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# A practicum primer

## Unsung hero of MSW program changing to fit the times

Call it the unsung hero, the best kept secret, or even the backbone of the MSW program. Unlike its more flamboyant research sister, it often doesn't get a lot of attention. But in terms of influencing a social work student's career, it's huge. As Professor Marion Bogo, who is recognized as an international leader in social work education research, says, "Study after study shows that students and alumni identify the practicum as the most significant part of their education in preparing them for social work practice." The practicum program—which, throughout the two-year MSW degree, gives students supervised learning experiences within a service setting—isn't just about students though. The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work's practicum program is also crucial in keeping the Faculty and the community connected. And it actively fosters the professional development of social workers in the field.

"The classroom provides the context to developing critical knowledge and thinking skills," says Dean Cheryl Regehr. "But it all comes together in practicum, with students experiencing the integration of theory and research into a real-world practice setting." The other main objective of the practicum, says Eileen McKee, the Faculty's new assistant dean of field education, is to have students develop competencies in performing specific practice

skills. McKee, a veteran field instructor herself, encourages all practicum students to ask themselves, "What can I learn from this experience?"

While the Faculty has traditionally offered a practicum program with excellent learning opportunities for students; a wide range of placements; dedicated field instructors; and strong practicum support, the program is continually being evaluated and modified. The past few years and the current economic recession have presented significant new challenges for students, field instructors, placement partners and the Faculty itself. "The question is, within our practicum program, how do we approach practice education in a way that meets the needs created by the current socio-economic climate?" says Regehr.

For example, social service agencies that have long experienced a squeeze on financial resources are now finding budgets even tighter. In turn, social workers, already facing heavy responsibilities, often find it difficult to commit to the further demands of becoming volunteer field instructors. "It takes time and energy to become a field instructor," says Dana Katz, the Faculty's practicum coordinator. The result, Katz explains, is that it is becoming increasingly challenging to attract new

practicum partners and field instructors, at a time when the profession is most needed.

The Faculty has developed a number of strategies, not just to respond to the current economy, but also to improve the practicum experience as a whole, ensuring social work grads who are highly prepared for real-world careers.

One of those strategies to improve student competencies and encourage creative and critical thinking skills asks students to become involved in creating new practicum opportunities. Moving outside of a clinical practice role adds another dimension to students' education, allowing them to understand how a specific program is created, developed and implemented. Among other initiatives, the Faculty is also exploring new collaborative partnerships with social service organizations which, usually because of funding shortages, are not practicum partners.

There is no doubt that these are challenging times for the social work community, its partners and clients. The need for skilled social workers trained in both theory and practice has never been more critical. There is also no doubt that the ongoing enhancements to the practicum program are a key part of the Faculty's success in fulfilling that mandate.

Continued on page 5



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

FACTOR-INWENTASH  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK





## Change is the constant condition of life.

Recently we held a scholarship and bequest-intention appreciation event at the Faculty, something we do on a regular basis to recognize our generous supporters. It is wonderful to talk with alumni and friends about why they feel passionate, not just about the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, but also about why they are so enthusiastic regarding the calibre of our students. In fact, one of the guests at the event told me afterwards, "I spoke to several of the scholarship recipients, and I was so impressed by their accomplishments and their ideas—the future of social work is in great hands!" I would agree—and extend that sentiment to all of our students.

Over the past two years we have expanded our MSW program by 30 percent. This year, applications to our programs continued to grow, and we were able to choose from students who have already set extremely high standards not just in academics, but also in personal goals, accomplishments and character. They apply because they are attracted to an institution that is home to exceptionally talented and dedicated staff and faculty. We have gained an international reputation for scholarly research that matters in the real world. Our publication of scholarly articles places the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work squarely in the top five social work faculties in North America, and citations of the work of faculty members place us in the top 10.

We are also known for creating innovative educational programs that graduate students who are ready to tackle the complex challenges of today's world. To maintain that responsiveness, we are further refining and adding to our programs. Responding to a need for social workers with leadership and management skills, in fall 2010 we are implementing a new Advanced Diploma in Social Service Administration and MSW specialization in the same.

There is no doubt that as Canadians and citizens of the world, we face some daunting challenges ahead. It's easy to be disheartened by the global recession, climate change, armed conflicts and humanitarian crises that affect us all—especially those most vulnerable in society. We have the resources, the technology and the human capital to make lasting, positive change, and that's where our Faculty fits in. We see ourselves changing one life—and a million lives—through our unique approach to the integration of research, education and practice.

I reflect upon this as I step down as dean and assume my new role as vice-provost, academic programs at University of Toronto on July 1, 2009. For the past 30 years, I have been privileged to be a part of the Faculty, first as a master's and doctoral student, then as a field practice educator and for the past 10 years, professor, and now as dean. I will miss my daily contact with the vibrant community that is the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, but I'm confident that it is ready to face the coming decades.

I would like to welcome my colleague Faye Mishna as interim dean. Faye's international reputation as a researcher, educator and leader in the field of social work, combined with her dedication to staff, faculty and students, makes her eminently qualified to take on this role.

I wish everyone a safe and happy summer.

Cheryl Regehr,  
Dean, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

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MSW/ADVANCED DIPLOMA IN  
SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

## Meet the new assistant dean of field education

It's not surprising that Eileen McKee, who was recently named to the new position of assistant dean of field education at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, is passionate about the role of practicum in an MSW student's education. Fresh from talking to an audience of 200 first-year social work students on the eve of choosing their fall 2009 practicum placements, McKee advised them to think of practicum in terms of the real world. "We encourage students to think of practicum as an opportunity to integrate the classroom learning with actual issues they are presented with in the field," she says. "At the practicum office, we assist students in preparing for their settings well before they have begun." "We also want students to reflect on the role of field education, as potential field educators themselves in a few years."

In this key position, along with the practicum office team and in collaboration with other staff, McKee will develop and oversee the practicum program for MSW students, ensuring that students are provided with opportunities to

integrate knowledge and practice and develop competency in their practice. The practicum office does this by developing and maintaining partnerships with social service and health organizations as well as working with the field to enhance teaching and learning opportunities.

An alum of the University of Toronto, holding both MSW and MBA degrees, McKee has 20 years of practice, administrative and training experience, including serving on several advisory councils and boards addressing health, mental health, addictions, income support and aging issues. Skilled in developing educational programs and creating new multi-sector collaborations, McKee is a recognized managerial and clinical social services leader who has shown a long-standing commitment to field education at U of T.



Eileen McKee,  
Assistant Dean of Field Education

## New faculty member has long-standing commitment to health/mental health issues

Shelley L. Craig, a licensed clinical social worker with considerable expertise in delivering services for vulnerable populations, especially within the health and mental health sectors, has been appointed to the position of assistant professor in the Faculty, effective July 1, 2009. Her 15 years of experience include a term as a medical social worker in the emergency care centre of a community hospital; director of a domestic violence shelter; executive director of ALSO Out Youth (a community mental health agency); and vice-president of the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays National Board of Directors. She is currently an assistant professor at Barry University School of Social Work in Miami.

Professor Craig has an extensive teaching background, obtaining her doctorate at Florida International University School of Social Work, where she taught for five years.

Her research focuses on health and mental health disparities and the impact of policies and the service delivery system on vulnerable popu-

lations. As the principal investigator on a \$4.3 million study, Craig has most recently directed The Alliance for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth, an extensive community research plan and resulting development of a comprehensive service delivery system for youth and their families. She has presented many of these findings at numerous academic and research conferences.

The recipient of many awards, including National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Student Social Worker of the Year and the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS) National Person of Impact, Craig is particularly proud that several of her students and interns have also become Student Social Worker(s) of the Year in the state of Florida.



Shelley L. Craig, Assistant Professor

## Professor Faye Mishna appointed interim dean



Following the appointment of Dean Cheryl Regehr to vice-provost academic programs at the University of Toronto, Professor Faye Mishna has been named interim dean at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. The appointment is effective July 1, 2009.

Professor Mishna is associate dean of research at the Faculty and is cross-appointed to the department of psychiatry. She holds the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Chair in Child and Family. Along with Professor Robert MacFadden, she is co-principal investigator of the Bell Canada Cyber Abuse Initiative and the Bell Canada Cyber Counselling Research, Training and Service Centre.

Prior to joining the Faculty, she was clinical director of Integra, a children's mental health centre serving children and youth with learning disabilities. Professor Mishna is a member of the National Framework Review Committee of the Child and Youth Advisory Committee of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. She is a

fellow of the International Academy for Research in Learning Disabilities.

Professor Mishna's program of research focuses on bullying; cyber abuse/cyber bullying and cyber counselling; and school-based interventions for students with learning disabilities.

She has fostered extensive collaboration between the Faculty and community agencies, enhancing and supporting the Faculty's mission of practice-informed research and research-informed practice. Her leadership in promoting the Research Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work and the Centre for Applied Social Research has led to numerous research initiatives.

Her work, particularly in the field of cyber abuse and counselling, has received ongoing media attention and she is often called upon for expert commentary.

"I am looking forward to taking on this new challenge," Dr. Mishna says. "This is an exciting time at the Faculty with some wonderful new appointments, excellent research and timely programs."

## PRACTICUM BY THE NUMBERS

### 3 or 4

Days per week spent by first-year MSW students in practicum from January until May.

### 03

Days per week spent by second-year MSW students in practicum from September until April.

### 220

The approximate number of placement opportunities from which students can choose.

### 01

The Faculty has pioneered the first online evaluation tool to measure student competencies during practicum.

### 30+

The number of years some field instructors have been volunteering with the Faculty.



Dr. Miriam Schiff,  
Hebrew University

## Violence takes its toll on Jewish- and Arab-Israeli adolescents

Faculty presentation by Hebrew University professor increases our understanding

At a February faculty event that shone a light on the impact of war and violence on Israel's youth, Dr. Miriam Schiff of Hebrew University's Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare presented the findings from her national study (with Professor R. Benbenishty and colleagues from the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma) of nearly 10,000 Jewish- and Arab-Israeli students. "Unfortunately, Israel is a laboratory for studying the effects of political violence," Schiff said. Currently a visiting scholar at Columbia University, Schiff shared her research over a luncheon presentation with an attentive audience of students, faculty, alumni and community partners. The presentation is part of the Faculty's ongoing commitment to fostering international collaboration and cross-cultural alliances to expand social work knowledge and practice.

By delving more deeply into the experiences of Arab- and Jewish-Israeli adolescents, Schiff wanted to investigate the impact of ongoing politically motivated violence. In North America, for example, Schiff noted that 11 percent of New York public school children and adolescents were still experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder six months after 9/11 took place. While 21 percent of Jewish-Israeli children live in poverty as compared to over 50 percent of Arab-Israeli children, would these and other differences have an impact on how children are affected? And are there potential risk and protective factors that can be addressed to help them?

The research team used a variety of measures to track experiences of politically motivated violence (exposure

and types) and its potential consequences such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and risk behaviors such as use of alcohol and other substances. Life satisfaction and school support were found as protective factors for some of the consequences. Risk factors included ethnicity (being Arab-Israeli and from the former Soviet Union), direct and massive exposure to the events, and previous negative life-events.

These findings reinforce the importance of social workers attending to contextual and prior negative events when it comes to understanding and assessing the impact of politically motivated violence. Who you are (ethnicity and place of birth) and experiences of hardship (poverty, negative events) represent considerable risks for the development of PTSD and other concerning behaviours like increased alcohol and substance use. Students experiencing poverty for example, reported more PTSD. Compared to their Jewish counterparts, Arab students reported more PTSD and increased alcohol consumption, including binge drinking. What mitigates these risks for all students? Schiff found that what helps in general, is school-based support; in particular, less tense and more skillful teachers, and finally, higher life satisfaction—possibly optimism—within students themselves. The researchers found that teachers "were in the same boat as the students" because they too reported trauma stress symptoms and admitted to not knowing how to help their students.

There is no doubt that Schiff's findings have implications for theory, research and practice, not just in

Israel, but in North America too. For example, she noted that we must expand our conceptual thinking beyond assessing primarily for PTSD because we run the risk of not casting our net wide enough to capture other contributors and risk behaviours such as alcohol and substance use. One audience member at the presentation added that the PTSD model was developed to capture information about a potentially traumatic event under "normal" circumstances; how does it apply when "normal" involves living with politically motivated violence? Schiff asserts that we also need to adapt Benbenishty and Astor's "whole community" approach rather than the usual emphasis on individual experience and micro interventions. Noting that the teachers were hungry for knowledge and skills that would help them to better support their students, Schiff, Bauma and colleagues believe that specialized community-based services could be of benefit. Service staff could show teachers how to better identify which students are at risk for specific symptoms and behaviours and would benefit most from particular kinds of interventions.

Schiff's presentation underscored the importance of attending to the experiences of marginalized groups. Similar to how children were once the overlooked victims of domestic violence, Schiff's research compels us to look at how children and adolescents who are victims of politically motivated violence are vulnerable, especially if they come from certain backgrounds (ethnicity, poverty) and are experiencing ongoing hardships.

## Faculty, student and alumni award winners

David Brennan



David Brennan, an assistant professor at the Faculty of Social Work, is the recipient of the 2009 Boston College Graduate School of Social Work Distinguished Alumni Award. The honour recognizes Brennan's accomplishments, dedication and leadership, especially in his work on HIV/AIDS. Brennan's research focuses on examining various populations impacted by HIV, particularly gay and bisexual men, as well as examining the mental, physical and sexual health and well-being of LGBT people, particularly ethno-racialized gay and bisexual men.

Alean Al-Krenawi



Alean Al-Krenawi, a PhD alumnus (1995) of the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and professor at the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, was recently named Killam Visiting Scholar at the University of Calgary. This prestigious award sponsors a distinguished scholar who will make a significant contribution to the academic life of the university. Professor Al-Krenawi is the first social worker selected for the Killam Visiting Scholar grant.

Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Award winners



Zeenat Ahmed



Andy Hauser



Annabel Pitts



Christina Yager

The Gordon Cressy Student Leadership Awards were established in 1994 by the University of Toronto Alumni Association and the Division of University Advancement in order to recognize students who have made outstanding extra-curricular contributions to their college, faculty or school, or to the university as a whole. Congratulations to these four 2009 winners from the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work!

**Zeenat Ahmed** is Omsbuddy at the Faculty of Social Work, providing student support and

is also co-chair of the Graduate Student Association. She helped to organize a trip to Georgina Island to give students an understanding of Aboriginal culture.

Social work graduate **Andy Hauser** is dedicated to improvements for fellow classmates at the Faculty; he is a member of the executive and the Social Work representative on the Graduate Students' Union, and he is also a peer mentor in the Faculty's mentorship program.

**Annabel Pitts** is an MSW student who has been an active volunteer on several fronts, including working on orientation activities and the mentorship program. She has also been involved in the community through raising awareness and funds for sexual health services.

MSW student **Christina Yager** has been actively involved in creating community in the Faculty through her volunteer efforts in orientation and peer mentorship activities for first-year MSW students.

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THE PEOPLE  
AROUND YOU?

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# A practicum

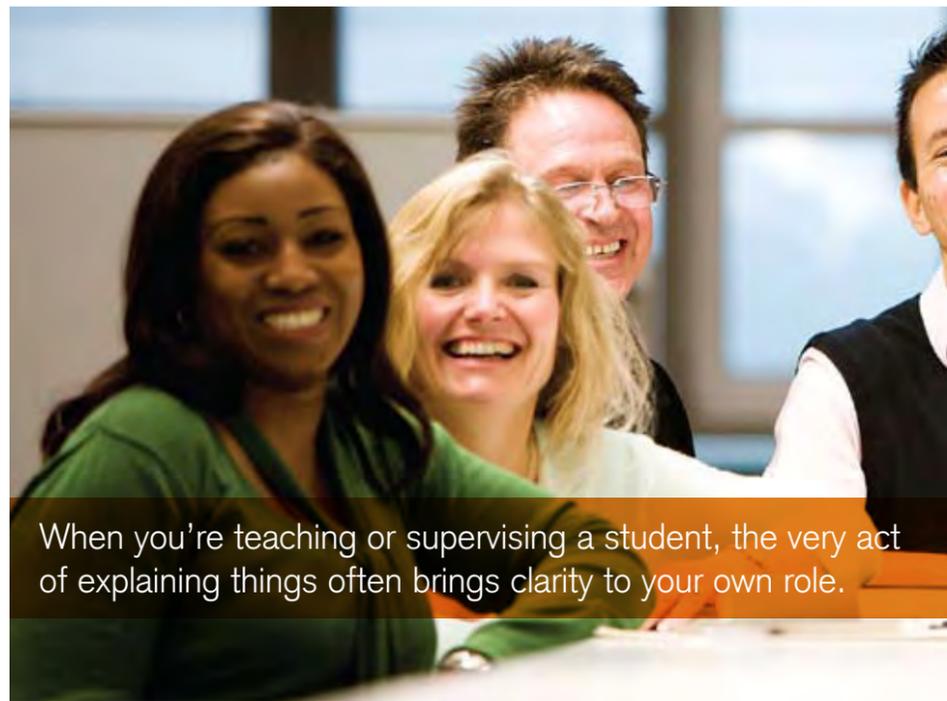
Study after study shows that students and alumni identify practicum as the most significant part of their education in preparing them for social work practice. And the Faculty's practicum program builds strong connections with service partners, social workers and the larger community. Right now is an exciting time to be involved in practicum, as the Faculty responds to new challenges from students, field instructors and the community.



This year's cyber counselling practicum is another Factor-Inwentash first.



Will a new practicum rotational model attract more field instructors?



When you're teaching or supervising a student, the very act of explaining things often brings clarity to your own role.

## Practicum students gain unique experience as part of Bell Canada Cyber Counselling Research, Training and Service Centre

There's no doubt that young people live in a cyber world. They meet new friends and chat with current pals online. They watch movies, play games and listen to music online. It's no wonder then, that many of them are also reaching out for counselling via their computers. Agencies like Kids Help Phone have seen dramatic increases in their online counselling services and numerous other services are springing up, using tools ranging from web cams to secure email programs. Thanks to Bell Canada's generous and ongoing partnership with the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, the Faculty is on the cutting-edge of this movement, contributing to important evidence-based research and clinical practice initiatives to advance our understanding of cyber counselling.

This academic year, second-year MSW students participated in a first-of-its kind clinical placement that saw them counselling students attending U of T's St. Michael's and Victoria colleges. The pilot initiative, led by Professor Faye Mishna, is part of the Bell Canada Cyber Counselling Research, Training and Service Centre. "More and more, there is a demand for cyber counselling," Mishna says. "But we have very little research into how it works, for whom it works, as well as the kinds of issues we're facing and the competencies we'll need to address them." She adds that the cyber counselling practicum provides a unique laboratory for research, and gives social work students an unmatched skill set in a quickly growing field.

The counselling program was advertised at the two colleges in September 2008, with students offered a choice of cyber counselling, face-to-face counselling or a combination of both. Although data collection and content analysis from the pilot will not be analyzed until the summer, in this first year, 52 clients received counselling

and 19 used the cyber counselling option. All participants attended an initial face-to-face meeting.

The practicum students worked out of offices at the Faculty and St. Michael's. They were supervised by Dr. Deborah Levine, staff social worker at U of T's Counselling and Psychological Services, who, besides sitting in on many client meetings, met weekly with the students, both in group and individual settings. "Students email their counsellor at any time, although it's pre-arranged that they receive a response back by a certain day later that week," Levine says. "It's very much like a once-a-week face-to-face appointment." The practicum students received a three-day cyber counselling training program provided by Lawrence Murphy, as well as attending various seminars arranged by Levine on topics such as narrative therapy, trauma and mindful meditation techniques. This knowledge was useful, the students acknowledged, in counselling their clients who were dealing with issues such as social anxiety, depression and family issues.

In the eyes of the six practicum students, their cyber counselling placement was a great success. Dedicated to their clients, they made themselves available via email over the holiday season in case a student needed help—an action that went well beyond their practicum commitment. Many had mixed feelings about ending the relationships with clients forged over the past year.

The research evaluation will include in-depth interviews with clients concerning the opportunities and challenges presented by cyber counselling. The evaluation will also include interviews with the counsellors comparing cyber and face-to-face counselling and what constitutes cyber counselling competencies. Feedback from registrars and dons at the two colleges will also be included.

## Thoughts on cyber counselling from practicum students

We asked the six MSW practicum students their impres-

sions of their unique placement counselling U of T students via email. These are the thoughts of Lori Lucciola, Miri Ben-Dat, Annabel Pitts, Kate Sedore, Elizabeth Arbour and Allison Eisner.

### How do you interpret a client's general demeanor or body language given that there are no non-verbal clues in an email exchange?

"We used 'square bracketing' and emoticons. (Emoticons are part of the language of the Internet in which users type a textual representation of their mood or facial expression using a sequence of keyboard characters; for example the "smiley face" :) is commonly used to indicate the user's happy or fun mood.) With square bracketing, you indicate your body language by typing in the words, enclosed by the square brackets sign. For example, you could type, 'I love my history class,' followed by '[eye roll],' which tells me that you actually hate your class. We find that our clients have grown up with this kind of communication, so they have a better sense of these types of non-verbal cues, with less room for misinterpretation."

### What do you see as some of the advantages of cyber counselling?

"One client I had who used cyber counselling exclusively, couldn't verbalize what was going on for her, but she had no trouble writing it down, so it was a beautiful modality for her."

"One of the neat things is that clients can start and save an email to us at any time they feel like they want to express themselves. Some found that writing to a therapist forced them to face their emotions in the moment. One client I had found that way more powerful for her than a face-to-face session."

### How about disadvantages?

"Emailing isn't the best tool for crisis situations, obviously, and we talk to clients about that right from the beginning, but that's not to say that a crisis couldn't happen. In our training, we talked about how we would handle that."

# primer



Sunnybrook Health Sciences' educational coordinator Illana Perlman (far left), works with rotational practicum student Lina Neves and her two Sunnybrook field instructors, Rinat Mayer and Amy Carter



Practice makes perfect: what if we built a better practice-based evaluation tool?

## Do you think you will use this experience in your future career?

*"I think it's a really good skill set to have. A number of employee assistance programs are offering online help, so it's very possible it will be a part of the work that I'm doing."*

## What's the one key thing you've learned from this placement?

*"Cyber counselling will grow in popularity, but I wouldn't go so far as to say it's going to take over traditional face-to-face counselling. It's a great option in a university setting because of the flexibility it offers students and the fact that they are comfortable in communicating this way."*

## New rotational practicum model helps time-strapped field instructors

How do you convince an already time-strapped social worker to take on the extra responsibility of becoming a field instructor for an MSW student? Given that many social workers in today's economy are being asked to do a lot more with less, it's sometimes a tough sell to get them to take on a first-year student for five months or a second-year student for the entire academic year. But by offering a rotational model that cuts the field instructor's commitment by at least one-third to one-half the time spent in a traditional practicum, the Faculty hopes more instructors will volunteer.

Instead of the traditional model in which students are placed in a single setting for the duration of their practicum, the rotational model sees students moving through generally two rotations of nine weeks each, or sometimes three rotations of six weeks each. The Faculty conducted focus groups with social workers and undertook considerable planning before implementing a pilot initiative in January 2008 that continued until May 2009. Dana Katz, practicum coordinator, judges the initiative a qualified success. "The rotational model is really helpful for potential field instructors who work in larger teaching centres, such

as health care institutions," says Katz. "They just don't have the time for a six-month commitment, but if you say 'You can rotate with two or three other staff to teach a student and still give back to your profession without a huge time commitment,' then they're much more likely to be interested," she continues. The model generally isn't viable for smaller community organizations that simply don't have the staff numbers, Katz says.

Students, especially those in their first year of the MSW program, can benefit too, Katz believes. "The rotational model gives first-year students a wider range of opportunities and competencies to begin to develop themselves as social workers," she says. "There's no better way to do that than by being exposed to widely different social workers, styles, modalities and client populations to give a great introduction to the field."

Illana Perlman, a social worker in the trauma program and the educational coordinator at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre (one of the Faculty's affiliated teaching centres), has been involved in developing the rotational model, along with Dr. Barbara Muskat, cross-appointed at U of T, and academic and clinical specialist at The Hospital for Sick Children. They have presented this pioneering Canadian social work model at major conferences and Sunnybrook has championed the model; of the initial 14 rotational placements in Toronto in 2008, Sunnybrook was home to six. "The notion is to focus on breadth of experience for the students, rather than depth," Perlman says. "As far as possible we develop rotational cohorts that are connected. For example, a student may begin a rotation in the emergency department and then proceed to the burn unit, to see the progression of a patient who was admitted to the former and then transferred to the latter." In 2009, Sunnybrook also helped to pilot an inter-agency rotational model, with an MSW student spending the first three-month rotation

at Sunnybrook, followed by the second three-month rotation at the Toronto Rehab Institute. "The student gained a sense of the larger picture by moving from an acute care centre to a rehabilitation setting, getting an appreciation for the continuum of care," Perlman explains.

In their evaluations of the rotational model, field instructors say that because students have to "hit the ground running," the model is better suited to students who are self-starters, flexible and independent learners. One such learner is Lina Neves, who, when we spoke to her, was just finishing her first-year practicum at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. Following a rotation in neurosurgery, she was completing her second rotation in the nephrology department. Neves finds the rotational model suits her learning style, enjoying the faster pace of the practicum. "It's given me a snapshot of two different areas," Neves says. "I have increased access to more people and different styles—I don't find it overwhelming, although it may not be for everyone."



**The student gained a sense of the larger picture by moving from an acute care centre to a rehabilitation setting, getting an appreciation for the continuum of care.**

Illana Perlman

The rotational practicum is in its infancy at the Faculty, with only about five percent of placements using the model over the past year. Although she doesn't believe the model will replace the traditional single placement practicum, Katz believes it is an excellent option to grow the pool of field instructors, and provide students with an increased range of experiences.

## Scholarship recipients thank donors at appreciation event

# THANK YOU

Scholarship and award recipients recently had an opportunity to meet and thank their generous supporters at a Faculty scholarship and bequest-intention appreciation event. Sherlyn Hu, a graduating MSW student and recipient of the Sing Tao Canada Foundation Scholarship, spoke on behalf of all student recipients, expressing appreciation for donors' generosity and commitment to the future of social work. "It's so wonderful to meet many of our donors in person," Hu said. "These awards mean so much to students because they allow us to continue our studies. Thank you so much!"



1



2



3



5



4

1. Nancy Williams and Grace Thompson

2. Marion Bogo, Rose Wolfe and Arlene Perly Rae

3. Karthryn Le Blanc and Rose Wolfe

4. Margaret McCain and Faye Mishna

5. Ivana Gosek, Kirsten Donovan, Sheldon Inwentash, Lynn Factor and Cheryl Regehr

6. Sheldon Inwentash and Lynn Factor with Factor-Inwentash scholarship recipients

7. Donna Wallis, Alice Zhao, Vincent Lu, Grace Wang, Seong gee Um, Faye Yu

8. Kasia Seydegart and Larry Enkin



6



7



8

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### Become an alumni mentor

Want to give back to your profession in a meaningful way? Have even a small amount of time to help a current student launch his/her career? See page 8.

### Your support is needed

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### ► PRACTICUM STUDENTS WELL SUPPORTED

Behind every practicum student, there is a team working to ensure his/her success. Beyond the field instructors who supervise students, there are faculty field liaisons who are the "middle" managers, acting as a bridge between the Faculty and several field instructors; and practicum education coordinators, who generally work for larger placement settings (such as a health care institution), supervising field instructors in a variety of departments. At the Faculty, Eileen McKee heads up the practicum program, with Dana Katz as practicum coordinator and Iulia Park as administrator.

# New and exciting research happens right here

## Outstanding year for SSHRC and other grant funding

It has been an excellent year for Faculty researchers, confirming the school's leadership in the field of social work research. In 2008-2009, the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work submitted five applications to the Canadian government's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Standard Grant Competition and was awarded funding for four, an 80 percent success rate. Below are some 2009 SSHRC and other funding highlights. Visit [www.socialwork.utoronto.ca/research.htm](http://www.socialwork.utoronto.ca/research.htm) for more research news.

### SSHRC COUNCIL GRANTS Standard Research Grants Program

**David J. Brennan. Eating disorders, body image satisfaction and physical, mental and sexual health among gay and bisexual men who identify with ethno-racialized communities.**

Co-Investigators: P.A. Newman, C. George, T.A. Hart

Collaborators: I. Persad, A. Ceranto

Does ethno-racial identity play a role in how gay and bisexual men see their body image? This project explores the relationship between ethno-racialized identity, resiliencies and risks for body image dissatisfaction and eating behaviours and attitudes. The investigators will also develop socio-culturally relevant tools to assess body image satisfaction and eating behaviours.



**Esme Fuller Thomson. What promotes permanency in child welfare kinship placement? A mixed method investigation of the role of service provision to First Nations and non-First Nations families.**

Co-investigator: Deborah Goodman (Children's Aid Society of Toronto)

Many provinces are promoting the placement of children in need of protection with their kin (grandparents and other relatives), which has many benefits for children. But are child services working effectively, and what are the outcomes for these children? By examining First Nations and non-First Nations children in kinship foster homes and non-relative foster homes, this study will focus on the role services play in promoting good outcomes for children. The investigators hope to generate program and policy suggestions on this urgent issue.

**Kelsey Simons. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment among Ontario's social workers in health and aging.**

A recent survey found that most Ontario social workers face high levels of work-related stress and symptoms of depression. However, there have been no specific, comprehensive studies of gerontological social workers in Canada to understand their unique employment conditions and needs. This project seeks to address that by examining job satisfaction and commitment among Ontario social workers in health and aging, and by gathering professional, demographic and employment information on this important segment of the social work workforce.

**Charmaine Williams. Insight, internalized stigma and post-diagnosis identities in schizophrenia.**

How do people with schizophrenia form identities in relation to their diagnosis? Conventional psychiatric wisdom states that people with schizophrenia either understand they are ill and need treatment, or don't have insight because they are too ill or emotionally fragile to accept the diagnosis. Dr. Williams proposes that developing a post-diagnosis identity is based on social as well as psychological factors, especially stigma, and will investigate this through her study of diagnosed patients.

### SSHRC STRATEGIC GRANTS Northern Communities Research Grants: Towards Social and Economic Prosperity

**Ernie Lightman. Globalization and precarious work in Canada's North.**

Co-Investigators: Bobby Kayseas (First Nation's University of Canada); Graham Riches (University of British Columbia); Dawn Hemingway (University of Northern British Columbia); James Mulvale (University of Regina)

How does globalization affect employment in Canada's North? This three-year project will investigate northern residents' experiences of precarious employment as they relate to health, household food security and the impact of welfare reforms. The investigators will explore alternative

economic security approaches that foster self-determination, and will seek to develop partnerships with northern communities to encourage their own research and responses to precarious employment.

### Community-University Research Alliances (CURA)

**Lynn McDonald. Engaged scholarship: Evaluating community care for older adults.**



Co-investigators: Lynn McCleary, Kimberley Wilson, Joan Harbison, Mark Yaffe, Christopher Frank, Diane Buchanan, Gloria Gutman, Marie Beaulieu, Sandi Hirst, Ariela Lowenstein, Corey Mackenzie, Esme Fuller-Thomson, Peter Donahue, Maryse Savoie

This proposal was successful at the Letter of Intent stage; a full proposal will be submitted in October 2009.

**Faye Mishna. Promoting cyber risk reduction for children and youth through community partnerships.**

Co-Investigators: Wendy Craig, Andrea Slane, Janice Currie, Tracey Curwen

This proposal was successful at the Letter of Intent stage; a full proposal will be submitted in October 2009.

### CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH (CIHR) Catalyst Grants: Planning and Development in Mental Health and Addiction

**Vicki LeBlanc. Predictors of stress and trauma responses to high impact events in police dispatchers.**

Co-investigator: Cheryl Regehr

This pilot project represents the first study in a developing program of research aimed at understanding the effects of acute

stress and trauma on police dispatchers. Participating dispatchers will be required to respond to a simulated 911 call in which both their physiological and subjective stress responses will be assessed.

### JOINT CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR RESEARCH ON IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT (CERIS) The Ontario Metropolis Centre

**Rupaleem Bhuyan. Negotiating citizenship and social rights on the front lines of social service delivery.**

Co-investigators: Davina Bhandar (Trent University); Jean McDonald (York University)

Community Partners: Wendy Komiotis (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children); Rebecca Rodgers (Nellie's); Jane Kail (Sistering); Harmy Mendoza (Woman Abuse Council of Toronto); Notisha Massaquoi (Women's Health in Women's Hands); Alethia Lewis (YWCA Beatrice House)

How does immigration status and citizenship affect immigrants' everyday dealings with social service providers? How do service providers manage these newcomers' sensitive identity information? And how do documentation requirements set by service providers' funders affect the providers' ability to help their immigrant clients? Using domestic violence services as their focus, this study will examine access to services by immigrants in times of crisis.

### Connaught Matching, Connaught Foundation, University of Toronto

**Michael Saini. Child maltreatment within the context of high conflict divorce and separation**

Using data from the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, this study will focus on cases involving child custody disputes after divorce and factors associated with child welfare decisions and investigation outcomes. Early identification of the unique factors of high conflict divorce in child protection systems will better protect children and allow us to make more effective child welfare decisions.

## New practice-based evaluation tool is revolutionizing student assessments

**Professor Marion Bogo, internationally renowned for her groundbreaking work in assessing competency for professional social work practice, has produced another pioneering tool to help students and their field instructors more effectively evaluate student competencies during practicum placements. Bogo, along with Dean Cheryl Regehr as co-investigator, piloted the Practice-Based Evaluation Tool (PBE) in 2008 and rolled it out to approximately 150 first- and second-year MSW practicum students and their field instructors this past academic year.**

The reason for the PBEs development was simple: traditional forms of evaluation simply weren't working. For example, numeric ranking scales used in social work and related human service professions were not accurately reflecting levels of student competence. "We found that when people use these scales, they invariably end up rating people higher and higher, so you eventually end up with unreliable scales and thus, unreliable and invalid evaluations," says Bogo.

As well, studies showed that when face-to-face evaluations took place between student and field instructor, ratings were "negotiated" and didn't always reflect a student's true level of competence. Research found that because social workers possess values that focus on being empowering and non-judgmental, they often

find it difficult to offer critical feedback, especially when students take issue with an evaluation. Finally, both the numeric ranking scales and the face-to-face evaluations were labour-intensive and often cumbersome to execute. The result was that it became difficult to identify students who were not ready to practice and equally difficult to identify the correct interventions.

The development of the PBE tool was the result of a multi-phase research project involving over 100 field instructors. The finished tool presents key domains of competencies and descriptions of student practice behaviours. Students and field instructors are asked to separately enter a password-protected document and choose four to six sentences that best describe the student's behaviours during their practicum. The PBE is written in the same language used by field instructors when talking about practice and student learning; it is much closer to describing the authentic practicum experience than the traditional, more distant rating scales. The computer generates both a score on individual areas and an overall tally. There is also an area for narrative commentary and students and instructors are able to see each other's evaluation, with plenty of opportunities for in-person follow-up discussion.

The results of the 2008 pilot project were extremely positive, Bogo says. "Analysis of the preliminary findings showed that there is much more variation in scores than traditional rating scales," she says. "This means we have a much more accurate representation of student com-

petencies." As Bogo rightly points out, if every student receives a 4.5 on a 5 point scale, then the evaluations become meaningless.

This innovative evaluation tool has been presented at several academic and social work conferences, including the Council on Social Work Education meeting in the U.S. It has generated considerable interest from social work educators struggling with similar evaluation issues. The PBE will replace traditional evaluation tools, Bogo believes, and could be adapted for use by other professions, such as in the human services field. The Faculty of Medicine is also exploring ways to develop a similar process to evaluate residents in specialty areas. Based on feedback from instructors and students, Bogo is currently undertaking new research to develop a PBE that is more specific to community administration and policy practice.

### Facebook gets a facelift!

The FIFSW Alumni Association has created the ONLY OFFICIAL Alumni Facebook group! This is a fast and easy way to stay connected to the Faculty. It's the only place to display pictures, organize reunions and share all of our personal and professional successes! Add us as a friend by searching [fswaa@hotmail.com](mailto:fswaa@hotmail.com)



## Six reasons why I became a field instructor



Jeff Bowen is a social worker in counselling services at Family Service Toronto, a community counselling, development, advocacy and public education agency. He began as a field instructor in 1976 at Thistletown Regional Centre and since then has supervised 32 students. "I've instructed about two social agencies worth of students," Bowen says, laughing. Here are his top six reasons – and no doubt many of the reasons other social workers have – for being a field instructor:

**1** I still remember my own experiences as a student and how important my practicum was; I understand the kind of learning that takes place that can't be had in a classroom, so I want to contribute to that.

**2** Social work has given me a rewarding and stimulating career, so becoming a field instructor allows me to give back to the profession. I'm not in a position to be in a classroom, teaching, and I enjoy my direct service work, so field instruction allows me to do both.

**3** By having students working on their own case loads, that extends my reach on a day-to-day basis and helps the agency to extend finite resources.

**4** Interacting with students keeps you abreast of new developments in the field. They bring a new vitality to the agency and stimulate discussion around new research and developments in the field. We love having them around.

**5** When you're teaching or supervising a student, the very act of explaining things often brings a new clarity to your own role.

**6** My intimations of mortality are kicking in and I like to think that by training a new crop of students, I'll be leaving a small but satisfying legacy. As social workers, we're committed to helping people and doing this just carries on that legacy.



## New advanced diploma offers leadership opportunities for social workers

### Program set to begin fall 2010

Social workers with leadership aspirations and at least five years of experience in the social services field will have an exciting new professional development opportunity with the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work's Advanced Diploma in Social Service Administration. The diploma, which begins fall 2010, can be taken as a post-master's degree or as a specialization within the MSW program.

Professor Wes Shera, who is director of the Advanced Diploma program, says the goal is to provide a comprehensive grounding in leadership skills, financial and human resources management and research and quality improvement in social service organizations. "We found through our needs assessment and focus groups that there was a real need for this diploma," Shera says. "Over the next 10 years, with the baby boomers retiring, there will be a huge turnover in social service management, and there aren't enough experienced employees available who have the training required to take on these jobs."

There are already a number of candidates signed up for the session, part of the roster of 15 to 20 students the Faculty hopes to enroll for the program's inaugural year.

Applicants must have an MSW or master's degree in a related social service field and at least five years experience in the social services.

What is unique about the program is that candidates won't have to interrupt their careers to complete the one-year (two years on a part-time basis) program. Diploma requirements can be completed in three terms through in-person attendance twice a month at full-day sessions. Part-timers will meet once per month for six terms. The program has four core and two elective courses, with the opportunity to complete one of the elective courses as an agency-based project. The diploma can also be completed as a specialization in the Faculty's MSW program.

The program's structure, content and choice of faculty are designed for busy professionals who have some experience under their belts, Shera says. "We're using an outreach model for the program to make it as accessible as possible," he explains. A former dean of the Faculty, Shera doesn't rule out introducing web-based courses at

some point to attract students beyond the greater Toronto area. Course content will emphasize management and administrative skills, he says, including a focus on some of the current hot-buttons in social service administration, such as increasing accountability and implementation of evidence-based practice. All course instructors will have significant field experience from a wide range of backgrounds. Shera predicts that given the equally diverse career experiences of the social workers who have been accepted so far, that courses will be lively, topical and will provide graduates with both the theoretical and practical knowledge they need to move into any supervisory, management or leadership role.

For more information on the Advanced Diploma in Social Service Administration, please visit [www.socialwork.utoronto.ca](http://www.socialwork.utoronto.ca).

## Be an alumni mentor this fall!

### Help a student to launch a career

By Malcolm Stewart, President, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Alumni Association

Are you an FSW alum who would like to give back to your profession in a meaningful—and fun—way? Do you have even a small amount of time to help a current Factor-Inwentash student launch his/her career? If so, the Alumni Association is looking for your help.

Going strong since 1993, the Alumni Association's Mentoring Program provides a terrific opportunity for experienced alumni to support graduating students in their

transition to employment. Over the past sixteen years the program has helped over 1000 students to begin their careers.

Our goal is to match each participating new graduate with a mentor who is knowledgeable about the student's area of practice specialization and can provide assistance with resume writing and job search skills, contacts and career planning advice.

At a time when the economy is weak and jobs are difficult to obtain, many of our grads will need support to boost their confidence and find employment. Last year, 46 MSW students were matched with mentors—this year we'd like to match many more.

If you are interested in becoming a Mentor, or know someone who is, please contact Amber Rutherford, Mentoring Coordinator at [amber.rutherford@utoronto.ca](mailto:amber.rutherford@utoronto.ca).

The Alumni Association thanks the following alumni for their continuing contribution and dedication to the Mentoring Program:

Esther Addo	Dr. Elaine Cooper	Lori Anne Greenspoon	Charlotte Maher	Karen Sasaki
Sue Anderson	Alexandra Dean	Beverly Guttman	Rayna Morris	Ed Shaul
Paul Asselin	Beth Feffer	Maggie Ho	Robert Parke	Dean Lorie Shekter-Wolfson
Faina Ben-David	Lisa Freud-Goldman	Scot Hodge	Paul Parnass	Steven Solomon
Chris Brown	Lynne Gallagher	Elizabeth Holmes	Cathie Percival	Michael Sullivan
Julie Burnett	Sharon Gladstone	Michael Kerman	Illana Perlman	Sorele Urman
Lucille Colthrust	Stuart Goldman	Zoe Levitt	Leny Prabhu	Rose Vetere

The Association also welcomes and thanks the following new mentors:

David Burnes	Saleem Haniff	Jose Jacob	Sadaf Shallwani	Beth Wilson
Cheri Faris	Stacey Jackson	Olivia Parkes	Sahar Vermezyari	Cathy Sorichetti
Erin Gill				

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