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UA61/5 Social Work Newsletter

WKU Social Work

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MSW Program Planned for Fall 2003

Western Kentucky University plans to begin offering MSW courses in the fall of 2003. The program will start with a two-year traditional program for all non-BSW degreed individuals and those whose BSW is over 7 years old. The advanced standing program, for those with a recent BSW, will begin in the summer of 2004. The graduate program will have an emphasis on direct practice in rural settings. In keeping with the purposes of social work, constituent needs, and the regional characteristics of south central and western Kentucky, the mission of the MSW program at WKU is to educate and prepare students

the funds are for the MSW scholarship fund. Any alumni interested in establishing a specific type of scholarship fund for the Department of Social Work should contact Dr. Suzie Cashwell.

Anyone interested in receiving more information should contact the Department at 270.745.5312 or suzie.cashwell@wku.edu. *Application packets and requirements are available February, 2003.*

Licensure Facts

Are you aware that the state of Kentucky licenses social workers at three levels or that the term Social Worker is title protected? Those with the BSW degree are eligible for the Licensed Social Worker (LSW) level. Social workers with a master's degree may take the Certified Social Worker (CSW) exam to become licensed. The specialty license is the Licensed Clinical Social Worker or LCSW. Individuals with social work degrees must be licensed to practice social work in the state unless employed by an "exempt agency." A few agencies that still have exempt status include the Cabinet

for Families and Children (DCBS), state hospitals, health departments, state universities and agencies affiliated with religious organizations. Both private for-profit and private non-profit agencies (such as community mental health centers, nursing homes, home health units, etc.) require licensure at the appropriate level.

WKU faculty members Dr. Sandra Starks and Dr. Dale Smith currently serve on the Kentucky Board of Social Work. Anyone interested in contacting the licensure board should write or call the board at P.O. Box 456, Frankfort, KY. 40602 or (502) 564-3296. The board website is www.state.ky.us/agencies/finance/occupations/socialwork.

A Note from the Department Head

The BSW Program continues to experience growth in terms of students, faculty, and programs. More than 150 students are currently listed as social work premajors or majors. Another 30 students are listed as social work minors. Ms. Jan Peeler, Dr. Dale Smith, Dr. Sandra Starks, Dr. Susan Wesley, and I continue to serve the BSW program. During this past year, Dr. Suzie Cashwell and Dr. Michelle Acree joined the faculty. Dr. Cashwell was initially hired in January 2002 to conduct an MSW feasibility study. She is currently serving as the MSW program director. Dr. Michelle Acree was hired in August 2002 to serve as the Field Director for the MSW program. Speaking of the MSW program, WKU made the decision to move forward with the creation of a graduate social work program. The social work faculty and the WKU administration have made a tremendous commitment to this program. The faculty hope to offer MSW classes in the fall, 2003. The growth and development of the social work program has resulted in the University's decision to create a Department of Social Work effective January 1, 2003.

Dean May



WKU social work students, Autumn Turner and Kim Wilson, practice their interviewing skills.

for professional social work practice to meet the needs of increasingly diverse rural populations. The program is particularly dedicated to addressing the work force needs of agencies working with Kentucky's families and children.

As the Department of Social Work implements its new MSW program, there is a need to establish a scholarship fund. Alumni, and others, who wish to donate to a general scholarship fund for the MSW may send checks or money orders, payable to the WKU Foundation, to the Social Work Department, 208 Academic Complex, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101. Please be sure to indicate in the memo section of the check that

Campus & Community Partnerships

Public Child Welfare Certification Program

The Public Child Welfare Certification Program (PCWCP) is a grant funded activity through Eastern Kentucky University that involves a collaborative partnership between the Cabinet for Families and Children and ten university social work programs in Kentucky, including Western Kentucky University. The goal of the PCWCP is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of social service workers employed by the Department of Community Based Services. Employers have historically filled social service worker positions with a variety of academic backgrounds in addition to social work. This requires a tremendous training effort leading to mixed results and high employee turnover.

The PCWCP is designed to work within and to complement the curriculums of the accredited social work programs across the state. Each school, through a rigorous screening process, can admit up to 10 students per year into

the PCWCP. The PCWCP students are required to take two intensive courses covering child maltreatment and interventions in child maltreatment. The two courses are offered statewide via interactive television and compressed video. Each university site has a faculty member to help students process the information. In addition to



Melissa Jackson, PCWCP student, documents client contacts at Warren County Department of Community Based Services (DCBS)

the course work, students are required to complete their field placements with the Office of Protection and Permanency. Exemplary field instructors help PCWCP students integrate classroom knowledge into the field and provide students with high quality supervision.

Once accepted into the PCWCP, students will receive three to four semesters of free tuition and a stipend each semester (\$1,300 in fall and spring semesters and \$650 in the summer semesters).

They will also be "guaranteed" a job following graduation as a Social Service Worker II rather than the traditional Social Service Worker I pay grade. In addition to the two courses and the field placement, students are required to attend training events as they move toward completing the Program. Following graduation, the PCWCP students will be required to work for the Cabinet for two years. The intention of the PCWCP is to improve both the effectiveness and retention of social service workers. Outcomes assessment procedures with the Program will involve comparing PCWCP students with other noncertification social work students and students from related

fields that are hired as social service workers. The expectation is that the PCWCP students will be more successful in their job responsibilities than the other two groups.

Western Kentucky University's Department of Social Work has participated in this grant since 1999. During this time, eighteen students have graduated with their BSW's and a certification in child welfare. There are currently twelve students enrolled in the program.

Kentucky Coop Intern Program

The Kentucky Coop Intern Program is designed to recruit students from high demand majors to work part-time for the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children. Social work is identified as high demand major. For the last two years, the Department of Social Work and the Barren River Service Region have placed approximately 50 students in coop internships. These students are hired to work for the Office of Protection and Permanency. The students earn \$9.17 per hour and are allowed to work up to 100 hours per month. There is no limit during the summer months. These interns provide a tremendous resource to the social service workers and clinicians that carry heavy caseloads. It is also a tremendous opportunity for students to gain work related experience while they are in school. There are currently more coop interns working for the Office of Protection and Permanency in the Barren River Service Region than in any other service region in Kentucky.

Anything New?

You are important to us! Help us be able to contact you. Please let us know of any changes:

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CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

Email _____

You can also e-mail us your information to swrk@wku.edu.

Faculty/Student Collaboration Opportunities

Health Enhancement of the Rural Elderly (HERE)

The Health Enhancement of the Rural Elderly grant is funded through the federal Office of Rural Health Policy. The primary aim of the grant is to maximize the effective use of the health care system among the rural elderly through a multi-component and interdisciplinary intervention. Faculty and students within the programs of social work, nursing, and public health are collaborating to implement project activities over a three-year period.

The project's major initiatives, which include educational modules, a Health Resource Guide, and a Rural Elderly Advocacy Program with Students (REAPS), will be implemented in neighboring Butler and Edmonson counties. The Health Resource Guide provides a comprehensive listing of health care providers and resources as well as easy-to-follow instructions on accessing public assistance programs and forms. The educational modules include such topics as medications, medical terminology, basic anatomy and physiology, and strategies for communication with health care providers. The Rural Elderly Advocacy

Program with Students individually matches students with the rural elderly to help them navigate the health care system.

Jan Peeler is the social work faculty working with students in the HERE grant program.

Kentucky Foster Care Census

The Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children (CFC) is charged, first and foremost, with keeping vulnerable children safe. Once children come into foster care, the Cabinet is charged with ensuring that children have a home that will nurture attachment and autonomy and support their well being. The Kentucky Foster Care Census (KFCC) is a proactive response to recent national and local events that have highlighted issues related to the delivery of quality foster care services in this country. The goals of this initiative include:

- conduct a statewide census of children in out-of-home-care within the 1600 CFC foster/adoptive homes
- verify the placement for each child
- Gather data on the essentials of child well-being

Fourteen WKU social work students spent the fall semester working with Dr. Dale Smith on the Kentucky Foster Care Census. Students were enrolled in an independent study class and provided a salary for their work. All students attended the initial KFCC conference held in Louisville on September 6-7, where they received training on research interviews, data collection, and foster care issues. Each student was assigned several foster homes to conduct research interviews in the Barren River, Green River, and Lincoln Trail regions.

Later, students attended a second conference, held in November, to review the preliminary findings of the census.

Students from the public universities in Kentucky conducted interviews in over 1,400 foster homes throughout the state. Many students have expressed surprising enthusiasm for social work research after completing this project. One student commented, "The FCC allowed me to be a part of a valuable, monumental study. I am thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the team that is setting new standards for foster children across the nation."

Phase II of the KFCC is planned to take place soon, with additional interviews being conducted in more of the foster homes in Kentucky.



Mobile Health & Wellness Unit

For the past three semesters, there has been a big, colorfully painted "truck" rolling around Warren and its neighboring counties. The WKU Mobile Health & Wellness Unit offers medical and dental screening, cleanings, and sealants; and health education and promotion for rural Kentuckians who are uninsured, underinsured, and/or have no access to such services. Funding for

the mobile unit comes from federal government appropriations. Students and faculty in the programs of nursing, dental hygiene, social work, and public health travel with the mobile unit to provide medical and dental services and offer referral and follow-up.

Susan Wesley is the social work faculty working with students interested in completing an independent study with the Mobile Health & Wellness Unit.

Learning Mixed with Fun

During the fall semester 2002, the Department of Social Work began hosting "Diversity Potlucks" designed to teach tolerance through interaction. In September we looked at the Jewish perspective on forgiveness. This discussion was led by WKU librarian Brian Carson who shared a reading and dialogue related to this topic. Another potluck/discussion centered on living with a disability. A consumer from the local LifeSkills agency shared her experiences and challenges related to supported independent living after having resided in an institutional setting. November's potluck included a sampling of the music of Lee Pinkerson from her CD entitled *Climbing to the Sun*, a musical interpretation of Native American history.

Highlights of these experiences have included the interaction among students and faculty across disciplines, the great food, and the excellent company. Through the leadership of Dr. Michelle Acree, we will continue to develop these potlucks as an opportunity for experiential learning about important aspects of social work education.



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Meet Our New Faculty & Staff

Suzie Cashwell, Ph.D.

Suzie Cashwell, Ph.D., joined the faculty in January 2002 and currently serves as MSW Program Director. Dr.



Cashwell received her BSW degree from Northern Michigan University. She holds the MSW and Ph.D. in Social Work from Florida State University. Prior to coming to WKU, Dr. Cashwell held teaching

positions at Auburn University, Valdosta State University, and Florida State University. Her primary research interests are in the areas of foster parents and welfare reform, areas in which she has also been published as well as involved in extensive volunteer work. In the realm of professional practice, Dr. Cashwell has provided direct services with the Institute for Family Centered Services, a family preservation program in Moultrie, Georgia and managed the South Georgia Caregivers' Network in Valdosta, Georgia.

In her role as MSW Program Director, Dr. Cashwell has brought abundant energy and dynamic

creativity, not to mention her sheer stamina, to the task of developing the MSW program. Any alumni or others interested in learning more about the MSW program can call 270.745.5312 or email suzie.cashwell@wku.edu.

Michelle Acree, Ph. D.

The newest member of the faculty is Dr. Michelle Acree, having come "on board" in August 2002 as MSW Field Director. Michelle received her Ph.D. from Virginia Commonwealth University and her MSW from the University of Alabama, where she also earned the certificate of Graduate Specialist in Gerontology. Her practice



background includes her work as a clinical social worker in long-term care and home health agencies in the vicinity of Norfolk and Roanoke, Virginia and as part of the management team at The Pavilion, a psychiatric hospital in South Hill, VA.

In December, Dr. Acree learned that her dissertation, *The Fit Between Low-Income Elders and Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Services: Informing the Development of More Adequate Substitutes for Medicaid-Funded Personal Care*, had been awarded top honors in a national competition sponsored by The Society for Social Work & Research.

Conrad Davies, B. S.



The new Office Associate for the Department of Social Work is WKU graduate student, Conrad Davies. Conrad graduated from WKU in May 2002 with degrees in Chemistry and Religious Studies. He is currently pursuing the

Master of Arts in Communications. Among the honors he received while an undergraduate are the All-American Collegiate Scholar (1999), All-Conference Honorable Mention: Soccer (2001), and Outstanding Senior in Chemical Education (2002).