

reach



Educating social workers for the “New China”

The China Project launches an ambitious new phase



IT is an epic task that will take decades to complete: establishing a formal system of social work education in a country of 1.4 billion people where, until recently, social work was not a recognized profession. Yet over the last six years, the University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work has played a critical role in laying the foundation for that system and has already started to educate the first generation of Chinese social work scholars and practitioners.

“I believe in the long term we will contribute to the broader social development of China, both in terms of the establishment of civil society and a more open, democratic society,” says Professor Ka Tat Tsang, director of the China-Canada Collaborative Project on the Development of Social Work Education in China (known as the “China Project”).

The ambitious initiative has been supported by the generosity of several friends of the Faculty, led by Dr. Annie Wong Leung Kit Wah. Dr. Wong is a well-known philanthropist in the Canadian and Chinese communities, and her commitment to advancing social work here and abroad has been essential to launching the China project (see article on page 5).

China’s transition from a socialist economy to the world’s fastest growing market economy has resulted in widespread social dislocation. With problems such as unemployment,

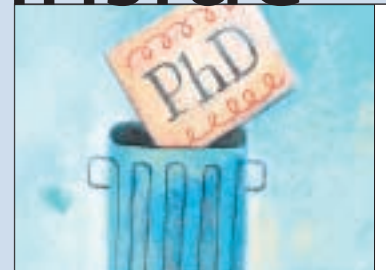
domestic violence, prostitution and addiction on the rise, there is an ever-growing demand for professional social workers in the country. In the past, government employees performed all social service functions, usually without the benefit of any social work training. University-based social work education did not even exist in China until the early 1990s.

During the first phase of the China Project, from 2000 until 2005, Tsang and his team collaborated with Chinese colleagues to design a social work curriculum based on state-of-the-art social work theory and practice in the West, yet adapted to China’s unique needs. In the process, the Faculty of Social Work has established an international reputation for its expertise in Chinese social work education, expanded its global network of research partners and enriched its knowledge of the Chinese community here in Canada.

Building on the success of the first five years, the project is now entering an exciting second phase that involves working directly with two of China’s leading universities on large-scale educational initiatives. “The Faculty has gained substantial experience and knowledge of social development and social service in China over the last several years,” says Tsang. “We’re now in the position of being actively sought out for training and consultation.”

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Illustration: Paul Zwolack/Mariena Agency Inc.



Farewell, and Thank You



As I write this column I am just days away from leaving this great Faculty that I have been proud to lead for the past three years. Accepting my new position as deputy vice-chancellor of RMIT University in Melbourne was a bittersweet decision. The Faculty of Social Work has provided the happiest and most collegial working environment of my career, but I couldn't turn down the opportunity to work at the highest levels in my hometown and at my alma mater.

I came to the Faculty in 2003 because it was one of the premier schools of social work in North America, and I believed it was capable of even greater things in the future. I was right. Our achievements over the past few years have been exceptional, and I'd like to share a few of the highlights.

Early in my tenure we revamped the Master of Social Work curriculum to keep pace with contemporary social needs, allowing students to delve deeply into one of four areas of specialization (Children and their Families, Diversity and Social Justice, Social Work in Gerontology, and Mental Health and Health). These four specializations are also at the core of the new Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work, the first of its kind in the world.

The Aboriginal Advanced Practitioner Initiative has been up and running for almost two years now, and we've just had our first MSW graduate come out of the program. One of my priorities from the start was to promote Aboriginal social work education at U of T, and I'm extremely proud that this initiative will soon be expanding.

The Faculty passed important external reviews by the Ontario Council of Graduate Schools and the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work with flying colours. It has an excellent academic plan for the coming years, created through an intensely consultative process that involved every possible stakeholder. And the Faculty is on a much stronger financial footing today, a crucial foundation for realizing its ambitions.

None of these things would have been possible without the Faculty's innovative professors, talented students and accomplished alumni, and I would like to end by extending my sincere thanks to all of you. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with you, and I wish you all good things in the years to come.

Jim Barber



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Interested in Reconnecting with the Faculty?

The Alumni Association is currently looking for new board members to get involved in areas such as Continuing Education, Advocacy and Faculty liaison. For more information, please contact us at alumni.fsw@utoronto.ca or 416-978-4437.

Faculty Update

What's happening around our world of Social Work

Leading Trauma Researcher Appointed Interim Dean

Professor Cheryl Regehr has been appointed Interim Dean of the Faculty of Social Work effective Jan. 1, 2006 until Dec. 31, 2006, or until the appointment of a new Dean. Regehr, who completed her MSW and PhD at the Faculty, is recognized for both outstanding research and teaching. She holds the Sandra Rotman Chair in Social Work and is Director of the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work. She is also cross-appointed to the Faculty of Law and the Institute for Medical Sciences.



Her past field experience includes administration of community and emergency mental health programs and sexual assault care centres. During her time as a practitioner, Regehr served as a field instructor for the Faculty for 10 years. She was the Clinical Director of the Critical Incident Stress Team at Pearson International Airport for a decade and is currently the associate director of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority's crisis support team. Her research examines aspects of recovery from trauma in diverse populations such as victims of rape, firefighters and child welfare workers. Regehr is a three-time winner of the Faculty of Social Work's Teacher of the Year award and the recipient of prestigious research awards from organizations such as the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law.

In its continuing efforts to create stronger links with the local Aboriginal community, the Faculty of Social Work was one of the sponsors of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto's Pow Wow 2005 at Dufferin Grove Park. With the theme "Bringing our Children Home," the event featured tradi-

Aboriginal Community Outreach

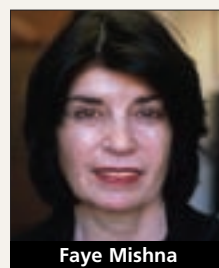
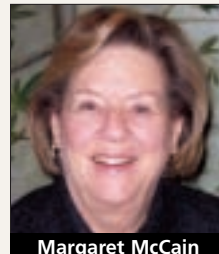
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tional music, dance and cultural workshops. The Faculty's Aboriginal Advanced Practitioner Initiative (AAPI), profiled in the Fall 2004 issue of *Reach*, is hoping to expand and attract more Aboriginal social service providers from across Ontario who would like to upgrade their academic credentials. The AAPI recently published an information guide for prospective students featuring this original artwork by Aboriginal artist George Yellowhead on the cover.

New Research Chair in Child and Family

The Faculty of Social Work is proud to announce that Professor Faye Mishna, a leading researcher on children's mental health, has been appointed the new Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Chair in Child and Family. The McCain family established the chair in 1998 with a \$1-million gift that was matched by U of T. The chair facilitates research into the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs targeting high-risk children and families. Mishna is one of Canada's pre-eminent experts on childhood bullying and is currently co-principal investigator on a major study of the cyber abuse of children at the Faculty's Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work.



The Alumni Bookplate Program: Give the Gift of Learning

The Faculty of Social Work Alumni Association Bookplate Program offers you a unique way to pay tribute to the important people in your life. Your donation enables the Faculty to purchase books, videos, DVDs and other educational resources for the social work section of Robarts Library. In return, we will place a bookplate commemorating the individual you have chosen to honour in the book or learning material. We will also send a card acknowledging your gift to the honoree or, in the case of a memorial donation, to the immediate family. For more information, please contact Ana Sapp at 416-978-3262.

Preventing Youth Violence in our Community: What Works?

An educational workshop presented by the Faculty of Social Work Alumni Association in association with its annual general meeting on:

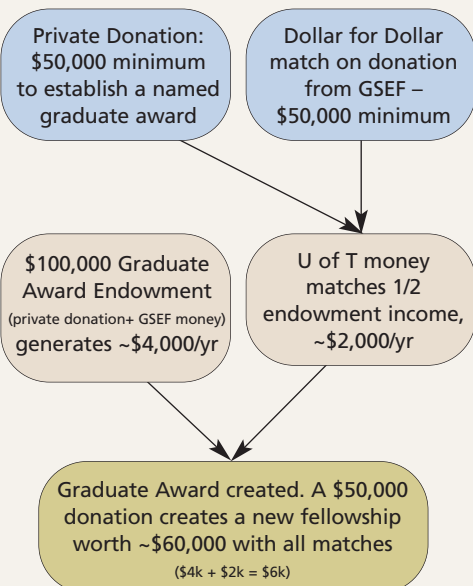
Thurs., May 18, 2006 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

at the Faculty of Social Work Building, 246 Bloor St. West

Featuring a panel of community and academic experts addressing questions such as:

- What does the research say? Do community-based models work?
- Who needs to work together to apply and develop responses?

Open to all. For further information and to RSVP, please contact: fund.fsw@utoronto.ca or call 416-978-4437



Student Aid: Opportunity to Triple the Impact of Contributions

The University of Toronto is currently offering a remarkable leveraging opportunity that will effectively triple the impact of donations made in support of graduate student awards. The university will provide a dollar-for-dollar match for gifts of \$50,000 through the provincial government's Graduate Student Endowment Fund (GSEF), producing a total endowment of \$100,000. In addition, half of the annual interest on this \$100,000 will be matched by equivalent U of T funds. The new scholarship will provide roughly \$6,000 per year in perpetuity for the benefit of social work graduate students.

For more information about this unique opportunity to support social work students, please contact: Judy Scheininger, Director of Advancement 417-978-5042 or judy.scheininger@utoronto.ca

The Immigration Issue

RBC Chair tackles the tough problems, from wasted human capital to racism in the workplace

The immigrant cab driver with a PhD is more than just a cliché in Canada. It is a reflection of the true plight of many foreign trained professionals who cannot find work in their fields, a problem that is among Professor Usha George's long list of research priorities as the RBC Chair in Applied Social Work Research.

George called on government and business leaders to improve current initiatives to integrate foreign trained professionals into the Canadian labour market at a major conference sponsored by the University of Toronto and RBC last year. Titled "Unlocking the Power of Diversity," the conference had former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Joe Volpe as the keynote speaker and attracted leading Canadian immigration scholars and representatives from community agencies serving immigrants.

Too many foreign trained professionals come to Canada with great hopes of finding success in the careers they trained for, only to become "absolutely frustrated, totally alienated and isolated from mainstream society," says George, who is also the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Social Work. "We need a coherent settlement policy and we need to determine what works and what doesn't. We have programs that are very scattered, and many have never been evaluated."

An important part of George's mission as the RBC Chair in Applied Social Work Research is to evaluate the impact and efficiency of social programs and policy. She says there is a serious disjunction in Canada's immigration system that requires urgent attention: Canada desperately needs skilled labour; today's new immigrants are, on average, better educated than the native-born workforce; yet there is a vast underutilization of immigrants' skills. While very few new immigrants are completely unemployed, she says the issue is whether they are able to contribute to Canada the way they did in their home countries. "It's a sheer waste of human capital. Once we bring people here, we must offer them the opportunity to feel part of Canada."

George's research has been highlighting the ad hoc, fragmented nature of immigrant settlement services – such as job search assistance, orientation programs and mentorship initiatives – for several years. She says the federal government has taken some positive steps recently towards better co-ordination of programs aimed at helping immigrants reach their full potential. Yet she is concerned about the announcement of increases in total annual immigration aimed at meeting Canada's demographic and labour market needs. "We have to clearly identify the gaps in the workforce and bring in the right people to fill them," says George, who is also the Director of the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS), "and we have to create incentives to attract immigrants to smaller centres outside the main cities." Major urban centres like Toronto currently receive the overwhelming majority of new immigrants.

In addition to examining solutions for foreign trained professionals, George researches a wide range of issues related to newcomer settlement, organizational practices in diverse communities and international social development. The following are just a few of her recent projects:

The RBC Chair in Applied Social Work Research at the Faculty of Social Work provides leadership in the areas of policy research, development and implementation. The RBC Chair also encourages a new generation of scholars and students to bring fresh understanding to Canada's social landscape. The University of Toronto matched a \$1-million gift from RBC Financial Group to establish the endowment for the chair in 1997. In addition, RBC provided the Faculty with a \$500,000 gift towards student aid that was matched by both the Ontario government and U of T to create the RBC Fellowships.



Immigrants, policies and migration systems

Funded by The Swiss Foundation for Population, Migration and Environment

George is the sole Canadian investigator on this international project that includes researchers from Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, France, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and the United States. The project is examining individuals' migration experiences in different migration systems. In George's case, she is studying the Mexican immigration system to Canada, a subject that has received scant attention from Canadian researchers.

Social capital and settlement in newcomer South Asian women

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

"Social capital" refers to all the ways that a person's social relationships provide access to needed resources, information and support. In this study, George is exploring how immigrant women from South Asia acquire and use social capital to aid their settlement process. "Our analysis to date shows that it's very clear that people depend on others in their community – personal networks are extremely important in resolving settlement issues, especially for employment and housing." Religious organizations also play a crucial role, she says. "Even when the formal mandate is catering to the spiritual needs of the community, immigrant religious groups are very involved in settlement."

Service delivery to Mandarin speaking immigrants from Mainland China

Funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

For the last several years, Mandarin speaking immigrants from Mainland China have made up the largest group of newcomers to Canada and the Toronto area. In this study with colleagues from the Faculty of Social Work, George identified Mandarin

speakers' settlement barriers and needs and then made recommendations to the federal government about how to enhance existing settlement programs. The government has responded to many of these recommendations and will be implementing changes over the coming year. Some areas slated for improvement include pre-immigration information, culturally specific services, and mobile service delivery in places such as religious centres, shopping malls and cultural centres.

Racism in the workplace

Funded by Human Resources and Development Canada

The term "Canadian experience" is sometimes used to discriminate against immigrants in the labour market, says George. By consulting extensively with employers, community groups and immigrant workers, this research initiative is helping to identify strategies to counter racism at work. Programs that educate employers about foreign credentials, for example, are an effective way of promoting equity in the hiring process. "We know that discrimination in the workplace exists," says George. "The issue now is how we can counter it."

QUICK FACTS ON IMMIGRANTS IN THE CANADIAN LABOUR FORCE

- Approximately 125,000 new immigrants come to Ontario each year, accounting for about half of all newcomers to Canada
- Toronto receives about 30 per cent of Canada's immigrants
- New immigrants to Canada have, on average, higher educational credentials than Canada's native-born workforce
- Only four out of 10 foreign trained professionals find work in their profession in Canada
- Between 1980 and 2000, earnings among male adult recent immigrants fell by 13 per cent
- Between 1980 and 1996, earnings of immigrant men compared to their Canadian-born counterparts dropped from 80 per cent to 60 per cent
- By 2011, it is estimated that 100 per cent of Canada's net labour growth will be by immigration

Social work IN CHINA

The First Generation



During his recent travels around China, Professor Ka Tat Tsang witnessed the extreme range of health and social service needs in this country in transition. Among the affluent citizens of booming cities like Shanghai, the pressing concerns are psychosocial in nature, from stress management to substance abuse. In the poor rural areas, people are struggling simply to find shelter and put food on the table.

“Along with this immense diversity of needs, there are many issues that have traditionally been beneath the surface and are just beginning to be talked about, such as the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS,” says Tsang. As the China Project enters its second phase, he and his team have partnered with Shandong University and Tsinghua University to help develop social work educators and practitioners equipped to tackle these types of social complexities.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHINA PROJECT

In 1997, Professor Ka Tat Tsang travelled to Beijing to participate in a conference on social work education sponsored by the Chinese College of Civil Affairs (CCA). As the educational arm of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the CCA is charged with training approximately 2.5 million government employees, many of who are responsible for performing social service functions in China. Recognizing that these workers were not adequately prepared to handle the country's burgeoning social problems, the CCA welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the Faculty of Social Work. Some preliminary discussions at the Beijing conference led to the signing of a formal partnership agreement in 1999 and the establishment of the China-Canada Collaborative Project on the Development of Social Work Education in China. Along with Tsang, the project's initial management committee included Professor Robert MacFadden, former dean Wes Shera and Professor Marion Bogo. Today the committee members are Tsang, Shera, Bogo, Associate Dean Usha George and Professor Esme Fuller-Thomson.

Training the trainers: Shandong University collaboration

The social work profession is so new in China that most of the people in charge of educating social work students are still essentially students themselves – they might have degrees in the humanities or social sciences, but little or no formal social work training. To remedy this situation, the Faculty of Social Work is contributing to the development of China's first Diploma of Social Work Education program at Shandong University.

The China Project has been instrumental in the rapid growth of social work education in Shandong Province. In 2000, Tsang played an important role in launching Shandong University's new Department of Social Work. It was the first in the province, and since then more than 20 other university-based social work programs have sprung up in this region of eastern China with a population of over 90 million.

With all of these programs now in place, says Tsang, it is time to formally educate Shandong's growing number of social work faculty members. Thanks to generous gifts of time and financial support from Percy Wong, a longtime friend of the Faculty and an honorary social work professor at Shandong University, the diploma program will

begin in May 2006. Tsang will be on hand to deliver the inaugural course.

In another initiative, Tsang and his China Project colleagues are helping to establish a practicum program at Shandong University. A major constraint in the development of Chinese social work education is that there is no professional community of social workers to serve as supervisors for students. It will be a long process, says Tsang, as practicum sites must be evaluated and approved one by one. To assist in the training of practicum instructors, Professor Marion Bogo's internationally recognized book on field education (see article on page 6) is in the process of being translated and adapted to the Chinese context.

For the past two years Tsang has been invited to be the keynote speaker at Shandong Province's social work education conference. “It's very gratifying,” he says, “because it's a strong indication of their appreciation of the Faculty's contributions.”

Transforming the workers: Tsinghua University collaboration

When China's top-ranked university established a new medical school in 2004, the head of the psychiatry program looked to the Faculty of Social Work for research and educational partnerships in the area of mental health. Since then, Tsang has helped launch a major multidisciplinary collaboration between Tsinghua University in Beijing and several U of T departments, centres and affiliated teaching hospitals.

The Faculty's role in this international alliance is to work alongside Tsinghua University in developing a retraining program for approximately 150,000 employees of the Chinese Family Planning Council. As the council shifts its mandate from population growth control to population health, these workers must broaden their skill sets. Their transformation into community and mental health practitioners will present a steep learning curve. In the end, they will be required to provide psychological counselling, diagnosis, intervention and referral services to a wide variety of individuals and groups.

A gift from Dr. Annie Wong Leung Kit Wah – the project's lead donor, who has remained steadfast in her support since the earliest days – has allowed the Faculty to take the first steps in this initiative. Tsang is currently performing a needs assessment at several sites where the grassroots workers practice. When this is complete, the China Project will be actively involved in designing programs to expand the scope of family planning practitioners' knowledge and abilities. “The practitioners' efforts will be refocused on increasing the capacity of families and individuals to cope with the demands that come with rapid social transition,” he says. “On a national scale, this will translate into improved quality of life for the entire population.”

HIGHLIGHTS OF PHASE ONE OF THE CHINA PROJECT, 2000 - 2005

- In 2000, the Faculty helped convene the first ever International Colloquium on Social Work Education in China, bringing together leading scholars from around the world to share their experiences and ideas for future research. The proceedings of the Beijing conference have been published in both Chinese and English.
- The project has produced several original Chinese textbooks on social work practice. Co-edited by scholars from China and the international social work community, these texts reflect Chinese social realities while offering students the latest knowledge in the field. The most recent books to be published are:
 - Women and Social Work in China (Edited by Sheila Neysmith of the U of T Faculty of Social Work and Liu Meng of Chinese Women's University)
 - Community Development (Edited by Miu-chung

Yan, a doctoral graduate of the U of T Faculty of Social Work, and Gao Jianguo of Shandong University)

- Family Mediation in Chinese Communities (Edited by Howard Irving of the U of T Faculty of Social Work with Chinese colleagues in Hong Kong)
- Seven visiting scholars from diverse Chinese institutions have spent time at the Faculty of Social Work, including Mr. Wang Laizhu in 2004. He is now in charge of civil affairs legislation in China and is spearheading important reforms in the areas of social security for the country's rural population and the regulation of NGOs. “The people who come to study here are the movers and shakers in the social work community when they return to China,” says Tsang.
- The project has undertaken a wide range of training and development activities for Chinese social work educators, including curriculum consultation, study tours in Canada and a special Master of Social Work scholarship.

The People Behind the China Project

Core group of supporters and volunteers sustain the initiative

The China Project is a collaboration not just between the Faculty of Social Work and the social work community in China, but also between the Faculty and a small but devoted group of supporters and volunteers who have made the whole initiative possible.



Top to bottom:
Dr. Annie Leung Kit Wah, Grace Chum, Irene So.

The logistics of an international partnership of this scope make it particularly expensive, with considerable costs stemming from travel and translation. While the project began with a relatively modest five-year plan, the continuing generosity of several friends of the Faculty has allowed it to transcend these initial parameters. While more than \$700,000 has been raised to date, fundraising efforts are ongoing for the latest ventures in China.

In 1999, Dr. Annie Wong Leung Kit Wah provided the lead gift that launched the China Project's first phase. A well-known philanthropist in Canada and China, Dr. Wong's social and charitable works have been praised by many leaders within the University of Toronto and Chinese community. She has a long history of giving to the Faculty, including substantial contributions to student aid through the Ontario Graduate Scholarship program. Most recently, she supported a Chinese visiting scholar and provided start-up funding for the Tsinghua University collaboration (see opposite page). She serves as a director of the Tsinghua University Education Foundation.

Dr. Wong is also noted for her patronage of several Chinese universities and her lifelong support of contemporary Chinese art and artists. She is an accomplished artist herself and her work has been exhibited around the world. Dr. Wong established Art Beatus Gallery in Hong Kong in 1992 to showcase and promote international modern art, with a focus on contemporary Chinese art. In 1996 she added a second gallery in Vancouver. That same year, she founded the Annie Wong Leung Kit Wah Art Foundation to assist emerging artists.

In tribute to Dr. Wong's outstanding service to the Chinese community, Zhong Shan University awarded her an honorary degree in 1999. In 2000, the University of Toronto presented her with an Arbor Award in recognition of her exceptional volunteerism. Most recently, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication recognized her contributions with the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and the Federal Republic of Germany bestowed her with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit.

The China Project's lead volunteers, Grace Chum and Irene So, have also played vital roles in ensuring the success of the initiative. They serve as valuable ambassadors and spokespeople for the U of T Faculty of Social Work and their generosity has helped launch a number of crucial research and educational initia-

tives. Chum was responsible for obtaining funds for the Social Work Chair in Housing, for example, while So did the same for the Social Work Chair in Multiculturalism.

Both Chum and So are highly successful businesswoman and longtime allies of the Faculty who, in addition to their own contributions, have secured considerable financial support for the development of social work education in China. As prominent members of the community, they were members of the Group of 175 key leaders of U of T's \$1-billion campaign and currently serve on the Social Work Dean's Advisory Council.

Chum, president of Perfect Link Consultants, leads

the founding members group of the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work and chaired the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) program. She created one OGS herself and made a significant contribution that helped establish another.

Irene So, senior vice-president at RBC Dominion Securities and the author of several books on financial markets, has been lending her support to the Faculty for many years. In addition to establishing a scholarship for Master of Social Work students in financial need, So made a lasting contribution to the China Project by funding a computer laboratory for social work education in Beijing.

Advancing Research and Promoting Social Change

A loyal friend of the Faculty lends her support to key initiatives

Louise Bellingham began her relationship with the Faculty of Social Work in a professional capacity, but her affinity for the Faculty's research soon turned the connection into a personal one. Today she is one of the Faculty's most loyal and effective ambassadors, receiving a 2005 Arbor Award from the University of Toronto Alumni Association for her outstanding volunteer service.

Bellingham's first major contribution to the Faculty came through her role as a senior executive at Bell Canada. Bell is a long-time supporter of the University and the Faculty, having established the Bell Canada Child Welfare Research Unit in 1998. Bellingham was instrumental in obtaining renewed funding for this highly respected research initiative known for its seminal studies on child abuse and neglect.

"I've had a longstanding interest in social justice issues, particularly involving women and children. And I've always felt that when people get together to work on something they can really make a difference," she says. "Bell has traditionally been a big promoter of community involvement, so my interest in philanthropy and volunteerism grew during my 25-year career there."

Bellingham started working at Bell Canada straight out of high school, moving up the ranks until she eventually led Bell's first charitable marketing campaigns in the 1980s. As the years went by, she steadily increased her advocacy for Bell Canada's role in creating healthy communities through strategic research partnerships. Eventually the company created a new position to reflect the unique niche she had carved out for herself – Director of Corporate Social Responsibility. "That was a culmination of many years of effort," she says.

Bellingham has intensified her involvement with the Faculty in recent years, taking a leading role in the creation of the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work and securing a major gift from Bell Canada for the Cyber Abuse of Children Initiative. Because Bell Canada is also a key sponsor of Kids Help Phone, Bellingham is very attuned to the issues surrounding youth and the online world. "I started to realize that this was a very important issue that was flying under the radar," she says of the growing threat of cyber abuse. "The Internet has brought a lot of positive things, but has also introduced some new social problems. One of those is an increased vulnerability for children, and we saw the need to examine this from a social work perspective." Largely through her efforts, Bell Canada became the new Institute's first corporate partner.

Even though Bellingham left Bell Canada in 2004 to further her education – she will soon add a social sciences degree to her MBA – she plans to maintain her strong ties to the Faculty and is currently assisting in fundraising efforts for a proposed cyber counselling initiative. "It started out as something that was part of my work, and now it's become part of my life," she says. "I especially enjoy fundraising on the research and development side because I know that, if it's done well, it can affect major social change. For me, there's nothing more motivating than that."



Louise Bellingham with University of Toronto Vice-President and Provost Vivek Goel

Human Development in the Developing World

Recent grad helps build early childhood program in Pakistan

Sadaf Shallwani is a born-and-bred Canadian who had only visited Pakistan before she moved to Karachi in September for a job at Aga Khan University, yet her reputation – or at least her family’s – preceded her.

Shallwani’s maternal grandmother is somewhat of a legend in the country. She was one of the first women from Karachi to graduate from medical school, and she went on to practice in refugee camps, establish eight maternity and child welfare centres, and provide free medical care to some of Pakistan’s most destitute citizens. “She’d often take a few nurses to a village and set up a mobile clinic on her own. She has a long history of serving the community,” says Shallwani, who graduated with an MSW in spring 2005.

Shallwani says she grew up admiring her grandmother and credits her for her own social justice

values – the values that have led her to a job in her grandmother’s hometown where she too is working to improve life for Pakistan’s neediest people, albeit from a different angle. In her role as an instructor and researcher in the Human Development Program at Aga Khan University, Shallwani is helping to implement and evaluate an early childhood development program in two poor regions of southeast Pakistan.

“The level of poverty here is incomparable to anything we have in Canada,” she says. “The villages have open sewage, and families live all together in tiny rooms where children sleep on the floor.” Her research team has hired

and trained early childhood development workers from the local community to educate parents and caregivers on childcare issues ranging from proper nutrition to language skills.

“It’s an exciting time to be part of the Human Development Program because it’s just starting to define itself and the whole field of human development in Pakistan,” says Shallwani. “Social work is not a regulated profession here, yet there’s a growing realization of the need for professionals to do this kind of work and a great deal of development-related activity with NGOs and local organizations.”

“Social work is not a regulated profession here, yet there’s a growing realization of the need for professionals to do this kind of work.”

Shallwani first became interested in working in Pakistan following a volunteer stint at Aga Khan University Hospital in 2000, where she assisted with occupational therapy activities in the psychiatry department. “It really opened my eyes, not only to what was going on in the country, but to the fact that I could go and work in the developing world.” Once back home, she resolved to devote her career to working for positive change abroad. “It came to a point where it wasn’t just politics or news to me anymore. It was real people and real suffering and I wasn’t able to turn my back on it.”

At the Faculty of Social Work, Shallwani led a team of students in the World Partnership Walk to raise money for poverty reduction programs in Asia and Africa. She was a research assistant to Professor Usha George on a study of newcomer South Asian women and received a Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Award from the University of Toronto Alumni Association. “When I was in Canada I was doing work that fulfilled me, but I definitely feel that here is where I can make a greater impact.”



Sadaf Shallwani, (in yellow, second from right in front row) with early childhood development workers in Pakistan

Lessons Outside the Classroom

Professor transforms social work field education

When Professor Marion Bogo talks about her more than 25 years of research on social work field instruction, she modestly says that it “filled a gap.” In fact, it revolutionized field education across the world and, in the process, helped advance the social work profession.

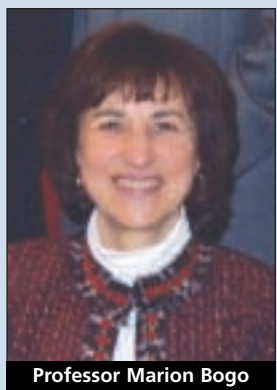
Bogo was just starting her career as a social work practitioner in the 1970s when she made an observation that would eventually absorb her as a social work scholar. “I became aware very quickly that the quality of practice of new graduates was highly affected by the quality of clinical supervision they received,” she says. Her interest in the educational aspect of practice continued to grow, and she decided to research the subject in depth at the Faculty of Social Work.

“I wanted to learn more about how supervisors help young social workers take what they’ve been taught at the university and apply it when working with real people with real problems.”

The focus of Bogo’s research soon shifted to an earlier phase of preparing for practice, the education of students in the field practicum. She was the Faculty’s practicum co-ordinator from 1979 to 1992,

a position that reinforced her convictions about field instructors’ critical role. “When you ask alumni about the most important part of their social work education, most will say the practicum because they came here to learn a practice, not simply to study about social work.”

Field instructors already have demanding professional responsibilities, and Bogo understood that they often needed help defining and successfully carrying out their pivotal educational roles. In the 1980s, the scant literature that existed on the subject of field instruction was outdated and based on little research. It was also apprenticeship-like rather than educationally focused. To remedy this, she led two national research projects



Professor Marion Bogo

that generated a new model for integrating theory and practice in field education. Her resulting book, *The Practice of Field Instruction in Social Work: Theory & Process* (University of Toronto Press & Columbia University Press), co-authored with Elaine Vayda, is considered by many to be the bible of field instruction. One practitioner who had just taken on her first practicum student recently told Bogo that

she “slept with the book under her pillow.”

Bogo developed a strong theoretical foundation for field instruction, but she also helped create many practical tools for field instructors along with her colleagues Roxanne Power and Andrea Litvack. Together they have produced teaching videos, guides and a series of workshops on vital issues in field education. Since publishing her first book, Bogo has conducted research on professional competence with colleague Cheryl Regehr and written extensively on topics such as the student-field instructor relationship and social workers’ motivations to be field instructors. In 1996 she became the first incumbent of the Sandra Rotman Chair in Social Work, established to promote research that improves social work practice and education.

Bogo’s contributions to field education have resulted in more positive and productive learning experiences for thousands of students and instructors both in North America and abroad, where she is in frequent demand as a consultant to social work schools in Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. “It’s gratifying to see the fruits of my labours,” she says. “The more I work at the international level, the more I feel I am making an impact.”

Building Urban Communities

Alumnus devotes his career to “the neighbourhood”



John Braithwaite

When he was growing up in downtown Toronto in the 1930s and 1940s, John Braithwaite used to go to St. Christopher Settlement House to meet up with friends, shoot some hoops, maybe play a game of pool – all the things boys do with their free hours. Yet “St. Chris” was more than just somewhere to go after school. It was a home away from home in the big city. Later, he would spend almost 25 years at the helm of another neighbourhood house in another city across the country, creating an urban haven where kids could feel as safe and accepted as he did during those afternoons at St. Chris.

After earning his Bachelor of Arts degree, Braithwaite became the first black boys’ worker in St. Chris’s history – just one of many “firsts” in his life. He was also the first black player on the U of T Varsity Blues basketball team. While his own teammates were supportive, the same couldn’t be said for other teams and their fans, especially south of the border. “I was called all kinds of names, couldn’t sleep in the same hotel with my team, had to eat separately,” he says. “It was bad in those days.” But he kept playing, eventually winning the Canadian National Basketball Championship with his team in 1953.

“I’ve always been determined to make positive changes in my life and in other people’s. Somehow, some way, I do what I set out to do.”

“When somebody tries to keep me down, it’s game over for them,” says Braithwaite, referring to his life on and off the court. “I’ve always been determined to make positive changes in my life and in other people’s. Somehow, some way, I do what I set out to do.” As his longtime friend Bill Stern says, “He looks mild, but he fights like hell.”

Braithwaite accepted an invitation to be a boys’ worker at North Shore Neighbourhood House in North Vancouver after completing his MSW in 1956. He encountered some racist board members there and the early years were tough, but again he persevered and at just 27 years old became the House’s first black executive director. Over the next two decades he built it into a strong, multifaceted neighbourhood centre. “We were into affordable housing, inner city recreation, youth outreach, social action, Aboriginal social services – you name it,” he says.

Braithwaite expanded his community involvement when he was elected to city council in 1972. Over the next few decades he was re-elected each of the nine times he ran for councillor, topping the polls every time. His contributions to North Vancouver are legendary and earned him the municipality’s highest honour – the Freedom of the City – following his retirement in 2002. Another major tribute came in 2004 when a new community centre in North Vancouver was named after him.

Braithwaite’s official exit from public life has not diminished his popularity in the community, and there are continuing calls for him to run for mayor. “The secret to my political success comes partly from my social work background – always listen, whether you agree or disagree with someone – and partly from my own philosophy – never give up,” he says. “This is what made me achieve what I did.”



Esther Addo

A Second Chance to Learn

MSW student overcomes adversity to achieve her educational goals

When Esther Addo finished the sixth grade in her native Ghana, she was faced with a very adult choice about her future: follow in the footsteps of the women in her family by quitting school and learning the domestic skills required of a good wife, or find a way to continue her studies on her own. She opted to fight for her education, something this Master of Social Work (MSW) student has been doing ever since.

Addo was one of nine children, and the accepted practice in her family was that only boys continued beyond primary school. “They believe girls grow up to get married, so it’s a waste of money to educate them,” she says. Though Ghana now offers nine years of free universal basic education, when she was young there were still tuition fees for the senior grades. Coupled with the cost of school supplies, it was a significant expense for a young girl without the financial support of her family. Yet Addo was determined to keep up her studies, so at just 11 years old she established a small business braiding hair in the city of Accra, the capital of Ghana, where she grew up.

She managed to put herself through high school and get good grades, but financial problems prevented her from officially graduating. So when her boyfriend left for Canada she went along too in search of better opportunities. It was difficult in the beginning because she could not legally work or study for several years, and when she finally could she did not know where to start. Her longtime ambition of becoming a lawyer or social worker seemed very far off.

Everything changed when she heard about the University of Toronto’s Transitional Year Program (TYP), which prepares adults lacking formal educational requirements for university admission. On the day her friend told her about TYP, Addo, by then a mother of two, got on a bus and went to apply. “I told myself, ‘This is my second chance, and I’m going to take it.’” She began the program in 2000, and everything was going well until her doctor discovered a tumour on her liver. He recommended surgery, but she decided on a “wait and watch” approach that continues to this day. Even with the stress of a serious illness, she was among the top three graduates in her TYP class and won several awards.

Soon after beginning her undergraduate studies in sociology and criminology, Addo developed another health problem that has left her with chronic headaches and one nearly blind eye. Again, though, she didn’t let this obstacle stand in the way of her educational goals and went on to get accepted at the Faculty of Social Work.

With her MSW graduation coming up this spring, Addo is only upbeat about her future. She is already the first person in her family – male or female – to graduate from university, and soon she will have a master’s degree. As for what sustains her on the especially hard days, she says it’s quite simple. “I want to be a role model for my children, and I want to do the things that I and many of my family and friends didn’t have a chance to do back home.”

An Online Lifeline

Dementia caregivers find help and comfort in web-based support program



Professor Elsa Marziali

Photography: Jayson Gallop

“It’s my lifeline,” wrote one woman, a longtime caregiver for her mother-in-law with Alzheimer’s disease. The heartfelt statement came in a letter to Professor Elsa Marziali and her research team, who introduced the woman to a web-based support program for caregivers of people with dementia. Lifeline is a fitting description for the program, which literally puts information, expert advice and mutual support “on line” for caregivers to access 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the comfort of their homes.

Recent years have seen significant government cutbacks in services for people looking after older family members with chronic illnesses, a trend that Marziali says could ultimately increase health-care costs. “Studies show that if we offer long-term, multi-component programs for caregivers, their stress is reduced, their ability to provide good quality care is improved and they are more likely to keep patients out of institutionalized care for longer. This constitutes a huge savings for the system.”

When Marziali was appointed the Schipper Chair in Gerontological Social Work at the Faculty of Social Work and the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric

Care in 2001, she immediately identified economical caregiver support programs as an urgent priority in the field. Around the same time, she attended a conference where Swedish researchers reported on an initiative that connected caregivers with social workers through video conferencing. She was looking for a highly accessible, cost-effective program, and this proved to be just the inspiration she needed.

In the end, Marziali took the idea one step further by integrating video conferencing in a website for dementia caregivers. Since caregivers are housebound much of the time and many live in remote areas where there are few, if any, support services, an Internet-based program was ideal. The challenge was how to teach older caregivers to use a new technology.

In Marziali’s pilot study, 80 per cent of the caregiver participants had never used computers. Not surprisingly, they showed some initial resistance to her program. That all changed, however, with a simple game of computer Solitaire. “Before they were even aware of it, they were dragging and clicking like pros,” she says. “They became totally immersed, and it diffused all their anxiety.” Marziali also worked closely with technology developers and the caregivers themselves to design an extremely user-friendly interface. The “Caring for Others” website contains disease-specific information, self-care strategies, a question and answer forum, and video conferencing capabilities for both one-on-one communication and virtual group interactions.

Last year, with funding from Bell Canada and CANARIE, a not-for-profit Internet development corporation, she tested the website with 34 caregivers of people with moderate to severe dementia in Timmins, Ont., and Lethbridge, Alta. A social worker and nurse provided 10 online group sessions weekly. Then each group of caregivers used the website’s video conferencing feature to continue to meet as mutual support groups, with the social worker available on an as-needed basis.

“When the group members met in person for the first time months later they embraced each other as if they’d been friends forever,” says Marziali. In addition to forming powerful online bonds, over 90 per cent of the caregivers reported decreased stress levels at the six month follow-up, and several said their participation in the group helped them to delay placing their family members in institutions. In the next stage of this research, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health, Marziali is conducting a random controlled trial at sites in Thunder Bay

and Ottawa to evaluate the cost benefits of the web-based program for dementia caregivers.

Marziali has also investigated the feasibility of virtual support programs adapted for caregivers and patients with traumatic brain injury and frontotemporal dementia (a type of dementia that tends to affect people in their 50s). “The online model is broadly applicable to other conditions,” she says, adding that she is interested in developing psychosocial intervention programs for obese adolescents and adults.

In related research, Marziali is collaborating with Professor Ronald Baecker of computer science to create multimedia video histories of people with Alzheimer’s disease. “Our aim is to stimulate patients’ long-term memory and maybe even extend it,” she says, with videos containing photos, old home movies, favourite songs and familiar stories. The results of a pilot test were very positive, and the American Alzheimer’s Association and Intel have funded this program and another project that will result in the development of six educational videos for dementia caregivers. Once complete, these videos will be available on the “Caring for Others” website.

Ten years ago, Marziali could not have imagined that she would become a leading expert in the field known as gerontechnology, let alone develop social work interventions that can be delivered online. She began her clinical career working with youth, went on to advanced training in psychotherapy, published widely on borderline personality disorder and is anything but tech savvy. Yet when the opportunity came to tackle a branch of social work that is growing more important by the day, given Canada’s aging population, she trusted in her strong background in applied research and jumped in.

As for her own Internet know-how, she says she’s learned enough to understand what works and what doesn’t work for older adults who access information websites, and she lets the experts take care of the details. “Increasingly, the health-care system wants people to take responsibility for their own health and the health of their family members,” she says. “To do this, people need information and support. Since we’re going to be increasingly driven by technology and web-based health care interventions in the future, what a wonderful vehicle to transfer this information and support.”

CANADA’S FIRST CHAIR IN GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK

In 2001, Professor Elsa Marziali was appointed the Schipper Chair in Gerontological Social Work. The chair was established by Joseph and Sandra Rotman and J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff, and named in honour of Norman and Honey Schipper, longtime supporters of the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care.

FIRST PERSON: COMMENTS FROM INTERNET-BASED SUPPORT GROUP PARTICIPANTS

“I have opened up to total strangers in the group – I can’t do that with friends or family because they won’t hear it because it’s too depressing, and they have their own problems.”

“When providing round-the-clock care, there is not a whole lot of time to deal with one’s emotions, and they tend to get buried alive. No longer did I feel so isolated, as I quickly found out that other caregivers shared these feelings.”

“Being able to connect with one another in the comfort of our homes at any time of the day or night is a very effective, non-intrusive and reassuring way to communicate.”

reach

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