Although this is the second edition of our newsletter for academic year 2008-2009, it is the first edition of the joint newsletter for the BSW and MSW Programs.

Dr. Pamela Twiss became the Chairperson of the Social Work Department and Baccalaureate Program Director in May, 2008. She also assumes Directorship of the BSW Program. Dr. Twiss replaces Dr. Christopher who served in this capacity for MANY years. She brings the following message:

Greetings from the Baccalaureate Program! I hope that this newsletter finds you and yours doing well in 2009 and that your social work degree is helping you to weather these difficult economic times. The undergraduate program in social work here at CalU continues to thrive. This is an exciting time for us. We are hoping to welcome a new full-time faculty member to our Program soon (stay tuned for more news on this). We are also actively engaged in a process known in social work education as “self-study.” The self-study process requires us to carefully examine our undergraduate program and to make data-based judgments to further develop our program for the benefit of future students. This self-study process is required as we seek reaffirmation of our undergraduate program’s accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education this coming year. As a graduate of our program, we would welcome any suggestions that you may have for improvement to our program. Please feel free to call me (724-938-4053) or to email me (twiss@cup.edu). If you haven’t visited us in our new office space in Azorsky or seen our campus in a while, I’d be happy to make an appointment to meet with you and show you our space and our new and changing campus environment. There’s a new Alumni Association just for social work graduates that could be a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with classmates, to network professionally, and to help future students. Our MSW Program Director, Dr. Norma Thomas (thomas@cup.edu, 724-938-1597), would be happy to provide you with information about this organization. Please don’t be a stranger to the program. We would love to hear from you!

MSW Program News:
At its June 2008 meeting the Commission on Accreditation (COA) reviewed the self-study for the MSW Program at CalU and voted to reaffirm our accreditation for eight years, through February 2016.

Faculty Presentations
Dr. Larry Breitenstein with Mr. Jerry Sopko (University of Pittsburgh Child Welfare Training Program) will present: Changing Agency Cultures, through Operational Excellence: Special Emphasis on Staff Retention, at the spring conference of the Pennsylvania Counsel of Children, Youth and Families, Harrisburg, March 26, 2009.

Dr. Norma Thomas had the following presentations in fall, 2008: American Society on Aging. New Ventures in Leadership Training. Part of Panel Presentation Leadership as a Woman of Color; Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging and the Senior Community Center Annual Conference. Pittsburgh, Pa. Celebrating Differences: Communication in a Multi-Cultural Environment; Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging, Pittsburgh, Pa. Training for the Pennsylvania Care Management Institute. Mental Health & Aging, Hoarding Behavior and the Elderly & Personality Disorders and the
Elderly; Senior Service America, Indianapolis Indiana. *Measuring Effectiveness as a Caring Professional.*

Dr. Thomas is scheduled to present at the National Association of Black Social Workers Conference, in April, 2009, Lexington, Kentucky.

Dr. Pamela Twiss will be presenting with Drs. Michael Daley and Grafton Hull in a Board-sponsored session on publishing in the Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work Education at the Baccalaureate Program Director’s annual program meeting in Phoenix, AZ in March of 2009.


Grants:

Dr. Gwendolyn Perry-Burney received a $76,800 grant from the R. Benjamin Wiley Partnership Program to help 11th grade students from urban high schools prepare for college.

Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education:

We take this opportunity to feature the four students who are currently in placement through the HPPAE Program (grant award $75,000 for three years). Three of them received their BSW degrees from California University of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Angela Cramer:

Received her BS in Social Work from California University of Pennsylvania in 2006. She has worked as a TSS worker for Family Behavior Resources, volunteers to assist persons with Alzheimer’s Disease in her neighborhood and did her undergraduate placement at Children and Youth Services in Greene County.

Ms. Cecelia Driscoll:

Is a non-traditional student that completed her B.S. degree in Human Development and Family Studies at Penn State University in 2007 and immediately returned to California University of Pennsylvania to begin the quest for a MSW. She comes to this program with over 20 years of social service experience and currently manages two low income Senior Citizen apartment complexes and a low income family housing development for Pennrose Management Company. She has a passion for advocacy and hopes to be a driving force in changing and initiating new policies in order to protect and care for our most vulnerable populations through research and advocacy. Her main area of interest is with the senior population and disaster victims/survivors.

Ms. Jessica Myers:

In October 2008, Jessica was selected as a member of the New York Academy of Medicine and Social Work Leadership Institute’s HPPAE Student and Alumni Leadership in Aging Committee. She earned her BSW from California University of Pennsylvania, graduated Summa Cum Laude, and earned the Outstanding Academic Achievement Award in Social Work for fall 2007 and spring 2008. She holds an Associate Degree in Human Services from Pennsylvania Highlands Community College, was the top graduate in her major for this degree, and was nominated for the Distinguished Graduate Award. She is a member of Phi Theta Kappa, Alpha Delta Omega, and the Graduate Social Work Student Association. In addition to her educational endeavors, she has four years of full-time employment experience working with aging clients. She enjoys volunteering in the
community transporting children to church and community activities, as a member and mentor of a local ministry group for single mothers, and as a Christian education teacher at her church. Please see her article in HPPAE Happenings at the following link http://socialworkleadership.org/nsw/students/HPPAE_Happenings_WINTER_2009.pdf

Barbara O’Savage: Worked as a Care Management Supervisor with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Agency on Aging, where she retired from in 2005. She is Lead Research Associate for the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center for the MAURC (Memory and Aging in Urban and Rural Communities) study. She worked in Fayette, Washington and Greene counties for more than 35 years. She received a Bachelor’s degree in Social work in 1980 from California University of Pennsylvania. She is a non-traditional student with a desire to continue to enhance human well-being and to help meet basic human needs of all people, especially the needs and to empower those who are vulnerable, oppressed and living in poverty.

Other News:
Ms. Sheri Boyle is the new local Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties Committee for Action through Politics Chair.

NASW Membership Contest
In the Winter 2008/2009 issue of The Pennsylvania Social worker, publication of the National Association of Social Workers, Pennsylvania Chapter, it was a surprise to see that California University was noted as having the highest percentage of its MSW student body as NASW members. A contest was then announced with the winners to be honored at an event in May. We are pleased to announce that California University, at the end of the contest, received second place after West Chester University. We encourage our students to join NASW because we believe we should be active in our professional organization. We also encourage any of the alumni who are not members, to have your voices heard by joining NASW at www.nasw-pa.org.

The MSW Program will hold an informational open house on Wednesday, April 22, 2009 from 6:00PM-7:30PM in Grand Hall of Old Main. Please call 724-938-4022 for more information.

Alumni Association:
The Alumni Association held its first event on Friday, November, 7, 2008 at the Kara Alumni House at CalU. The new officers of the Association were introduced:

Ms. Amanda Pritchard, President, is a 2005 graduate of the CalU BSW Program and is working on her MSW degree at CalU. She is currently employed by Washington Drug and Alcohol Commission, Inc. and Douglas Education Center and is a member of the Graduate Social Work Student Association.

Ms. Kathy Bierer is the Vice President of the Alumni Association, a 2007 graduate of the CalU BSW Program and currently enrolled at CalU in the MSW Program.

Ms. Julie Reagan graduated from the BSW Program in 2008 and is currently in the MSW Program at California University. She is the Alumni Association Secretary, lives in Masontown, Pa and has an interest in issues related to HIV/AIDS and GLBT populations.

Ms. Mary Bryson graduated from the CalU BSW program in 2000. She currently services as the Alumni Association Treasurer. She works as a Social Service Coordinator for Seniorcare Network and a part-time therapist for WJS Psychological Services. In addition, she works with senior citizens at two apartment sites in Uniontown, Pa. During her studies at WCCC and California University of Pa., she worked with troubled youth at Communities in Schools and New Directions, both alternative schools. Ms. Bryson serves on the Fayette County Homeless Task Force in Uniontown. She plans
to add the title of owner/manager of a Candle/Gift Bryson’s by Candleligh t Shop in 2009 that’s located in Hopwood, Pa.

We thank each of our officers for their willingness to step forward to lead the Alumni Association which serves both our BSW and MSW graduates. The general purposes are to provide networking and mentoring opportunities as well as raise funds to support social work education.

The next event of the Social Work Alumni Association is scheduled for April 2, 2009 from 5:30pm-7:30pm at the Carter Hall Multipurpose Room (behind the Azorsky Building). Ms. Jenna Mehnert, Executive Director of Pa. NASW will be the featured guest. The $5.00 requested donation goes toward the Social Work Alumni Scholarship Fund. Please RSVP by contacting Ms. Tammy DeRocco, 724-938-4022.

Congratulations:
The following students graduated in December, 2008:

MSW: Ms. Sandra Rankin

BSW; Ms. Ashley Adamson; Ms. Brianna C. Bowman; Ms. Joan M. Creely; Ms. Samantha N. Cupelli; Ms. Michelle A. Ferenz; Ms. Amanda L. Green; Ms. Doris M. Hanning; Ms. Miranda B. Jackson; Ms. Nicole R. Jordan; Ms. Molly F. Kimmel; Mr. Adam C. Liberty; Ms. Ashley M. Ponderendolph; Ms. Stephanie A. Schmidt and Ms. Emily Gibson Snyder.

We congratulate all of our graduates. Please stay active with the Social Work Department through the Alumni Association.

Alumni Updates:
We welcome information about our alumni such as new positions, appointments, research, relocations, marriages, etc. for this section of the newsletter. Also, please send to Ms. Tammy DeRocco your current contact information.

We are also looking for submissions to name the newsletter! A prize awaits the person whose submission is chosen.

Upcoming Events
Continuing Education:
The next continuing education event is scheduled for April 2, 2009 from 9:00am-3:00pm in Natali. Proceeds will benefit the Social Work Alumni Association Scholarship. Please contact Ms. Sheri Boyle 724-938-5988 or Boyle@cup.edu for more information.

Rural Communities Institute:
The Rural Communities Institute administered through the Foundation of California University of Pennsylvania, provides a variety of social work consultation services to non-profit organizations. Funds raised through RCI enhance the operations of the MSW Program as well as provide support for students. If you wish to know more about RCI services, please call 724-938-1597.

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