Curriculum Renewal
Enhancing our curriculum to better serve marginalized communities:
• A new community-based macro specialization
• Interprofessional learning and collaboration
• Integrated behavioral health care training

Also Inside:
State Agency Partnerships
For more than 30 years, the college has partnered with Illinois state agencies to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.

The Dean’s Advisory Council
Dean Hairston has appointed an advisory council of community leaders to support the college’s mission.
The University of Illinois at Chicago Jane Addams College of Social Work carries forward the mission of Jane Addams and the Hull-House movement, adapting them to the realities of today’s urban environments.

Our mission is to educate professional social workers, develop knowledge, and provide leadership in the development and implementation of policies and services on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, racial and ethnic minorities, and other at-risk urban populations.

We are one of seven health science colleges at UIC, advancing an interdisciplinary approach to addressing health inequities.
From the Dean

April 4, 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance of that painful day brings memories of a time in our nation's history when prejudice and segregation were in the political mainstream.

Recent events in our country have brought painful reminders of the division and discrimination that still exist in American society. We may have hoped that outdated attitudes and opinions about race, gender and otherness had been fading away, but they have resurfaced with a new vigor. The freedom that some people feel to openly display bigotry and hatred is astonishing. At times, it may feel as if the clock is truly being turned back.

So, what does all of this mean for us here at Jane Addams College of Social Work? To be true to our mission, we must redouble our efforts to advocate for people who are poor, marginalized and oppressed. With great urgency we must resist any political or social movement that strives to discriminate, segregate, deny health care or build walls to separate us. As social workers, we must renew our commitment to advocate for a just society and for the populations, communities, families and individuals that we serve.

In this issue of Affirmations we examine some of the ways the college is renewing its commitment to serving marginalized communities and addressing injustice and disparities. Curriculum renewal and innovative training programs are at the heart of this work. We also take a look back at the many ways in which the college has partnered with Illinois state agencies over the years, helping to refine and improve policies and services for vulnerable children, families and adults transitioning from institutions to community living.

Thank you for your support of the college, its students and faculty, and its mission of advancing social, racial and economic justice. As always, I would love to hear from you, and welcome your call, email, or visit to our campus.

Sincerely,

Creasie Finney Hairston, PhD
Dean
CURRICULUM Renewal
The college has been conducting a self-study of its MSW curriculum, in preparation for reaccreditation by the Council on Social Work Education.

However, we haven’t been simply ticking checkboxes on a list. This has been an opportunity to enhance the curriculum not only to meet CSWE requirements but, most importantly, to meet the needs of populations and communities that the college serves.

The renewed and expanded MSW curriculum will provide students with the knowledge and skills they’ll need to advance social, racial and economic justice in urban settings, whether working with individuals, families or entire communities.

Topics of environmental justice have been added, at a time of growing awareness of lead in drinking water across the country, or toxic levels of manganese on Chicago’s South Side.

The use of technology in social work is also being highlighted, whether using GIS mapping for community development, text messaging to help clients manage medications, or using electronic medical records.

Fall 2018 will also bring the launch of a new macro-focused specialization called Organization and Community Practice (OCP). Replacing and building on the macro content in the Community Health and Urban Development specialization, OCP will give MSW students the practice and leadership skills necessary for community-based development and organizing.

The college has continued to find opportunities for students to gain experience in interprofessional collaboration, serving a variety of vulnerable populations, from older persons, to people with HIV, to adjudicated youth with disabilities.

Lastly, the college offers training in the delivery of integrated behavioral health care in primary care settings, to reduce health inequities in communities where access to services may be limited.

Continue Reading to learn more about:

- Organization and Community Practice
- Interprofessional Collaboration
- Integrated Behavioral Health Care Training
Chicago is one of the most segregated cities in the United States. With the structural inequities that arise from such intense segregation, Chicago communities sometimes struggle to marshal the strengths and resources that they possess and that would lift them out of poverty and marginalization. However, organizations and residents in many Chicago neighborhoods are coming together to create positive change for their families and their communities. This is the context for the college’s new specialization in macro social work, Organization and Community Practice (OCP), which will train social workers to join with communities in developing community-based and participatory responses to systemic inequities and injustices.

The OCP curriculum is conceptually grounded in a framework of social determinants of health and human rights, asserting that basic human needs – clean air, clean water, healthy food, adequate and safe housing, reliable transportation, a living wage and quality education – are essential conditions for a healthy life, and therefore a fundamental right to which all are entitled.

A Community Health and Human Rights Framework

Jane Addams would not have known the term "macro social work," but she was most definitely a macro practitioner. She understood that environment and the social determinants of health underpin the well-being of both individuals and entire communities.

The OCP curriculum is conceptually grounded in a framework of social determinants of health and human rights, asserting that basic human needs – clean air, clean water, healthy food, adequate and safe housing, reliable transportation, a living wage and quality education – are essential conditions for a healthy life, and therefore a fundamental right to which all are entitled.

OCP will shift the narrative away from being needs-based, as with typical social services, or philanthropy-based. Students will learn to address the structural and systemic conditions that limit health and quality of life in marginalized communities. Through interventions at the community level, they will learn to build knowledge from within the community, and use that knowledge to foster community development, shape public awareness of the issues and the solutions, and shape public policy.

A Skills-Based Approach to Leadership

One of the goals of OCP is to produce leadership for advancing social justice as community partners. Instead of being population-focused or problem-
focused, OCP will take a skills-based approach to prepare students for management roles or for launching a grassroots organization.

For example, students will learn to maintain an organization’s services by increasing its financial base. They will examine the current context of foundations and public funding. They will learn how to identify sources of funding and to write grant proposals. And they will develop a response to an RFP for funding.

Students will have the opportunity to learn about human resources development, maintaining diversity and doing organizational assessments. Or they may learn about social entrepreneurship as an alternative model for accomplishing social change.

The OCP curriculum will also cover the use of technology for social change. Examples include the use of GIS mapping to show the distribution of community resources, using social media for organizing and advocacy, or using other digital tools for data collection or storytelling.

The practical skills acquired in OCP will be transferable across a number of different roles, in a number of different settings. Students will be prepared to pursue careers in nonprofit organizations, human services, government, or even in the for-profit sector in positions such as community liaison or corporate responsibility.

Policy Reform as Social Advocacy
Macro practitioners understand how public policy can impact vulnerable populations, positively or negatively. OCP will prepare students for community-based policy practice to protect human rights and reduce health inequities. They will learn to work with communities and organizations to identify problems and develop a responsive strategy for shaping public policy at the local, state or federal level.

For example, students will set up a task force to identify key social issues in Chicago communities, such as poverty and the lack of financial institutions, food deserts, or the impact of criminal justice reform on families. They will then form smaller groups that focus on each issue. They will reach out to community organizations, analyze policies, and summarize findings into a policy brief. The students will develop talking points to be used in contacting the media or talking to legislators. They will also write op-ed pieces and will be encouraged to submit those for publication through news outlets.

Certification in Human Services Management
Students graduating from the OCP specialization will be prepared to obtain Human Services Management certification from the Network for Social Work Management. The certification confirms competencies in executive leadership, strategic management, resource management and community collaboration.

In establishing the OCP curriculum, faculty have paid special attention to ensuring that students will be fully prepared for the certification exam, and certification will help graduates demonstrate their competencies to prospective employers.

Macro-Focused Field Placements
The college maintains relationships with more than 300 organizations in communities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area, all working with vulnerable populations. Similar to other MSW specializations, OCP will offer field placements (internships) in community organizations where students can gain real-world experience in community-based macro practice.

OCP students will work directly with community leaders, residents, organizational administrators and direct service workers, and in the process be exposed to multiple levels of policy debate. They will utilize qualitative and quantitative analysis and participate in the implementation of studies to identify key factors leading to the development of innovative social policies. Working with their community partners, they will advocate for social policies that advance human rights and social, racial and economic justice.
Interprofessional collaboration in health care, and interprofessional education more generally, have come increasingly to the fore as effective strategies for training professionals in the delivery of care and services.

The college is involved in a number of interprofessional initiatives that will prepare social work students to function as part of interdisciplinary teams serving marginalized populations and communities.

**Interprofessional Collaboration Among the UIC Health Sciences**

As the college’s Director of Academic Program Development and Assessment, Associate Professor Christopher Mitchell observes, “Increasingly, there is a realization that successful treatment of a client requires attention to the totality of the person, and to the myriad factors that affect the person’s functioning and well-being.”

Mitchell is on the planning and steering committees of UIC’s Office of Interprofessional Education of the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs, and he has coordinated the college’s participation in several new initiatives among the health sciences.

**Scholars and Leaders in Geriatric Care**

As part of the college’s role in UIC’s ENGAGE-IL program, which is a collaborative education and practice initiative to enhance care for older adults, MSW students may participate in the Scholars and Leaders in Interprofessional Geriatrics program.

This is a six-week summer program that brings together students from UIC’s seven health science colleges to train in providing geriatric care as part of an interdisciplinary team. The focus is on unique qualities and needs of older adults across life phases and care settings, and how an integrated team of interprofessional practitioners can provide family- and patient-centered care to optimize health, well-being and quality of life for older adults.

**Interprofessional Training in HIV Care**

The college is also participating in a joint venture between the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center at the UIC College of Medicine and UIC’s Collaborative for Excellence in Interprofessional Education.

“Increasingly, there is a realization that successful treatment of a client requires attention to the totality of the person, and to the myriad factors that affect the person’s functioning and well-being.”
The project offers a multi-week education and training program that teaches students about interprofessional approaches to HIV care, and includes site visits to community-based AIDS service organizations.

The curriculum covers all aspects of HIV care and treatment, and demonstrates how professionals from different disciplines can work as a team to manage HIV care for individuals in impacted communities.

**Interprofessional Immersion**

As one of UIC’s seven health science colleges, JACSW participates in the Interprofessional Education Collaborative, which advances collaboration among the health sciences and sponsors a variety of events. One such event is the annual Interprofessional Education Immersion Day, which brings together hundreds of students and faculty from the health sciences for interprofessional training using video case studies and case-based discussion groups.

Dr. Mitchell says that social workers contribute an understanding of the social determinants of health, such as access to behavioral health services, safe and affordable housing, financial stability and access to healthy foods. “A hallmark of social work is the ‘person-in-environment’ perspective,” he says. “As part of a care team, social workers help identify these needs and address them, either through direct clinical practice or through referral and brokering of services as necessary.”

**Interprofessional Collaboration in Primary Care Settings**

The college has received a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to train social workers in the delivery of integrated behavioral health care in primary care settings located in marginalized urban communities.

Professor Sonya Leathers, principal investigator on the grant, says that in these settings social workers will work in direct coordination with primary care providers. “Rather than seeing a person as compartmentalized, physical health separate from mental health, the two go hand in hand,” she says. “Integrating primary and behavioral health care increases access to behavioral health services for vulnerable clients who could have the most difficulty accessing such services.”

**Helping Adjudicated Youth with Disabilities**

“Young people with disabilities may become involved in the juvenile justice system because of their vulnerability,” says Annette Johnson, chair of the college’s school social work specialization. “When they return to school, they don’t have a good support network and may end up in alternative schools, where they still don’t get the supports they need.”

To help address this situation, the college is working in partnership with UIC’s Department of Special Education on a project entitled Project LEAD (Leaders Enhancing outcomes for Adjudicated youth with Disabilities). The project will prepare special educators and school social workers to work collaboratively toward improving outcomes for adjudicated youth with disabilities, whether in temporary detention center schools, or in middle or high schools.

Project LEAD is funded through a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), and administered by the UIC College of Education.

About JACSW’s contribution to interprofessional education at UIC, Dean Hairston says that social workers bring special and necessary expertise when serving marginalized communities. “Social workers understand the larger community context, and how the environment informs the particular needs of individuals,” she says. “That is the value of including social workers in interdisciplinary teams: their ability to frame well-being as a product of environment. This is necessary to improve outcomes for people living in communities that are plagued by health inequities.”

The 2017 IPE Immersion Day, at which hundreds of UIC health sciences students, including students from JACSW, gathered to engage in interprofessional education. This year, approximately 30 of the college’s MSW students and several faculty members will participate.
Statistics from the Chicago Department of Public Health show that for people below the poverty line, 22.2% report a diagnosis of depression and 10.3% report serious psychological distress.

“Our hope is that an integrated care model will be effective in addressing these kinds of needs,” says Professor Sonya Leathers, principal investigator on the four-year training project. “Integrating primary and behavioral health care increases access to behavioral health services for vulnerable clients who have the most difficulty accessing such services.”

What is Integrated Behavioral Health Care?
Fundamentally, it is the integration of behavioral health, which encompasses both mental health and substance abuse treatment, into primary care settings such as family clinics, internists’ offices, or assisted living facilities.

“In these settings, social workers will work in direct coordination with primary care providers to increase access to behavioral health services,” Leathers says. “Rather than seeing a person as compartmentalized, physical health separate from mental health, the two go hand in hand. Mental health supports physical health, and vice versa.”

Program training director Catherine Melka-Kaffer notes that they are working to increase opportunities for implementing such an approach at the community level. “I conduct outreach to integrated care settings to increase students’ access to these types of experiences, and thereby increase the number of social workers in these settings,” she says.

Stipend to Support Students
Students accepted into the program receive a stipend to help ensure completion of the training. “The students undertake this training on top of the regular coursework for their MSW degree, so it’s more demanding,” says Professor Leathers. “Many of our working students lose income, so we’re thrilled to provide this kind of financial support.”

Using an Evidence-Based Approach
Students are trained to use evidence-based practices that have been found to be effective in diverse populations, to ensure that the interventions are appropriate for all clients that the program’s students will serve.

“For example, we provide training in short-term cognitive behavior interventions and exposure to motivational interviewing, which are effective with people who have both behavioral health and medical issues,” explains Leathers. “Our plan is to train students in interventions that will produce positive outcomes in communities that are negatively impacted by health inequities.”

The college has received a $1.91 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to train graduate social work students in the delivery of integrated behavioral health care in marginalized Chicago communities.
Recent events ranging from hate speech on college campuses, to demonstrations vowing to return the United States to a time when racial discrimination was protected by law, to the repeal of DACA, have placed race and ethnicity at the center of public debate.

In response, Dean Hairston has appointed a new advisory council charged with supporting the college in its mission of advancing diversity, equity and social inclusion.

“The college has a rich history and track record of embracing diversity and inclusion. Recent events compel us, however, to carefully review how the college is doing with respect to race and ethnicity,” the dean says. “The council will support the college in determining how best to continue to advance our mission in this very challenging social climate.”

The Dean’s Advisory Council is comprised of distinguished leaders from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, who bring understanding and knowledge of the pressing needs of disadvantaged populations, as well as a strong commitment to addressing those needs.

The council is charged with reviewing the status and progress of the college, with particular attention to race, ethnicity and underrepresented groups.

Council members will serve as ambassadors and advocates for the college within their networks and their communities. They will make recommendations to strengthen the college’s programs and to enhance its community impact, as well as assist in identifying and connecting the college with resources to support its students, programs and activities.

“In a time of racial tensions and divisive rhetoric and politics, we must continue to examine what we are doing and we should do,” says Dean Hairston. “The advisory council will help the college further its commitment to providing an inclusive environment, and assuring that the college is a great place to work and study.”

People who live in marginalized communities are often in contact with state agencies, and may rely upon the services those agencies provide. For such government services to be most effective and efficient, policymakers must remain informed about real community needs, and the evidence-based practices available to improve outcomes in those communities.

The college has a long history of working in partnership with Illinois state agencies to ensure that community needs and public policy are aligned toward producing the best possible outcomes for a variety of vulnerable populations.

In some cases, the collaborations have focused on refining best practices, and in other cases they have focused on ensuring that the voices of community members are heard by policymakers.

Children and Families in the Foster Care System

The college’s ongoing work with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) represents the longest standing partnership with a state agency. For more than 30 years, the two have worked together to improve outcomes for children and youth in the foster care system, and to address the overrepresentation of African-American children.

Workforce Development and Training in the Field

From the late 1980s and into the early 2000s, the focus of the partnership was to increase the number of child welfare practitioners and to elevate the knowledge base of practitioners already working in the field.

The college participated in a stipend-based training program to ensure that child welfare practitioners had MSW degrees, as well as a program that enabled DCFS supervisors to obtain their MSW.

College faculty have served as subject matter experts and advisors, placed in DCFS offices and implementing a case teaching model to address the education needs of DCFS staff. The college also partnered with the agency on Project STEP (Supervisory Training to Enhance Practice), which trained direct service supervisors to support caseworkers in family-focused and trauma-informed practice.

Development of Kinship Care

Around the same time the college worked with DCFS to enhance permanency for children placed with relatives. This period witnessed a great influx of children into the foster care system, as a result of increased incarceration during the crack epidemic, producing a shortage of foster homes. The childrens’ relatives were often asked to provide foster
The college created a training manual on kinship care for DCFS supervisors and case workers that helped to increase permanence and shorten the time that children remain in foster care.

The college worked with child welfare organizations in undertaking an extensive review of case records and current practices, to identify barriers to permanency as well as factors that promote permanence for children in kinship care.

Best practices were tested in the field, then further refined to create a training manual entitled “Achieving Permanency For Children In Foster Care, A Training Manual.” It has been found that use of these practices is effective for both increasing permanency in placements and shortening the time that children remain in the foster care system.

**Child Welfare Traineeship**

In 2009, the college launched its Child Welfare Traineeship Program, which continues to this day. It provides advanced training to MSW students who are committed to a career in child welfare, and prepares them for the Illinois state licensing exams. The training focuses on DCFS priority areas, such as family-centered, trauma-informed, strengths-based practice, and addressing the over-representation of children of color.

**Research, Evaluation and Facilitation**

Starting in 2008 and continuing to this day, the college has been working with DCFS on the Permanency Enhancement Project. The college has provided technical support and assistance to five Action Teams in the Cook County region.

The Action Teams meet regularly to strategize on ways to increase permanency and address the overrepresentation of African American children in foster care. The college provides ongoing evaluation of permanency barriers and analyzes and interprets data to support and evaluate their work.

The college partnered with DCFS and other organizations in 2010 for the Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII), an evidence-based trauma intervention to promote permanency among youth who have reached their two-year anniversary in foster care. PII studied whether the likelihood of
permanency for these children could be increased by using a trauma-informed intervention to help them manage their reactions to stressful situations.

In 2014, DCFS requested that the college conduct a longitudinal study to investigate factors that promote stable placements for children and young adolescents at high risk for multiple moves. This Foster Parent Stability Survey found a number of factors that are predictive of stable placements, and ongoing analysis of the data will provide further insights.

From 2015 to 2017 DCFS asked the college to evaluate its Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation and Discharge Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation processes. Both models emphasize participation from youth and other key stakeholders such as family members or caregivers, engaging in team decision-making. The evaluation found very high levels of satisfaction from the youth, as well as from the other participants.

The college also participates in work groups for the Child Welfare Advisory Committee, co-chaired by DCFS and community partners. The work groups discuss issues, trends, emerging policies, best practices and promising practices. As a team member, the college is able to contribute knowledge of evidence-based practices.

People Suffering from Addiction
For 19 years, the college partnered with a number of federal and state agencies, including the Illinois Department of Human Services, through the Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Center. The center was recognized nationally for working with treatment organizations, state agencies and consultants to transform programs and practices in substance abuse treatment, including behavioral health and primary care integration, recovery based systems of care, trauma-informed care, and evidence-based practices.

The college’s most recent collaboration with DHS has been through the Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, on a project to reduce deaths from opioid and prescription drug overdoses. Entitled Illinois Prevent Prescription Drug/Opioid Overdose Deaths, the project will evaluate the effectiveness of increased availability of naloxone overdose reversal kits in the field, and will also evaluate data collected from the field to determine best practices for interventions. Another component of the project is an epidemiological analysis of available data on the use of heroin and prescription opioids in Illinois, to better understand the pathways to addiction.

Older People with Physical or Mental Disabilities
In partnership with the Illinois Department on Aging (DOA), the Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research hosted an invitational dialogue on community reintegration for former nursing home residents as mandated by the Colbert Consent Decree, which required the State of Illinois to help Medicaid-eligible adults living in Cook County nursing homes move into the community. This event brought together representatives from the DOA, health insurance companies, human services agencies, health care providers, and advocates for residents.

We have worked hand-in-glove with DCFS to prepare an effective child welfare workforce. They informed us about what their caseworkers needed to provide effective service, and we provided information about best practices determined by research in the field with practitioners. This is the importance of such partnerships.

Clinical Associate Professor
Faith Johnson Bonecutter

I think UIC does more actual applied research than other institutions. We spend more time working with actual agencies, doing more of this collaborative type of research, which provides answers to the questions they have. We can help with problems that have been identified as priorities for the populations that are served by the agencies.

Professor Sonya Leathers

DCFS and the College bring different expertise and perspectives to the table. We can work together to evaluate practices and policies and make evidence-based recommendations for improving outcomes. We can also work together to give a voice to the children, youth and families being served in the child welfare system.

Assistant Professor
Jennifer Geiger
The second Summit on Reentry, Reintegration and Aging included directors and administrators from IDOC, IDOA and IDHS/DMH, providers and former nursing home residents living in the community. Among highlights of the event was a constructive dialogue that focused on barriers to the resettlement of former nursing home residents, and the supportive services they found most useful.

**People with Mental Illness**
The college is working with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health (DMH) to evaluate the implementation of the Williams Consent Decree. Under the decree, the State of Illinois agreed to help 4,500 individuals residing in Institutes of Mental Disease (IMDs) transition back into the community, if appropriate and if they are willing.

College researchers have conducted one-on-one interviews with residents at all 24 IMDs in Illinois, to determine their perspectives and concerns about transitioning to community-based living. A qualitative analysis is being performed to shed light on why the transition is more difficult for some than for others, and how community-based services can ease the transition.

**Reentry and Reintegration for Older Prisoners**
The college’s newest state agency partner is the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), now collaborating with the Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research on a series of summits that focus on issues of reentry and reintegration for older returning citizens.

The summits bring together a variety of stakeholders, including state agency directors and administrators, community organizations, former prisoners and their family members. They engage in a lively and productive exchange of experiences, concerns and ideas that results in an action plan for supporting older prisoners as they return to their communities.

**The Perspective of an Agency Partner**
"The summit on reentry brings together multiple perspectives on this older population. It is an opportunity for all of us to collaborate, to figure out where resources exist and where they are deficient, and to figure out a solution that is beneficial to all who are participating."

**Gladys Taylor**
Assistant Director
Illinois Dept. of Corrections

**The Voices of Other Partners**
See video interviews and pictures from the most recent Summit on Reentry, Reintegration and Aging.

**GO TO:**
go.uic.edu/summit
or scan this code

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**JACSW Faculty on their Partnerships with Other Illinois Agencies**

- **Dean Creasie Finney Hairston**
  Through our partnerships with DMH, the college has amplified the voices and experiences of people who often go unheard. In so doing, the college has effectively made persons receiving services a part of the conversation, so that their perspectives and needs may inform policy decisions at the state level.

- **Professor James Swartz**
  Working with DHS, the university has provided a relatively large workforce for a complex issue such as the opioid epidemic in Illinois. We can provide information about who is being affected by the epidemic and about the effectiveness of DHS’s activities and interventions. This will help to improve outcomes for victims of overdose.

- **Professor Joseph Strickland**
  The partnership between IDOC and the Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research has been very effective in providing a forum where policymakers and members of the community engage in productive dialogue. It’s going to take all parties working together to address the growing problem of our aging prison populations.
When Helene Brou arrived in the U.S. from Ivory Coast in Africa, her degrees in Psychology and Communications did not translate. She learned English at Joliet Junior College, then attained both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Psychology from Governor’s State University. She began to feel dissatisfied with psychology because, “it looks only at the illness and doesn’t take environment into account.” Her mentor advised her to go into social work, which takes a comprehensive approach to the whole individual, and this brought her to Jane Addams College of Social Work.

Student Spotlight
Helene Brou, MSW Student

What is it about JACSW that made you want to study here?
I visited the college and spoke with some of the faculty, and that convinced me that Jane Addams was the best school for social work. But also because it continues the work of Jane Addams, the first social worker. My experience here has been very good. The faculty are very, very knowledgeable and caring, which is not true everywhere. The field staff have also been very supportive, and my classmates, too. I am surrounded by good people here, which helps.

Why did you choose Mental Health for your MSW specialization?
It was because of my background in psychology and my interest in clinical work. But in social work I will be able to integrate all factors that will help a person who has a clinical issue, not only addressing a mental disorder, but all factors related to the disorder.

What sort of mental health practice do you hope to pursue as a social worker?
My initial goal was to work with older people in a clinical setting, but after my field placement I’ve become interested in working with people with HIV/AIDS.

Where is your field placement?
I am working with people with HIV at Open Door Health Center, and it is a good fit for me because any population can get HIV, and you must understand the role of social determinants of health, the individual’s environment, and the impact of different systems. You must understand intersectionality.

What have you learned about intersectionality and the social determinants of health?
In my clinical work I’m seeing that people with HIV may have different characteristics, they are mainly from the LGBTQ community, mostly minorities, some immigrants, but that they all have common issues: they are poor, lack health insurance, they may lack education, they have comorbid mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and many are homeless and lack transportation. This fundamental lack of resources brings them to all of those conditions.

What social work practice skills or knowledge have you gained there?
I’m learning so much. I have two supervisors, one for clinical and one for administrative skills such as being able to enter information into software, learning the paperwork, and following the progress of patients.

What are your plans for after graduation?
I am happy to say that I have been accepted into the PhD program at Jane Addams. My research will continue to focus on people with HIV, and I plan to serve that population in the future.

What advice do you have for others who want to go into social work?
If you have a desire to help people, and are compassionate and caring, then social work is the best profession. It is the best way to help people in many ways, because you understand the individual at different levels and dimensions.

What does social justice mean to you?
It means giving the same opportunity to everyone, and to try to erase stigma and discrimination so that people won’t be vulnerable and exposed to high-risk behavior. The main thing is to improve the conditions that people live in.

Is there someone you especially admire, or who inspires and motivates you?
My parents have inspired me to do good in the world. What they did all their lives is to help other people. They taught me to be generous and share whatever I have. And also not to worry about things you don’t have power over, but to do your best to change them and help those who need it.
Alumnus Spotlight

David Simpson, PhD ‘11

JACSW alumnus David Simpson is Assistant Professor of Social Work at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) in Tacoma, WA. While at UIC, he was a clinician at the Institute for Juvenile Research, where he treated individuals with anxiety disorders across the life-span. He also served as Program Evaluator for the Urban Youth Trauma Center, working to improve the lives of youth and families affected by community violence who are experiencing traumatic stress and co-occurring conditions.

Dr. Simpson was an Adjunct Professor at JACSW, and taught mental health practice and research classes to students in the mental health specialization.

How was your work with children and adolescents informed by your social work education?

Primarily by learning to meet people where they are and starting from there. That was a big part of my work with children and adolescents, and their families. And remembering that people really are their own expert, and engage in behaviors that protect them, and that is where I need to start my work with them. My job with youth was to use the evidence to help them see that there could be other ways of dealing with their symptoms.

What are effective ways of addressing the mental health needs of young people in marginalized communities?

Adapting mental health interventions to meet the needs of these youth is important. Practitioners need to make sure that the youths’ symptoms are addressed from many angles, for example, at home, in the community, and at school; to see the youth as part of a system and intervene with all systems that are necessary.

At PLU you co-led a course that took students to Rwanda; please tell us about that.

The title of the course was “Genocide Memorialization and the Future of Rwanda.” The purpose of the course was to help students learn about the importance of memorialization and what direction the country is headed, within the context of this memorialization. As someone with a history of working with individuals with trauma, my co-faculty member and I both wanted to make sure that we discussed how Rwandans were coping with the nationwide trauma.

What did the students experience while in Rwanda?

A lot! Our experiences ranged from visiting several genocide memorials, to observing how the country has memorialized this horrific event, to hearing testimonies from survivors. The testimonies included incredible stories about survival, devastating loss and trauma.

In a Reconciliation Village, we heard how perpetrators of the genocide were now living next to and working with survivors of the genocide, and particularly the family members of those who had been murdered during the genocide. Our group heard and talked about forgiveness quite a bit. There were times when we struggled to fully integrate the meaning of this forgiveness.

We heard from the kindest, humblest man who, during the genocide, saved over 400 adults and children at an orphanage his family ran in Kigali. They hid in the ceiling of the orphanage, only to come out after dark. To hear his story was truly a gift. One of the youth he saved was with us, and it was clear that the two are now connected forever. This was an experience none of us will forget.

There were other wonderful moments when we were immersed in the culture of Rwanda, trying to learn words and phrases in the native language of Kinyarwanda. It was important that we remembered that we were guests in Rwanda, and that we needed to respect the culture as much as possible.

We visited a large market on several occasions. In Rwanda, in general, you bargain for what you will pay for certain goods. There was a lot of excitement in engaging in this ritual at the market! And we learned about traditional dances that were performed for us when we entered certain communities.

Our group also met with about 10 women in a basket cooperative, who make baskets and other crafts to sell. We went along with them to work in the field, feed their livestock and walk nearly a mile to fetch water. One of these women welcomed us into her home as though we had known her for years. Their generosity was overwhelming. It was only a glimpse into the life of Rwandans, but also a clear picture of how much we as Americans take for granted.

What originally drew you to social work, and what continues to motivate you?

Ah! I wanted to connect with people. I wanted to serve those who are in marginalized, oppressed groups to ensure that their needs are being
met as easily as mine are. I enjoy working with people to find solutions to problems, not just listen to their problems. Unfortunately, just listening to problems is what many people believe social workers do.

Now that I’m on faculty in a small social work department, what continues to motivate me is seeing all the students who want to enter this profession. It is really great to see their excitement for service and to help them learn new skills that they’ll use with their clients. I’m excited that my experiences with clinical work, research, and teaching at UIC have helped me in my teaching and my work with students.

**Are there other ways JACSW prepared you for your life as a professor of social work?**

So many ways! I worked with so many great faculty members at JACSW who challenged me to keep growing and learning, and were also great models in how to mentor students. I had the opportunity to teach as an adjunct professor, which prepared me for a full-time faculty position. The experience solidified my passion not only to teach, but to teach future social workers. The college really helped me grow and develop as a social worker, and I am truly thankful for that opportunity.

**What was your most memorable experience at JACSW?**

Graduation and my cohort! Also, working closely with faculty who want you to succeed.

**What advice do you have for people thinking about getting their PhD?**

Do it! Just make sure it is something you are determined to do 110 percent. If you give any less than that, it may be a tough few years!

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**2018 Alumni Award Recipients**

*Awards presented by the UIC Jane Addams Alumni Association at the Alumni & Friends Celebration on April 18, 2018*

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**Social Justice Ally Award**

*Awarded to a civic or community leader who has used their position to advance a social justice agenda consistent with the mission of Jane Addams College of Social Work and the work of its alumni.*

**Benjamin S. Wolf**

is Legal Director of ACLU Illinois. He has worked tirelessly to protect the rights of the LGBTQ community, freedom of speech and religion, victims of unlawful discrimination and police mistreatment, and children and adults in government custody.

As the husband, brother and grandson of social workers, he says, “Social workers and their colleagues in vulnerable communities, along with people who live in those communities, do most of the real work to produce social change.”

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**Rising Alumni Award**

*Recognizes alumni who, within 10 years of receiving their highest JACSW degree, are doing innovative work, demonstrating influence within their field, and making a notable impact on the social work profession.*

**Laura Ng, MSW ‘15,**

is Executive Director of Traffick Free, Inc., which provides the greater metropolitan area of Chicago with tools and programs to combat human trafficking and transform the lives of survivors and communities.

In early 2017, after six years of research with providers and survivors from around the country, Traffick Free opened Chicago’s first emergency and overnight drop-in center for all adult females who have been victims of sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

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**Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award**

*Presented to alumni who have achieved outstanding success and national/international distinction in their chosen field of social work.*

**Joel J. Rubin,**

MSW ‘83, ACSW, CAE, has served as Executive Director of the 6,000-member Illinois Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers since 1999.

Under his leadership, the chapter has advanced the legislative and policy agenda of the social work profession in Illinois by strengthening social work licensure, insurance reimbursement, confidentiality standards and safety, and by advocating for legislation that promotes human well-being and equitable funding in the human services sector.
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Jacquelyn Bonavia, JACSW Director of Advancement, wants to discuss with you what IGNITES your passion for social justice. Please reach out today to make a gift now, or via your estate. She would especially enjoy saying thank you and learning more if you’ve already arranged for an estate gift to benefit the college.

Contact Jackie at 312-413-2305 or email her at jbonavia@uic.edu.

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