Eighteen MSW students attended the Liberation Based Healing Conference in New Orleans this fall. The title of the conference was “Staying Awake: Resisting Dominance & Mobilizing Hope.” Our students did an incredible job representing our department. They were involved throughout the event, raised critical questions, and demonstrated humility and professionalism.

On Day 1, Yadira Tejeda, Wanda Diep, Berali Carillo, Xochill Azmitia, and Michelle Baek participated in a panel titled “Critical Pedagogy and Intersectionality.” On Day 2, Yadira, Wanda, Berali, Michelle, and Amber Gutierrez participated in a panel titled “Reflective Voices: The Interruption of Coloniality in the Classroom, Curriculum and Practice.” Sara Koenig served as moderator for a panel titled “Resisting Disability and Overcoming Challenges” featuring speaker Michael L. Benjamin-Robinson, who spoke about the HIV epidemic among Gay and Bi-Sexual Black men in the South. MSW faculty member José Paez had the opportunity to co-present with Michelle, Berali, Jennifer Ochei and Terrence Stewart on a presentation titled “Disobeying the Academy: Finding Decolonial Options.”

End-of-the-Year GSWEC celebration

On April 26, thirteen MSW Interns presented their GSWEC (Geriatric Social Work Education Consortium) research projects at the GSWEC End-of-the-Year Celebration. The event, held at Huntington Hospital Braun Auditorium, was a great success and CSUN had students from each of its five cohorts represented at GSWEC. The following students were recognized for their service and dedication to working in geriatric social work:

- Partners in Care Foundation: Michelle Baek, Megan Douglas
- Pacific Clinics: Monica Chamichyan
- Alzheimer’s Greater Los Angeles: Camille Buenviaje
- Motion Picture Television Fund: Donna Erdmann, Anna Grigoryan
- Veterans Affairs: Viridiana Hernandez, Claudia Agee Hughes, Alex Petro, Paulina Polanco, Anthony Ross, Lainey Sevilla
- Jewish Family Services: Arielle Ventimiglia

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Reflections on our Growth as a Department of Social Work

Year’s end lends itself to reflections of our past as well as opportunities to plan for our future. It was 2005. The CSUN Department of Social Work admitted our first cohort of 25 students. In May of 2007, our first graduating class received their MSW degrees. Fast forward to ten years later. In May 2017, 179 students successfully completed their studies and were awarded their MSW degrees. In August, 181 students were admitted into our program. Yes, we are now a Department of Social Work that admits several new cohorts every year. We are grateful to our Department, College, University, and many community supporters for your help with our growth over the past 12 years.

In terms of Department employees, in 2005, we started with 4 tenure-track faculty and 1 full-time field director. We now have 12 tenure-track faculty members, 2 full-time instructors, 7 full-time field staff, 5 full-time administrative staff, a part-time administrative staff, and scores of part-time instructors, many who have been with our Department now for years. In August, 2017, we were pleased to add to our growing Department. We hired two new tenure-track faculty members: Dr. Allen Lipscomb moved from a part-time instructor to a full-time tenure-track faculty after successfully obtaining his Psy.D. from Ryokan College and Dr. Lauren Willner joined our Department after successfully completing her PhD at UCLA. Please see inside our newsletter for more information introducing each of them.

And last, but not least, we continue to increase our outreach. Note that we opened our Diversity Day Conference to the on-campus and off-campus communities. We hope to see you here on April 7th from 9am – 3pm in the Northridge Center for our 10th annual Diversity Day. Meanwhile, I wish you all peaceful holidays and look forward to hearing from many of you in 2018.
Welcome to Our New MSW Faculty!

Allen Lipscomb, PsyD, LCSW, joined the CSUN faculty in the fall of 2017, as Assistant Professor. Dr. Lipscomb is a clinical psychologist and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of California. Dr. Lipscomb received his doctorate in Psychology with a clinical emphasis in marriage, family and child psychotherapy from Ryokan College and his MSW from the University of Southern California. Dr. Lipscomb specializes in providing anti-oppressive mental health services to individuals, children, youth and families of color. His areas of research are centered on the psychiatric epidemiology among racialized and marginalized individuals who have experienced trauma (i.e. complex trauma, traumatic-grief and race-based trauma).

Lauren Willner, Ph.D., MSW, also joined the department in the fall of 2017 as Assistant Professor, after completing her Ph.D. in Social Welfare at UCLA’s Luskin School of Public Affairs. Dr. Willner’s research focuses on the nonprofit sector, specifically social justice and social change organizations. Social justice is at the forefront of her research and practice, and she is committed to garnering greater understanding about how the models that nonprofit organizations embrace can be strengthened to achieve greater positive results for clients and communities. Dr. Willner earned her MSW from the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy and Practice in 2009, and BA in Feminist Studies and Photojournalism from the Gallatin School at NYU in 2004.

Sally Casanova Scholarship

MSW candidate Lainey Sevillano has recently been awarded the Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholarship for 2017-18. This year’s application pool was very competitive with 228 strong candidates throughout the entire Cal-State system. Lainey is 1 of 76 scholars admitted to this year’s program. For the past year, Lainey has worked under the guidance of Drs. Sarah Mountz (SUNY Albany, Social Work) and Moshoula Capous-Desyllas (CSUN, Sociology) on their Community Based Participatory Research Project, From Our Perspectives: Untold Stories of LGBTQ Youth in the Foster Care System in LA County. Lainey will continue her work with the LGBTQ former foster care youth and investigate their experiences with homelessness as a Sally Casanova Scholar. Lainey is also a vibrant member of the CSUN MSW program as a member of Docs & Talks, Phi Alpha Honor Society, 2017 Diversity Day Planning Committee and as the NASW Membership Coordinator.

Student Success Ally Program

MSW students providing internship services on campus at CSUN resource programs, as well as program directors and field instructors, gathered on October 19th to celebrate the growth of CSUN campus resources and support collaboration. The Student Success Ally program hosted the event. Representatives from campus programs such as the Klotz Health Center, Housing Instability Project, Minority Male Mentoring (M3), Cal Fresh, and Student Success Allies came together. Additional MSW interns are placed at Women’s Resource Center, Family Empowerment Team in Action (FETA), the Matador Achievement Center, and the Pride Center. MSW campus interns are contributing to enhancing the quality of college success in each of their Individual programs and as a collaborative team.
Select Faculty Publications and Presentations


On April 26, NASW-CA Region G collaborated with California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Department of Social Work’s Docs and Talks Committee to host a special screening of the documentary, El Canto Del Colibri. The film’s director, Marco Castro-Bojorquez describes the film as “a story of Latino fathers dealing with issues of immigration, faith, marriage equality, machismo, culture, and the process of their LGBTQ children coming out.” After the screening, Marco openly shared the process of creating his beautiful film. Marco also willingly fielded questions about his life experiences, his passion for social justice and his advocacy work. The room was full of social justice leaders ranging from professors and students from CSUN’s Social Work and Deaf Studies departments, to representatives from the Dream Center, Strength United and the Pride Center.

On November 1st, the CSUN Breastfeeding Coalition in collaboration with MSW’s DOCS & TALKS presented the Milky Way Documentary. The film draws attention to cultural and political issues that impact breastfeeding women in the United States. This event was held in the Whitsett Room allowing members of the community, faculty, and students to join together to watch the documentary, as well as participate in a Q&A with the producers Chantal Molnar and Jennifer Davidson. Overall, the event was informative and provided hope for potential improvements not only for breastfeeding in the United States, but also within the breastfeeding community at CSUN.

CSUN On Point—Mental Health Stigma

In November, Second-year MSW student, Ebony Harper spoke on CSUN’s radio show, On-Point, about mental health stigma. The show aired on KCSN, CSUN’s radio station @ 88.5 FM, and on local television channels. CSUN On Point states that “Mental Illness is on the rise among young people in America.” In the show, On Point reports on the stigma surrounding mental illness and how to address it. Ebony, an advisor to students in CSUN Student Housing, states, “... Stigma comes from people not being familiar or just knowing what the behaviors are... so you get this thing that people don’t want to be around you.” She credits the CSUN MSW program, in part, for her passion and drive to address issues such as mental stigma, saying, “My internships, my classroom discussions and my professors have all fostered an atmosphere of success for me to thrive in the social work profession. I am more informed than I have ever been on what our clients and people from oppressed populations experience. I am so ready to do the work and this is only a start.”

17th Annual GAP Conference

The 17th annual Grandparents as Parents (GAP) Conference, held on November 3, 2017 at the Omni Hotel, was attended by roughly 300 people. Julie Gould, our Department CalSWEC Project Coordinator and Mental Health Program Coordinator, was instrumental in planning and presenting at the conference. Julie and Katie Mortimer, our Executive Director of Field Education, Contracts, and Admissions, offered a break-out session called “Supporting Children Dealing with Trauma: Considerations for Professional and Relative Caregivers.” Dr. Susan Love, one of our department faculty members, was the keynote speaker. The conference theme was “Bridging the Gap: A Conference for Caregivers and Professionals.” It was sponsored by the Eisner Foundation, CSUN and the Alliance for Children’s Rights.