Welcome to the Alumnae Newsletter of the Department of Social Work!!
In this volume you will find lots of information about what the Department is
doing at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, information from faculty
about their activities, and stories about our fabulous students. Please enjoy and
please keep in touch!

Chairperson’s Perspective
by Bill Anderson

Some of you remember when there were only four of us on the
faculty and we offered a single
section of most courses and
graduated students at the end of things called
“quarters”. Times have changed!

This has been an exceptionally busy year,
with workgroups, subcommittees, committees of the
whole and external task forces galore, not to mention
teaching our fabulous students. We have made some
significant changes in our senior curriculum at the
same time that we moved full speed into MSW
planning, while continuing to provide the best
undergraduate (now BSSW!) education possible.

The brief articles by individual faculty will
address many of these topics, but I want to
emphasize that as we continue to move forward on
the MSW development process we are not looking
past the needs of our undergraduates. We graduate
two cohorts each year at the end of Fall semester and
Spring semester; cohorts have been averaging about
25-30 students each. We split our Practice I and
Practice II classes into two sections per semester to
keep the class sizes manageable.

We’re very proud of how active our students are, both on campus and in the community. The
Social Work Club has had another great year, our
students continue to excel on the licensure exam,
they continue to dazzle in their practicum and they
find jobs in our service region and beyond.

As you will read below, our faculty are
deeply involved in their teaching, research, student
development, continuing preparation, and campus/
community service (the five contract areas on which
we are evaluated). Two faculty members (Nancy and
Robin) were tenured this year and three faculty
(Nancy, Robin and Marilyn) were promoted. In
addition to excellent teaching, faculty members gave
presentations and had papers published, wrote grants
supporting their research and supporting students,
consulted with community agencies, served on
boards of directors, and supervised practitioners.

It is a great privilege to get to serve as chair
for the other seven faculty (soon to be eleven!). It is
also a great reward to hear back from alumnae about
what they are doing, so use the form or the email
address and keep in touch! Finally, keep an eye on
the MSW Program -- you can play a role!
MSW Program by Nancy Fitzsimons

The Department of Social Work is well on its way to offering a Master in Social Work degree. The MSW Program was approved by the University in May and was approved by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) in August. The Department has already submitted our first (3-volume!) Benchmark I report, thus beginning the lengthy process of obtaining accreditation, and the document was accepted as “complete” by the Council on Social Work Education in early August.

The MSW Program will focus on preparing students for “advanced generalist” social work practice, with advanced skills in both clinical practice and administration, and with some emphasis on practice in rural and small communities. The Department will offer two ways to complete the MSW degree. The 60 credit hour “Traditional 2-Year Program” is expected to begin in the fall of 2007 and will include 40 credit hours of coursework and 20 credit hours of field experience. The 32 credit hour “Advanced Standing Program” will commence in the summer of 2008 and will consist of 22 hours of coursework and 10 hours of field education. Only students with a bachelor’s degree in social work from a CSWE accredited program will be eligible for the Advanced Standing Program. The Department will begin accepting applications for the Traditional 2-Year Program in October of 2006 and will begin accepting our first cohort of MSW students in the early spring of 2007.

For more information about the MSW Program contact Nancy Fitzsimons, Program Director (nancy.fitzsimons@mnsu.edu or 507-389-1287) or Annelies Hagemeister, Admissions Coordinator (annelies.hagemeister@mnsu.edu or 389-5078). Additional information is also available on our website at: http://sbs.mnsu.edu/socialwork/graduate/

Social Work Day at the Capitol

On April 3, two Department faculty, Nancy Fitzsimons and Chris Black-Hughes, accompanied 15 social work students to the NASW sponsored 10th Annual Social Work Day at the Capitol. Over 350 social work students, educators and professionals participated in this event. They spent the morning at the Minnesota History Center learning about lobbying and important policy issues in the areas of Child Welfare, Civil Rights, Health Care, and Mental Health. In the afternoon they marched to the Capitol for a spirited rally in the Rotunda. Drs. Fitzsimons and Black-Hughes accompanied students to meetings with area legislators, including Senator John Hottinger, Representative Ruth Johnson and Representative John Dorn. Students lobbied against bills that would have allowed pharmacists to refuse to dispense certain medication on ethical, moral or religious grounds and lobbied against a bill that would have required all employees of state and counties to make written report to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for any violation of federal laws by any applicant for public benefits.
Rural Social Work by Paul Mackie

Among those who practice social work in rural areas, there has long been a discussion about what “rural social work” really means or looks like. Dating back to the early 1900’s, empirical discussions have been conducted in the research literature on this question, with little consensus established. It seems we as a profession often find ourselves stuck trying to sort out what “rural social work” is, and as is not. Interestingly, the question does not seem so complex among those practicing in rural and remote areas. These social workers often describe the need to be an effective generalist as an important quality and describe frustration related to the lack of qualified staff to fill open positions. While the debate continues, recent research being conducted in the Department of Social Work at Minnesota State University, Mankato has been yielding interesting and important findings on these questions.

Dr. Mackie has approached this question from a new and novel perspective – that of the social worker either already employed in rural settings or social work students considering where they will seek employment upon graduation. Findings from recent research suggests that a few key predictors can be isolated to predict who is more likely to become a rural social worker: growing up in rural areas, having been placed in a rural practicum site, and receiving rural-focused social work coursework were found to be the most important factors to predict who eventually becomes a rural social worker. Further, social work students not yet in the workforce also appear to be more likely to seek rural-based employment when they grew up in or are otherwise more familiar with rural areas.

Implications of these studies are important. Based on these findings, rural social work labor force issues (the lack of adequate staffing and retentions problems) could be addressed by focusing recruitment of students from rural backgrounds. Evidence suggests that there has been a lack of qualified social workers in rural areas across the United States, including southern Minnesota and the Midwest. If we are to establish labor parity between rural and urban areas, these findings suggest that social work educators need to focus more on strategic recruiting, practicum placement, and coursework on rural issues so as to adequately prepare students for the challenges rural social work presents. To accomplish this, your faculty at Minnesota State University, Mankato are working hard to better understand these issues and provide sound, empirical evidence to guide the future of preparing social workers for the complexities of rural practice.

MSSA State and Regional Conferences

A new record was set in March as 63 students and faculty from MSU attended the Minnesota Social Services Association (MSSA) Conference in Burnsville. Students participated actively in workshops and attended special student-oriented sessions hosted by MSSA. As usual, students took the lead in planning and developing the Region IX “Cabana” activities and once again were a great success. This conference also marked the debut of the MSU display booth advertising the new MSW program. Many alumnae and others stopped by to hear about the program!

This Fall (September 29th) the Region IX MSSA will have its own conference in North Mankato and as always students and faculty will be actively involved. We look forward to seeing you at these meetings!
Shadow Victims: Crimes Against People with Disabilities

An innovative new on-line training is now available for law enforcement professionals and others to learn about combating crimes against people with disabilities. Nancy Fitzsimons, Associate Professor in the Department, was the Project Director and lead author of a U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women grant to develop the training materials in conjunction with the Minneapolis-based Law Enforcement Resource Center (LERC). The on-line course provides trainees with information on understanding Minnesota laws, victim issues, and responding to victims with physical, sensory, cognitive disabilities and mental illness. The training is highly interactive and includes video segments, audio interviews, exercises, hyperlinks, chapter quizzes and a final examination. In addition, trainees receive a 139 page workbook containing the most crucial information presented in the course. The training was approved for 10 CEU by Minnesota POST. While targeted for law enforcement personnel, anyone working in victim services, disability services and social services would benefit from taking the course. Free access to the course is available for 400 law enforcement officers. All others may complete the course for only $25 dollars. For more information, contact Nancy Fitzsimons (nancy.fitzsimons@mnsu.edu or 507-389-1287) or visit the LERC website at http://www.lerc.com/ to directly access the course. Spread the word to law enforcement and other professionals about this affordable and important training opportunity!

Social Work Club

The Social Work Club, under the leadership of Deidre Farwick and Lauren McNelly, seniors who graduated this past spring, carried on the Club’s tradition of service to the community. The club participated in several fundraising efforts, including bake sales and social work apparel sales and working at the concession stand at the Civic Center, in order to support Habitat for Humanity, Mankato Sharing Tree, CADA House, Theresa House, Mankato Area Healthy Youth, and drug and alcohol prevention at Maple River School. The Club finished the book drive for the Institute for AIDS, International University of Management (IUM) in Windhoek, Namibia. The books were mailed to Namibia in February of 2006 and the Club’s efforts were featured in the March 2 edition of the Mankato Free Press. Once again the Social Work Club worked with our Region 9 MSSA chapter to design, decorate and run the cabana at the statewide Minnesota Social Services Association Conference. The Social Work Club received a Community Service award from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences for their outstanding community service and volunteer efforts, as they have each of the past several years.
Undergraduate Curriculum Changes by Robin R. Wingo

After years of discussion, feedback, and planning, a major renovation occurred in the undergraduate social work program in the Spring of 2006. Courses changed names, the numbering system was realigned, courses were added and dropped, and the degree was renamed! Robin led the Department through the massive paperwork and committee reviews required to make curriculum changes. While phasing in these changes will happen over the next two years, here are the highlights.

Those of you who graduated since the mid-90’s, do you remember SOWK 495, Senior Paper? After Fall of 2006, the requirement for the thirty page senior paper will be eliminated as the ‘capstone’ expectation of the social work program. SOWK 450, Social Work Senior Practicum and SOWK 455, Integrative Seminar will meet that expectation with a closer focus on recognizing how students have met the goals and objectives of the program. Practicum and Seminar will be joined in the final semester of the program with a new course, SOWK 447, Social Work Practice IV, which will focus on social work in and with organizations. This will allow Practice III (taken along with Practice II) to focus completely on community analysis and change. Students desiring to complete a major writing assignment with a faculty mentor can still complete a senior paper for elective credit.

With the expertise of some of our recently arrived faculty, we are now able to offer three new practice electives: SOWK 422/522, Social Work and Chemical Dependency; SOWK 427/527, Social Work and Domestic Violence; and, SOWK 432/532, Social Work and Disabilities. These courses can be taken for undergraduate or graduate credit, and can meet the need for continuing education hours for those of you who are licensed.

Students graduating in December of 2007 will be the first class to officially graduate with a Bachelors of Science in Social Work (BSSW)! This change distinguishes the professional nature of the degree awarded to students of social work. Additionally, it allows students who come back to the University already possessing a BS degree, to add a social work degree to their resume and have it recognized as a separate degree. We are very pleased that the degree name change was approved in December of 2005 by the MnSCU Board of Trustees, and only wish that it could be made retroactive to earlier graduates.

Social Work Team takes a hike!

The Social Work Department was well represented at the May 7th, 2006 Multiple Sclerosis Walk by a group of energetic students, along with a faculty member (Chris) and her dog! The team covered the five mile walk with great enthusiasm, earning t-shirts for their efforts along with raising several hundred dollars for the fight against MS.
Domestic Violence & Multi-Disciplinary Education by Annelies Hagemeister

When I was hired to teach at Mankato in the Social Work program, I was eager to begin teaching a course focused on my area of practice and research experience, domestic violence. When I first taught the 3-credit course two years ago there were 13 students, but this past semester there were 30 students enrolled in the course. Despite the relative lack of specific domestic violence education social workers have received in the past, this issue is a cross-cutting problem that touches the lives of many social workers and their clients in different fields of practice.

Fran Danis and Lettie Lockhart published a collection of curriculum modules on domestic violence entitled *Breaking the Silence in Social Work* (2004, CSWE). Their edited collection includes 37 different modules, including two that I had previously developed for a course on children and domestic violence. The collection suggests that domestic violence screening, risk assessment, and intervention should be an integral part of practice in fields from child protection to school social work, substance abuse to public assistance (Danis & Lockhart, 2004), among others.

In addition, it is important for social workers to understand how other professionals respond to and intervene in situations of domestic or intimate partner violence. To that end, the social work elective taught in this department now includes concurrent sessions with violence-related courses taught in sociology, corrections, and law enforcement. As part of the Interdisciplinary Violence Education Program at MSU, Mankato, we work to bring in guest speakers from the community and have interdisciplinary discussion groups where students learn how students in other majors look at the issues and interventions surrounding domestic violence.

Social Work Alumna of the Year

Two more years, two more great graduates doing wonderful things

Since it has been a while since the last newsletter, here’s an update on our most recent two winners of the annual Alumna of the Year award. In 2004 we honored Pat Kuehl (class of ’76) for her years of high quality service at the Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health in Region IX, her years of nursing home social work, and her years at St. Peter Regional Treatment Center. As with so many of our award winners, her efforts don’t stop at the work site as she is active in several communities serving on a range of boards and in a variety of volunteer settings. Her photo shows her with her advisor, retired professor Wayne Sandee.

In 2005 we honored Julie Caraway Jensen (class of ’95) based on her creative leadership and personal commitment to Partners for Affordable Housing where she serves as Program Director, coordinating a variety of programs that assist the homeless. Like other winners before her, Julie gave a very moving presentation about what it has meant to her to work in our profession and with some of our most powerless clients.

We will be recognizing another graduate this Fall and would appreciate your nominations of any alum who has been working in the field at least 10 years since graduation!
A trip to Israel by Marilyn Frank

From the middle of May until the middle of June I had a wonderful opportunity to visit Israel. For two weeks I taught English to adults in Tiberias. We could see the Sea of Galilee (Lake Kinneret) from the classroom. The Israeli’s were very interested in learning about Minnesota and sharing their experiences of life in the Upper Galilee region of Israel. I visited with people in their homes, on their farms, and had tours of the area and the local college. I even saw the remains of a 2000 year old fishing boat that dates back to the time Jesus and his disciples preached in the area.

Other experiences included hiking for 4 hours down into a wadi (deep valley through which water flows after a heavy rainfall) just outside Safed (Tsfat) a sacred city in Northern Israel. In Jerusalem I visited a close Palestinian friend and his family. At the Jerusalem YMCA I met and shared a meal with Muslim, Christian, and Jewish teenage girls and their families. The teen girls had participated in a 6 month program to learn about and share each other’s culture. At the family gathering I attended I was introduced in Hebrew and Arabic as a friend from Minnesota. I was warmly invited to share in one of the best meals I have eaten-anywhere.

Behind me are sites sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians. I pray for peace in this region and around the world.

Ethics and Continuing Education by Christine Black-Hughes

The Social Work Department responded to the Minnesota Social Work Board’s January, 2006 Statutory Continuing Education changes by providing ethics workshops. New Statute 148D.130, Subd. 2. states, “At least two of the clock hours required under subdivision 1 must be in social work ethics”. The Workshops presented by Chris have focused on the connection between interdisciplinary communication and ethical practice. Individual case studies are the focus of the workshops along with the application of the MN Standards of Practice and the NASW Code of Ethics. Several agencies across the state have requested the workshops. These agencies included Brown, Dodge, and Kandiyohi Human Services, MN Ombudsman’s Office, Saint Peter RTC, Scott & Brainerd Educational Coops, and the Association of Nursing Home Social Workers from the Southwestern Region. Future workshops are scheduled with MSSA Regions 9 & 10 and ISJ Hospital in Mankato.

Christine has also represented the Department as an active participant on the Board of Social Work’s Advisory Committee, including the Foreign Born/ESL and the Clinical Standards for Social Work Subcommittees. For those of you who have your MSW, the Clinical Standards subcommittee is in the process of developing new standards for LICSW applicants. If implemented, the proposed training and practice standards will affect eligibility to apply to take the LICSW examination and to conduct clinical supervision.
Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Grant by Debra Gohagan

The Department of Social Work is one of 5 members of the BSW Undergraduate Child Welfare Consortium (with St. Cloud, Moorhead, Winona, and Bemidji). The goal of this project is to recruit and train undergraduate social workers for practice in rural settings with at-risk children and families. Funds for this project are allocated through Minnesota Department of Human Services using federal Administration for Children, Youth and Families Title IV-E funding. This project is administered by the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare under the auspices of the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. Graduate programs in social work have had access to these training dollars for over 20 years but only in recent years have these funds become available for undergraduate social work programs. Research shows that social work professionals who are committed to working in child welfare and who are supported financially and academically in this commitment are more effective practitioners and make a longer term investment in their careers in children and families services. We accepted our first students Spring ‘05 and have provided stipends to 20 students for up to 3 semesters each. Of these 20 students, 11 have graduated and have completed or are in the process of completing their employment commitment to work in child welfare.

Social Work majors accepted into this program are provided a stipend of $1900 per semester. During their academic experience students are encouraged to increase their knowledge and awareness of social work with children and families through course work, participation in workshops, and access to resources specific to child welfare. Their senior practicum must be in a child welfare agency, and upon graduation, they agree to seek employment in a child welfare program which primarily serves Title IV-E eligible children (children at risk of removal from their homes or who have been removed from their homes) for a period of at least as long as they received financial support.

Nominate Someone for Alumna/Alumnus of the Year

As discussed on page 6, each year the Department honors one of our graduates as Alumna/us of the Year. You can help us by nominating one of our graduates that you know has served the profession for at least the past 10 years. Please send your nominee’s name and contact information and why you think they deserve the award to Bill Anderson (william.anderson@mnsu.edu). This year we will accept nominations until September 15th and the award ceremony will be on November 3rd, 2006. The list of previous winners is on our website at: sbs.mnsu.edu/socialwork/alumni/alumofyear.html

Keep in Touch!!

There are so many ways that you can keep in touch -- let us know where you are and what you are doing via telephone (507-389-6504), email (social-work@mnsu.edu), on the contacts page on our website (sbs.mnsu.edu/socialwork/contact/), via mail at the address below, or when you see us at conferences or site visits. We’re always looking for more field supervisors, donors, and distinguished alumnae!

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