Cheers to the passing of another school year and more students joining the profession with their freshly printed degrees! We are excited for all of our BSW and MSW students who graduated last month and hope you enjoy some of the pictures and articles that appear in this summer edition of our *Field Notes*. The accomplishments and contributions of our students do not go unnoticed by our faculty and staff. Some have been included in this newsletter but please know that a book would be required to include them all. Our students work diligently throughout the year to provide services and complete projects that will help those they serve. We want to recognize those efforts, congratulate all of our students, and wish them much success on the next part of their journey.

I look forward to working with all of our agencies again and hope that your summer will bring rest, comfort, and much joy! See you in the fall.

Patty Hunter

Patty Hunter, with her daughter, Jenna, at this year’s graduation ceremony.

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MSW Culminating Activities

In years past, graduating MSW students have had two options for a culminating activity; a thesis or a 12-page comprehensive paper exam. This year, students were given an additional option to complete a community-based poster presentation project.

Out of the 44 graduating MSW students, eight chose the poster option. Students were instructed to choose a case they worked on during their concentration year field placement and were given specific guidelines for the poster format. They also had to cover various topics such as diversity, social justice and ethics, human behavior and the social environment, policy and practice, and also provide a literature review related to the case.

On March 10, students, faculty, and community members attended the poster presentation reception in Colusa Hall, where everyone was free to view the posters and interact with students. The students were then divided into small groups of two or three in different rooms where they presented to three evaluators made up of faculty from the MSW Comprehensive Exam Committee. Students presented for 15 minutes and then had five minutes for Q&A.

The chair of the Comprehensive Exam Committee, Seema Sehrawat, commented that Social Welfare Institutions: A Response to Power and Scarcity, SWRK 170, is a required course for all social work majors and is an approved general education course. As such, the course is typically filled to capacity and is offered in both fall and spring semesters. This course is also a service-learning course, meaning all students enrolled in the course must complete 10 hours of volunteer or paid experience in a social services setting. For many students and particularly non-social work majors, this may be the first time that they come into contact with people who may be homeless, struggling with a disability, or explicitly in need of social services.

This semester, for the first time, SWRK 170 partnered with the Butte County Library. Students fanned out to provide volunteer services at the libraries in Chico, Oroville, and Gridley. Library patrons who received assistance with accessing social media, searching various online databases, and getting information about public agency providers such as the Veteran’s Administration and the Social Security Administration were appreciative for the help. In particular, adults who speak Hmong and Spanish, as well as school-age children, appreciated the personalized assistance. Other schools of social work in urban areas across America have partnered with city and county libraries to provide indirect social work services to library patrons—this initial collaboration between CSU, Chico and the Butte County Library may follow such a direction.

Students in the Community

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A big thank-you to all of the community agencies that attended this year’s field fair! We had our largest turnout to date and were beyond excited to fill up the BMU Auditorium. As always, we are so appreciative of all the agency staff that take time out of their busy schedules to come meet our students. This event is such a great way for students to informally meet various agencies and learn what field placement opportunities exist. Students can ask questions, gather information, and better prepare themselves for the field placement process that takes place during the spring and summer. Patty Hunter and Andrea Rioux are busy working on placing 96 BSW students and 107 MSW students! Students and agencies will be notified of placements the first week of August, so please look for those emails from Nicole Davis.

Students interact with agency representatives.
As a BSW student, Jackie Burris completed her field placement at Catalyst Domestic Violence Services. Jackie is now the housing program manager at Catalyst and has served as an agency field instructor for the past five years. At this year’s Field Instructor Appreciation Reception, Jackie was recognized as BSW Field Instructor of the Year. We asked her to offer a few words of wisdom:

What have you learned from your student interns this year?
Every year, I learn something new from student interns, including this year, during which I gained new perspective about how to view my work with survivors of domestic violence. Each student intern this year used their voice to share what they were observing and learning, including how they were combining their own approach with the approach of Catalyst. It is always enlightening and motivating to see things through the eyes of new social workers, which I always take as an opportunity to learn. I continually learn that supporting survivors of abuse is fluid and flexible, and hearing questions and observations from student interns is always a good way to evaluate if we are being effective, practicing empathy, and serving as role models for people entering the field for the first time.

What words of wisdom do you have for new agency field instructors?
While the overall support that student interns give to agencies is incredibly helpful, it means more to me to provide a meaningful, student-led internship. When given the opportunity, students come up with creative ideas that help evolve the way we help people. The best piece of advice that I can give to new agency field instructors is to always remain open to that. Of course, have in mind learning activities that will help shape their experience, but also listen to what activities they feel will contribute best to their learning. Internships are a student’s chance to be challenged, challenge themselves, make mistakes, and find successes. By collaborating with them through that whole process, I feel that students have experiences that they can take with them into the field. In turn, as field instructors, we will carry those experiences forward with us as well.

Alumni

April Johnson graduated from CSU, Chico with her MSW in 2015. April was a Title IV-E stipend recipient who completed her foundation year internship at Youth for Change in the Foster Care Services program. For her concentration year, April was placed at Glenn County Child Welfare Services and continues to work there as a County Social Worker IV.

“Child welfare is the most engaging and meaningful work I have ever done. I’m not going to lie, some days are tough, and by tough I mean frustrating, tears falling, and heartstrings pulled kind of tough. Other moments are the most elating, enjoyable, heartfelt, kind, supportive, and uplifting ones you will ever share with another human being. I love working in Child Welfare because families are a beautiful mess, and that in itself is beautiful. As social workers, we get to have the privilege of hearing their story and helping to spread light in this world.”

April is working toward getting her licensure and is specifically interested in Katie A., macro-system changes, and teaming with other services providers to ensure that families are getting the support that they need.

Agency Field Instructor

Words of Wisdom
Mindy Johnson

My name is Mindy Johnson. I am a mother of two beautiful daughters. I am also a recent graduate of the BSW program from CSU, Chico. I was born and raised in the small town of Paradise, California, so it is no wonder that I have such a strong passion for local community and social work in rural areas. My journey through life has sculpted me and prepared me for this profession. Throughout my life, I have endured certain adverse life experiences. Some of these experiences include trauma and loss, addiction, homelessness, and domestic violence. When I was able to find enough stability in my life to begin making healthy choices, the life changes began. In my particular situation, this meant a complete teardown of who I was to rebuild into who I am today. This transition was challenging and at times painful. However, I prevailed and remain a strong and compassionate human being today. My time in the BSW program has been a time of tremendous growth. I have had the opportunity to meet some amazing individuals and create lifelong relationships. The faculty and staff of the School of Social Work have encouraged and empowered me along the way. The many barriers that stood in the way of me and my dream were conquered by having faith in myself and never giving up. I had the privilege of completing my BSW internship at the Glenn County Health and Human Services Agency. While there, I was exposed to the many facets of child welfare. The fact that child welfare is where my passion lies made this experience truly invaluable. I look forward to returning to the field to further my educational experience while in my MSW internship.

Mona Kazemi

People often ask me why I chose social work as a profession. It took me some time that to realize that social work chose me. The thing about social work is that it is innately part of your identity and that is why we as social workers are drawn to the profession. Throughout my time in the graduate program, I have been blessed with numerous opportunities to develop this part of my identity. From interning with the National Association of Social Workers to conducting research regarding the experiences of low-income families accessing subsidized child care services, I have been able to apply social work values and ethics on a macro scale and have truly learned the need for and the importance of the voice of social workers in policy and research. I began my career in direct practice, but often times my practice and the efforts of my clients were hindered by policies and regulations. Understanding the systemic barriers, historical oppression, and the way that poverty perversely persists from generation to generation was only the first step needed to create change. I am grateful to my mentors, professors, and colleagues for challenging me to find solutions to these issues. I am proud to be a part of a cohort that I am sure will contribute significantly to the field of social work. I have been inspired and motivated by my colleagues and mentors, and I am in awe of the passion and drive that surrounded me this past year. I look forward to the future and the work that we will all do.
WHY WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT CHILD WELFARE

Growing up, some of the people I loved the most were impacted by child welfare, and their experiences provided me with knowledge that fostered a desire to be of service working within these systems.

I am passionate about children and families being happy, healthy, and whole.

I want to empower families to find strength within themselves to create safe and stable environments for their families.

My passion for child welfare grows the more I learn about it. It is an integral system for protecting our children and keeping families unified.

I love kids and helping people. Being a social worker and working in child welfare combines my two passions.

I have a heart for interacting with families and victims of trauma. I like to look for opportunities to see a trauma survivor smile.

I truly believe that change is possible and that families have real potential to overcome the hardships they face.

TITLE IV-E
Child Welfare Training Program
Lobbying for Social Work

This past April, a group of over 25 social work students traveled to Sacramento to attend Legislative Lobby Days along with faculty members Vincent Ornelas and Patrick Mace. Lobby Days is an annual two-day event where social work faculty, students, and professionals can learn about the legislative process and important legislation that affects social workers and the clients they serve. Attendees also have the chance to attend a legislative appointment, network, and volunteer during the event.

This year, our social work students lobbied for three bills: SB 23, AB 2590 and AB 1584 SSI/SSP. SB 23 will repeal the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule in the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Children (CalWORKs) program in order to provide for the basic needs of a newborn. AB 2590 would remove the word punishment from the Penal Code and change the purpose of sentencing offenders to public safety. It also encourages the Department of Corrections to provide opportunities for education and rehabilitation to all inmates. Finally, AB 1584 works to eliminate cuts to the SSI/SSP grants that help prevent seniors and other disabled adults from living in poverty.

We are always excited to have our students attend this wonderful event each year and get experience lobbying for issues so important to Social Work!