



ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

THE CATALYST

Meet our new Field Director

Greetings from the Social Work Department's new Director of Field Education!

It is a privilege to share a bit about myself and my thoughts about field education and its critical importance in the development of professional social workers. I began my social work journey in the very hallway where I am currently located, on the 2nd floor of Stewart Hall on SCSU's campus. I earned my BSW degree from SCSU and am a very proud Husky alum! After working in the field as a child protection case manager and with at-risk adolescents in school based prevention programs, I returned to school and completed my MSW degree at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. Since 2004, I have engaged in clinical social work practice in a variety of settings, specializing in mental health care, crisis assessment and intervention, and case management. And although there have been periods of fatigue and professional burn-out, I can honestly say I have loved my career as a social worker and wouldn't change a thing!



Sarah Meisinger, MSW, LICSW

I was first introduced to field education as an adjunct faculty member with the Department of Social Work in 2009. Since that time, I've taught multiple field seminar courses at the BSW and MSW levels and have thoroughly enjoy witnessing students make the transition from the academic setting to the social work profession. In addition to my current role as Field Director, I also serve on the Board of Directors for the Minnesota Chapter of NASW as well as the Delegate Assembly for National NASW. A local Board I am involved with is the for the Center for Life Transitions, a non-profit grief resource center that serves the St. Cloud area. I strongly believe in contributing to the social work profession which has also led me to writing and publishing two books about the field which offer practical guidance for new social workers in direct practice roles.

As a social work professional and educator, I believe field education is paramount to the integration of theory and skills into 'real-life' social work practice. I value the opportunity to partner with students in the social work program to support, mentor, and guide them in the direction of their professional goals and dreams. I believe that similar to our work with clients, students take the lead in determining their professional paths and are the experts in understanding their challenges, needs, and strengths as future social workers.

In my free time, I enjoy yoga, knitting, reading (introverting!), and the outdoors. I love spending time with my family and am incredibly grateful to return to my social work 'home' at SCSU.



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SOCIAL WORK DEGREE AND INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE— UNDERGRADUATES

Abigail Mulic

My experience achieving my social work degree has been life changing. When I found social work I realized quickly that this was more than a major, it was a passion. The material I was learning was sticking and I was able to use it in my day to day life. I even began reciting it to friends who were no longer in school or simply chose a different major. Throughout the degree we focused on the history of social work and how this helping profession came to be, then we learned how and what we can do to make a difference in today's society. When it came to my internship I noticed the cycles that happen with kids. My internship started at Adolescent Addiction Services where the target population was adolescents who struggled with addictions. After they switched to outpatient I was transferred over to Clara's House, where the target population that I worked with would be Elementary and Middle School aged kids with mental health struggles. When working with these groups I noticed that many are here because of something lacking in their home life. This can range from having divorced parents to being adopted due to parents using while pregnant. Every child, regardless of how they came into this setting needs love and support, and I am glad that I get to be a part of the healing process in my future as a social worker.



GOT RESEARCH?

If you would like your research or publication information presented in the next issue of *The Catalyst*, feel free to contact Dr. Teboh with your information.

Dr. Teboh can be reached during his office hours in SH 237 or via email at:

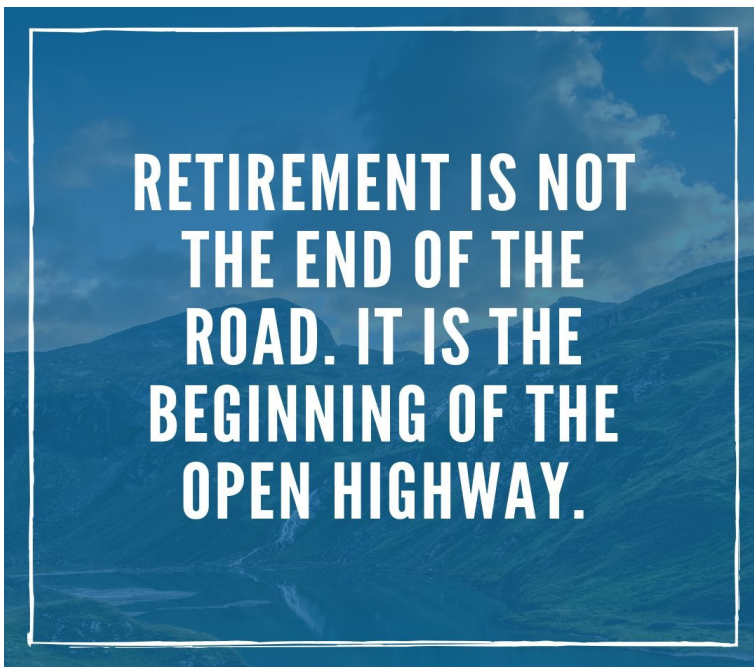
cteboh@stcloudstate.edu

Roblyn Austin

Social work was present in my life before I even knew it was and this profession has changed my life. Since I began taking social work classes I have become self-aware of the identities I behold and the position I have in society. More importantly, the privileges that I carry with me everywhere I go. Becoming a social worker has helped me grow personally and professionally. I wouldn't change the profession I chose for anything else because I know I am making a difference in the world. Despite the consistent "why would you choose such an underpaid and stressful job" accusations and comments, I know that this is my calling to help and apply the advocacy I can offer.

In addition to my education, I co-led the Social Work Association (SWA) at SCSU during the time *Roe v. Wade* was being attacked. Immediately the SWA was interested in doing macro social work in the form of a Reproductive Rights March. While organizing the march the SWA needed to be brought back from dormancy because the group hadn't been touched since before 2020. Helping lead this event was a major highlight of my social work journey. With some hard work, stress, and tears the March succeeded with over 70 marchers. I hope that future SWA groups can build a strong foundation of social work values and bring that into the community and world.

Working in the field is not easy and I learned this while I was interning at the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Family Services. While interning I learned the complexities of case management and the system that does not work in favor of Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. Every day I was faced with stressful decisions and frustrations with the system that is far from perfect. I would rather live to have the knowledge that the system is broken than live without knowing because it creates the worst harm possible.



AN INTERVIEW DATE WITH RETIREE PROFESSOR PFOHL

Please describe your work history, beginning with your first job as a lecturer.

My work history began long before I came into academia. I held positions in the private not-for-profit and public social services. While I in the public sector I was social work field instructor. My first opportunity as a lecturer presented itself in 1999, serving as a Fixed Term Faculty in the Department of Social Work at SCSU. This experience was followed by serving as an adjunct faculty and a trainer with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System. In 2004, I entered St. Cloud State University as a probationary, tenure track Assistant Professor, moving on to become Associate Professor and then Professor. My teaching responsibilities included primarily undergraduate course along with a few graduate courses. I served as the MSW Program Director for three years and the Title IV-E Child Welfare Program Director for approximately twelve years.

What skills have you acquired over your entire work history?

My education and work experience developed my skills in critical thinking, communication, instruction, problem-solving towards solutions, program development and management. As I review my career, I see my growth in these areas, readily acknowledging I have yet to master any.

What were the greatest successes or accomplishments in your entire working history?

The most observable accomplishments over my professional career include obtaining my M.S.W. and Ph.D., program development at the county, accreditation of the M.S.W. Program at SCSU, continuation and expansion of the Title IV-E Child Welfare Program. While these are meaningful, my greatest sense of accomplishment was witnessing clients taking steps to make change, supporting social workers in their daily work, and being part of students achieving their educational goals.

continued next page)

SOME OF THE PLACES OUR STUDENTS INTERNSHIP

Stearns County Human Services works on providing different services based on the their divisions such as: community corrections, adult and disability services, family & children, finance & technology, gateway services, and public health.

Bridge to Community Resources is a referral and service providing organization on campus at St. Cloud State University that is there for students that go to SCSU and also homeless population in St. Cloud area. They prioritizes community action and help students access to and be aware of both on and off campus resources with their programs.

Northern Pines Mental Health Center has been in the community since 1964 providing full range of mental health services to all ages including mobile crisis outreach series, school-based services, adult community based series to crisis residential services, outpatient therapy an much more.

Minnesota Department of Corrections was opened in 1889 and designed to rehabilitate first time "offenders" between the ages of 16–30, through industrial work-programming activity. They are collaborating with the office of Ombuds for Corrections in crating a pilot family and friends of incarcerated group in order to strengthen the ability of loved ones of incarcerated individuals to provide positive support for their incarcerated loved ones.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. PFOHL (CONTINUED)

What were the greatest challenges you faced at work? How did they help you grow as an individual? What advice would you have for other employees facing similar challenges?

Several challenges come to mind. An ongoing challenge in any place I've worked is limited and decreased funding, resulting in decreased or limited services (this was in social service agencies as well as at SCSU). Another challenge has been navigating multiple viewpoints along with limited trust between co-workers. And the final challenge I experienced was balancing multiple demands on my time and energy, demands which came from within and without the work setting.

Funding issues drove me to be more resourceful, creative, and how to be an effective advocate. I grew in my understanding of self and what strengths and growth areas I possessed. I grew to see myself through the eyes of others as I navigated my co-worker relationships and grew in my ability to listen, observe, and find compromise. Forgiveness or, if one prefers, "letting go" of offenses and hurts can go a long way to a healthier work environment. When time and energy felt limited, I learned that taking time to breathe and slowdown allowed me to refocus on what was most important. Perhaps my greatest growth through all challenges was recognizing others were present to support and assist. I did not need to go it alone and leaning on others strengthens me.

I am hesitant to give advice to others as everyone is unique, coming from varied experiences and possessing different strengths. I've articulated my own growth and within these some "advice" is present.

How can we improve our work environment as we move forward?

Acknowledge and accept strengths and abilities, using these to promote our mission.

Describe the characteristics of the co-workers with whom you most enjoyed working.

This can help others understand what's valuable in working relationships. Traits of co-workers which I most enjoyed include: kindness, thoughtful, possess a forgiving heart, placing others ahead of self, setting a high bar for their work, cooperative spirit, and a sense of humor.

What have been the most significant changes in work culture since you started? Which changes were for the better? What do you wish hadn't changed?

From my perspective one of the most significant changes in work culture is acknowledging and honoring the unique culture of individuals, families, and groups. We have not arrived. I still have work to do as seen by the efforts of some to take back advances we have made. The changes made ARE for the better.

Since my first work experience, I see the increased use of and reliance on technology as a significant change in the work culture. With this are great advantages. We have an abundance of information and knowledge, which as social work professionals and educators allows us to be at the forefront. We maintain and enhance what we know concerning best practices, changing nature of society, social justice policy, the list goes on. Communication of all kinds is literally at our fingertips, increasing our access to one another. Overall, I believe the changes which technology has brought are for the better. However, it also comes with risks and challenges. Two that I see are 1) experiencing information overload; and 2) insufficient time to critically examine validity, reliability, and coherence with social work's mission.

Leaning on technology to communicate is an area where I long to go back and wish things have not changed so much. I acknowledge the benefits of technology as we moved through the pandemic. It helped us stay connected. Yet it cannot (in my mind) address the richness and nuances of communication and connection afforded by face-to-face, in the same room communication. When we share the same space, breathe together, we are connected. Yes, I long for that.



**What changes do you believe could benefit the department of social work?
What would you say are the greatest personal and/or professional strengths the department has today?**

Relationship building and program planning and development are the two areas which I believe would benefit the department.

As mentioned in my response to the prior question, being physically present with one another enhances our connections, can allow, and support civil discussion and disagreement, and strengthens ties. Relationship building occurs in the formal (department meetings) as well as informal (during a shared lunch).

Effort and time set aside for program planning and development within the context of the University, College, Department, and Council on Social Work Education missions would benefit the department. It assures alignment for all, positions the department for funding and scheduling (to name a two), and assures a strong education for our BSW and MSW students.

One strength of the department are the faculty and staff who are part of it. Each brings knowledge, expertise, and insights into the social work profession. Melding into a whole? Simply amazing! Another strength of the department is the tenacity to continue to serve our students and community. The members of the department touch many lives, having the power to effect modest and great change. Another strength I see in the department is its continuing commitment to social justice of all kinds.



I am hesitant to give advice to others as everyone is unique, coming from varied experiences and possessing different strengths.

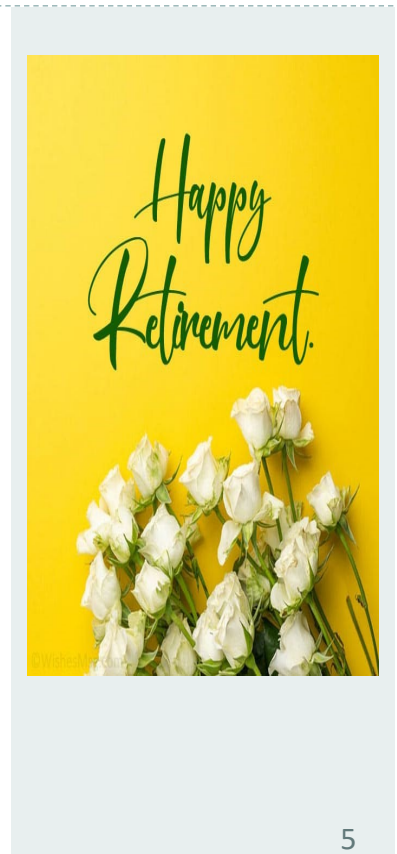
Have you considered offering your services on a part time or consulting basis? If so, what is the type of work you would most enjoy?

Yes, of course I have considered offering my services to others and/or to other organizations. During this next phase, my goal is to be a volunteer. This includes hands on experiences such as distributing food at the food shelf or raising funds to purchase suitcases for foster children and youth, assisting with interviews, assisting with applications for Habitat for Humanity, and continuing my Board to commitment to CMMHC. I enjoy being with University students which could lead me to being guest speaker or short-term substitute. I am open to be a support person (coach or mentor) for those in social work.

So far how have you been enjoying your retirement?

I am aware that retirement is a privilege, not everyone has that opportunity. I am trying to lean into, share, and embrace this change. My first steps are adjusting to more time with Ted. Right now, the move to retirement is allowing me to travel, reconnecting with family and friends, exploring and connecting with new communities and those who live there.

Thank you for your time and we wish you a fantastic retirement.



SOCIAL WORK EVENTS

Project Connect, Theresa

Project Homeless Connect is an annual event organized mainly by social workers in the Saint Cloud area. There is active involvement from the Department of social work and the Department of Gerontology. This project aims at providing resources to the homeless community in Saint Cloud. Resources come in various forms such as information, relief items, and food which are typically distributed to people without homes.



As an intern at Bridge to Community Resources I had the privilege of witnessing and participating in project homeless connect 2022. I remember feeling a sense of purpose while arranging and organizing over 500 relief items for the homeless community in Saint Cloud. The involvement of the community through donations and information distribution was beautiful. Back home in Ghana, I was involved in community work similar to this so this was a great reminder of why I chose this career path.

My highlight throughout the event process was the event day. It was great interacting with people and getting to know their stories. I particularly loved talking to a woman about how she rescued her dog. I asked her why she decided to rescue the dog. She explained that sometimes you need just one person to show you what true care is and, in this case, she showed what true care is to the dog. This made me reflect on how helping people could in the long run enable them to be helpers in many ways. I loved how involved social work students were in this event, the department of social work put students in charge of client intakes and this speaks volumes to how the department always seeks to empower its students. I wish this could be done quarterly to establish a concept of sustainability. Overall, this was a great experience and I look forward to the 2023 edition.

SWDAC— BRIANNA OLIVER

The presenter's name was Representative Jessica Hanson, and she is from District 55A, but also won the "Social Policy Maker of the Year" award last year. She started as a community organizer, then moved on to get her bachelor's in social work at St. Catherine University. Later, she got her master's in advocacy and political leadership at Metropolitan State University. (Minnesota Legislature, n.d.).

The topic relates to social work policy because she has authored and helped pass bills for the people, but also for social workers as well. There have been five new bills that she has told us about in the rotunda of the capitol building. The first one that she has authored is HF1198 which was posted on March 30, 2023, which will bridge the children's mental health systems. There is a lot of mental health access out there for children, but attempting to coordinate with care teams is difficult. Hanson states that HF1198 will revolutionize how we deliver children's mental health services in Minnesota. The next bill addressed was created on March 2, 2023, and titled HF1566. Minnesota Legislature states that, "Requirements established for commissioner of health to administer lifeline centers to respond to 988 contacts, 988 prepaid wireless fee and 988 telecommunications fee authorized, rulemaking authorized, and money appropriated." (Minnesota Legislature, 2023). This bill is the 988 funding for the mental health crisis line, and we know that if we can intervene early, early intervention matters. They are trying to make sure everybody in the legislature knows that it's not just about creating bed space, more facilities, or supplying our workforce with more social workers, it's about making sure we are meeting people where they are at and providing services when they need them. Hanson stated that we should do more to make sure we can be there for folks who are experiencing crises and make sure they know that it's okay not to be okay.

Hanson didn't have bill numbers for these next ones yet, but they're working on title protection to make sure that if you call yourself a social worker, it's because you have a social work degree. Social workers do more than just paperwork or giving resources, we are the ones keeping society connected; we are the glue that keeps our systems of public safety. When an individual goes to the hospital, the social workers take care of them and they make sure all paperwork is filled out, they have housing, and make sure all waivers are set so people are not discharged onto the streets. It's important to protect that title of social work because it deserves it. Another bill they are working on is to make sure no social work student in Minnesota will ever have to do an unpaid internship again. The labor and support that we provide to communities matters; it is very important that we get field experience but it's equally important that we get compensation while we do it. The last bill that Hanson tells us about is about the workforce shortage. For years we've been saying that we have a workforce shortage and in the past year, we were 15,000 police officers short in the state of Minnesota. Hanson looked at the numbers for social workers at the same time and by 2030, we're going to be 15,000 social workers short. She stated that she will go forward with a bill that makes sure that in addition to the work we're doing, they also offer a bill to free MSW programs as well.

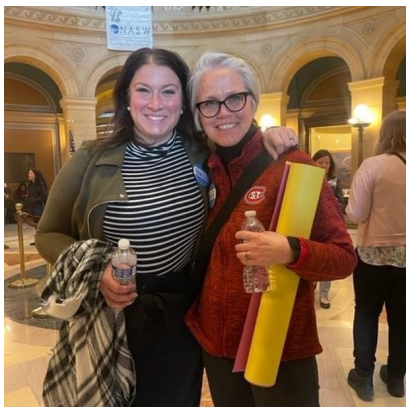
This has improved my knowledge of policy practice because before I went to the Social Work Day at the Capitol, I had no idea about how policies really worked and have never seen them in action besides reading about them in a textbook. I thought that this was a very cool experience because I have never done anything like this before. I may be a bit more interested in macro social work and policy advocacy than I was in the past because I actually have gotten to see how it works and the parts that are included in the process. I may not know every part of the process, but representative Jessica Hanson has shed a new light on the topic, and I am super grateful that I got the opportunity to see her in action. In my opinion, I think that she did really good, and all the other presenters as well did an amazing job! The only concern I would have is when you were going in person to the presentations, it was hard to get into them if you didn't sign up. I don't think it was organized well and there were people getting in to see the presenters without having signed up. I wish that I could have seen it, or they would have broadcasted it in some way that people on the outside could have seen as well. Otherwise, I think that SWDAC was amazing, and I have no other complaints.



STUDENT CORNER—THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE SW DEPARTMENT, SCSU

Social Work Association, Abigail Mulic

My experience with the Social Work Association was phenomenal. When we first started getting together to decide where we wanted this organization to go and do this year we quickly were drawn to the fact that Roe V. Wade was overturned a couple months prior. As future social workers, this turnover makes it so we are limited in how we can assist our clients in the future. Given our change agent and policy classes we jumped right in and put ourselves out into the community to march and rally for what is important to us. This was a major success as family members, community members, students and staff joined us as we chanted through downtown St. Cloud. Throughout this experience I have personally gained a connection with members of congress and gained an insight in what it takes to make a change. My hope for the group is that members will always dream big and aim high. When people are questioning and getting weary that what you want is too big, that is the time to push forward. “Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” -Theodore Roosevelt



Jessica Estrada

I am Jessica Estrada, a mom of four children and I have been at SCSU since 2019. I have enjoyed the journey even when it became hard. I am now doing my MSW and interning with Bridge to Community Resources. I am grateful to have been accepted for the program and to be part of BCR. My favorite part of BCR was Project Homeless Connect. I was able to be part of the macro process and gained knowledge of what it took to make such event happen since I had to help with gathering resources and connecting with community business to participate. In regard to what could improve, I would say my night classes. I feel like the time of classes could improve by having more time options. I would rather take a day off work and attend classes in the day if I were given the option than to take classes that end at 9:30 pm. I also enjoyed meeting new people and making lifelong relationships!

Mimi Nguyen

Through the social work degree journey, I was greatly challenged academically. The social work department offers graduate assistantships which not only supported me financially over these past two years but allowed me to gain experience working under the direction of faculty in their teaching roles. I feel very lucky to have been accepted into a paid internship position with Stearns County in the Family and Children’s Division this past year. I gained invaluable experience in Adoption/ Guardianship and the 18-21 Extended Foster Care program as well as shadowed workers in other departments, giving me a taste of just how diverse the social work profession is!



CONTD

Lauren Voss

This program has impacted me as it has allowed me to think differently due to the experiences that I have gained throughout semesters at internship. The supervision with Dr. Meisinger has also been top notch. You can tell that all of the professors genuinely care as well.

Jenny Lieser

I have always wanted my MSW since undergrad, and SCSU provided me with an affordable option to obtain that. I love to learn and appreciate the diversity of the faculty. I have enjoyed being in an academic setting where there is a quest for knowledge and increased capacity of competence.

Anonymous Feedbacks

The MSW program has impacted me in so many ways. One of the main way I will like to discuss is that the program has given insights and knowledge of the social work profession in more detail than the bachelor's program. It has also allowed me to use and practice my social work values and skills more effectively.

MSW program has been very helpful and has impacted me in several ways. First, it has given me a boarder way to look at social work. It ha s also impacted me financially. I thought the program would be better. I feel like what I am learning as a MSW student, I learned in my BSW. I wish I could have had more hands on training and more supervision.

The professors of the MSW program have been supportive when you seek out the support. There has been a lack of communication throughout the past two years, which has been a challenge to navigate as a future social worker. Overall, the impact of this program has increased my confidence, ability to advocate for myself and others, and lastly opened my eyes to new opportunities and experiences.

I was pushed out off my comfort zone and had to work really hard. I am happy to feel supported by the MSW faculty at St. Cloud State. Overall, I have had a great experience.

The MSW program has allowed me to build my confidence and skills in social work. This program has taught me how to work in a variety of settings and has given me connections in my classmates and teachers. I have learned about the mental health disorders, policy work, social work with immigrant families and individuals. The MSW program has prepared me tow work in any setting or future career that I want.

I have learned how to integrate what I learn in the program and to use the knowledge out in the field. My field placement has helped me with hands on and prepared me for the real life clients.

The MSW program has been an important program for me. It has enriched my social work knowledge and brought me more confidence in my ability to learn and apply knowledge and skills. I will recommend this MSW program~



MEET NEW PEOPLE IN THE SW DEPARTMENT

Our Office Manager

Nikki Koehn

Hi, my name is Nikki Koehn. I am the new(ish) Office Manager for The Department of Social Work. My role here is a little bit of everything; I support the faculty and the department/ program. I am mainly behind the scenes; however, my favorite part is getting to work with students. Our department is lucky enough to have four Graduate Assistant positions, and I am happy to be able to have these four students as my colleagues. My door is always open for students to stop by, and I am happy to help you with whatever I can. Last summer, I worked as the camp coordinator for SCRUBS CAMP, which the College of Health and Wellness Professions puts on. I look forward to working at the camp again this year, as it was truly a highlight of my summer.

Graduate Assistants

Caroline Stringer

Hi! My name is Caroline, and I use she/her pronouns. I am a foundation student in the MSW program, and I have Bachelor of Arts degrees in graphic design and electronic publishing from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. After graduating in 2013, I moved back to my hometown of Saint Cloud. I currently assist Dr. Brumbaugh-Johnson and Dr. Yeo as a graduate assistant, and I love having the opportunity to learn from the experiences and perspectives of BSW students.

This academic year, I had the opportunity to explore macro work through my internship with the National Alliance on mental illness (NAMI) Saint Cloud Area, and I have also been fortunate to work with NAMI MN, NASW MN, and St. Cloud StandDown. One of the most important things that I've discovered this year is that I love macro work, but I am looking forward to exploring micro practice next year!

Theresa N Kumah

Hello, my name is Theresa Kumah. Most people call me Tessa. I am originally from Ghana, a beautiful country in West Africa. I have a bachelors in Social Work from my home country. The social work profession is not popular in Ghana and this makes it difficult for people to continue working in this field. As relentless as I am, I found myself actively engaging in humanitarian activities which sought to address the needs of vulnerable groups in rural Ghana. I co-founded a nonprofit organization with my friends after we realized we needed to create impact even as college students.

The journey and process involved in helping people is a long and demanding one but the sense of fulfillment that follows is something to cherish. I decided to be brave enough to move to a completely different country for Graduate School. It is exciting that I am a part of the department of social work. I actively assist faculty members with carrying out course tasks. I love what I do and it feels great to be surrounded by likeminded individuals who are culturally responsive. I look forward to learning and growing in the social work profession.

In addition to all the academic activities, I love watching reality tv because it helps me relax. Fun fact about me: I can make trumpet noises with my palm (sounds weird but that's my cool kid side.)



PHOTO GALLERY

Social Work Day at the Capitol, 2023



We all do better, when we all do better



Social work students with Rep. Wolgamott

Minnesota Social Service Association Conference



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

(Check handshake for more information on the job requirements and to apply)

GA POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Teaching assistants participate in undergraduate instruction either by teaching or by providing support services. Under the guidance and supervision of departmental faculty members, teaching assistants may serve as instructors of record, laboratory assistants, or test and paper evaluators. It is expected that this experience will provide teaching experience relevant to a professional career.

Research assistants are assigned to participate in research-related tasks directed and supervised by faculty members. These experiences should be educational and provide insight into the way research is conducted.

Program support assistants are assigned to participate in the administration of the appointing unit. Both academic and non-academic units employ administrative assistants. Program support assistants should have the opportunity to learn both office functions and educational management procedures. Duties may be specific to an individual graduate program or service unit and could include working under the supervision of the department's office manager, the department faculty, or with facilities specific to the department.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW)

Program Description

The MSW Program offers both full and part time programs of study. Students who have completed a BSW within the last five years are able to enter the program in an Advanced Standing Status. If a student's BSW degree is greater than five years old, they are required to take SW 610: Social Work Theory and Frameworks in Summer Session to be granted Advanced Standing Status. Students who have completed a Bachelor's degree with the required prerequisites enter the MSW Program as Foundation students. Advanced Standing and Concentration are synonymous as Advanced Standing Students join those Foundation students advancing to their Concentration (second) year of the study.

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Graduate Program

The Master of Social Work degree prepares graduates to think critically and work collaboratively in the social service profession.

Generalist– Individuals with a bachelor's degree, but no Bachelor of Social Work degree, can be accepted as Foundation students assuming all prerequisites are completed.

Advanced Generalist– Individuals possessing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) can be accepted as Advanced Generalist students assuming all prerequisites are completed.

Noteworthy

Applications Due 1/15-3/1

MSW information sessions listed on our website

Licensure

G.A. positions available .