

2019

## [Social Work] Newsletter, 2019

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Social Work.

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### Recommended Citation

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Social Work., "[Social Work] Newsletter, 2019" (2019). *Social Work Newsletter*. 7.  
<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/swnews/7>

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NEWSLETTER

20  
19

FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD:

# YEAR IN REVIEW

FALL 2018 - SPRING 2019

The Department of Social Work concluded the 2018-2019 academic year with a few faculty changes. Dr. Bill Downs retired after 25 years of service with the department and will be greatly missed by faculty, staff, and students. We wish Dr. Downs the best as he moves into this new phase of life. Conversely, we welcomed two new faculty to our team. You can read about Libby Fry and Dr. Sei-Young Lee, our newest team members, in the Faculty Highlights section of this newsletter.

A huge highlight of the year came when one of our students was selected to deliver the student address at commencement in May. Kyla Ford, a phenomenal student who majored in Social Work and Criminology, delivered an inspired speech at the ceremony. You can read Kyla's story on page two.

In the following pages, you will read about the achievements of our students and faculty and how their efforts enhance the lives of social service clients. As department head of Social Work, I continue to be extremely proud of our accomplishments and welcome the updates we receive from alumni and friends. I look forward to hearing your news and welcome your questions and comments. You can reach me at [cynthia.juby@uni.edu](mailto:cynthia.juby@uni.edu) or 319-273-6249.



Cindy Juby Ph.D.



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
University of Northern Iowa

## FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS



Sei-Young Lee

Dr. Sei-Young Lee obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Southern California, School of Social Work and her MSW degree from California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA). Her post-MSW practice focuses on domestic violence intervention and prevention with trauma-focused counseling. She also worked as a Research Scientist in Los Angeles County Probation Department and University Consortium for Children and Families. Before joining UNI, Dr. Lee taught at Cal State LA School of Social Work from 2014 to 2018. She regularly taught Social Work Research Methods, and Human Behavior and the Social Environment (HBSE) at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and supervised 65 graduate research projects or MSW thesis.

Dr. Sei-Young Lee's primary research occurs at the intersection of juvenile delinquency with child welfare and education. She has continuously studied on the impact of child maltreatment experiences on youth delinquency and violence.

Her research areas extend to adverse childhood experiences and domestic violence. She currently works on the protective role of school and education on delinquency among youth with child maltreatment history by gender; domestic violence affected by gender norms in Korean immigrant women in the U.S.; and racial differences in substance use and treatment completion. Dr. Lee has presented more than 30 studies in national and international conferences and has more than 20 peer-reviewed journal articles in press, under review, and under development.



Libby Fry

Libby Fry is enjoying her first year as a full-time instructor for the social work department. She teaches various social work courses, including Social Work Policy and Practice. Prior to coming to UNI full-time, Libby worked with adolescents, specifically those who were pregnant and/or parenting. Her work involved engaging in the community through collaborative work and outreach projects. As a UNI alumna herself, Libby looks forward to contributing to this community's well being and vibrancy in a new manner as she re-joins the UNI family.



Bill Downs

Dr. Downs is retiring this summer after working for 37 years in academia, 27 of which were at UNI. During his time at UNI, he had several different roles. From 1992 to 2000, he was the director of the Center for the Study of Adolescence; from 2000 to 2002 was the founding director of the MSW program; and, in 2012 was interim head of Social Work.

In addition to full-time teaching and administrative responsibilities, Dr. Downs wrote more than 75 grants during his time at UNI. One series of grants he is particularly proud of were from the Office on Violence Against Women, which funded the Integrated Services Project (ISP) from 2001-2018. The ISP was a partnership between UNI and the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence to develop and enhance collaboration between victim service and substance abuse treatment programs across Iowa. Professor Downs was also involved in Bringing Seeds of Hope, a domestic violence victim services agency, to the area. In 2013, when funding was redistributed, he was a founding member of Amani Community Services, which provides culturally-specific services to African American victim survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Black Hawk and Linn Counties.

Dr. Downs states that he especially enjoyed working with students and collaborating with community agencies during his time at UNI. He is looking forward to retirement with his wife Carol and their cats, as well as spending more time with family.

## BSW STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Kyla Ford

Kyla Ford's academic journey started pretty hastily. At just 17 years old, she had moved out of her mother's house, was just diagnosed with chronic regional pain syndrome and was recovering from surgery. She knew she wanted to go to school, so she enrolled in Kirkwood Community College and started studying human services.

"My brain was so foggy, I just literally applied to the first school I knew I could get into," she said. "I don't even know why I picked human services. Honestly, I think I took a career test and it said clergy or social worker and I was like, 'OK, I'm not gonna' be a clergy member, so I could probably do something with social work.' But I didn't realize where my trajectory was going."

Little did she know, she would develop a passion that would lead to even more opportunities. At Kirkwood, her studies not only helped her develop a love of her major, they helped her have personal breakthroughs. Some of her first classes at Kirkwood talked about mental illness — something that's impacted Ford's family, and Ford herself.

"I was going through my own mental health problems and when we started to go through that curriculum I realized, 'Oh, I'm not a bad person,'" she said. "I started to realize that not only can I help those around me, but I can help myself, I can help my family."

Motivated by her studies at Kirkwood, Ford transferred to UNI, started studying social work and became actively involved on campus. She took on leadership roles with Active Minds, Ethnic Student Promoters, the Student Social Work Association, UNI Mental Health Council and UNI's NAACP chapter. This May, she was one of the commencement speakers at the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences graduation.

She also became involved with the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program, which allowed her to do original research, and took on an internship with the Waterloo Community School District, where she leads a conflict resolution skills group for third graders.

"My favorite thing is interacting with kids and giving them an avenue to tell someone their story," said Ford. "Having that safe space, that's just so important. And recreating that any way I can in the future is something that I want to do."

For Ford, creating these safe spaces plays a key role in preventing violence, and violence prevention is at the heart of all of her work. The conflict resolution group aims to prevent interpersonal issues from escalating into violence, and her research focused on examining the impact of school policies on campus violence. According to Ford, there is not enough focus on prevention in social work — but UNI helped her develop the skills to change that.

"Something that's severely lacking in all social services across the board is prevention of any kind," she said. "Prevention is the one thing that I feel is the most important and that I'm drawn to. And that started my very first semester here at UNI."

In addition to helping her develop a passion for prevention, UNI helped her develop a passion for research — and has given her a new sense of direction.

"Before UNI, I didn't even know what research was," said Ford. "Giving me the license to do a project and do original research ... that's where my entire trajectory shifted."

For the first time, Ford has a vision of where life is going — she's planning to pursue a doctorate in community psychology from University of Illinois at Chicago in fall 2019. It's a huge shift from her mindset when she was seventeen and running away from negative experiences. Today, Ford is looking forward and is excited for what the future holds.

"This is the first decision I made that wasn't decided by circumstance," she said. "I got to make a decision and I'm getting to form myself. And that's something I'm really looking forward to."

## MSW STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



Morgan Eggert

Morgan is an MSW student from Atkins, Iowa. She is currently completing her advanced field placement at Bethany Christian Services, an adoption agency in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. While at Bethany, Morgan has worked to support expectant mothers by connecting them with resources to sustain their pregnancy and keep their baby healthy. She also helped mothers identify and utilize supports to help them parent their child, if and when possible.

In addition to serving as an intern, Morgan served as the Graduate Assistant for Student Success and Retention. Throughout her time in this position, she co-developed outreach projects to support students who are facing barriers to remaining at the university. She also served as a teacher and coach in a pilot program for students who were recently suspended from the university. She developed a weekly coaching plan rooted in motivational interviewing. The plan provides students with numerous opportunities to set goals and evaluate how their behaviors are impacting their ability to meet those goals.

Through her graduate assistantship, Morgan developed a passion for working with college students. After graduation, Morgan hopes to continue work within the higher education field, supporting students who are struggling academically.



Anna Patch

Anna has been a part of the UNI community for both her undergraduate and MSW degrees in Social Work. During this time, she has benefited from the encouragement of fellow students and mentors invested in her success. With the support of this community, Anna has focused her energy on studying institutionalized white supremacy in social work. In turn, she has investigated the impact of internalized white supremacy on individual social workers. In efforts to transform these paradigms and in collaboration with the community, Anna has facilitated dialogues on the White Savior Industrial Complex, educating social workers on ways to address and redress power in their work with clients and communities as well as within the profession as a whole. As part of this work, Anna also provides an open group for educators and social workers in the Cedar Valley focused on healing from internalized whiteness.

Anna has completed B.A. and MSW internships at the UNI Office of Compliance and Equity Management as well as the Waterloo Writing Project. In the future, Anna looks forward to working with both Access Evaluations & Education and the Waterloo Writing Project.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Allison Lasley

Since graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from UNI, Allison earned a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of Iowa while working at Meskwaki Family Services, the Tribe's Child Welfare agency, as the Indian Child Welfare Act Coordinator. Allison worked with Casey Family Programs and the Iowa DHS as a faculty member on the Racial Equity Alliance while completing her Masters level Practicum with Sandy Lint and the Community Partners for the Protection of Children (CPPC). Allison received the 2014 Catherine G. Williams Lifetime Diversity Achievement Award from the Iowa Chapter of NASW for making a difference in the lives of Iowa's families. In 2013 she transferred to Meskwaki Nation Child Support Services (MNCSS), a brand new program, as a Case Manager in the Start Up phase and now, currently serves as the Director of the Sac & Fox Tribe's IV-D agency (since 2015). MNCSS is a federally funded Title IV-D agency and was the 2016 Recipient of the National Tribal Child Support Association's Partnership Award for Professional Excellence for being a professional partner in nationally promoting tribal child support enforcement programs and endeavors - essentially making a difference for Tribal families.

# STUDENT SERVICES



## Social Work Student Association

The undergraduate Social Work Student Association (SWSA) brought a variety of guest speakers to campus this past year to highlight their social work role and other relevant issues to the field of social work. They included Rachel Carter-Shadle to speak on homelessness/veterans issues, Nancy Hagensick to speak on Social Work Ethics, Anna Cullen to speak on Social Work in the Medical Setting, Lisa Wetzel to speak on Life Long Care and Melanie Oleksa to speak on School Social Work.

The 2018-2019 Student Officers included: Tosha Prier, SWSA Treasurer; Steph Dunkel, Co-President; Brayden Brown, Secretary; Kyla Ford, Student Representative; & Andy Hagensick, Co-President. Steph attended the Department's annual awards and scholarships ceremony to speak on behalf of the SWSA.



MSWSA Members

## Masters in Social Work Student Association

The Masters in Social Work Student Association (MSWSA) participated in several events this past school year. MSWSA President Matt Hotek represented the MSWSA by participating in 2018 Walk to End Alzheimer's event. Students also volunteered at Wheaton Franciscan's Celebrate You event, celebrating women and honoring breast cancer survivors. MSW students attended the Student Disability Summit, where student Scott Schwartz was one of the presenters. Susan Backes from the House of Hope spoke at their October 10th meeting, sharing information on the Pillars Program. Students also attended the 2019 PTSD Conference. Four students from the MSW program (Matt Hotek, Theresa Kramer, Eric Eastman, and Annemarie Goldhorn) attended NASW Student Day on the Hill in Des Moines where they met with their local legislators to discuss the need for the creation of a Children's Mental Health Board.



Celebrate You



NASW Student Day on the Hill



Student Disability Summit

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

**“I am not a teacher,  
but an awakener.”**

— Robert Frost

I believe this quote by Robert Frost defines the core reason why dedicated individuals in the social work field agree to supervise a social work student for their internships...to ignite passion in their students to address and advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice for those individuals, families, groups and communities that they serve. During the 2018-2019 school year, 139 students were placed from our undergraduate, graduate and online program, which is over 63,000 hours of field work being done locally, around the state, out of state and in one instance, out of the country. We would like to highlight some of the great experiences and supervision our students received this year.

**Jenny Becker**  
Director of Field Instruction



### Samantha Akers

**Internship:** UnityPoint Health - Allen's Together For Youth (TFY), Waterloo, IA

**Internship Supervisors:** Brooke Olson, BA Family Studies and Sociology; Jean Gallmeyer, Certified Adolescent Sexual Health Educator

**Dates of internship:** December 2018-February 2019

“My agency instructors provided me with many activities and experiences. Not only did I observe and learn from them, but I would like to highlight the successes and strengths of the Together For Youth staff as a whole. Their interactions with me went beyond what was expected of them. From making sure I felt included in staff meetings to reminding me of my worth on their team, they never failed to make me feel valued and appreciated. Every staff member went out of their way to make sure I felt comfortable with my workload while pushing me to be better and ensuring that I was getting what I wanted out of the field experience as a whole.

There are countless examples of this. For instance, while I was there, an RFP was approaching its due date. They allowed me to voice my thoughts on curriculum choices as well as help in grant writing. This was an experience that I know could have been easily handled by their own wisdom, but instead they reached out to me and allowed me to learn about the process of grant writing and curriculum.

There were many opportunities that they gave me throughout programs. I was in an awkward situation because of a study abroad experience that started in February. TFY did not allow this to be an excuse. They accepted me and made sure I was welcomed in my short amount of time there. It would have been easy for them to turn me away because of my atypical schedule, instead, they worked with me and made sure I had enough hours.

TFY encouraged me to take part in individual health services, group education and more. This allowed me to learn about a variety of topics, situations and people. I will forever be grateful for the experiences I had at Together For Youth with every staff member involved. I will be a much better social worker, employee and person because of the kindness and passion of TFY Staff. The women at Together For Youth are outstanding examples of who I want to be as a social worker and human.”



## Gabriella (Ella) Gruen

**Internship:** Allen Child Protection Center, Waterloo, IA

**Internship Supervisor:** Miranda Kracke, LMSW

**Dates of internship:** January-May 2019

"My agency supervisor, Miranda Kracke from the Allen Child Protection Center, is very organized and well-rounded. She strives for perfection in her own personal work. She is very informed on the social work skills and processes. She is very flexible, understanding and competent in the field of social work. Miranda always seeks to improve her social work skills with new knowledge in order to better serve the patients seen at the ACPC. Miranda is dedicated and passionate about her job and the individuals she serves. She ensures that her practice is ethical and promotes teamwork. Even more, she advocates for the provision of evidence-based services.

During my social work field experience, I have been granted an opportunity to learn how to collaborate with clients and staff in order to find mutually agreed upon intervention goals. I was able to assist with planning for our community training event to raise awareness/provide education for children affected by drugs and alcohol. Additionally, I have been able to attend board and case consultation meetings. I have attended multiple case review meetings with our multidisciplinary team: DHS, counselors, law enforcement, county attorney, our staff, etc. My trainings and observations have enabled me to better understand and assist a client by applying social work knowledge and frameworks to meet them where they are at."



## Hanna Reese

**Internship:** Eastern Iowa Family Counseling, Mount Vernon, IA

**Internship Supervisor:** Julie Gondek, LISW

**Dates of internship:** August 2018-May 2019

"I have learned office administration and case management skills during my internship as well as individual, couples and family therapy assessments, and interventions with invaluable experience with a variety of diagnoses (anxiety, depression, phobias, ADHD, bipolar disorder, OCD, borderline personality disorder, dissociative identity disorder, etc.) and a variety of ages (5-65 years old).

From day one, Julie has been a fantastic supervisor. She's incredibly knowledgeable about a variety of diagnoses and social work in general, and has the work and life experience to back it up. She is welcoming and accepting, hard-working and determined. I consistently felt that she genuinely wanted what was best for me. When I felt hesitant, she encouraged and challenged me to push forward while reassuring me that I had her support the whole way. She provided me with honest and direct feedback, but always worded it in a positive and supportive way that never made me feel discouraged. She has always been open to questions and frequently checks in on how my progress towards the licensing exam is doing to see if there is any way she can help."



## Leon Shears

**Internship:** Jesse Cosby Neighborhood Center, Waterloo, IA

**Internship Supervisor:** Jessie Henderson

**Dates of internship:** Spring 2019

"The Jesse Cosby Neighborhood Center is dedicated to keeping and enhancing the quality of life for our neighborhood families through stewardship of resources. As an MSW Foundation intern during the Spring of 2019, I was responsible for helping complete rent rebates, conducted rent support intakes, participated in Meals-on-Wheels deliveries and learned the fundamentals of grant writing and inter-agency collaboration. This internship inspired my desire to help, showed me the power of empathy, and allowed me to use solution focused interventions. I would like to thank Jesse C. Henderson for giving me the opportunity, all staff at the center for helping me, the individuals involved for allowing me to work with them and UNI for their support. Love Each Other Now."



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
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