

THE SOCIAL WORK LEADER

Western Kentucky University | Department of Social Work

Newsletter | Spring 2017

Igniting Social Change

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 WKU[®] Department of
Social Work

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NOTES FROM DR. DEAN MAY

Hi! Welcome to the latest edition of the Department of Social Work's newsletter. We now have a new name for our newsletter: *The Social Work Leader*. I like this name for a couple of reasons. Leader is often a term in the name of a newspaper. More importantly, according to Google, the term leader can also mean an organization that is successful or advanced in a particular area. So, welcome to the Social Work Leader.

As we wind down the current academic year, much has been accomplished and we look forward to our next challenges. The major accomplishment this past year was the submission of reaccreditation self-studies by the BSW and MSW programs to our accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The CSWE Commission on Accreditation will be sending a team to WKU in September to review our BSW and MSW Programs. Ultimately, the Commission on Accreditation will make a final review and recommendation on our programs in February, 2018. The submission of the self-studies to CSWE is a great accomplishment and we look forward to our site visit in September. Accreditation is vitally important and is an indicator of success, thus a demonstration of being a Leader.

Our BSW and MSW faculty and staff are committed to leading and realizing our mission of preparing competent and responsible professionals to work successfully in a global society. I look forward to our next issue of *The Social Work Leader* and giving you an update on our reaffirmation process.

Take care!

Dean May, Ph.D.
Department Head
WKU Department of Social Work



“Our BSW and MSW faculty and staff are committed to leading and realizing our mission of preparing competent and responsible professionals to work successfully in a global society.”



Environmental Service Day at Community Center

Environmental Service Day this past April with the Parker-Bennett Community Center After-School Program. The program serves children ages 5 to 13. Members of the ABSW-SCKY organization provided activities centered around *Earth Day* awareness and read children's literature centered around

The Association of Black Social Workers - South Central Kentucky (ABSW-SCKY) hosted an African Americans and their contributions and stories regarding environmental change.

ABSW-SCKY Chapter Officers include:

President: Dr. N. Sun
Vice President: Bridget Key
Secretary: Zaida Lane
Treasurers: Renisha Curtis and Sierra Baily
Advisors: Barbara P. and Dr. S. Starks
Community Impact Liaisons: Jessica Stunson and Ashley Blair

A Busy Spring for GSSW

WKU's Graduate Student Workers (GSSW) association has been very busy this semester. Students from GSSW donated items to assist victims of tornados in the greater New Orleans area, pitched in to help fellow students implement community organizing projects, participated in Social Work Month, and celebrated their accomplishments with a graduation party. For those who might not be familiar with GSSW, the organization is service driven, goal oriented, and dedicated to professional development of Master's of Social Work (MSW) students. Each semester the organization participates in at least one community service project to help foster a commitment to service among its members.



GSSW members Chris Joffrion and Susan Mkanta join fellow classmates to stock a Free Little Pantry at the International Center.

On February 7th, a devastating tornado struck the greater New Orleans area. The tornado was the strongest to hit New Orleans in recorded history. Fortunately, no one was killed by the tornado, but the storm caused nearly 3 million dollars in damage and resulted in numerous injuries. Dr. Nubian Sun, a MSW faculty member, decided to travel to New Orleans to help with clean-up efforts in the area that was still recovering from devastating floods that occurred less than a year earlier. While GSSW funds did not permit the organization to send students to assist, the organization did pack Dr. Sun's vehicle with food, toiletries, and other needed supplies.

(GSSW story continued on page 6)



MSW/BSW Spring Commencement

In May, we honored 115 graduates from the WKU Department of Social Work at various commencement ceremonies.

Our Master of Social Work (MSW) program honored 54 graduates and our Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program honored 61 graduates.

(GSSW story continued from page 5)

In March, students from Dr. Gabbard's graduate class in Rural Community Organizing and Development were required to plan, organize, and implement community service projects as part of a service learning unit. Always eager to serve, members of GSSW joined in with fellow classmates that had partnered with several local organizations to host service projects. GSSW members donated items to stock a Free Little Pantry at the International Center of Kentucky, joined students and faculty from the Eleventh Street Academy to clean their neighborhood, and helped the Hill House stock a Free Little Library.

In March, GSSW also participated in Social Work Month. GSSW organized an event on campus, called Dancing on the Frontlines. Dancing on the Frontlines sought to motivate and encourage area social workers to get involved and stay involved with local community issues that all social workers should care about. The event featured speeches from Bowling Green City Commissioner Slim Nash and Executive Director of the International Center of Kentucky, Albert Mbanfu. Commissioner Nash discussed the continued fight to pass a Fairness Ordinance in Bowling Green. Such an ordinance would protect local members of the LGBTQ community from discrimination in housing and employment. Mr. Mbanfu discussed the International Center's work with refugees and new immigrants and how local social workers can help.

GSSW concluded the spring semester celebrating the organization hard work and recognizing graduating members at their 2017 GSSW Graduation Party. The party was held at the Garmon House on Saturday, April 29th. The event offered a rare opportunity for MSW students and faculty to relax, unwind, and reflect on another extraordinary year.



MSW Director's Corner

In the social work profession, we value collaboration and the importance of human relationships. Our MSW program exemplifies that foundational value and demonstrates it through actions. Our faculty and staff have accomplished much over the past year, and that is indicative of the strong team orientation and relationships present. With 6.5 full-time faculty and two professional staff members, the MSW Program is relatively small, yet we are mighty! Consider the following achievements and milestones:

- Kicked off our first completely online cohort with 22 students with plans for a 2nd cohort to begin in the fall 2018
- Completed our CSWE Self-Study on time
- Employed seven new adjunct MSW social work instructors
- Implemented a formal mentoring program for adjunct instructors
- Got a 4th assistantship position/student scholarship
- Began the process of reestablishing the Addictions Certificate
- Held a successful Social Work Month of events
- Established a few more HBCUs during the recruiting tour
- Developed and deployed an alumni survey
- Began a strategic planning process for the MSW program
- Published more than six peer reviewed scholarly articles
- Presented research at more than eight local, state, national, and international conferences
- Mentored more than 100 students in research and practice settings
- Graduated 55 new MSWs
- Recruited around 70 MSW applicants with around 50 admitted at this time



“None of these goals are met in a vacuum; only by support of each other in the classroom, community, and office spaces can our great success continue.”

None of these goals are met in a vacuum; only by support of each other in the classroom, community, and office spaces can our great success continue.

While we have new goals to accomplish in the upcoming year including hiring a new tenure track MSW faculty member, expanding our online program to include a traditional cohort, and implementing the Social Work CAS (Centralized Application System), it is important that we all pause and reflect upon the program's achievements over the past year. With gratitude, I salute our wonderful students, staff, and faculty, and I look forward with great anticipation of the works to come!

Dr. Patricia Desrosiers, LCSW

The Department of Social Work (SWK) celebrates the academic achievements of some of our most outstanding students each Spring at our annual College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) Awards Banquet.

Mariah Castlen **MSW Spirit Award**

Mariah is from Tell City, Indiana. All her life she has had a passion for helping people. She began her journey to social work, working with Habitat for Humanity at the age of 12. She started by volunteering to help others and that process has led her to become an MSW Graduate.

She plans to become a therapist and continuing improving her practice. Eventually, she wants to develop a non-profit organization to benefit low-income youth in exploring their passions and meeting their full potential.



Samira Fezjic **International Reach Award**

Samira was born in Bosnia and moved to the United States when she was very young. Since then, she has called Bowling Green

her home. Samira has served as the WKU President of Phi Alpha Honors Society for Social Work. Samira is excited about her new job placement with Park Place Recovery Center in Scottsville, Kentucky where she will be providing counseling services for women seeking recovery for substance use. Upon graduation, she hopes to transition into the therapist role at PPRC for Women. As she looks toward the future she is most excited about working in the field and advocating and empowering her future clients. She also plans to continue her education and is thinking about pursuing a Ph.D.



Philip Parsons **MSW Outstanding Graduate Student Award**

Philip is a combat Veteran who has overcome many obstacles to complete his education. After combat and using mental health services he was interested in pursuing a degree in social work. After leaving the military at the end of 2010, Philip set about trying to find a new way of life. Soon he attended Veterans Upward Bound where he utilized adult refresher classes to get ready for college. Philip obtained his Bachelor's of Social Work degree at WKU, graduating Summa Cum Laude. Philip states that his success is in part due to his passion for helping his fellow brothers and sisters in the military. He believes that having had to walk a path that few understand, he could use his experiences to help others. Philip is also interested in research and policy. Philip has been active in several organizations on campus and with his peers. One of Philip's hobbies is ultra-running. He credits this type of running to be the activity that allowed the change process to happen and to be one of the most effective forms of self-care.



Mallory Perkins **MSW Legacy Award**

Mallory is from Hopkinsville, Kentucky, where she attended a Gordon Ford Community College before transferring to WKU her sophomore year. Initially pursuing an accounting degree, Mallory developed a passion for older adults after a summer of helping out at her father's practice (family doctor). "I found myself in love with being with older adults, getting to know them, and their life story", remembers Mallory. With that passion, she then went to volunteer at the Cornell Memory Center in Hopkinsville. In the fall of 2014, she decided to switch majors to social work with a minor in business administration. Mallory graduated in 2016 with her BSW and will graduate this spring with her MSW.

This past fall, Mallory started working at Cornell Memory Center, an adult day facility for people suffering from dementia/Alzheimers. She also interns at Pennyroyal Hospice. Mallory plans on taking a CNA class this summer and will be starting her Masters in Health Administration in Fall 2017. She feels that this will help her to be a better leader and understand the clinical side of a nursing home.



(Student Awards continued on page 9)

(Student Awards continued from page 8)

Sydney Jones MSW Spirit Award

Sydney is from the small town of Wingo, KY. She graduated from WKU's Bachelor's of Social Work program while also earning a Bachelor's degree in Criminology. Sydney works with KY SAFE Therapeutic Foster Care as a case manager.

Working a full-time job, completing internship hours, and completing a full course load has been a challenge, and it has also been rewarding. Her passion is to work with at-risk youth. She hopes to open a community center for at-risk adolescents to help them improve self-esteem, and provide support and assistance with their future.

Mariah hopes to inspire people to be a positive role model that young people will follow, "Children have always been a population I have enjoyed, while I found myself shying away from teens; however, right when you think you've got it all figured out, you find out where your heart is leading you".



BSW Students Present at SWE Conference

The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program had 13 students whose posters were accepted for the Kentucky Association of Social Work Educators Spring Conference at Eastern Kentucky University this past April.

BSW student, Kalee Culver presented with BSW Child Welfare Support Coordinator Austin Griffiths, on the job satisfaction of child welfare workers. Robin Reynolds, Brittany Gasaway, Janelle Williams, and Eddie Razo presented "The STEPS Act: A Social Work Policy Project" in which they proposed the regulation of sober living homes in the state of Kentucky.



BSW Director's Corner

There are many highlights to report for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program from this academic year. Students and faculty have been excelling in both academic and social activities. As social work advocates in training, about 45 BSW students together with faculty members, Ms. Laura Bain-Selbo, Dr. Simon Funge, Dr. Larry Owens and Dr. Dana Sullivan, participated in the Kentucky NASW's Lobby Day, on Tuesday, March 2017. They not only met with their legislators but also attended a Social Work rally in the Capitol Rotunda.



*BSW Program Coordinator,
Dr. Dana Sullivan*

The BSW students are topping in academics. In March, 13 BSW students including Elizabeth Willenbrink, BSW Alumni 2016, made their presentations at the WKU Student Research Conference. Lindsey Moore and Elizabeth Willenbrink won their sessions. Ms. Willenbrink, the principal researcher, presented a paper "Cultivating Community: Food Insecurity and Community Gardening among African Refugees in Bowling Green, Kentucky". This original study was carried out under the supervision of Dr. Gayle Mallinger and Dr. Molly Kerby and the interviews were done in Swahili by Martha Musalia, MSW student. Lindsey Moore presented a poster "Standing in the Way: Criminalizing Homelessness", and her faculty sponsor was Dr. Whitney Harper.

The BSW program continues to motivate students to excel in their academic achievements through awards. At this year's College of Health and Human Services' awards banquet, the following BSW students, from all three WKU campuses, were recognized for their academic achievements: Crysania Davis, Outstanding BSW Student-Bowling Green Campus; Sarah Bowman, Outstanding BSW Student-Owensboro Campus; Brittany Gasaway, Outstanding BSW Student-Elizabethtown Campus; Tyler Winklepleck, BSW Research Award; Kimberly Miles, BSW Field Award; and Edward Razo, BSW GPA Award.

Dr. Gayle Mallinger was awarded the 2017 Faculty Excellence in Public Service Award for the College of Health and Human Services. Dr. Mallinger was most deserving of this award for her work in the program, college, university, and community.

Keep watching this corner for greater things in the coming years!!

Dr. Dana Sullivan, Ph.D., MSW

NABSW 49th Annual Conference

The 49th Annual National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc (NABSW) conference was held in Washington D.C. this past spring.



The theme for the conference was, “Unmasking Politics & Policies: Strengthening the Black Family”. Below are reflections from some of our student attendees:

Bridget Key, Chapter Vice President: “This was the first time that I had ever been to Washington, DC and also the first time I had been around so many prestigious and empowering African- American Social workers. We ended the conference with the Harambee celebration and an overall life changing experience, to say the least. I am honored to be a part of this organization and this conference helped me gain a new respect for the position I hold in the ABSW South-Central Kentucky Chapter.”

Renicha Curtis, Chapter Treasurer: “As a proud African- American woman, it was beyond a dream to be in the presence of so many men and women of color who were great leaders. Most importantly, these great leaders were willing to teach and mentor me to become like them if not better. This conference was very powerful and inspiring. I have

never attended any events where people wore African attire. People wore their attire with pride and dignity.”

Ashley Blair, Chapter Community Impact Liaison: “It is not every day that I have the chance to be around other individuals who have the same goal in life as myself, which is striving to make a difference in the lives of those in the Black community. Also, it is not every day that I am graced with the presence of those who look like myself. To say that I had a wonderful time would be understatement, it was a life changing experience. The conference highlighted issues within the Black community and how Black professional social workers can address them.”

The Association of Black Social Workers of South Central Kentucky

The Association of Black Social Workers of South Central Kentucky is a local chapter of the National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc., comprised of people of African ancestry. We are committed to enhancing the quality of life and empowering people of African ancestry through advocacy, human services delivery, and research.

National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc. (NABSW) works to create a world in which people of African ancestry will live free from racial domination, economic exploitation, and cultural oppression.

In collaboration with national, international, and other appropriate groups, NABSW continues to leverage its collective expertise to strategically develop capacity of people of African ancestry to sustain and flourish.

ABSW-SCKY Chapter Officers:

- President: Dr. N. Sun
- Vice President: Bridget Key
- Secretary: Zaida Lane
- Treasurers: Renisha Curtis and Sierra Baily
- Advisors: Barbara P. and Dr. S. Starks
- Community Impact Liaisons: Jessica Stunson and Ashley Blair

Chapter Projects/Programs:

- *Bowling Green Community Kwanzaa
- *Thanksgiving Dinner Family Adoption
- *Christmas Gift Family Adoption
- *Annual Spring Soiree’ Scholarship Fundraiser
- *ABSW-SCKY Book Scholarship
- *Environmental Service Day- Parker Bennett Community Center After-School Program
- *Blessing Bags for Homeless

Chapter Representation:

- * Attendance at BSW Poster Presentations
- * Attendance at Annual National Association of Social Workers Conference
- * Attendance at Annual Bowling Green MLK Day
- * Attendance at Monthly Black Leaders Advocating for Change (BLAC) Meetings
- * Participation in Hill House- Project L.I.F.E. at 11th Street Academy

Chapter Outreach:

- * Facebook Page- ABSW-SCKY
- * WKU Annual Informational





WKU Social Work Faculty Create and Share Knowledge Through Their Research

By Christopher Joffrion

According to the NASW Code of Ethics, “Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.” While many social work students and practicing social workers find the idea of research daunting, faculty members in the Social Work department at WKU appear to relish the idea of doing research, and they have been busy in recent months making contributions to the knowledge base by writing-up, presenting, and publishing various research projects.

In March, most members of the faculty attended the 33rd Annual Association of Baccalaureate Program Directors conference in New Orleans, Louisiana where several faculty members shared their research with social work educators from around the country. Presenters included Dr. Gayle Mallinger and Dr. Patricia Desroisiers who presented their research on patient navigation.

Faculty members have also recently presented their research at the Council of Social Work Education conference, the Kentucky Association of State Program conference, the Association of Continuing Higher Education conference, the Ethnographic and Qualitative Research conference,

and the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education, and Social Development in Seoul, South Korea.

In addition to racking up the frequent flier miles traveling to conferences around the world, social work faculty members are sharing their knowledge through countless publications in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. If you’re looking for some summer reading you might consider adding these articles to your list. Recent publications include (WKU faculty members highlighted):

- **Desrosiers, P., Mallinger, G., & Bragg-Underwood, T.** (2016). Promoting socially just healthcare systems: Social work’s contribution. *Advances in Social Work*, 17 (2).
- **Desrosiers, P. & Sullivan, D.,** Dickinson, T. & Lay, C., (2016). Victim assistance service providers training needs assessment. *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education*, 19(2).
- **Griffiths, A., Murphy, A. L., & Harper, W.** (in press). Child sexual abuse and the impact of rurality on foster care outcomes: An exploratory analysis. *Child Welfare*.
- **Griffiths, A., Rosey, D., Culver, K., Piescher, K., & Zhang, Y.** (2017). Who stays, who goes, who knows? A state-wide survey of child welfare workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 77, 110–117.
- **Mallinger, G., Gabbard, W. J., & Starks, S.** (2016). Managing microaggressions in the college classroom. *Faculty Focus Special Report*, 6, 10–12.
- **Shackelford, J. & Cappiccie, A.** (2016) article entitled “The power of cross-disciplinary teams: Increasing first responders’ knowledge of traumatic brain injury survivors” to *Journal of Professional, Continuing and Online Education*, 1, DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.18741/P9H59G>.

WKU Social Work faculty members are constantly conducting and publishing new research. Current research are addressing dating violence, services for survivors of domestic abuse, leadership in the non-profit social service sector, cultural competency education, online instruction, service learning, the effects of secondary trauma on parenting by frontline workers, mindfulness, homelessness, and teaching on branch campuses.

Dr. Amy Cappiccie Awarded the Fonetta E. Elam Supervision Clinical Award

By Dr. Martha Musalia

The award to Dr. Cappiccie would not be a surprise to those she has taught and supervised. Dr. Cappiccie is all about social work as she interacts with her students and supervisees.

Dr. Cappiccie, who was nominated by her Hope Harbor supervisee Ericka Church, became the second awardee of the Fonetta E. Elam, administered by the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs.

The award was a recognition of her positive impact in the lives of thousands of Kentuckian women, men, children, and survivors of sexual assault. Other than working with service providers of sexual assault victims, Dr. Cappiccie has experience working with traumatized individuals.

According to Dr. Cappiccie, supervision is what shapes one as a social worker, it's all about the client. A "client-centered supervision": because for social workers, the client is the primary target. Being a supervisor takes hard work and dedication in advancing knowledge. This is in line with our NASW Code of Ethics requirement, that all social workers should endeavor to achieve competency in area of practice. In order to competently do clinical supervision, Dr. Cappiccie took time to build herself since she received her licensure in 2003. She has engaged in several studies both nationally and internationally.



Hope Harbor Executive, Melissa Whitley and Dr. Amy Cappiccie

“Though it was unexpected, I feel greatly appreciated. But more importantly, I feel honored to have provided services that helped to focus on the hard work of the profession of social work.”

-Dr. Amy Cappiccie

Dr. Gayle Mallinger Awarded the WKU Public Service Award

Dr. Gayle Mallinger is the University awardee of the Public Service Award for the 2016-2017 academic year. Dr. Mallinger is an assistant professor in the Department of Social Work, where she has been a professor since 2011. She received her MSW and Ph.D in Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh. Her research interests include environmental justice, efficacy of diversity training, and women and leadership. Her publications appear in peer-reviewed social work journals, including *Advances in Social Work* and *Affilia*.



WKU President Dr. Gary Ransdell, Dr. Gayle Mallinger and Provost Dr. David Lee

Dr. Mallinger’s research, teaching, and service are shaped by common and related themes, including the examination of social and environmental implications of risk and resilience, the development of strategies to increase social and political capital among students, the university, and the community through interdisciplinary work, and the promotion of cultural competence through experiences within and outside of the classroom.

In addition to her service at the departmental, college, and university levels, Dr. Mallinger is on the Board of Directors at both Hope Harbor and the Bowling Green International Festival. She collaborates with social service agencies and neighborhoods surrounding the WKU campus.

Accreditation Activities

By Dana Sullivan

Recently, the BSW and MSW programs submitted their self-studies to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) as part of the reaccreditation process. This is a process that is completed every eight years.

Programs are required to submit written materials that outline the following:

- Chapter 1 Program Mission and Goals: The program must submit their mission statement and goals; they must explain how they are consistent with the mission of the institution and how the program's goals are derived from the mission.
- Chapter 2 Explicit Curriculum and Field Education: The program must explain how their curriculum is integrated in classroom and field, and how the nine required CSWE competencies are implemented, including a matrix illustrating what competencies each class covers. The program must also explain their field education program.
- Chapter 3 Implicit Curriculum: The program must describe the learning environment outside of the classroom. The areas covered in this chapter are diversity, faculty, resources, and student development including advising and admissions.
- Chapter 4 Program Evaluation: The program must explain their evaluation procedures and demonstrate how each of the required competencies are measured on at least domains (knowledge, skills, values and cognitive/affective processes). The evaluation plan must contain the assessment data for the past year across all program options (for example, across all regional campuses for the BSW Program and across the online cohort for the MSW Program).

This summer, the programs will receive letters of instruction to prepare them for the site visit which will occur September 19 and 20, 2017. The CSWE Commission on Accreditation will meet in February 2018 and vote on the reaffirmation of WKU's Social Work programs.



Vakalahi, Ph.D., MSW, M.Ed., as their keynote speaker for both the MSW and BSW commencement programs.

Dr. Vakalahi, an immigrant Pacific Islander woman of Tongan heritage, born in Tonga and groomed on the Northshore of "Oahu, HI is a Professor & Associate Dean at Morgan State University School of Social Work in Baltimore, Maryland. She has served in various faculty and administrative positions across several universities (New Mexico State University, BYU-Hawaii, San Francisco State University, George Mason University); in professional organizations including the Council on Social Work Education and National Association of



Commencement Keynote Speaker

The WKU Social Workers. Department of Social Work program had the honor of welcoming Dr. Halaevalu "Valu" F. Ofahengaue

Dr. Vakalahi has been a Hartford Faculty Scholar, Fulbright Senior Scholar, CSWE Minority Fellow, and was named the Counsel on Social Work Education's Feminist Scholar of the Year in 2016.

Dr. Vakalahi's areas of teaching include social policy, human behavior and social work environment, organizational leadership, and cultural diversity. Her two areas of scholarship are: Pacific Islander culture and community and Women of Color in academia,

Her eclectic educational background; B.S. in Business Management (BYU-Hawaii), MSW (University of Hawaii-Manoa) and M.Ed. and Ph.D. in Social Work (University of Utah), have informed her leadership, scholarship, teaching, and service which she hopes have forwarded social and economic justice in some small way.



(left to right) Dr. Amy Cappiccie, Dr. April Murphy, Dr. Vakalahi "Valu", Dr. Patricia Desrosiers, Dr. Sandra Starks, and Dr. Jay Gabbard (center)

Jeremiah Jaggers

MSW, May 2008

Why did you choose to study Social Work?

I became interested in social work by chance. My bachelor's degree was in Political Science, and as an undergraduate, I began to notice the number of people who were in poverty and who were denied the essential resources to get out of poverty. At the time I had a co-worker who was a BSW student. I was discussing this with her, and she mentioned that I should look into social work. After some research, I found that social work aligned well with my beliefs.

What activities, organizations were you are a part of at WKU?

While at WKU, I had a number of positive academic experiences. I served as President of the MSW Student Organization for two years and completed a two year internship with Fairview Community Health Center. Additionally, I had the privilege of working with a number of faculty in the Department of Social Work on research projects. I co-authored a number of scholarly publications and attended a major academic conference in Hong Kong with Dr. Jay Gabbard.



“My time at WKU was transformative. I moved from a disenchanted young person, to a professional driven to promote positive social change.”

-Jeremiah Jaggers

How did WKU prepare you for life after college?

My time at WKU was transformative. I moved from a disenchanted young person, to a professional driven to promote positive social change. The faculty were supportive, but also challenging. Social work is a tough profession, but I was ready for the day-to-day challenges in large part because of my education.

What have you been doing since graduating from WKU?

I worked as a social worker for some time before pursuing my PhD in Social Work from the University of Alabama. Since that time, I have served as a faculty member at Indiana University, training aspiring social workers, using many of the same techniques I learned at WKU.

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Lindsey Nave

MSW, May 2010

What is your educational background? I graduated from WKU with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies and Religious Studies in May, 2005. After taking some time away from school, I decided to return to WKU and obtain a MSW. I have been thrilled with the unique way each of my majors have worked together to provide the skills needed to best serve others in a holistic manner.

What activities, organizations were you a part of at WKU?

During my undergraduate program, I was an active member of the WKU Forensics team. As a graduate student, I was the president of the Graduate Students of Social Work, a graduate assistant in the social work department, and participated in internships with BRASS, Inc and Western Kentucky Refugee Mutual Assistance Association, Inc. I was fortunate to have two international adventures as part of my MSW experience as a student on study abroad to Egypt (2010) and a student research assistant and presenter in Mexico as part of the WKU Social Work team presenting at the International Symposium for Social Development (2009).



“While the education and support I received throughout my time at WKU was vital for my future, the experiences available to me as a student were life changing.”

-Lindsey Nave

How did WKU prepare you for life after college?

From the time I was a small child, I had a keen interest in other cultures and had a strong desire to live internationally and help people. However, taking a childhood dream and turning it into a reality is not always an easy process. While the education and support I received throughout my time at WKU was vital for my future, the experiences available to me as a student were life changing. As the MSW program sought internship placements, the team placed me in programs to help me explore different paths toward international social work. I was able to explore advocacy, research, fundraising, policy, and management while under the guidance of mentors eager to ensure I was able to find my path. It was during my internship at the refugee agency that I learned how much I enjoyed working with children, specifically refugee children and children from conflict, which opened the door to employment and international work.

What have you been doing since graduating from WKU?

As graduation neared, I was offered employment at the refugee agency at which I was doing my internship. After spending two years as the school liaison and coordinator of interpretation,

(Continued on page 23) 20

Cecilia Mengo

MSW, May 2012

Why did you choose to study Social Work?

My desire to pursue an MSW at WKU was driven by my passion for working with vulnerable populations, especially women and children living in the rural areas. Before coming to the US, I worked alongside families in rural parts of Kenya for seven years and I witnessed first-hand the challenges that many families go through. During my work with these families, I listened to stories of how they conquered their day to day life challenges. I was particularly intrigued by their creative business ideas that were later turned into micro businesses that provided income for their families. It was during my work with these rural communities, that I realized I needed to equip myself with more skills on community organizing, especially group dynamic skills. Upon, reviewing the WKU social work course curriculum program, it was crystal clear to me that the program was geared towards training social workers to work better with rural communities. This is when I made a major decision to move to the US to continue with my graduate studies in Social Work at WKU.



What activities, organizations were you a part of at WKU?

I worked as a graduate research assistant for two years. Under the supervision of my faculty advisor, I worked with a state grant funded project to examine the services provided to victims of trauma in Warren County, Kentucky. Also, with guidance and support from my faculty advisor we created and piloted a study abroad program for MSW students to travel to Kenya, this project is still in progress. I was also a member of Graduate Student Social Workers and Phi-Alpha honor society.

How did WKU prepare you for life after college?

WKU was a home away from home. The faculty members and especially my advisors were my great mentors. They had an open door policy that made it easier for me to interact and consult with them freely on course work and the research projects that I was working on. Also, my experience as an International social work practitioner and an international student offered a unique perspective that helped me to understand the context of global social work and how my skills can contribute to meaningful social change in the global arena.

(Continued on page 22)

(Cecilia Mengo continued from page 21)

What have you been doing since graduating from WKU?

I am a tenure track assistant professor at The Ohio State University, Columbus. I teach *Human Behavior in the Social Environment* and social and economic justice. I also supervise social work students who are on field practicum with the local agencies here in Columbus. Being a field liaison provides me with the opportunity to connect with local agencies and community. In addition to teaching, I am also engaged in research work. My research examines the persistent social problem of Gender Based Violence among marginalized and vulnerable women in the US and Sub-Saharan Africa. I also explore the social and economic inequalities that keep women in the cycle of poverty and the ways in which experience with violence perpetuates the cycle of poverty in womens' lives. My aim is to extend and expand my research by contributing to prevention and intervention efforts that can address the most immediate needs of women and children with a goal empowering them. I am also cognizant of the importance of education as a key avenue for empowering the most marginalized individuals in our society.

“The world today is faced with complex social problems that call for innovative strategies. As social work majors, it is important for students to broaden their perspectives by thinking globally and acting locally.”

-Cecilia Mengo

Any advice to current WKU students and/or Social Work majors?

The path to being who I am today has been as a result of the support I have received from so many people including my family, friends, fellow students, and faculty. The world today is faced with complex social problems that call for innovative strategies. As social work majors, it is important for students to broaden their perspectives by thinking globally and acting locally. Sometimes the pathway to our social work careers is difficult and unclear. My advice to social work majors is to stay focused, be open minded, be curious to learning new things such as a new culture, a new language, and do not be afraid to get out of your comfort zone. That way, you will be able to understand social issues that are happening across the globe and how they affect families and local communities in places like Kentucky.

(Jeremiah Jagers continued from page 19)

Any advice to current WKU students and/or Social Work majors? Social work is a demanding profession and it isn't likely to get easier anytime soon. To be a successful social worker, one must first be a successful student. To do that I suggest that students become engaged. Learn about social work practice, even outside of the classroom. Become well-informed by accessing credible resources – read the newspaper, surf the internet, and watch the news. Talk with other social workers. Find out about the things that influence your profession and impact your clients.

(Lindsey Nave continued from page 20)

my desire to work with children and travel led me to taking a position teaching English at an elementary school near Seoul, South Korea. After 3.5 years working as a language instructor in Korea, my desire to combine my love for children, teaching, refugee populations, and international humanitarian work led me to Tomorrow's Youth Organization (TYO). TYO is an American NGO focusing on holistic education for children, youth, and women from disadvantaged areas of the Northern West Bank.

As a social worker who embraces the importance of education, working for an organization that supports mental health in addition to educational growth is incredibly special. As the International Internship and Fellowship Coordinator, I am fortunate to bring young professionals to a city called Nablus to teach classes for our students. While professional development and support for the educational programs is the focus of the program, it is also vital for us to support young international interns and fellows through culture shock and help with intercultural communication, specifically with a population continually impacted by violence. In a sense, I get to be a tour guide, mentor, supervisor, and teacher for young people beginning their careers in international humanitarian work. I am fortunate to be able to help others as my mentors at WKU impacted me.

Any advice to current WKU students and/or Social Work majors?

Since moving abroad in 2011, I have made it a point to say yes as often as possible. Whether it is taking a job that pushes you out of your comfort zone or an opportunity to do something you never imagined doing, just say yes. It was terrifying to move to the other side of the world alone and it was not always easy, but the experiences life has brought my way have been amazing.

If you have a passion, find a way to make it a reality. Don't wait for life to hand you what others are willing to work for. Explore as many options as you can and find out what makes your heart beat fast and places a smile crawl across your face. Research and understand the process required to make your dream a reality and then work as hard as you can toward that goal. The process may not be what you expected and you might end up doing something unexpected, such as teaching kindergarten in South Korea, but you will end up where you want to be. The adventure is always worth the effort needed to overcome the fear.

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