A message
FROM THE DIRECTOR

Our BSW and MSW students have amazing classroom and field education experiences during their education. This issue of Social Works gives you a taste of the variety of experiences students have while in the program from those in the classroom to those in field education. You learn about policy advocacy by our MSW students, extracurricular activities of our BSW students, student attendance and presentation at national conferences, field experiences, and career development activities.

As I review these experiences, I’m impressed by several things. First, the range of activities is noteworthy from BSW students presenting a thought-provoking seminar on “Building Bridges for the Unheard” at the Shepard Symposium to an MSW student providing social work services as part of the College of Law’s Defender Aid Clinic in collaboration with the law faculty and staff. Second, these experiences have a tremendous impact on students, as can be evidenced in their comments about attending national meetings and being involved in policy work. Finally, not only do the experiences impact the students involved, but in turn these social work students are having a significant impact on others and their work is recognized by others, e.g., Gage Williams award for his social work impact.

This will be my final message as the Director of the Division of Social Work. The College is in the final stages of the search for the new Director who hopefully will start this summer. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the faculty, staff, students and others in the Division. As I have said many times, being an outsider (I am not a social worker and am the Dean of the Fay W. Whitney School of Nursing) I have learned so much about social work, but, and this was unexpected, I also learned a lot about nursing as I began to be able to see my own profession through a different lens as my knowledge of social work increased.

I have appreciated the opportunity to work closely with the Division of Social Work and am confident that the Division faculty and staff are in a good position to continue their good work with the new Director.
Welcoming a NEW BSW COHORT!

The new BSW cohort during a welcome reception on the UW Laramie campus in September 2018.

The start of the 2018-19 school year welcomed a combined total of 39 new students (Casper and Laramie campuses) into the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) class in the Division of Social Work. Students graduating with a BSW degree have career opportunities available to them that include state, federal and other public agencies, non-profit organizations and private for-profit organizations including hospitals, mental health centers, schools, adolescent treatment facilities, child care centers, nursing homes, substance abuse treatment centers, public assistance agencies, probation and parole offices, correctional centers, community action agencies, and research facilities. Our faculty and staff fully support our students in their academic goals to achieve the social work career of their choice.

IN & AROUND CAMPUS

From the beginning of the 2018 fall semester, students in the Junior BSW Cohort began exploring the fundamentals of social work, including gaining an in-depth understanding of the ethical skills needed by a Professional Social Worker.

In class exercises during the fall semester, Kym Codallos, Assistant Lecturer with the Division of Social Work, asked students to review examples of situations requiring ethical decision-making and what the outcomes might be for those decisions.
Students entering into the BSW program are immediately provided with the resources they need to advance in their studies. Along with learning ‘hands-on’ in the classroom, social work students are given a map of UW campus resources, where information related to their studies can be found. One such location is the UW Law Library. Here students can visit on their own to access information related to their program of study.

On a ‘field trip’ to the Law Library, BSW students had the opportunity to see how the library is structured and to meet personnel who can assist them in finding the information they are looking for. In addition to the many resources on the UW campus, the Division of Social Work provides students with resources specific to the social work profession.

“When I attended the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) conference in Orlando, Florida, during the fall 2018 semester, I had a great opportunity to not only enhance my undergraduate learning, but I also had the opportunity to learn about different graduate programs offered. I feel that I have a better understanding of how I want to further my career and how I want to pursue my MSW. When I came back, I was excited to share about...
A SENSE OF Community

For Gage Williams’ work as the NASW Wyoming Board BSW student representative last school year and for his advocacy work in Casper for the LBGTQA+ community, Williams has been recognized as a rising star in Social Work. He received the Work Award by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Wyoming Chapter, at the Wyoming Counseling Association and NASW 2018 Joint Annual Conference held in Casper, September 20-22.

With his help, the non-discrimination resolution passed in the Casper city council. He also works to bring a sense of community and visibility to the LBGTQA+ community with the non-profit he founded, “Out in Wyoming” and organizes an annual pride event that has grown from a 100 person gathering to over 500 people.

Williams nonprofit is currently working on opening a resource center and compiling a list of service providers who are knowledgeable about LBGTQA+ issues so that people feel supported and are reminded they are not alone.

Pictured from left: LaRae S. Stibitz, MSW, LCSW, Veronica Pedersen, LCSW, Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers, Wyoming Chapter, and Gage Williams.
UW Division of Social Work BSW students presented ‘Building Bridges for the Unheard,’ a collective project for Social Justice as part of this year’s Shepard Symposium at the University of Wyoming. Encompassing student fieldwork in areas including community shelters, correction facilities and centers for treating addiction, students presented themes of unheard voices—those of individuals dealing with homelessness, incarceration and family separation.

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After the presentation, Dr. Kirsten Havig, Assistant Professor with the Division of Social Work, along with students and a facilitator, engaged in discussions aimed at Radical Listening – learning to listen and understand more about the person speaking than what sometimes spoken words might convey.

The Shepard Symposium on Social Justice, an annual event at the University of Wyoming since 1997, has evolved into a major national conference, seeking to engage participants in discussion and analyses of strategies and actions that can eliminate social inequality.
Preparing FOR THE FIRST INTERVIEW

The experience of interviewing for a new job is often listed in many surveys as one of the most anxious moments we experience. The interviewee is asked questions by the prospective employer to help the employer determine the qualifications of the person applying – if they are a ‘good fit’ for that organization.

While most all employment interviews aim to seek the best candidate for the job, interviews for positions in health and social service settings are especially rigorous.

Applicants are screened for educational background, previous employment experiences and activities shared in social media environments.

Students graduating from the UW Division of Social Work received expert assistance with preparing for their first interview experience, listening and participating in presentations by health care professionals who share in the hiring process for their organizations. Mock interviews were offered during social work month.

The month of March is a time of seasonal transition, with thoughts of the coming springtime reason for celebration. March is also the month we take special notice of social workers everywhere and celebrate these professionals and the work they do for their communities.

AT 7220 FEET, we ELEVATE SOCIAL WORK

MARCH IS NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Let’s celebrate our profession!
As part of recognizing the social work profession, the Division of Social Work invited a panel of professionals from the local community to speak with students about what different areas of social work are like, and what a student entering into the field can expect.

Despite the many challenges these professionals encounter, the reward of helping individuals and their communities is a powerful motivation. Each member of the panel shared their own experiences, ranging from working in both rural and urban settings; pointing out that sometimes, due to occasional funding shortfalls, even having available office space to work in requires some creative planning.

Panelist Amanda Matthews and Clint Haynes share with students their experiences that made them better and more confident social workers, emphasizing the importance of making the most of their education, learning from faculty and the instruction they receive while in the field.

While working in their communities, a social worker can at times face dangerous situations, not only for themselves, but also involving clients they care for, arising from volatile relationship environments, mental illness and substance abuse.

“I asked him if he was feeling suicidal, he said no. I then asked him if he was feeling homicidal – he didn’t respond. I knew we needed to get help immediately!”

– Clint Haynes, LCSW, MSW

THE SOCIAL WORK CAREER PANEL INCLUDED:

Karen Drew, MSW, an alumna from the division, is now completing her PhD in the Counseling Program at University of Wyoming and currently at the Wellspring Counseling Center on the UW campus.

Jamyn Gavello, MSW, a 2018 alumna, is currently working with Hospice of Laramie.

Amanda Matthews, BSW, a 2018 alumna, is currently completing her MSW at UW and has an internship at ACES located on campus.

Clint Haynes, LCSW, MSW, completed an undergraduate degree at UW (in a field outside social work). While he is not a UW social work alumnus, he is a contributor to our program in many ways. He serves on committees and acts as a consultant in our program and works for the State Department of Family Services.

Attending via Zoom: Pam Oiler, BSW, MSW, LCSW, an alumna who works with the Cheyenne Family Medicine Residency Program. She takes on interns and contributes greatly to our program through serving on committees and informing our curriculum.
Once again this year, Dr. Kirsten Havig’s advanced policy advocacy course for MSW students presented the opportunity for community outreach and engagement. Eight teams partnered with statewide nonprofits or state agencies to plan, implement and evaluate an advocacy project.

PARTNERS AND PROJECTS THIS YEAR INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- The Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund on educating legislators about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as key to child abuse prevention.
- Creation of a fact sheet on environmental justice issues in Wyoming with the Power River Basin Resource Council.
- Research for the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault on evidence-based curricula for the prevention of child sexual abuse.
- Creation of an advocacy toolkit for Wyoming Equality.
- Efforts toward the inclusion of the voices of people in the criminal justice system in legislature efforts toward justice reform in partnership with the Wyoming chapter of the ACLU.
- Compiling information from other states with legislative recommendations for the Wyoming Rx Stakeholders Group pertaining to prevention of Rx abuse via prescription monitoring.

STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH LOTS OF ENTHUSIASM:

“It was exciting to have an assignment that allowed us to do real-time, hands-on work with an actual agency. We enjoyed working with a local agency that puts advocacy within easy reach of the average citizen, and our advocacy efforts for Forward Wyoming made us feel like there were things that could be accomplished at a grassroots level to improve voter turnout among millennials in our state. After seeing some initial statistics from the Wyoming Election Division, which showed an increase in the number of voters in the general election, we are optimistic that millennials are becoming more aware of the issues that will affect them for the next 50+ years and will increasingly become involved in the political system, including running for office.”
- Chris Compton, Gen Cotherman and Conor Mullen

“Our team had the unique opportunity to work with the Wyoming Attorney General’s Division of Victims Services unit as part of our social welfare policy class this past fall. The Division of Victims Services (DVS) is a state-level agency of the Attorney General’s office in charge of spreading awareness and providing education and technical support for programs that are dedicated to serving victims of crime, as well as the general public in Wyoming. DVS also works to support judicial, legislative, and social reforms that will benefit the victims of crime.

We were tasked with conducting a nationwide policy analysis of domestic violence fatality review teams and then created a white paper showcasing a framework for the establishment of a review board in Wyoming that DVS could present to the legislature this spring. Wyoming is one of six states that do not have some form of domestic violence fatality review board. DVS also provided an amazing opportunity for the team to travel and attend the state of Montana’s review board so that we could see how a successful review board functions. While on the trip they were able to not only experience a case review first hand, but also got to meet and interview Dr. Neil Websdale, founder of the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative.”
- Alaria Schnase, Amanda Matthews, and Lilyann James
Leslie Patterson, Stephen Hansen, Megan McGhee, and Tyler Smathers knew immediately with which group they wanted to work for a project assignment in Dr. Havig’s Advanced Policy course – the American Civil Liberties Union of Wyoming (ACLUW). At their first meeting with ACLUW’s Policy Director, Sabrina King, the group recognized a particularly well-timed opportunity for criminal justice reform in Wyoming. Driven by a ballooning Department of Corrections budget, the Wyoming Legislature had enlisted the assistance of the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG) to work on Justice Reinvestment reform in Wyoming that would drive down incarceration costs in Wyoming by lowering the number of Wyoming citizens behind bars. Counter to the trend seen in other states across the nation, the rate of incarceration of citizens in Wyoming has been growing, most of it due to violations of onerous probation and parole sentencing. Wyoming’s criminal justice system effectively keeps many non-violent offenders trapped in the revolving door of justice; prisons and jails are full, and Wyoming is paying private prison corporations to house prisoners out of state.

The Justice Reinvestment research done by CSG led to three Justice Reinvestment bills being introduced in the Wyoming Legislature’s 2019 General Session that set limits on the period of time an individual could be sentenced to probation or parole, created standards and options for the imposition and modification of probation, and provided a defined system of incentives and sanctions for probation and parole supervision, all with the objective of decreasing the high numbers of Wyoming citizens behind bars. The Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, the Wyoming Parole Board, the Wyoming Conference of Municipal Courts and the Wyoming County and Prosecuting Attorneys Association spoke in opposition to much of the Justice Reinvestment reforms proposed by CSG. Among state agencies, the Department of Corrections alone stood in favor of CSG’s proposals. Yet the population that would be most impacted by the proposed reforms – those under state supervision as well as their families – had no representation in front of the Legislature’s Joint Judiciary Committee (JJC), the legislative body considering CSG’s reform proposals.

TREND MEANS “TREATMENT AND RECOVERY, NOT DETENTION”
Patterson, Hansen, McGhee and Smathers – the “ACLU Team” as they called themselves – set to work to find formerly-incarcerated individuals willing to testify in front of the JJC about their experiences of being caught in Wyoming’s revolving door of justice. The effect on the JJC was apparent as formerly-incarcerated individuals and family members related their personal stories about how Wyoming’s justice system had impacted their lives and set up ex-prisoners for a return to prison regardless of whether new crimes were committed.

The parole and probation reform bills were passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Mark Gordon. But the behavioral health component critical to successful rehabilitation and community reintegration of ex-prisoners was missing from the passed legislation. The Legislature extended its engagement with CSG to study behavioral health needs in Wyoming before the next Legislative General Session in January, 2020.

The ACLU Team has worked with the group of ex-prisoners who testified in front of the JJC, ex-prisoners who sent letters to legislators in lieu of testifying, families of ex-prisoners, re-entry service providers, and mental health professional groups across Wyoming (including the Wyoming Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers) to form the group TReND Wyoming to continue to advocate for the missing community-based, behavioral health component of Justice Reinvestment. TReND means “Treatment and Recovery, Not Detention”, and it’s advocacy work will continue for many years in anticipation of for-profit, private prison businesses in Wyoming whose interests are served by keeping people behind bars. Though the ACLU Team helped start TReND Wyoming, in the spirit of community social work, TReND Wyoming is increasingly being led by members of the population for which it advocates.

For information on how to become involved with TReND Wyoming, please visit its website, TReNDWyoming.org, or visit its Facebook page. All advocates are welcome.

Amanda Matthews is the first MSW student to be placed at the University of Wyoming’s Defender Aid Clinic (DAC) located within the College of Law. The DAC is a statewide legal assistance clinic that provides counsel at no cost to individuals who have been accused or convicted of crimes. Additionally, the clinic works with the Rocky Mountain Innocence Project. As a master of social work intern, she has had the opportunity to conduct a plethora of client liaison work, and has said that the experience has tremendously benefitted her own professional development, the array of services provided at the Clinic, and the relationship and collaborative potential between social work and law here in Wyoming.

While knowledge of law has not previously been one of her strong suites, she has quickly gained the insight needed to be a viable and valuable member of the clinic team. At the clinic, she helps to provide initial contact and engagement with clients, conducts biopsychosocial assessments, facilitates client interviews, provides client support in court, offers advocacy, and works to connect clients with wraparound services and other critical resources. Additionally, she has had the opportunity to assist in equipping clients to write self-advocacy letters and in creating mitigation reports for the student attorneys to use in trial. This experience has also shown her the value of collaboration with attorneys and other professionals in working toward social justice goals for clients as well as the value of utilizing social work in other professions. Currently, she is setting up the foundation to create an integrated social work law class that will benefit both colleges’ student in the future.
Conor Mullen is looking forward to the end of the spring semester and the beginning of fieldwork for his thesis titled Empowerment Through Skateboarding: Photo Novella with Displaced Youth in Greece. Conor found his way to social work and a passion for youth empowerment programming through experiences as an art educator and longtime skateboarder. The link between self-expression and empowerment is an important one for Conor, his outlook on social work and his research.

“Displaced youth have immediate needs that relate to their physical health and safety, but the development of their psychosocial well-being can never be put on hold.”

In researching for his thesis, Conor will facilitate a participatory arts-based project with refugee (or displaced) youth at Free Movement Skateboarding; a non-profit that uses skateboarding as a catalyst for equality, integration, and well-being with refugees in Athens, Greece. Displaced youth have immediate needs that relate to their physical health and safety, but the development of their psychosocial well-being can never be put on hold. Intervention programs that support displaced youth’s psychosocial well-being have often been overlooked in global health programming and despite the fact that children make up over half the world’s refugees, humanitarian aid continues to neglect efforts to improve their psychosocial well-being.

This is a topic of concern for social workers and one that will continue to grow as the number of refugees continues to rise. The shortage in psychosocial-based youth programs mirrors the lack of research into their importance for displaced youth and forms the basis for Conor’s research. To learn more about Free Movement Skateboarding visit their website (freemovementskateboarding.com). The research is made possible by the Social Justice Research Center, the Haub School of Environment & Natural Resources, and Division of Social Work.

Photo credit: Free Movement Skateboarding; Skateboarders in Athens, Greece
Pamela Oiler, Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and faculty member at the University of Wyoming Family Medicine Residency Program in Cheyenne, Wyoming, was selected during fall of 2018 for a Fellowship in the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Emerging Leaders Program.

The Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) Emerging Leaders Fellowship is a yearlong educational experience which offers training, tools, and support for new faculty and those who are transitioning to leadership roles. STFM’s Emerging Leaders Fellowship provides essential leadership training to family medicine educators. The Fellowship class size averages 15 educators per year nationwide from Residency Training Programs with different professions including family medicine physicians, pharmacists, clinical social workers, public health and nursing.

A BSW graduate of the UW Division of Social Work, class of 1999, Pamela hopes to build confidence as a leader, a teacher and an educator through her experience in the Emerging Leaders Program. “I hope to strengthen my public speaking skills so I can effectively facilitate team-wide meetings. My goal is to increase teaching within the College of Health Sciences and the Division of Social Work.”

Pamela was honored at the UW College of Health Sciences’ Distinguished Alumni Reception during the University of Wyoming 2018 Homecoming celebrations. She was recognized as the Division’s Distinguished Alumna for her contributions to education as well as serving as a Field Instructor for students.

The UW Division of Social Work welcomed Billie Chapman as new Field Education Director in the fall of 2018. She is a 2008 graduate of the University of Wyoming Master of Social Work program. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from UW in 2005. Billie began her social work career at the VA Medical Center in Sheridan where she worked for nearly ten years. She served on the inpatient psychiatry unit, a transitional work rehabilitation and housing program for veterans who are homeless and in the VA nursing home programs.

Billie is passionate about ethical decision-making, geriatrics and extended care, and training social work students. She and her husband, both born and raised in Wyoming, are excited to be back in Laramie as they enjoy the benefits of small town life in a community that is near to both wonderful outdoor opportunities and urban areas. In her free time, she enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her husband, their dog and their three ferrets.
Pamela Oiler, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), was chosen as the 2018 Division of Social Work’s Distinguished Alumna. She is an Assistant Lecturer at the UW Family Medicine Residency Program in Cheyenne.

Pamela graduated for the University of Wyoming with her Bachelor of Social Work in 1999. She also holds a Master of Social Work degree from Colorado State University.

The CHS Division of Social Work is seeking nominations for our Distinguished Alumni for 2019. Please consider honoring one of your colleagues. This individual will be recognized during the fall 2019 UW Homecoming celebrations. Please email Socialwork@uwyo.edu with your nomination, including full name, title and contact information.

Invited presenter, Dr. Noel Bridget Busch-Armendariz, Director with the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA), with the Steve Hicks School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin, presented the keynote theme, Ice Cream, iPhones and Exploitation: Current Evidence on Human Trafficking, at the 2019 College of Health Sciences Research Day.

Dr. Busch-Armendariz discussed the worldwide prevalence of human trafficking and explained how its presence in the U.S. might take the form of obvious physical imprisonment or more subtle forms such as the use of coercion or persuasion. She pointed out that even certain everyday items, such as smart phones, have been found to contain material procured by child labor in another part of the world.

From left: Division Director Mary Burman, Pamela Oiler and Interim Dean David Jones.
Efficient, caring, knowledgeable and competent are some of the qualities attributed to Ashley Neff, the University of Wyoming Staff Employee of the Third Quarter of calendar year 2018. In addition, she also received the Outstanding Staff in the College of Health Sciences. She has been in the Division since 2014 and became the senior office associate in 2016.

HERE ARE A LIST OF THE COMMENTS BY HER NOMINATORS:

• “She is an outstanding staff member, which she miraculously balances with her family commitments and her work as a UW student. She has worked with faculty to improve the admissions processes for both undergraduate and graduate applicants. Her staff support to these refinements has been critical to the success of the admissions process.” Her nominator states that she is “our superhero!”
• She is a military veteran, having served for a number of years, exiting as an officer.
• Ashley has left an indelible imprint on students, so much so that, when we have graduation parties, graduates publicly recognize her in their speeches on stage.

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I arrived in Laramie in 1981 as a LCSW. I was thrilled to learn that there was a social work program at the University of Wyoming. I began to mentor students and even taught several courses over the years. I give to the Division of Social Work because I wanted to keep the program going and strong.”

–Martha Pheneger, LCSW
Dr. Mary Burman is the quintessential administrator who goes above and beyond the call of duty in her service to the Division of Social Work, the School of Nursing, the College of Health Sciences and the University of Wyoming and the surrounding community. Even more commendable is that she executes all these duties with admirable equanimity, poise and humility. Although she is quick to remind folks, "I'm not a social worker", it's hard for her to convince the average person of the veracity of that statement as she has dedicated quality time to learning about and understanding the social work program, along with its nuances and idiosyncrasies.

As a result, Mary has adeptly represented the Division of Social Work in any forum. For a position that begun as temporary in 2016 and one that has gradually progressed into additional years of her leading the Division of Social Work, it is not hard to imagine why we would consider her an Honorary Social Work Educator. Dr. Burman is a visionary, who continues to support the Division in its quest to strengthen and grow and her positive impact ricochets across all stakeholders: students, faculty, and community partners. Mary Burman, we salute you!

~The UW Division of Social Work