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Stimulus, Fall/Winter 2008

UT College of Social Work

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The College of Social Work Featured in the University-wide Capital Campaign Kick-Off

Charles Glisson Awarded $1.5 million Grant

David Patterson Uses Cutting-Edge Technology to Help End Chronic Homelessness

Akins Endowed Scholarship Will Provide Awards to Outstanding MSSW Graduate Students
From the Dean’s Desk

Welcome to the fall issue of Stimulus!

This fall we welcome two new faculty at our Nashville campus and highlight some of our outstanding alumni and supporters. Our capital campaign kick-off has been very successful and we're at the halfway point in our fundraising efforts. We invite you to join your fellow alumni with a donation to the college to help keep our programs strong and the college moving up in the rankings. Congratulations are due to all of you! The strength of our college relies on the quality of our students, the outstanding teaching and research of our faculty, and the leadership of our alumni and donors. Thanks to all of you who have stepped up to help us in the capital campaign!

This issue also highlights a new grant received by Dr. Charles Glisson, director of the college’s Children’s Mental Health Services Research Center. Funded by the W.T. Grant Foundation, this grant solidifies our growing partnership with Helen Ross McNabb Center. In partnership, we will be researching the facilitating conditions for moving evidence-based practices into real-world settings. The findings from this grant will provide critical information for service delivery providers throughout the country struggling with the implementation of evidence-based practices.

Our new evidence-based curriculum is in place and our first graduates of this curriculum will graduate in May 2009. The faculty have devoted much time and study to the development and implementation of this competency-based curriculum. As we continue with the curriculum we are mounting an outcome assessment of its effectiveness and will be sharing this information with you in the future.

It is a privilege to work with such dedicated faculty, bright and enthusiastic students, and strong supporters of the college. The future remains bright for the college as we move forward in important ways, not only by remaining relevant to practice concerns but also in creating new knowledge to lead us into the future.

Thanks for all you do to support the college!

Adrienne M. Novak
College Announces Akins Family Fellowship

by Betsy DeGeorge

The College of Social Work is pleased to announce the establishment of the Akins Family Fellowship. This contribution to the school creates an endowed scholarship that will, when fully funded, provide scholarships to MSSW graduate students.

Stipulations of this fellowship emphasize volunteerism, requiring scholarship recipients to participate as community volunteers during the period of the award and encouraging continuing volunteer activity after graduation. Emphasis on the volunteer spirit is in keeping with the character of the Akins family. Darrell Akins, a graduate of the University of Tennessee and Chairman/Partner of AkinCrisp Public Strategies, is a native of East Tennessee who has served the community in numerous civic capacities. In the corporate world, Akins practices a kind of corporate citizenship that embraces giving back to the community.

The College of Social Work has been the beneficiary of Akins’ volunteer energies for some time. He has served as a member of the board of visitors and is a member of the capital campaign committee. Rachael Akins, daughter of Darrell and Deborah Akins, is a 2005 graduate of the CSSW master’s program with a concentration in management and community practice. She is presently the Director of Development for Samaritan Inns, an agency combating homelessness and addictions, located in Washington, D.C.

“When my wife and daughter and I became aware of the UT capital campaign, we wondered what would be appropriate for us to do,” states Akins. “We concluded that founding this fellowship would be a way to say thank you to the College of Social Work for the great preparation that Rachel has received while pursuing her career in social work. We also wanted to do something to recognize the excellence of leadership that Karen Sowers has provided as Dean and the great progress the college has made under her leadership.”

Beginning in the year 2012, student scholarships will begin to be awarded. Scholarship applicant eligibility will be extended to enrolled or admitted individuals in the Master of Science in Social Work program at the Knoxville campus. Applicants must be pursuing a degree with a focus on evidence-based practice across systems. Applicants must also have graduated from an East Tennessee high school. This is the second UT fellowship that has been initiated by the Akins family; the first was established in honor of Akins’ parents and supports students following a career in guidance counseling.

“We are indebted,” states Dean Sowers, “to the Akins family for the establishment of this fellowship. We look forward to the day when the capital campaign is complete and this fellowship will be fully funded. The endowment will provide support to generations of students in social work.”

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Senator Douglas Henry, recognized for inspiring service to children and families at risk

Senator Douglas Henry, known as the ‘patron saint of children and social workers’ for his long and dedicated service to the children and families of Tennessee, received the University of Tennessee College of Social Work’s Senator Douglas Henry Award for Service to Children and Families at Risk in recognition of his inspiring leadership.

Senator Henry was the first recipient of the award presented by Dean Karen Sowers at a gathering of alumni and friends at the home of Lisa Pote in Nashville last May.

“The award is intended to recognize individuals or organizations with an exemplary record of service to children and families,” Dean Sowers said. “Whether you call him the ‘patron saint of children and social workers’ or just a legislator who ‘hired out for this job’ of serving all Tennesseans with integrity and compassion, Senator Henry is a living example of how a public servant can make a huge difference for good.”

During his years in the state legislature, Senator Henry has sponsored numerous bills that affect the safety and well-being of the state’s most vulnerable citizens. These include legislation to prohibit the placement of children in adult jails and to provide state supplemental funding to improve Juvenile Court services, as well as many bills aimed at improving the adoption system.

Senator Henry has also sponsored bills recognizing the importance of social workers; raising the educational standards, credentialing requirements, and salaries of Tennessee Department of Children’s Services caseworkers; and allowing social workers to receive reimbursement from insurance companies for mental health services.

In receiving the award, the Senator acknowledged the support of his family, especially his wife, Lolly. He said that over the course of his 40 years of service to the people of Tennessee, he has become convinced that social work is the most important profession.

Dean Sowers said the award will be presented annually to a person or agency who exemplifies the values and dedication of Senator Henry.
Through the support of many people across the state and nation, the College of Social Work has been able to develop high-quality programs and research that provide students a world-class education. Graduates of the programs attribute much of their success in the field to the outstanding education they received from the college. From cutting-edge research projects to recognition by the U.S. News and World Report's national rankings of graduate programs as being 26th overall, the College of Social Work is equipped to give faculty and graduates the tools they need to provide top quality services to those in need in communities both near and far.
Three CSW Programs Command Center Stage at the U.T. Capital Campaign Kick-Off

The Campaign for Tennessee, a university system-wide fundraising capital campaign, was officially launched on April 17, 2008, with a multi-media extravaganza and dinner at UT's Thompson-Boling Arena in Knoxville.

The event highlighted statewide accomplishments of the University of Tennessee, and three of the college’s programs were featured on stages set up around the arena floor. A speaker noted the significance of each program as a spotlight shone on each stage.

The college was well-represented among the one thousand guests who attended the event. Dr. Elizabeth Strand and Dr. John New represented Veterinary Social Work, along with graduate student Tiffany Pennington and Administrative Assistant Kara Edwards of the College of Social Work. Two four-legged friends appeared with the group—“Maggie,” a golden retriever and HABIT (Human Animal Bond in Tennessee) volunteer, and Dean Sowers’ beloved “Hayley.”

The college’s Children’s Mental Health Services Research Center was represented by Center Founder and Director Dr. Charles Glisson; Associate Director Dan Jackson; Assistant Research Coordinator Kimberly Causer, and doctoral student Young Sook Kim.

The college’s undergraduate research program was also featured. Dr. Matthew Theriot, program director; Dr. Sarah Craun, coordinator of senior research projects; Heather Marshall, College of Social Work alumna and research project award winner; and students Yanelle Torres and Gary Singleton appeared on stage to represent this program.

The Campaign for Tennessee has an overall goal of $1 billion by 2011. The College of Social Work’s goal is $5 million, and the current total raised is $2,962,229.

—Kirche Rogers

Finding Innovative Ways to Help the Homeless

Dr. David Patterson, professor and director of the Knoxville Homeless Management Information System (KnoxH-MIS), is working hard to promote the use of technology to help end chronic homelessness within the city of Knoxville and Knox County.

The KnoxH-MIS Implementation Grant from the East Tennessee Foundation was recently awarded a $100,000 KnoxH-MIS Implementation Grant to support the development of a KnoxH-MIS system that gathers information on the delivery of services to the homeless population within Knox County. The KnoxH-MIS is a technologically advanced database that gathers information on the delivery of services to the homeless population within Knox County. It was designed to maximize service coordination for homeless individuals, provide aggregate data on the population, and to assess needs, service effectiveness, and accountability.

The system was built to become an integral tool of practice, an instrument to strengthen communication and the business practices of the 12-provider/partner agencies that use it.

“We want case managers, social workers, and other frontline staff to use the HMIS as their primary information resource, as a means to reduce duplication of effort, services, and resources,” said Dr. Patterson.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for agencies and partners to share information, to record the services they provide, to document agency and community efforts, and, in turn, help this area to meet the goals of the 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.”

While the battle to end chronic homelessness is a difficult battle to fight, the KnoxH-MIS provides a critical tool of practice in this endeavor. Dr. Patterson and the KnoxH-MIS team are currently working closely with community partners. “Our ultimate goal is to move our citizens into housing and to use KnoxH-MIS data to coordinate housing and essential care,” he said.

KnoxH-MIS is a community outreach and research enterprise that is part of the University of Tennessee’s Outreach Mission to partner with organizations of the community. This year the grant will be used to increase the staffing efforts of the KnoxH-MIS team in order to increase contact with and assistance to partners and providers in their efforts to serve this Tennessee community.

—Vicky Bridgeforth, Production Coordinator for SWORPS

Making Strides in Youth Service Delivery Programs

Dr. Charles Glisson, distinguished research professor and founding director of the college’s Children’s Mental Health Services Research Center (the CMH- SRSC), has been awarded a three-year, $1.3 million grant from the William T. Grant Foundation. Glisson and his colleagues will study the effectiveness of an organizational intervention developed by the CMH-SRSC to improve the work environments of mental health service programs and the outcomes for youth.
Media Enhanced Feature

Helping Communities Thrive: SWORPS Releases
Demographic Profiles of the Greater Knoxville Area

For over 30 years, the college’s Social Work Office of Research and Public Service has played a key role in working with organizations that provide services to families and children in the state of Tennessee. As families deal with a changing economy and fewer resources to provide for themselves, health and human service agencies have the challenge of working with more clients and aligning their services to meet families’ immediate needs.

SWORPS is able to help agencies overcome their challenges through projects such as creating a “statistical snapshot” of the Knoxville area for the United Way of Greater Knoxville. This compilation of data, presented in a demographic profile Viewbook, provides agencies with information on residents of the county that they serve.

The United Way’s partner agencies, a diverse group of health and human service providers, use the information in the process of applying for grants and to research issues particular to their clients’ needs. Among the study’s findings, data revealed that Knoxville’s median income has become stagnant and, as a result, recent years’ earnings growth had merely kept pace with inflation. The study also showed that Tennessee has one of the fastest-growing Hispanic or Latino populations in the nation, and in a series of articles published by the Knoxville News-Sentinel, provides information on residents of the county that they serve.

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Don’t Forget the Date!

This year’s Homecoming Gala is fast approaching! The event, which includes dinner, dancing, and a silent auction, takes place this year on November 7, at Rothchild Catering and Conference Center, 8807 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, Tennessee. Gala tickets are $30 and can be purchased until October 31.

In closing, Dean Sowers told Louise, “We realize that you have several alma maters, but tonight the University of Tennessee wants to honor you for your truly inspiring example of service.”

—Stephanie Piper
Distance education seems like a cutting-edge idea, and, certainly, internet-based technologies have changed the face of distance education during the last dozen years. However, the University of London offered the first distance education courses more than 150 years ago. They offered high-quality education to students anywhere and with a flexibility that allowed working people to advance through a recognized course of study. Charles Dickens wrote an article in support of that program, calling it the “People’s University” and saying that the program would “extend her hand to the young shoemaker who studies in his garret.”

The University of Tennessee College of Social Work, too, has a long history of extending its educational programs to a wide range of students. Its doors first opened in 1942. “At no time in the history of the country,” stated the first school brochure, “has the need for professionally prepared social workers been greater than now.” Beginning in June of 2008, a cohort of students began a new kind of educational journey.

From across the state of Tennessee and using the online tools of the 21st century, a group of 14 Advanced Standing students began work on a distance education Master of Science in Social Work degree that meets the same standards as the traditional on-campus degree and that is fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

Distance education classes are taught primarily online. Several delivery methods are being used to implement this statewide education program. Some are synchronous (taking place at the same time), and some are asynchronous (available at any time). The synchronous sessions are mediated using UT’s Centra LiveOnline classroom and allow groups of students from across the state to meet together online and interact using computer cameras and microphones. Asynchronous sessions allow for maximum flexibility of student schedules.

Students log into class sessions and materials at any time and access course materials according to their own individual schedules. Occasionally, students get together at a central location for face-to-face sessions. Such meetings occur only a few times per semester and take place on Saturdays.

All elements and course content in the distance education curriculum are identical to the on-campus curriculum. The same professors teach the courses, the same tests and assessments are given, and the same field placements are required. Karen Sowers, dean of the College of Social Work, comments that, “The students who obtain their MSSW through this distance education program will join the ranks of the UT CSW alumnus as some of the best-trained practitioners currently working in the social work profession.”

Visit http://www.csw.utk.edu/about/stimulus/ to view a demonstration of the online course experience.

—Betsy DeGeorge
Four Students Have Joined the DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The College of Social Work welcomed four new students to the doctoral program in 2007. The students are Katherine Hampton, Young Sook Kim, Mark Oliver, Merriellyn Rennard, and Marico Rivers.

Katherine Hampton, originally from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, holds a BA in Psychology and an MSW, both received from the University of South Carolina. The focus of her dissertation is on whether or not school-based mentoring, as opposed to community-based mentoring, has any impact on outcomes outside of the classroom or academic setting. Hampton plans to graduate from the doctoral program in May of 2010.

Young Sook Kim, originally from Seoul, South Korea, holds a BA in Child Welfare and Studies from Sookmyung Women’s University in Seoul, Korea, and an MSW from Columbia University in New York. Her research interest is Organizational Social Context. The focus of her dissertation will be on the elderly with mental health disorders and how organizational climate impacts elderly with depression in assisted living. She plans to graduate from the doctoral program in 2010.

Mark Oliver, originally from St. Albans, West Virginia, holds a BS in Psychology from Virginia Tech and an MSW from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is considering focusing his dissertation on the effects of combat-related posttraumatic stress disorder on the children of the sufferers. Oliver plans to graduate from the doctoral program in May of 2010.

Merriellyn Rennard, originally from Chattanooga, holds a BSW from UT Chattanooga and an MSW from UT Knoxville. For her dissertation, she is focusing on violence prevention and is taking a holistic approach to examining violence and ultimately preventing it. Rennard is working with the Veterinary Social Work program and will be examining the connection between human and animal violence and complexities of the interpersonal violence, specifically family violence, including intimate partner violence, child abuse, and animal abuse. Rennard plans to graduate from the doctoral program in May of 2010.

The college is pleased to have such outstanding students in the PhD program. We welcome them and wish them good luck in their studies.

—Kathy Williams is a Training Coordinator for UNICORP

First Veterinary Social Work Summit Proclaimed a Success

The College of Social Work’s Veterinary Social Work program, housed in the College of Veterinary Medicine, held its First Annual Veterinary Social Work Summit in April. The Summit was the first conference in professional social work that was dedicated to human animal relations.

The event brought together representatives of veterinary social work programs from across the globe to discuss topics such as the link between human and animal violence, diversity and animal companionship, animal-assisted interventions, pet loss, compassion fatigue, spirituality, social work and the human animal bond, and mediation in animal-related environments. Additionally, there was an international panel discussion about cross-cultural experiences of animals.

Throughout the conference there were activities for getting to know each other, team building, exercises that highlighted diverse opinions about various topics including animals, as well as exercises that promote being in the present moment—an important step in handling stress.

Dr. Elizabeth Strand, director of the Veterinary Social Work Program at UT, reported that:

- 42 participants attended
- 15 states were represented
- 5 countries were represented
- 10 veterinary colleges were represented
- 6 colleges or schools of social work were represented
- 13 lay social work practitioners attended
- 2 veterinary hospitals were represented

Participants expressed that they had a very positive experience at the Summit. One wrote in a follow-up letter, “The Summit was immaculately organized, truly fantastic, a wonderful achievement....I hope you are pleased by how well it went and how satisfied everyone was. All of the people there were magnificent in making the event work.”

And another participant noted in a follow-up letter, “I wanted to let you know that the First Veterinary Social Work Summit was the finest coming together of professionals I have ever attended.”

Strand states, “This was a seminal experience in social work. I am so happy that we were able to facilitate these professionals to communicate and share for the purpose of holding this new area of veterinary social work practice to social work’s ethical standards and best practices. It was also loads of fun!”

The next Veterinary Social Work Summit will be held at The University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine on May 13–16, 2009.

—Kirkie Rogers

by Kathy Williams
4. Marilyn Smith, second from left (MSSW ’71), won the 2008 Lucille Evans Dean award recipient. She celebrated the honor with family and friends who attended the event.

5. Dean Sowers and Dr. Hal Ramer (MSSW ’52), Board of Visitors member, at the Lucille Evans Dean award reception.

6. (l. to r.) Dean Sowers with Lou Beasley (past UTCSW Associate Dean) and Dr. Sherry Cummings at the Lucille Evans Dean award reception.

7. Dr. Michael Blackwell, recently retired dean of the UT College of Veterinary Medicine, spoke about the development of veterinary social work practice at the First Annual Veterinary Social Work Summit in April, 2008.

8. Social workers from five countries listened as presenters discussed various aspects of the human-animal bond as well as other topics such as pet loss, compassion fatigue, and stress management. See the story on page 8 for more details, and visit http://www.csw.utk.edu/about/stimulus/ for a photo slideshow of the event.

9. Erin Allen, CSW graduate (’06) and former VSW intern, plays an animal noise game during a session geared toward getting to know other participants in a fun way. She has accepted a veterinary social work position at Colorado State University’s prestigious Argus Institute.
The CSW Welcomes New Faculty and Distance Education Coordinator

Kimberly McClure Cassie joined the Nashville campus this fall as a lecturer. Before joining the staff, Cassie was a doctoral student at the college, where in 2007 she received a $50,000 Hartford Dissertation Research Grant from the John A. Hartford Foundation. The grant was administered by The Gerontological Society of America, the oldest and largest multidisciplinary scientific organization devoted to the advancement of gerontological research. In 2005, she was also the recipient of the Hartford Doctoral Fellows Pre-Dissertation Award. Cassie has focused her research on the organizational culture and climate of nursing homes. Specifically, she has studied employee work attitudes, turnover, and resident outcomes. Cassie stated, “I am looking forward to giving back to the university that has given me so much.”

Kate McClernon-Chafin joined the Nashville campus in January 2008 as the new Distance Education (DE) Coordinator. She is responsible for program development, advertising, recruitment, field coordination for DE students (this includes developing field placements and conducting trainings for students and field instructors), coordination of admissions, and teaching. Prior to joining the college, McClernon-Chafin was the clinical supervisor for the Davidson County Mental Health Court. McClernon-Chafin stated, “Not a day goes by that I don’t reflect on the fact that I am truly living my dream. I have always wanted to work with students in an academic capacity, and the pride I feel from empowering. I am thrilled to be part of a team that supports new cutting-edge approaches in educating social workers.”

Sam Choi has joined the Nashville campus as an assistant professor and will be advising students and teaching courses on social welfare policy, evidence-based practice, and evaluative... Work Research. She stated, “I am very excited to be joining the college and becoming a part of its ongoing success.”

The College of Social Work presented Anna Cameron with the BSSW Student of the Year Award at the Social Work Legislative Conference in Nashville on March 26, 2008. Dr. Matthew Theriot, an assistant professor and the college’s BSSW Program Director, nominated Anna for the award. She was chosen based on her excellent grades, active participation in the BSSW program’s student-run Social Work Organization, for doing well in her field placements, and for her commitments to the profession of social work and education.

Anna’s level of commitment became apparent when halfway through the fall semester of her senior year her mother was diagnosed with terminal malignant melanoma and was given one to three months to live. As her full-time primary caregiver, Anna had to take a leave of absence from school, field placements, and work. She had to take incompletes and dropped one class. Regrettably, her mother passed away in December. Anna returned to school, field, and work in January. She made A’s in all her incompletes and remaining courses. With tremendous support from everyone at the college, she was able to walk across the stage this past May with her classmates and classmates.

Dr. Theriot stated, “It was a pleasure to nominate Anna for the award. She is an amazing student and will be a fantastic social worker. Anna deserved the nomination because she has overcome so much and maintained a stellar academic record. During her junior and senior years, she experienced the death of her mother and was a primary caretaker for her younger siblings. These are huge challenges for anyone but Anna persevered, earned high grades in all of her classes, performed exceptionally well in her senior field placement, and graduated near the top of her class. Her perseverance and ability to be successful in light of these challenges made Anna a clearly deserving nominee.”

In response to receiving the BSSW Student of the Year Award, Anna stated, “Winning this award truly meant a lot to me. I worked really hard all throughout college and overcame some adversity in my personal life. My father passed away the summer before I began my freshmen year and my two younger brothers and I were financially independent and lived together all throughout my college years. It was the perfect culmination to the journey that was my college education.

“I was honored to receive such recognition and to be nominated in the first place by people that I really respected and looked up to. After my mom passed away, I had this renewed passion for social work and was so eager to get back to school and finish my degree; perhaps because of what I learned as a social worker could be a person or family in a situation similar to my own family’s. Winning this award only added to my feelings of pride and passion for the profession of social work.”

Since graduating, Anna has moved to Orlando, Florida, and is looking forward to a career in social work. She plans to attend graduate school and eventually become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

—Kathy Williams

Anna Cameron Receives BSSW Student of the Year Award
The University of Tennessee College of Social Work
Office of Research and Public Service
UT Conference Center
600 Henley Street, Suite 880
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-4104

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