn’t work.

Finally, did our MSW graduates feel prepared by their concentration/track courses? Over 77 percent said yes, and for graduates focusing on family systems work, that number was 80 percent. Among the alumni who said they did not feel as well prepared, a number commented that they needed more content from another area of practice—mental health diagnosis for Families Track graduates, for example, or family systems classes for graduates in the High-Risk Youth Track. We think these graduates will be pleased with the new MSW curriculum that GSSW is implementing this year. Students no longer have to commit to either Community/Mental Health or Behavioral Health. The new curriculum also offers room for concentrations, several of which combine clinical and macro practice, such as empowerment/strengths (36 percent). Other frameworks, in order of frequency, are cognitive/behavioral, family systems, multicultural, psychodynamic, group work and community practice. The new structure also made it possible for graduates focusing on family systems work, that number was noticeably increased. The new curriculum also made it possible for graduates focusing on family systems work, that number was noticeably increased. In many cases, the new curriculum also offered room for many more electives, so that students have more access than before to other aspects of practice.

We hope that blurring the strict divisions between clinical and community practice will help our future graduates achieve the kind of professional competence this 1980s graduate described: “Being able to combine clinical and community was very beneficial. I graduated into a combination clinical and community job and had a great deal of increased confidence in my abilities. I moved into administration and had a good foundation for that work.”

**PhD Highlights**

Among the PhD alumni who responded to the survey, six were retired. For those still working, 60 percent had tenure-line or tenured positions, 10 percent had non-tenured academic positions, 10 percent had university administrative positions. and 20 percent were agency or program directors.

PhD alumni have strong presentation and publishing records. 64 percent have presented at national conferences, published a peer-reviewed journal article, or both, and 59 percent have written books or book chapters.

**We Hear You! GSSW Offers CPD to Meet Your Needs**

One of the things we requested from our graduates on the 2013 Alumni Survey was guidance regarding the development of new continuing professional development (CPD) workshops and lectures. Here are some of the most common recommendations we received:

- animal-assisted therapy and interventions
- trauma and trauma-informed care
- gerontology and retirement issues
- dialectical behavioral therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy
- military veterans
- psychopharmacology
- multicultural and racial issues
- school social work
- nonprofit management and leadership
- the new DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)

Compare that list with this sampling of GSSW workshops, lectures and other CPD offerings during 2013-2014, and you’ll see that we’re making a concerted effort to incorporate as much of your feedback as possible.

- “Your Pet and Coworker—The Value of Incorporating Animals in Work with Older Adults and Families” (July 2013)
- “Animals and Human Health Certificate” (offered online; multiple cohorts each year)
- “Transforming Trauma—Research Developments and Methods for Trauma-Informed Animal-Assisted Interventions” (to be held May 7-8, 2014; click here to register now)
- “Trauma-Informed Leadership in Social Work Settings” (July 2013)
- “Estate Your Intentions: A Special Forum on End of Life Issues—Legal, Medical, Ethical and Practical Implications” (March 2013)
- “An Introduction to Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)” (July 2013)
- “Working with Military Families” (June 2013)
- “Introduction to Psychopharmacology for Social Workers” (July 2013)
- “The Challenges of Diversity, Power/Privilege and Leadership in the Workplace and Community” (February 2013)
- “Uncoupling Consultants’/Therapists’ Unconscious Racial Prejudice and Stereotypes in Multicultural Clinical Social Work Practice” (June 2013)
- “Pedagogy of Privilege Conference” (August 2013)
- “Let’s Not Walk: Research-Driven Approaches for Reducing Racial Disparities in School Discipline” (January 2014)
- “How To Work With Difficult People—for those in Leadership Positions” (June 2013)
- “Why Social Workers Make Great Fundraisers: Applying Your Knowledge and Skills to Secure Financial Resources for Your Cause” (March 2014)
- “The DSM 5: Changes and Challenges” (February 2014)

Click here to find an updated list of upcoming events, as well as a link to “License and Continuing Professional Development.”
class notes

In October 2013, Libby Bonta (MSW '67) received the Veritas Award from the University of Colorado Anschutz Center Department of Biomedical Ethics. The award, which was established in 2000, recognizes individuals who have supported the Center’s work in research, research and community outreach. Bonta has served as a facilitator in the department’s ethics course almost from the time the course was developed in 1988.

Robert Carr (MSW '66) sent a letter to GSSW last spring inquiring whether he might have been the second Native American to graduate from the school. He was writing a book at the time and wanted to verify that the information he had was accurate. As reported in the spring 2011 issue of GSSW Magazine, our research indicates that Howard Walkingstick (MSW '40) was the first Native American in the United States to earn an MSW and Ron Lewis (PhD '74) was the first Native American to earn a doctorate in social work.

Carr, who is a member of the Pueblo of Laguna Indian Tribe of New Mexico, was employed by the State of Oklahoma when he began his MSW studies in 1963. He returned in 1965 to complete his second year on a stipend, which means he may well have been the second Native American GSSW graduate. Although we cannot provide absolute proof that that is true, in any case, we take pleasure in acknowledging his noteworthy achievements and congratulating him on the publication of his book last fall. The book may be ordered from All Alumni News.

Laura Nissen (MSW '89, PhD '97). LMSW, CASAC III, was appointed as Dean of the School of Social Work at Portland State University effective on January 6, 2014. A member of the school’s faculty for 14 years, Nissen served as National Program Director for Reclaiming Futures, an initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and aimed at transforming substance abuse treatment in the juvenile justice system across the United States.

Maria C. Hernandez-Peck (PhD '80) was named a 2013 Alumnus Fellow for Social Work by the Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville where she earned her MSW.

A national expert on aging and caregiving, Hernandez-Peck’s primary research interests are family caregiving and resource subsidies of older farmers. She serves as Director of the Center for Studies in Aging at Eastern Washington University School of Social Work from 1983 through 1988. She attended three White House Conferences on Aging, two of them as a governor’s representative, and she was selected to serve on the National Advisory Committee to the Conference in 1981.

Hernandez-Peck’s contributions to the field of aging, and to the social work profession as a whole, have been recognized over the years at local, state and national levels. She was selected as Social Work Educator of the Year by the Washington National Association of Social Workers and Teacher of the Year for the EWU Inland Empire School of Social Work in 1987. She subsequently received awards from Spokane Community Mental Health, the Alcohausm Council of Colorado’s Spokane Employment Retirement System, and the Spokane Gay and Lesbian Community. The State Council on Aging honored Hernandez-Peck with the Excellence in Action Award, and she received the Leadership Award from the Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging. In 2013, she was named Outstanding, Faculty for Excellence in Community Engagement at Eastern Washington University.


Marnie Chamlitni (MSW '95). LCSW, provides animal-assisted therapy in various departments of psychiatric facilities around the Denver metropolitan area. She also provides transition services when the youth are paroled back into the community. “It is a very rewarding job,” says Chamlitni, who earned GSSW’s Certificate in Animal-Assisted Social Work along with her MSW.

Kelly Cunnalia (MSW ’08). LCSW also earned the Animal-Assisted Social Work Certificate during her concentration year. Cunnalia owns and operates The Child and Family Therapy Center of Denver, LLC. She specializes in working with children with life-limiting illnesses. Cunnalai has utilized her AASW Certificate, along with therapy dogs Indiana and Oliver, to provide animal-assisted therapy to many children and families with great success.

In Memoriam

John S. Degenhart (MSW '62) passed away on December 5, 2013, at the Hospice Alliance Hospice House in Hayward, Wisconsin. He was 80. Degenhart met his future wife, Joyce (Carpenter) Degenhart (MSW '60), when they were GSSW classmates, and the couple married six months after they earned their degrees. They moved to Wisconsin in 1966, where John worked at Racine County Human Services. He later worked 20 years for Milwaukee Public Schools, retiring in 1989.

In addition to his wife, Degenhart is survived by a son, two step-granddaughters, a sister, a niece and many cousins. Memorial gifts in Degenhart’s honor may be made to Hospice Alliance, 10220 Prairie Ridge Blvd., Pleasant Prairie, WI 53158, or to Prairie School, 4500 Light House Dr., Racine, WI 53402.

Rodman Lynn Underwood (MSW ’60) died on July 1, at Halifax Medical Center in Daytona Beach, FL. Underwood was LinkedIn Account to Find Your Place in the Pioneer Network

More than 50,000 alumni and students have come together in the new Pioneer Network. The network uses the existing power and flexibility of the LinkedIn network to bring together DU graduates around the world.

Log in to the Pioneer Network with your LinkedIn account so you can:
- Reconnect with classmates or meet alumni near you
- Collaborate on plans to come back to campus for sesquicentennial events
- Find other Pioneers in your field, major or industry
- Extend your LinkedIn network by sending requests or message 1st and 2nd degree connections without leaving this site
- See the impact DU alumni have had around the world and in your neighborhood

Don’t have a LinkedIn account? Visit here to create one!

GSSW alumninews
The Last Word

encouragement

(in-ˈkar-i-jən) noun – support from your peers when you need it most

It was just before winter break when colorful notes began to appear around Craig Hall. Stuck onto restroom mirrors, tacked onto bulletin boards, left near student mail folders and on elevator walls, the cheerful messages provided much-needed smiles and encouragement for sleep-deprived students writing end-of-quarter papers and studying for final exams.

Created by members of GSSW’s Queer Equality Alliance (QEA) student organization, the notes also served a larger purpose. They represented GSSW’s participation in DU’s Be(A)ware Campaign, a student-led effort to write and photograph positive messages on mirrors around campus, illustrating the University community’s commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity of all kinds.

The campaign resulted from an incident last fall in which a hurtful message was written by a non-DU student on a mirror in an undergraduate residence hall. The message, which admonished students to “beware” of diverse populations among them, quickly galvanized individuals and student groups to respond with defiantly positive messages of their own.

I am a gay male . . . a first generation college student . . . a FIERCE bi-racial woman . . . an ally . . . read typical messages, each ending with the words “I belong here!” Others put the focus on DU’s inclusive community: “I embrace our differences!” “I believe love is stronger than hate!”

At GSSW, QEA students put their own spin on the Be(A)ware campaign, offering supportive words to their classmates at an especially stressful time of the academic year. “You’re almost there!” read one bright purple note. It’s encouragement sure to resonate again as students gear up for spring quarter finals—another milestone on their journey to graduation and careers.