



Social Work Advisory Board

The Advisory Board of Siena College's Social Work Program is composed of a wide variety of persons whose input and assistance is important to the Program. These include social work practitioners, field instructors, students, alumni, college staff, state legislative staff, a MSW program representative and other members of the community.

The Advisory Board supports the program's mission to prepare undergraduate baccalaureate students for competent generalist social work practice by:

providing consultation to faculty in developing and maintaining a comprehensive curriculum

planning and carrying out activities that develop the resources and supports needed by the Social Work Program to meet student needs

serving as a link between the academic and practice components of the Social Work profession

Are you interested in serving on the Advisory Board? Contact Donna McIntosh at 518-783-4261.

Siena College International Social Work

Welcome to this special edition of *The Talking Circle*, the Siena Social Work Program newsletter for alumni, students, social work practitioners and others. The term *Talking Circle* comes from Native American traditions of teaching and symbolizes open hearts to understand and connect with each other. This newsletter is the result of a committed partnership between members of the Social Work Program Advisory Board and the social work faculty.

We hope this newsletter serves as just one of many ways we may all stay in touch and reconnect. Do you have news you would like to share? Drop us an email or a letter.

International Social Work Study by Current Seniors

We are proud of four of our incoming seniors, who had amazing study abroad experiences last year:

*Amanda Fuchs, So Africa
Carly James, China
Diane Martori, Ecuador
Meg Walsh, Italy*

We celebrate their courage, sense of adventure, and commitment to enriching educational experiences!

Students participate in international issues

On March 21st, Siena Seniors led teams of social work students from across the state at the **annual NYS Social Education Association Lobby day in Albany** to talk with legislators about licensing BSWs, loan forgiveness for BSW students and passing anti-human trafficking legislation (internationally focused legislation). This was an amazing opportunity for students to learn what it is like to lobby and hopefully encourage them to do so in the future.

*Tess Morgan, Class of 2007
Student Representative to the
Advisory Board*

Social Work Day at the United Nations was held on March 23, 2007 in New York City. Juniors and Seniors that attended were accompanied by Diana and Donna to share in the learning and networking. This was a day of learning about women around the world and how they practice social work in their countries. Throughout the day we heard from several speakers about how the international world is changing and how we need to be more aware of these changes as well as how we can be better professionals in our fields.

*Shannon Wales, Class 2007
Student Representative to the Advisory
Board*



The “Death Lady” Visits Taiwan and Hong Kong - By “Dr. Carla”

During the summer of 2005, I spent 2½ months teaching and learning about aging, end of life issues, and memorialization practices in Taiwan and Hong Kong. While teaching two 6-week courses (Hospice Care and Multicultural Thanatology) at the Institute of Life and Death Education and Counseling at the National Taiwan College of Nursing in Taipei, I lived in a guest room on the 7th floor of the College and spent my non-teaching days visiting agencies that provided care to the elderly, the dying, and the bereaved.

My students dubbed me “Dr. Carla” (as Sofka is not a common name nor an easy one to pronounce for the Chinese). Teaching in Taiwan involved adjusting to teaching barefoot in the ‘Zen Room’, sitting on a chair that was about 6 inches above the ground, and learning to ignore the distractions created by the resident lizard that lived in this room. It was fascinating to learn about concepts in our Westernized way of thinking about death that do not “fit” with Eastern cultural views of death and dying. For example, the concept of an “extended dying trajectory” or dying as the result of a long-term illness did not make sense to the students because “you are only dying right before it happens.” The introduction of hospice care, while becoming more common in Taiwan, has faced challenges with acceptance due to this view. Seeing the “memorial puzzles” that were made by dying patients and their families (framed and sold once a year in a fundraiser for the program) and visiting “Spiritland” at MacKay Hospice in Taipei provided me with an appreciation for ways that different cultures can create innovative ways to improve models of care.

Before leaving on this adventure, I wasn’t sure how I would do being in a foreign country where I didn’t speak the language. It was also the first time that I spent this much time away from my family and wasn’t sure I could survive without seeing my daughter for 2 months. With phone cards from the 7-11 across the street from the College, Gwyn and Mike were just a phone call away. Sending e-mail at 9:45 at night after class caught everyone in the U.S. mid-morning, so staying in touch was fast and easy. I also discovered that with good maps, a tour book, some courage, and lots of energy, I was very comfortable going anywhere I wanted to go and met amazing people everywhere that I went. I can even play a practical joke on the telephone on someone in Chinese! I’m not sure when I will have a chance to go back, but I look forward to the time that I can visit my friends and family* in Taiwan.

Professor Diana Strock-Lynskey doing Cemetery Restoration in Belarus



Diana Strock-Lynskey on Journeying to Belarus

Ten Siena students, one faculty member, the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, one staff person, Dr. Michael, Lozman, Director of Project Restore, and I journeyed our way through Poland and Belarus, Eastern Europe. Lasting 13 days in June of 2006, our trip included educational tours of the Warsaw Ghetto, the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery, Warsaw and Krakow, Auschwitz and Birchenau Concentration Camps, the Belarus cities of Minsk and Muir and the Belarus Resistance Movement Museum. While completing the actual cemetery restoration work, our group resided in the local town of Lido, Belarus (once a thriving city with a significant Jewish population) and commuted to the village of Yselyub (a one hour drive each way daily). In six days, we were able to clear the entire cemetery of major debris (an enormous task not to be underestimated based on 60+ years of neglect), the cemetery fence panels had been carried, attached to one another, and embedded in concrete (approx. 85 metal panels about 6’ in length each), the entire cemetery was enclosed by this permanent fencing, and a formal entranceway and dedication plaque were installed. In addition, 160 stones (about ½ of the cemetery) were located, dug up or taken out from under debris, cleaned, correctly positioned (based on the traditional Hebrew lettering) and placed in secure ground. While others came and went and did what they could, it was the young people’s consistent involvement that enabled us to accomplish so much. **(continued on page 3)**

(from page 2) It is clear that restoring these gravestones served as a major point of “transformation” for both the community and us. When these stones began to become visible, the reality hit home that each site represented a real person that once existed as a member of this community, and the sacredness of the cemetery began to be reestablished. Later, during a memorial service involving our group, community members, political leaders and ambassadors from Belarus and England, our students and village’s young people gathered pebbles that were placed on each grave stone, a Jewish tradition that we learned signified that someone has visited that grave and honored the deceased. The experience of parting from the community members was very emotional and one that will not be soon forgotten. The many tearful embraces and expressions of mutual gratitude conveyed the forging of heart connections that transcended language and other cultural barriers that initially existed and will stay in each of our hearts for many years to come.

International Social Work Study Abroad Options Explored for Students

Professor Strock-Lynskey continues her work on behalf of the Department to expand international study abroad opportunities, specifically in social work, for our majors to increase study abroad options for juniors and seniors while remaining within the four year academic plan for the undergraduate degree. Professor Strock-Lynskey has worked closely with Brother Brian Belanger, Director of the Study Abroad Office, to explore current and possible affiliations that might grant students credit for service and some upper level courses as determined by the Department and in accordance with CSWE curriculum standards.

Program News and Updates

Program Reaccreditation: During the 2006-2007 academic year, we underwent a successful and productive self study and site visit for program reaccreditation by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Accreditation, which occurs every eight years, ensures that the quality of professional programs merits public confidence.

Accreditation standards establish basic requirements for BSW and MSW educational programs. The Program’s reaccreditation status will be on the October agenda of CSWE.

Program Changes: In addition to routine review and revision of curriculum, during the 2006-2007 year, the Department reviewed and revised, with input from the Advisory Board, the following: Program Mission Statement, Program Goals and Objectives, Withdrawal Policy, Termination Policy, Evaluation of Student Performance in Field Form, Analysis of Outcome Data and update of the Program’s Assessment Plan

We completed our 2004-2007 strategic plan and have noted objectives and task areas for 2007-2008 utilizing the newly developed operational plan format used by the College for its 2006-2011 Strategic Plan.

Curriculum Changes: SWRK 301 was renamed from Service Requirement to Junior Internship with approval from the College Board of Instruction. We also sought changes in pre and co-requisites for upper level social work courses.

This year the Program participated in the College Honors Program by offering honors courses including a section of SWRK 100 Introduction to Social Welfare and Social Work taught by Professor Rivas and SWRK 466 Advocacy and Activism taught by Professor McIntosh. On May 18th, the students in SWRK 466 presented to the Board of Trustees Franciscan Values Committee and Academic Affairs Committee on a proposal for socially responsible investing at Siena as part of students’ advocacy work to end the genocide in Darfur. During Spring 2008, Professor Strock-Lynskey will offer an honors section of SWRK 453 Death, Loss and Grief.



Siena College
Social Work
Department

515 Loudon Road
Loudonville, NY
12211-1462

Phone:

(518) 783-4123

Email:

jzoske@siena.edu

*Social Work
Department*

www.siena.edu/socialwork

Social Work
Scholarship
Endowment
Will Give First
Scholarship in 2007

We will be awarding our first scholarship to a social work student in 2007 from the Social Work Endowed Scholarship initiated by social work alumni and the Advisory Board a few years ago. Thank you to every one who contributed to this Scholarship Endowment. If you are interested in making a contribution that will help future social work students, please contact the Program.

Class of 2007

(back row) Kyle Brethel, Alison Powers, Emily Colton, Kristin Pritchard, Bobbie Hunt, Katie Walts, Robin MacHattie, Lisa Pyskadlo, Cricket Whalen,
(front row) Vinita Kavanagh, Jennifer Curatolo, Shannon Wales, Carolyn Brown, Tess Morgan, Colleen Higgins



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515 Loudon Road
Loudonville, NY 12211



