Diversity Lecture and Awards Luncheon Highlight Social Work Month

The School of Social Work celebrated March, Social Work Month, with two major events, the second annual Diversity Lecture by faculty member Anthony King, followed a few days later by the Alumni Association annual meeting and awards luncheon.

King’s Diversity Lecture Details Strategies for Success in Reentry Programs

The school’s 2nd Annual Diversity Lecture was delivered by Dr. King on March 20 in the Community Arts Auditorium. Entitled “Demographic Characteristics of Returning Offenders: Implications for Community-based Reentry Programs and Service Providers,” the talk brought the large, attentive audience up to date on the problems faced in attempting to ease the transition from prison to family and community and reduce recidivism as offenders complete their sentences.

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March 31st press conference, which served as the media announcement of the school’s new Center for Social Work Practice and Policy Research, was well attended and demonstrated the collaborative powers the center and its agency partners will have.

Press Conference participants included Provost Nancy Barrett, Dean Phyllis Vroom, Center Director Joanne Sobeck, New Detroit President Shirley Stancato, Ismael Ahmed, director of Michigan’s Department of Human Services (DHS), President and CEO of Oakland Family Services Michael Earl and Alice Thompson, CEO of Black Family Development, Inc.

Writing for the Detroit Free Press, education writer Robin Erb said, “A new research center at Wayne State University will connect number-crunchers, policy-makers and social workers as they tackle Detroit’s — and possibly the nation’s — thorniest social issues…” The Free Press article continues, quoting presenter Ahmed from DHS, “...the issues the center will explore are “almost a perfect alignment” with issues at DHS.” Erb’s article concluded by quoting Center Director Joanne Sobeck, “Our neighborhoods, our city, our state face an economic downturn that weighs heavily on our people and the communities...the time is right for this kind of research because social workers are well placed to help the growing need.”

Marisa Schultz, a reporter from The Detroit News also attended the press conference and filed a story headlined “WSU beefs up urban social work…University center will help community agencies figure out best ways to address region’s ills.” She described how students will have first-hand opportunities to work with faculty on research projects, and how results will be disseminated throughout the broader community. Then Schultz quoted doctoral student Angela Kaiser, a student in the school’s first PhD class, on the center’s goal of researching best practices: “You don’t want to be doing something that doesn’t work, especially when you are trying to help people.”

In addition, WDET, WWJ and WUOM reporters interviewed Dean Vroom during the press conference. The WWJ piece ran throughout the day on March 31 and during the morning newscasts on April 1. Crain’s Detroit Business also ran a story in May.

Welcome to the summer 2008 edition of Visions and a special additional welcome to the members of the Class of 2008, who are now officially members of the alumni body. We are happy to have you aboard. I hope you will enjoy this edition and that you will read each issue of Visions with interest, because it is our major means for keeping in touch with our alumni and letting you know what is going on in the school, the university and the Alumni Association.

The lead story in this issue, on the cover, is about the events we held in March to celebrate Social Work Month...events that I hope you will attend next year if you find yourself on or near the campus.

Perhaps of even more interest to you new graduates, there’s a story on the graduation luncheon in your honor that I was pleased to host in May at the Roostertail Restaurant.

And for all of you there are several stories about the school’s current activities, including a profile on BSW Coordinator Cassandra Bowers and the important work she is doing with the State of Michigan Department of Human Services and several other Michigan colleges and universities. Also there’s news about a singular honor recently bestowed on interim MSW Coordinator Jerrold Brandell, as well as a story on the attention our new Center for Social Work Practice and Policy Research has been getting from the local press here in Michigan.

Summer is generally a quieter time on campus...but it is also a time when we can take a short breath and then get on with the important work of preparing for the new entering class and taking further steps to implement our strategic plan. I hope you, too, are having a laid back but productive summer. ■

Dean Phyllis Vroom
A $75,000 grant, to be spread over three years, has been awarded to the Masters of Social Work program for development of an innovative program that prepares social workers to specialize in the care of older adults. The school joins 41 others from around the country that have adopted the New York Academy of Medicine’s Social Work Leadership Institute’s model, with support from the John A. Hartford Foundation. Called the Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education, the program will help meet the growing demand for social workers, as the nation’s aging population is expected to more than triple by 2050.

Student leaders who spoke at luncheon: Sarah Barlow and Hassan Hammoud.

At the end of April, Dean Phyllis Vroom hosted a luncheon at the Roostertail restaurant on the Detroit River honoring the class of 2008 and welcoming the graduates into the alumni ranks. In her welcome remarks, Dean Vroom said, “I hope that the skills, knowledge and values you have gained at Wayne State University have prepared you well. By choosing social work as a profession you have already signaled your belief in the importance of serving others and contributing to the community.”

Following the dean’s welcome, attendees heard student representatives Hassan Hammoud (representing BSW students) and Sarah Barlow (the MSW representative) speak on behalf of their respective classes. Next came toasts by Program Coordinators Cassandra Bowers and Jerrold Brandell, followed by a welcome to the Alumni Association by current president Georgene Thornton.

Another highlight of the program was recognition of the charter members of Phi Alpha, a chapter of which has just been established at the school. The purpose of Phi Alpha Honor Society is to provide a closer bond among students of social work and promote humanitarian goals and ideals. Phi Alpha fosters high standards of education for social workers and invites into membership those who have attained excellence in scholarship and achievement.

Students can apply up for the Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education fellowship starting this fall, with the first crop of graduates expected in 2009. For more information, contact Director of Field Education, Anwar Najor-Durack ac1724@wayne.edu or (313) 577-4446.
School of Social Work Sponsors “Roots and Wings” Conference September 16 through 20th

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is an edited version of a story submitted by conference director Adrienne Brant James, an alumna who received her MSW from the school in 1963.

In sponsoring the Roots and Wings Seminars at Wayne State University, the School of Social Work honors a celebrated past history while focusing on the future. This conference and companion pre-conference workshops celebrate the contributions of early pioneers, the “roots.” A large number of significant professional careers were nurtured in Detroit by the progressive-looking School of Social Work and fellow academicians from the College of Education. These visionaries rejected the pessimism of “deviance and deficit” mindsets and believed even “difficult” youth possess strength and resilience, so they set out to design schools, group programs and therapeutic milieus in which all young persons could grow and thrive. The best-known “launching pad” for this view was Pioneer House, a group home on Second Avenue which was later to become famous in the books, Children Who Hate and Control From Within by Fritz Redl and David Wineman. Later published as one volume, The Aggressive Child, this work became the single most prominent publication in the development of the “wings,” the legacy programs on which the upcoming seminars are based. Redl, an Austrian, came to the U.S. in 1936 and had a profound influence on the development of the school’s curriculum during the 1940s. Wineman was a program director at Pioneer House and its summer extension, Camp Chief Noonday, along with Mary Lee Nicholson. These programs evolved from a deep commitment to treating all persons with dignity and respect and focused on children in the natural life space of family, school, peers and community. Watchwords were democratic group dynamics, qualitative action research, conflict resolution, therapeutic milieu and positive social ecology.

Researchers, often protegés of practical theorist Kurt Lewin, came to WSU to work with Fritz Redl, and then built their own very successful ways after training and education “in the real world.” Researchers and practitioners came to remarkably similar conclusions over the years, resulting in what we celebrate this fall as the “reclaiming youth movement.”

Pre-conference two-day workshops include Response Ability Pathways (RAP), the Circle of Courage resilience model; the Developmental Audit, advanced strategies for strength-based assessment; Enchanted with Chemicals, reclaiming kids caught in the web of drugs, and a one-day workshop on The Circle of Courage.

Dozens of conference presenters include Frank Fecser of the Life Space Crisis Institute; John Seita, author of Kids Who Outgrew Adults; and Michael Peterson on inclusive schooling. Thom Carfat from Quebec and Karen VanderVeen of the University of Pittsburgh are world leaders in child and youth care. William Steele, MSW from WSU, is internationally known for his Trauma Loss in Children sensory intervention strategies. John Gibbs, Erik Laursen, and Martin Gold study positive peer cultures with delinquents. Derek Peterson heads the Institute for Community and Adolescent Resilience, Martin Mitchell and Herman McCall of Starr Commonwealth are experts on schools and strength-based treatment.

The School of Social Work highlights this heritage and especially notes the achievements of Redl, Winemen, Paul Gump, who co-authored the classic, Big School, Smoll School, in these developments as well as in this conference and whose work endures in the legacy programs that will be celebrated and discussed.

All workshops are being processed for social work CEU credit and are also available for college credit from Augustana College. Student discounts are available. In recognition of the financial stresses facing the country and Detroit in particular, some presenters have offered their services pro bono and Conference fees have been reduced considerably. Updated fees and further information and registration are available online at www.reclaiming.com. Conference director James can be reached at (313) 308-7935 or abjames@reclaiming.com.

Cassandra Bowers

Coordinator for the WSU Baccalaureate Social Work program since 2000, Professor Cassandra Bowers joined the full-time faculty in 1998. Before that she was an administrator for several not-for-profit human service agencies serving adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18. Bowers earned both her MSW in social work administration and her PhD from Wayne State University.

Since 1998, Bowers has been the school’s PI for the Family and Child Welfare Educational Program designed to increase the professionalism of the Department of Human Services Child and Family Services Division front-line and supervisory staff, working with a consortium of five other Michigan universities and the state of Michigan’s Department of Human Services. After its 10 years in existence, the program is having a very positive long-term impact on the quality of service to children and families in the state and beyond. Over 100 WSU students have graduated with their MSW and have benefitted the Department of Human Services with their professionalism and ability to work effectively with children and families, and only three have failed to fulfill the program’s requirement of four years of service subsequent to completing their MSWs. And the influence of their experience had broadened as many graduates have moved in to supervisory roles in which they share what they have learned with those they supervise.

And now Bowers is Principal Investigator of a study that is preparing to collect data to measure the overrepresentation of minority children in the child welfare system, working with faculty members Alice Lamont and Shirley Thomas.

In yet another related activity, Bowers and Thomas worked on an AHCC Committee of the Department to develop a clinical unit within the Child and Family Services Division of the Wayne County Department of Human Services. Recently Bowers was named Special Projects Chair for the Baccalaureate Program Directors National Conferences to be held in Phoenix and Atlanta over the next two years. She has also received a service learning project grant to introduce the discipline of gerontology to BSW students. She is also co PI on a project to infuse gerontological content into all curricular areas of the BSW Program.

Bowers has been a guest speaker for the “Parenting Behind Bars” program at the Mound Road Correctional Facility in Detroit. In a thank-you letter after her presentation, that facility’s Blair quoted one of the young fathers in attendance as saying Dr. Bowers was “gangster tough,” while others praised her “gentle, caring yet powerful intellect.”

In the community, Bowers is working with a community organization that runs a parent advocacy program, helping them to evaluate the program’s effectiveness.

As you might expect, Bowers’ research interests are in the area of adolescence, both in the delinquent and non-delinquent populations. Other areas of interest include alternative education for the at-risk adolescent population. Dr. Bowers can be reached at aa208@wayne.edu.
Alumni Luncheon Honors Doug Plant and Robert Ennis

The Alumni luncheon on March 28th honored "Alumnus of the Year" Doug Plant (MSW ’81) and Robert Ennis as "Citizen of the Year". Presided over by Alumni Association president Georgene Thornton, and held at Alumni House, the luncheon is held each March as a celebration of Social Work Month.

Plant, who was introduced by Dean Vroom, is the Vice President of Community Services for United Way for Southeastern Michigan and was recognized as Alumni of the Year for "visionary leadership in the use of technology to support human services and organizational excellence." He oversees funding, partnerships, and operations of the volunteer center and 2-1-1. He began at United Way in 2005 as a consultant and organizational excellence. "He oversees funding, partnerships, and operations of the 2-1-1 call center. He was subsequently hired as the Operations Manager then moved into the Director's role before taking on the newly formed Community Services department in 2007.

Plant earned his MSW from Wayne State University in 1981 and has held a variety of management roles in both for-profit and non-profit human service entities for over 20 years.

Ennis is a licensed social worker in the State of Michigan and founder and president of Ennis Center for Children, Inc. which provides Foster Care, Adoption, Juvenile Delinquency, Mental Health, and Sexual Offender programs. He was recognized for his "dynamic leadership as an advocate promoting effective public policy and services to children, youth and families in the State of Michigan."

The major speaker at the event was Joanne Sobeck, who spoke on the topic "Introducing the WSU Center for Social Work Research: Your Connection for Research Support, Partnerships and Success," thereby giving alumni luncheon attendees a scoop over the local media, which heard the same message at a press conference the following week (see related story on p. 2).

Summarizing his message, Dr. King said, "As the nation finally awakens from its fascination with mass incarceration... reintegration programs and services have become the social movement of the day. While... there are a number of promising and effective interventions... the fact is, we know far less about how to transform today's convicted felon into a law-abiding and productive citizen than one may think. Therefore, prisoner reentry programs and community-based agencies that serve returning offenders must think outside of the box. More importantly, they have to learn as much as possible about the men and women they serve, their backgrounds, cultural norms, communities, frustrations, and aspirations."

Then he concluded by sharing several recommendations reentry programs and service providers need to consider as they develop programs:

1. Provide every returning offender with a corrective experience that addresses their problem solving deficits and cognitive impairments as well as their emotional problems and issues.

2. Help offenders establish or reestablish healthy relationships with families, communities, and the broader society. They are the foundation for effective prisoner reentry and reintegration.

3. Help offenders develop new peer groups and life styles. Because the overwhelming majority of released offenders return to the same communities and neighborhoods they lived in prior to their imprisonment, a major challenge for returning offenders is developing new associations.

4. Help Offenders Manage Role and Identity Transition. Returning offenders need significant help in developing positive, pro-social, and productive personalities and identities. After years of engaging in criminal and antisocial activities and being labeled by society as misfits, criminals or predators, inmates and parolees need help shedding the self images they developed in response to these categorizations and ridding themselves of these stereotypes.

5. Support and Sustain Reentering Offenders perhaps the most important resource reentering and recovering offenders need is daily, unconditional support which often is a scarce resource. returning offenders need a tremendous amount of personal support and encouragement to sustain them during the reentry process because the odds against them successfully reentering their communities, even under the best of circumstances, can be low. They know this and so do their family members, friends, and the larger society. Frequently, returning offenders have previously failed to successfully reenter their communities and the negative attitudes about previous offenders that permeate our society remind them daily of that fact. Reentering inmates and parolees also have their own doubts about their ability to succeed on the outside. These circumstances can destroy offenders' confidence and sap their motivation to change, which in turn, can negatively affect their compliance with the conditions of their parole or their involvement in reentry programming. Formal and informal support groups for both offenders and their families can provide the type of emotional support both need to help them cope with the emotional highs and lows associated with reentry and reintegration.
It has been an exciting and active academic year for your Alumni Association, which now boasts 885 paid members, nearly 10% of our 8810 living alumni. On your behalf, I was especially pleased to attend the graduation luncheon at the Roostertail hosted by Dean Vroom, where I welcomed over 300 members of the class of 2008 into our alumni ranks.

During the year I also enjoyed attending some of the Wayne First Campaign events held throughout the area. At these events, SSW alumna (MSW '69) and member of the SSW Board of Visitors, Annette Freedman, was featured prominently in a film as she is interviewed about why and how she established an endowed scholarship for the School of Social Work. “It was time to give back…” is the essence of Annette’s message as she describes how she established a SSW endowed scholarship.

Over 10 years ago the SSW Alumni Association established an endowment for a student scholarship. Through your generosity, at our “Dinner with the Dean” event in June at the Detroit Yacht Club, I had the honor of presenting Dean Vroom with checks totaling $2000 as a gift to the school from your alumni association. These funds were raised from association activities such as our theater party in April, the sale of alumni merchandise, and a silent auction held at the DYC dinner. You can be proud to know that the endowed scholarship currently has a principle of over $23,000 which will never be spent down. Interest from this growing principal is given to students in the form of scholarship funds. During her tenure, Dean Vroom has seen the collective principal from all of the school’s established endowments grow to over a million dollars, thanks in no small measure to the generosity of our alumni and other friends of the school.

I hope you will stay in touch by attending one of our events in the coming year and renewing your alumni membership. Also consider participating as a member of your alumni board which meets monthly and carries out plans to sustain our loyalty and connection to the school. Great things are happening at WSU. We have a lot to be proud of. I can be reached through the dean’s office at (313) 577-4464 and welcome your call.

Georgene Thornton, MSW
President
Other board members are: Pamela Hopkins, Vice President, Joanne Bregolin, Secretary, Tim Cobb, Treasurer, Jerry Caughey, Parliamentarian, Kimibrate Adams, Past President, Sue Bangana, Donald Barry, Catherine Banker, Phyllis Edwards, Mosque Hughes, Debbie May, Fatu Njai, Members at Large, Nevan Hammond, Student Liaison to the Alumni Board
Assistant Professor Fayetta Martin Selected to Participate in Institute on Aging Program

Fayette Martin has been selected to participate in the Institute on Aging and Social Work, a year-long, intensive program at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota which provides advanced training in aging research for social work faculty members from across the nation. Martin is one of 15 participants chosen from a pool of hundreds of applicants.

Those who are chosen develop knowledge and skills in research methodology and have the opportunity for extended contact with distinguished visiting professors and National Institute on Aging (NIA) staff. In addition, they work with colleagues from other institutions to develop a research proposal and submit it to NIA/NIH. Participants are challenged to emphasize methodological issues in their own courses and to provide research experience to their students.

Martin is one of 15 participants chosen from a pool of hundreds of applicants.

The program offers an opportunity for top-level training with nationally recognized experts in research methodology related to aging. Specifically designed for college and university social work faculty, the program aims to strengthen participants’ knowledge and skills essential for developing an active research agenda and integrating research in aging with teaching.

Your Visions editor asked Martin what she was expecting to learn that might be of interest to alumni who work in the aging field. She replied, “I am expecting to... gain a better understanding of the National Institute on Aging’s grant process and about funding opportunities.” We also asked what her specific focus would be and how it might help the school. Martin’s answer: “As a result of my participation in Institute on Aging and Social Work workshop this summer, my research and teaching this fall will be greatly infused with new knowledge, and understanding of cutting edge issues in aging that will benefit my students, the WSU community, and the Detroit metropolitan area...”

Cotman to Assist Carlton in Planned Giving

Ivan Louis Cotman, community advocate and longtime education administrator in Michigan, has joined the university’s Planned Gifts Committee. Cotman will be lending special focus to School of Social Work efforts to increase partnerships with individuals and business organizations, working with Development Director Marguerite Carlton.

Cotman brings to the school and the committee his expertise as a lead consultant with Cotman and Associates, a philanthropic consulting firm for nonprofit organizations and individual and family counseling, and 38 years of experience in education administration.

His career in education administration included 21 years with the Michigan Department of Education, where his last position was Assistant Superintendent and Director of the Office of Enrichment and Community Services.

He earned a bachelor’s degree in English and Social Science from Kentucky State University, his MSW in Social Work degree from Clark Atlanta University, and a doctoral degree from Wayne State University in Educational Leadership and Administration.

Brandell Named Distinguished Professor

Upon the recommendation of Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Nancy S. Barrett and President Irvin D. Reid, Professor Jerrold R. Brandell has been appointed to the rank of Distinguished Professor. The university’s Board of Governors (BOG) announced the appointment during its March 2008 meeting, along with four others. The designation comes with a $2500 stipend. Brandell is Chair, Graduate Concentration in Interpersonal Practice; interim MSW Program Coordinator; and Lead Teacher, Psychodynamic Practice Track

Reacting to news of the appointment, Dean Phyllis Vroom said, “This rank is one of the most prestigious in this university and is awarded to only a few faculty members. Please join me in congratulating Professor Brandell on this well-deserved and singular honor, which he brings to himself and to the school.”

Brandell joined the School of Social Work faculty in 1992, after teaching at Michigan State University and Boston University. A practicing psychoanalyst and social work clinician, he is founding editor of the clinical journal, Psychoanalytic Social Work, and currently serves on the International Editorial Advisory Board of the Israel Annual of Psychoanalysis, as well as on the Editorial Boards of Clinical Social Work Journal and the Bulletin of the Michigan Psychoanalytic Council. He was elected President of the Michigan Psychoanalytic Council in 2007. He is very actively involved in clinical practice, consultation, and supervision, and in 2001 was elected to membership as a distinguished practitioner in the National Academies of Practice. He and his family live in Ann Arbor.

This rank is one of the most prestigious in this university and is awarded to only a few faculty members. Please join me in congratulating Professor Brandell on this well-deserved and singular honor, which he brings to himself and to the school.” — Dean Phyllis Vroom


In 2007, he gave the First Annual Jean Leach Lecture at Family Services of Cincinnati, Ohio. Previously he was the Day-Care Lecturer at Smith College School of Social Work, and has also given the Joan Greenstone Memorial Lecture in Chicago by joint invitation of the Loyola University School of Social Work and the Institute for Clinical Social Work. Recently, he was invited to present a half-day workshop at the Fifth International Congress of Psychotherapy, to be held in Beijing, China, in October.
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