Commission Affirms WSU School of Social Work’s Accreditation for Eight Years

In late June, WSU President Irvin Reid and Dean Phyllis Vroom received the word we all had been anticipating for months: after an arduous documenting process, the Wayne State University School of Social Work achieved reaffirmation of its accreditation until 2015 by the Commission on Accreditation (CSWE). Reacting to the news, Dean Phyllis Vroom said, “I extend a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to everyone involved in writing the self-study and to each member of the faculty, academic, administrative, technical, secretarial and clerical support staff for your hard work. All of our hard work recently and over many years has brought forth sweet fruit.”

As a part of reaffirmation feedback, the Commission cited many strengths of the School of Social Work’s program, including the quality of the faculty, staff, administration and leadership; our BSW & MSW curricula, Advisement/Retention Programs; the diversity of both student body and staff; our strong Field Education program and other special programs such as the BSW Integrative Seminar and the Advanced Year concentrations in Community Practice and Social Action, as well as Interpersonal Practice.

They also commended the school’s high graduation rate, the satisfaction employers find in our alumni practitioners, faculty scholarship, the reputation of both the BSW and MSW programs and the school’s impact on the community through participation on boards, commissions, task forces as well as research and technical assistance.

In summary Dean Vroom added, “We’re particularly gratified that the high quality of our programs and everything that entails is reaffirmed. And we’re thrilled that we also met our goal of completing the self-study and reaffirmation processes without having to write an interim report.”

The CSWE is a nonprofit national association representing more than 3,000 individual members as well as graduate and undergraduate programs of professional social work education. Founded in 1952, this partnership of educational and professional institutions, social welfare agencies, and private citizens is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the sole accrediting agency for social work education in this country.
MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

The biggest news we’ve had since the last issue of Visions came in June when the Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education informed Wayne State University President Irvin D. Reid of their “vote to reaffirm accreditation for eight years, ending June 2015.” This was the culmination of a long, occasionally arduous process which involved many persons, including faculty, staff and alumni. There’s a detailed article discussing the commission’s findings elsewhere in this issue.

Less welcome news came in early fall when university president Irvin Reid announced his intention to step down in 2008. But I was delighted to learn that he will continue to work on strengthening the relationship between Wayne State University and the City of Detroit, thanks to the generous support of Eugene Applebaum. In my opinion, the best way to honor his leadership will be to continue our excellence in our urban, research, teaching and scholarship missions.

Another key part of this issue is a public thank you to all of the donors who have supported the school during the last couple of years. It is not news that these have been difficult times for the university and the school as well as for the city and state. That’s why private support has become ever more important for us. Your generosity and that of our other donors help us maintain our standards and to help the Wayne First Capital Campaign draw to a strong conclusion … which gives me a smooth segue to my next topic.

Over the last several months there have been other “news.” Look in these pages for a profile of new Associate Dean Cheryl Waites, an outstanding addition to our administration who comes to us from a tenured position at North Carolina State University. She replaces interim Associate Dean Beverly Black who has decided to return to the warmer climes of southern Texas. We will miss her. Joining Dr. Waites on the faculty is newcomer Shawna Lee, PhD who has earned several degrees from the University of Michigan and comes to us from the University of South Carolina. May these Carolinians bring some warmth to our approaching winter! A well-attended Edith Harris lecture by Ellen Pence is reported on here as well.

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Academic Senate President Seymour Wolfson, and Medical School representatives, Dr. Robert Menzter, Dean, Dr. John Flack, Chair, Internal Medicine and Dr. Jose Rafols, Professor, Anatomy. Mary Ann Tyler-Alien and Elizabeth Hardy represent the alumni body and Student Council President Cindy Chidi gives a student perspective to the group. Faculty representatives include Jorge Chinea, Liberal Arts and Sciences, James Hartway, Fine, Communications and Performing Arts, and William Volz, School of Business Administration. Other committee members are: Judy McClusty, President, Staff Association and Charles Parrish, President, AUP-APT, representing staff and unions, and Gary Togrog of The Sterling Group, representing the business community. The Honorable Claudia Morcom and Eddie McDonald, City of Detroit, are voices from the community and Hilary Ratner, VP, Division of Research, and Ahmad Ezeddine, Academic Affairs serve as representatives of the university administration. Executive Secretary to the Committee is Christine Cook.

Comments about the search and nominations of potential candidates may be sent to the Presidential Search Advisory committee: PSAC@wayne.edu or by mail to P.O. Box 2130, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202. A website will be established soon.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Dean Phyllis Vroom
Three New Candidates join PhD Program

In September three more students joined the school’s fledgling PhD program, bringing the total currently enrolled to six. The newcomers are Cristina Tucker, Rebecca Wiersma and Nancy Thornton. Tucker comes to WSU from northern California; Wiersma and Thornton are both Michigan residents. Wiersma is an alumna, having received her MSW from the school, while Thornton holds degrees from the University of Michigan and Texas A&M – Corpus Christi.

Tucker says, “I chose this particular program because my interests are concentrated in social and economic justice, with a focus on race relations. Many of the current professors have been tackling some of the very research questions that I am interested in. I feel that the applied research approach at WSU is most appropriate for both the social and the economic difficulties in Detroit. I am interested in policy and theory with a direct connection to the city in need. Detroit, I feel, is that city.” She also states, “In this school, I expect to be immersed in a struggling urban center with great potential for community development. I hope to learn a great deal from the fantastic faculty here. It is wonderful to see the enthusiasm from the faculty and their accessibility.”

Wiersma adds, “I was excited to find out about Wayne State University’s new PhD program through the School of Social Work. I graduated from (the) MSW program in 2002, and I received an excellent education. Thus, my previous experience … made me feel that the … program could provide me with another great academic experience.”

Thornton describes her reasons for joining the program, “I was drawn to the Wayne State School of Social Work because of the focus on inner city challenges. In this first year I am serving as a graduate research assistant for Dr. Faith Hopp, studying access to health care for elderly persons with advanced heart failure.”

The 2007 Edith Harris Endowed Memorial Lecture delivered by Ellen Pence

Ellen Pence, PhD, founder of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, was the featured speaker for the 20th Annual Edith Harris Memorial Lecture on Thursday, October 18, 2007. The lecture, titled Strengthening Community Responses to Violence, was held at the Community Arts Auditorium.

Dr. Ellen Pence has worked for over 30 years in efforts to end violence in the lives of women and their children. She was one of the founders of the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project an inter-agency collaboration model used in all 50 states and over 17 countries. She is the chief author of the Praxis Institutional Audit (PIA). The PIA is a method of identifying, analyzing and correcting institutional failures to protect people drawn into legal and human service systems because of violence and/or poverty. Pence is currently working with the State of Michigan to audit the sources of racial disparity in the child welfare system.

Pence is well known for helping administrators and practitioners reevaluate their conceptual and administrative practices with an eye toward closing the gap between what people need and what institutions do. She has received numerous accolades for her work in the field.

Dr. Ellen Pence delivered the 20th Harris Lecture in October.
School of Social Work Donor Honor Roll

The administration, faculty, staff and students of the Wayne State University School of Social Work gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following organizations and individuals in calendar year 2006. If you wish to make a contribution or have a comment on the honor role, please contact our development director, Marguerite Carlton, at (313) 577-8807 or ae8206wayne.edu.

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School Welcomes New Associate Dean, Cheryl E. Waites

Dean Phyllis Vroom has announced the appointment of a new associate dean, Cheryl E. Waites. Dean Waites comes to the school from a tenured position at North Carolina State University, where she earned her Ed.D in Counselor Education and where she has served as associate head of the Department of Social Work since 1999. Waites, whose research foci include aging and intergenerational practice, social justice, best practice with African-American families and communities as well as social work education, received a N.C. State Outstanding Teacher Award in 2005-2006.

Waites earned her MSW from Fordham University’s Graduate School of Social Services and her BA in Sociology from Hunter College at City University of New York. She has been appointed to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Commission on Accreditation for a 2006-2009 term. She has previously served on the CSWE Board of Directors.

Georgene Thornton – Parliamentarian

The new Associate Dean is a recognized author and a leading scholar in gerontological social work. She has been designated as a Faculty Scholar by the Hartford Foundation and was awarded a grant to support her study on “Determining Health Promotion Strategies and Interventions: Social Work Practice with African-American Elders.”

Visions sat down with Dean Waites to hear a bit about her goals as dean. She hopes to “build a community and supportive climate where collaborative processes and clear communication are in place.” We also asked her if she had a message for our alumni readers. Her response was, “There are many exciting things going on here — and I have the honor of working … to move toward even greater success as a world-class school of social work. As associate dean I have oversight of academic and student affairs. I am honored to be working with Dean Vroom … and the very talented and accomplished faculty and staff. I look forward to the opportunities to come.”

Dean Waites replaces Interim Associate Dean Beverly Black, who has accepted a position as MSW Coordinator at University of Texas-Arlington. Black made major contributions to the school in curriculum, instruction, research and service. She just completed a highly lauded, funded project on prevention of dating violence with middle school boys and girls in the Detroit Public Schools. Dean Vroom stated, simply, “She will be missed!”

MESSAGE FROM Georgene Thornton Alumni Association President

Greetings! I am very excited to be your new Alumni Association president and to welcome everyone back for the 2007-2008 academic year. There is something especially exciting about the beginning of a new school year … there’s a delicious buzz on campus … new students are excited and curious … returning students ready to get started again … and faculty and alumni are happy to make new acquaintances.

I believe the School of Social Work offers one of the most fulfilling programs at Wayne State University, or anywhere, for that matter. As an alumna I believe I speak for all of you when I say we are proud we chose the program here, successfully completed it and returned to give back by active participation in the Alumni Association and serve on its board.

Introductions

As is customary, the Association’s board held its annual election at the end of last school year. The other new officers are: Pamela Hopkins – Vice President; Joanne Brogdon – Secretary; Tia Cobb – Treasurer; Jerry Caughy – Parliamentarian; Immediate Past President – Dr. Kimberly Adams.

Other Board members are Donald Berry, Cathrine Bunker, Phyllis Edwards (Social Committee Chair), Maxine Hudgins (Membership Committee Chair), Delores May (Fundraising Committee Chair), and Faize Nojar (Education Committee Co-chair).

Non-elected staff include Loren Hoffman, Dean’s Liaison and Yvette Chestong, WSU Alumni Affairs Liaison.

Business

We held our annual Board retreat in July at the Detroit Yacht Club. The main focus of our deliberations was to explore new ways of keeping our members (YOU) interested and involved in your association … and to assist in improving the school’s visibility in the larger community. Some ideas for doing this: social work forum with inner-city families; mentorship program for incoming and returning students; quarterly guest speakers with attendance earning CE credits.

Fundraising Dates to Keep in Mind

A second focus of the July retreat was fundraising. We have made a fun addition to our fundraising event schedule, a Detroit Repertory Theatre Night slated for next April … April 27, 2008 to be specific. Your $25 ticket gives you admission to “Southern Comforts,” a romantic comedy by Kathleen Clark, plus hors d’oeuvres and champagne for starters.

The Alumni Association calendar for 2008 is shaping up like this: our annual Awards Luncheon will be in March, the theater event in April and the Dinner/Silent Auction in June. Watch for details in the mail.

I look forward to meeting you at our events.

Georgene Thornton, MSW, LMSW

President, Alumni Association
are organized to provide. She is a leader in the emerging field of institutional ethnography and a social activist with a compelling message of hope and institutional accountability.

In her presentation, Pence showed how 12 core features of contemporary institutions serve to produce harmful outcomes. She provides social activists, institutional administrators, and social work practitioners in the legal and human service fields (as well as those who study institutional processes) a method of analyzing and correcting institutional practices that fail to serve the needs and interest of everyday people.

Edith Harris was a graduate student in the School of Social Work at Wayne State University from 1966 to 1968. An outstanding student, Mrs. Harris was deeply committed to the social work profession. Her untimely death in 1968 cut short a very promising career in social work. The annual lecture in her memory carries forward her concern for the mental health of individuals and families. The Edith Harris Memorial Lecture is made possible through the generosity of the Harris Foundation. A faculty committee, currently composed of Anthony King, Poco Kernsmith and Antonio Gonzalez-Prendes, selects the speaker.

Edith Harris was a graduate student in the School of Social Work at Wayne State University from 1966 to 1968. An outstanding student, Mrs. Harris was deeply committed to the social work profession.

Dr. Pence is joined by Dean Vroom and Harris Lecture Committee members (from left to right) Anthony King, Poco Kernsmith and Antonio Gonzalez-Prendes

The Edith Harris Memorial Lecture has been approved by the Social Work Continuing Education Collaborative for 2 continuing education contact hours. Many of the professionals in the audience earned credit toward recertification by attending the 2007 lecture.