Social Works

Wyoming’s Leader for Social Work Education

Research & Community Outreach

University of Wyoming’s College of Health Sciences Division of Social Work
A message
FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Division of Social Work’s mission outlines its commitment to research and community activism very clearly:

Guided by the ethics, values, scholarly inquiry, and practice principles of the social work profession, the mission of the University of Wyoming’s Division of Social Work is to educate and prepare students to become effective, ethical, and competent social workers by providing quality and diverse learning opportunities toward the betterment of the human condition within the state of Wyoming, nationally, and internationally.

This issue of Social Works highlights the research and community activism of our students and faculty. We’ve provided an overview of our faculty research interests. In addition, the titles of our MSW students’ research studies or practice evaluation projects are listed. We highlight several MSW students who have earned accolades for their research. Finally, you’ll learn about MSW students real world advocacy efforts as part of their course called “Advanced Policy: Advocacy and Social Action.” We are grateful for the support of advocacy organizations around the state who supported these students in their work.

We also introduce you to several new faculty: Travis Labrum, Assistant Professor, who recently finished his PhD at University of Pennsylvania; and Kym Codallos, Assistant Lecturer, who comes to us from California with lots of practice experience.

Mark your calendars for UW Homecoming, which will take place October 19-20, 2018. We will honor the Division of Social Work Distinguished Alum. We will also celebrate with the rest of the College of Health Sciences at the CHS Tailgate Party on Saturday before the game. Please consider nominating a graduate for the Division of Social Work Distinguished Alum.

If you’d like to make a difference in or find out more about the UW Division of Social Work, please visit our website at www.uwyo.edu/socialwork. If you are on-campus, please stop by and say hello!
DR. KIRSTEN HAVIG, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

During 2017, one publication of note was, Bragg, J., Havig, K., Ricky T. Munoz, R. T., & Gordon, J. (2017). Capturing the complexity of sexual identity: Better data for more inclusive social work research. International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 10(02), 527–534. Dr. Havig is building on this research with an independent project funded through the UW Social Justice Research Center, Experiences with health and social services among sexual and gender minority people in Wyoming: A mixed-methods exploration. She has also received funding from the College of Health Sciences with co-investigator, Dr. Neely Mahapatra, for a project entitled, Human trafficking in the Wyoming region: A mixed-methods, exploratory study of knowledge and practice amongst health care professionals.

DR. TRAVIS LABRUM, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Travis Labrum research interests include issues affecting persons with major psychiatric disorders and their families—including various aspects of caregiving and family conflict—and elder mistreatment by persons with or without psychiatric disorders. With collaborators at the University of Pennsylvania, he is currently examining domestic disputes responded to by Philadelphia police officers in which either the victim or offender is indicated to have a mental illness.

DR. VALERIE THOMPSON-EBANKS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Higher education institutions are experiencing a steady increase in the enrollment of student veterans. As a result, many colleges and universities have developed or strengthened programs and other support services to enhance the retention and success of this student population. Scholars call attention to the importance of assessing the effectiveness of these veterans specific support services/programs. In light of this need, I am currently collaborating with retired Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) Thomas Stoudt, UW faculty member (ECTL), to conduct a pre-test/post-test longitudinal quantitative study to assess the impact of the University of Wyoming’s (UW) Veterans Specific First Year Seminar (FYS) and the Veterans Transition Course on veterans’ adjustment to college and their educational outcomes (i.e. academic persistence and academic performance).

DR. NEELY MAHAPATRA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Wyoming was the last state to pass recommended laws around human trafficking in 2013. Healthcare providers are in a unique position to be able to identify and respond to the needs of trafficking victims, they often do not have the necessary training. Our collaborative study will provide empirically-grounded data about knowledge and needs of these key professionals in terms of identification and response to human trafficking victims/survivors in Wyoming.
Each year, as a requirement for graduation with the Master of Social Work degree from the University of Wyoming, students complete a year-long practice evaluation (Plan B) or research study (thesis). After forming a committee of professors from social work and outside disciplines, in the fall semester, students design and present their methodology, using evidence-based frameworks and attention to the social justice goals of the profession. Once approved, the spring semester is all about data collection, analysis and write-up. The 2017-18 projects are listed below:

**Master’s Thesis Research:**
- **Amanda Barnard:** Foster Parent Experiences in a Rural State: An Empowerment Perspective
- **Peter Kingsley:** Gender Differences in Post-Traumatic Growth: Significance of Help-Seeking Behavior
- **Monika Leininger:** An Exploration of the State of Environmental Justice Awareness Amongst Wyoming Social Workers
- **Liana Moskowitz:** An Analysis of Safety Messages for the Prevention of Sexual Assault: Sources of Victim Blame & Reframing the Discourse
- **Anna Bohl:** Does Multisystemic Therapy Lower Frequency of Adolescent Delinquent Behaviors?
- **Ben Brettell:** Utilizing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to Reduce Anxiety with an Alternative High School Student
- **Bratati Chakraborty:** Increasing Student Participation in University of Wyoming Police Department’s Campus Sexual Assault & Harassment Awareness Program through Interactive Advertising
- **Rachel Kimble:** The Effects of Art Therapy Techniques on Individuals with an Intellectual Disability Experiencing Anxiety
- **Leanne Gerding:** Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care in Foster Parents: A Single-case Design Study of the Effectiveness of Psychoeducation
- **Jamyn Gavello:** Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorders in the Veteran Population
- **Livvy Gerrish:** Service Learning in Clinical Work
- **Michael Holland:** Restorative Justice in the School System
- **Maryanne Kaboi:** The use of Together Facing the
Challenge training for foster parents in increasing their sense of support

- **Shandra Lazar**: Measuring Sense of Community of Residents at the COMEA House and Resource Center
- **Sally Michelena**: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Intervention to Increase Regular Classroom Time for a Student with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- **Capella Morris**: Check-in/Check-out Positive Behavior Intervention for Middle School
- **Mary Ryan**: A Psychoeducation Intervention for Loved Ones of Eating Disorder Patients in an Outpatient Setting
- **Alicia Selfridge**: Using cognitive processing therapy to reduce guilt and shame in a survivor of sexual assault.
- **James L. Trosper**: The Sweat Lodge Experience as Examined among Participants at the Wind River Reservation

**AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY!**

“My Plan B evaluation focused on the preliminary steps of bringing restorative justice practices into the school setting. Utilizing the exemplary research of restorative practitioners in states like Minnesota, Colorado and California, I implemented a six-week educational series focused on restorative theory and practice to a select group of administrators, counselors, security staff and teachers. The study was designed to evaluate my effectiveness in improving their knowledge of what restorative justice was, strengthening their attitudes and beliefs regarding why restorative practices can be transformative for at risk students, and building their self-efficacy regarding their own actions with students on campus. In the end, one of the most inspiring comments made to me was: ‘Well, you sure taught this old dog some new tricks.’ Such an amazing opportunity!”

– MSW Graduate Student, Michael Holland.

Members of Dr. Kempson’s Plan B Masters class: front row from left: Diane Kempson, Mary Ryan, and Livvy Gerrish, Back row from left: Brandon Bishop, Michael Holland, and Jamyn Gavello.
MEET THE ADVOCACY TEAMS

Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming’s advocacy team learned the value of “behind the scenes” advocacy work through their partnership. The group took a preventative approach to advocacy, developing curriculum to educate parents regarding issues connected to child abuse and neglect. They provided the agency with endorsements from local partners, evaluative measures, and toolkit for the agency to use to implement the curriculum, aimed at educating the public on state policies related to defining and reporting child abuse and neglect.

The Wyoming Children’s Law Center, Inc.’s advocacy team had the privilege of working directly with legislative policy, a curricular focus of the social work program. Their project involved collecting foster parent testimonies that could be used to educate the Wyoming legislature of the value of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights, a piece of legislation aimed at improving the foster parent experience, thereby enhancing retention of valuable foster parents. Team members reported: “foster parents were really grateful that we were taking this on and they think it’s going to be helpful”. They also noted that, consistent with social work values, the project felt like “a really good opportunity to hear from the voices that are typically silenced.”

Wyoming Women Rise “is dedicated to empowering women in Wyoming to become leaders in state and local government”. As the organization is less than a year old, their advocacy team had the unique task of tailoring the scope of their project so as not to overwhelm their present resource capacity. The advocacy team held an event on the University of Wyoming campus on December 4, featuring Laramie Mayor, Andrea Summerville, in the Wyoming Union. Mayor Summerville spoke of her personal journey

TAKING THE CLASSROOM TO THE COMMUNITY

Over the course of the fall semester, Assistant Professor Dr. Kirsten Havig’s MSW course, Advanced Policy: Advocacy and Social Action, ushered its students out of the classroom and into the community! To better develop the advocacy skills of students, and to provide service to Wyoming communities, six advocacy teams partnered with a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. Students then followed the advocacy process from start to finish: meeting with their nonprofit to clarify needs and goals, developing an informed understanding of key policy issues, designing a logic model, and implementing an advocacy project.
in local politics, including the process of fundraising, campaigning, and what it’s like to serve as Mayor.

Thirty-five people attended the event, while around 200 others livestreamed via Facebook. Attendees wrote that the event was “inspiring”, as well as “well planned and executed.” One person commented: “I hope there will be a second one!” Regarding the experience of organizing the event, one of the advocacy team members remarked: “It was rewarding getting to see everything come together and to see advocacy at work among my fellow community members.”

UW McNair Scholar’s Program is a federally funded program that “encourages students to pursue graduate studies by providing opportunities to define goals, engage in research, and develop the skills and student/faculty mentor relationships critical to success at the doctoral level”. The team provided research contingency planning around future. As an additional promotional tool, one team member conducted an extensive interview with a previous McNair graduate, writing a beautiful article documenting her story of success.

Equality State Policy Center “is a broad-based coalition of social justice, conservation, and labor groups in Wyoming working to improve the lives of all Wyoming’s people through transparent government, fair elections, and thriving communities”. In anticipation of the 2018 Budget Session, the advocacy team worked to design a questionnaire and collect testimony aimed at gathering people’s personal opinions and stories of the importance of Wyoming’s public education and mental health services: two areas that have undergone historic budget cuts. Recounting what was learned from the experience of reaching out to community members, one team member said: “You become less cynical and start to see that forging relationships and making connections is the path to positive transformation.”

A group of students passionate about environmental justice worked to educate the public around a proposed city ordinance that, if passed, would have protected Cheyenne residents from close proximity drilling sites. They contacted 100 local stakeholder residents, and drafted letters to the editor of the local newspaper, in order to promote awareness and education around the importance of clean aquifers.

Following the project’s conclusion, students were encouraged to provide final thoughts about the learning experience. One student wrote: “Rather than being based in the theoretical, we have been working in the world, which is a nice bridge between academia and reality.” Another student echoed: “I really enjoyed this project because we got the chance to take what we learned in class and apply it in real life.” Not only did students learn and grow from experiencing their own projects: “It was also helpful to hear what other classmates were doing to get a broader understanding of advocacy work”. A final note of feedback for Dr. Havig: “I hope you continue to do this project in your future classes.”

Powder River Basin Resource Council, promotes a tripartite mission statement: “the preservation and enrichment of Wyoming’s agricultural heritage and rural lifestyle”, “the conservation of Wyoming’s unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources consistent with responsible use of those resources to sustain the livelihood of present and future generations”, and “the education and empowerment of Wyoming’s citizens to raise a coherent voice in the decisions that will impact their environment and lifestyle”.
MEGAN WILD: STUDENT VETERAN NEEDS

In 2017, Megan Wild completed a thesis entitled, “University of Wyoming Preparedness to Address Student Veteran (SV) Needs”, chaired by Neely Mahapatra. Being a wife of a veteran, her personal connection to the topic augments her passion for this group. Ms. Wild’s study won her first place in the Competitive Poster Presentation at the annual College of Health Sciences Research Day in 2017. She also showcased her study at the annual meeting of the Society for Social Work and Research in Washington, DC in January of 2018.

A cross-sectional convenience sample of 114 faculty & staff members and 77 SVs (N=191) completed an anonymous quantitative survey. It is the first study at UW that compared staff and faculty perceptions of what student veteran needs are and what student veterans at UW identified as their needs and thus addressing the gaps in services to this important group of student population. Results indicated both groups agreed that training for faculty and staff on the SV population is an area of utmost need and lack of transition assistance is a barrier. Social acculturation was an area of need identified by SVs whereas staff and faculty did not. Faculty and staff did not see the lack of space for a SV center as a challenge, but SVs did.

Important recommendations from her study include: (a) regular discussion panels to provide insight about the student veteran culture and other related topics of importance, (b) virtual role-plays (an online simulated role-play) that walks participants through conversation about how to assist students veteran needs in higher education, (c) centralized online resources for quick reference on how to assist student veterans, and (d) staff training to address student veteran disability needs.

LIANA MOSKOWITZ: SAFETY MESSAGING & VICTIM BLAMING

Liana Moskowitz’s work with the Community Safety Network—a non-profit that provides shelter and support services to victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in Jackson, Wyoming— informed her thesis work titled, “An Analysis of Safety Messages for Prevention of Sexual Assault on a University Campus: Sources of Victim Blame and Reframing the Discourse.” Ms. Moskowitz’s study won her the second place in the Competitive Student Research Oral Presentation at the annual College of Health Sciences Research Day 2018. The study, chaired by Neely Mahapatra, is the first in addressing safety messages internalized by the campus community and to identify how these safety messages might be contributing to a culture of victim blame. A total of 131 administrative, faculty & staff members and 196 students (N=327; Males 73 & Females 254) completed an exploratory quantitative online survey.

Results reveal that the UW community has a high level of female-focused safety messages that put the burden of safety on women. This finding was reinforced by the response to the scenarios where respondent’s increasingly allocated blame to the victim as the situations became more divergent from rape scripts. When asked, vast majority of respondents stated that they listen to a partner’s wishes (obtain consent), yet conversely, the majority also stated that they could tell if a person felt comfortable, even if they did not say so. This suggests some disconnect between the understanding of consent and the practice of obtaining it. The university community indicated a high degree of readiness for bystander intervention models. The study could be used by the university to reframe the discourse surrounding sexual assault and implement progressive messages that do not ascribe to victim blame.
“Scholarships like this are a lifesaver to all students no matter what. Receiving these scholarships helped me focus on my schoolwork rather than trying to juggle an extensive course load while working a full time job. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be able to learn from an accredited institution and to be able to graduate with little to no student loans. Because of these scholarships I was able to focus on my practicum placement and to make a difference in the community.”

– Hannah Winland, BSW

“The scholarship that I received this year was very beneficial to me both financially, academically and personally. This scholarship helped to ensure that my graduate level educational pursuit was possible. Receiving this money helped me to focus more on my studies by relieving some of the financial burdens associated with attending school. Thank you for enabling this much appreciated opportunity.”

– Shandra Lazar, MSW

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☐ The Lenore N. & Robert P. Palmer Social Work Scholarship
TRAVIS LABRUM, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Travis Labrum, PhD, LCSW, happily joined the Division of Social Work as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2017. His research interests include issues affecting persons with major psychiatric disorders and their families—including various aspects of caregiving and family conflict—and elder mistreatment by persons with or without psychiatric disorders.

KYM CODALLOS, ASSISTANT LECTURER

Kym explains she and her family’s arrival in Wyoming, “I come to Wyoming from California, and I am so very excited to be here in the Rockies! My entourage includes... an amazing spouse (who is also a social worker), four beautiful children, three super cute dogs, and two guinea pigs. We are a very active and busy family and can’t wait to get out and explore our new environment! During long breaks we usually head to mountains of Hidalgo, Mexico where we have family”.

Her research and practice interests include cross-cultural practice and application. “I have been a bilingual practitioner since earning my MSW, so this field has always been of particular interest to me. I earned both my LCSW and ACSW in 2009 and have had a private practice and consulting business since that time”.

Noting the valuable role social workers play, Kym states, “Whether directly or indirectly, social workers make an impact on the lives of others, and I respect the privilege I’ve been afforded to partner with people from all walks of life as they journey towards their identified goals!”.

THE UW DIVISION OF SOCIAL WORK WELcomed TRAVIS LABRUM AND KYM CODALLOS AS NEW FACULTY AND AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE EDUCATION OUR STUDENTS RECEIVE.
PRESENTATIONS:


**Mahapatra, N.** (2017, October). You cannot Turn a Donkey into a Race-Horse” South-Asian Youth and Gender-Violence. An oral presentation to be presented at the 2017 annual program meeting (APM) of the Council for Social Work Education, Dallas, TX.


**Labrum, T., & Solomon P. L.** (January 2018). Fears of harm held by caregivers about relatives with psychiatric disorders. Oral presentation at Society for Social Work and Research 22nd Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

PUBLICATIONS:


**Labrum, T., & Solomon, P. L.** (accepted). Safety fears held by caregivers regarding relatives with psychiatric disorders. Health & Social Work.

**Labrum, T.** (2018). Caregiving for relatives with psychiatric disorders vs. co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders. Psychiatric Quarterly. Advance online publication. doi:10.1007/s11126-017-9557-0

During this year’s University of Wyoming 2017 Homecoming week celebrations, the College of Health Sciences (CHS) came together to honor Distinguished Alumni from throughout the college. The Division of Social Work invited Alyce Duckworth, LCSW, to campus to honor her as its Distinguished Alumna.

Alumni from the schools and divisions in the College are honored each year for excellence in and contributions to health and social services. By returning to the UW campus, they are able to share their experiences with and inspire CHS students.

Alyce Duckworth MSW, LCSW has 18 years experience as a clinical social worker in mental health. She has worked as a Clinical Supervisor for outpatient therapists, therapy interns and Day Treatment staff. She has also worked a great deal on the “front line” as a therapist with individuals of all ages, families and groups. Alyce is a prolific writer and has authored regular mental health columns for various newspapers in the Denver Metro area for 10 years. The goal of these columns has been to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and therapy while explaining related concepts in terms that make sense to laypeople in the broader community.

HONORING ALYCE DUCKWORTH

CALL FOR DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

The Division of Social Work in the UW College of Health Sciences welcomes your nominations for our 2018 Distinguished Alumni. This individual will be honored during the upcoming Fall Homecoming season at the University of Wyoming. Go Pokes!

To nominate a graduate, please send a 1-2 paragraph allowing the accomplishments of the nominee and the nominee’s resume/CV to the Director, Division of Social Work, 1000 E. University Avenue, Laramie, WY 82071 by September 1st, 2018.