

## Changing Landscape of Social Work Education

Thank you so much for this recognition. I know that there are many of my colleagues sitting out there and others that are not present today that are equally deserving of this award.

I going to spend a few minutes talking about my thoughts on what I perceive as the changing landscape of social work education. Many of these changes are interconnected but I believe that the changes and the associated challenges are going to impact all of you in whatever kind of university or college you chose to take a position.

**Clinical faculty.** First, one of the changes that we are seeing in social work education is an increasing number of clinical/practice faculty. There was a time where we had many clinical faculty in schools of social work but that was probably over 40 years ago. However, in the last 20 years, our schools, especially our large and research schools, have been populated by tenured and tenured track faculty who hold a PhD. Today, with university budget cuts, increasingly one sees ads for positions in schools of social work for clinical faculty positions. This is occurring in large research universities and small teaching colleges. Although there are many tenure and tenure track positions still available, the changing balance between clinical and tenure/tenure track positions will likely present challenges for social work programs. Faculty are likely to struggle to create an environment grow where research and clinical faculty are both valued and supported despite school and university pressures related in teaching loads and funding.

**Graduates without MSW/practice experience-** Another important change that we are seeing in social work education is the increasing number of faculty who do not have a MSW degree and/or practice experience. I am guessing that several of you do not have a MSW and/or practice experience. In 2016 according to the GADE guide, only 17 of our PhD programs required that students specifically have a MSW and 13 of these required 2 years post MSW experience. Generally, we see that large programs and research schools are those less concerned about applicants having a MSW and practice experience and it is in those schools that are likely to have clinical faculty to teach practice courses. However, the smaller programs and those with less of a research emphasis need their faculty to teach across curricula areas and often require a MSW and 2 years post MSW experience for their applicants. How will programs respond to fewer faculty members having a MSW

degree and practice experience? How might the environment of programs change? These are important questions that programs will need to address in the future.

**Funding issues.** As you all know, higher education is receiving fewer and fewer state and federal dollars, leaving universities to seek their own funding. Faculty in social work programs are under great pressure to seek grant funding. A competitive job market, requires doctoral programs to prepare their students to not only publish but also to seek funding opportunities. The pressure for grant funding is likely to only increase. Simultaneously, our students are leaving bachelor, masters' and PhD programs with more and more debt. According to CSWE report in 2015, students' debt averages over \$30,000/program level. The need to support our students is increasing at the same time funding is being cut and competition for grants is increasing. Whatever kind of university you take a position, funding will be a major issue for your program and for your students.

**We are seeing a much greater emphasis on Interdisciplinary work than ever before.** Doctoral programs have long required students to take courses outside of the discipline. However, today, the importance of interdisciplinary work is magnified. Students and faculty, alike, need to be involved in interdisciplinary research projects and applications for grant funding. One of the results and probably benefits of the emphasis in interdisciplinary work is that our students and faculty may be increasingly be mentored by faculty outside of social work.

**Student Composition.** Make up of our students is another important change occurring in social work programs. Social work education is seeing an increasing number of international students. CSWE reported that from 2006 to 2013, there was a reported increase of 60% in international students. This increase in international students is enhancing our students' experiences and classrooms' discussions by providing multicultural perspectives. However, at the same time, we see fewer men in social work. programs. Students of Color continue to be underrepresented. We all understand the importance of a diverse student body and faculty but we struggle to address it. Student composition is an important issue for all our programs, large and small, research intensive and primarily teaching.

**Very importantly, we see the reemergence of practice doctoral programs** (better known as the DSW). We don't know yet what the implications will be for the profession or social work education. We do know that some graduates of practice doctoral program are assuming tenure track positions. In the latest report from CSWE's Commission on Educational Policy and Commission on Accreditation Practice Doctoral Committee reported that 21% of graduates from practice doctoral programs took tenure track positions and 12.5% took nontenure

track positions. Some graduates of PHD programs with strong clinical backgrounds may want to teach in a practice doctoral program. Some graduates of practice doctoral programs may be interested in filling positions in the smaller social work programs where teaching is emphasized. Some may be interested in clinical faculty positions in the research universities. It is too early to know how the practice doctorate will impact social work education or the profession but it indeed will have an impact.

**Job Market.** As you approach the job market, you will have many decisions to make. However, wherever you choose to go, we need you as scholars, researchers, and educators who function as stewards of our discipline who will address the many changes facing social work education.

We need some of you to take positions in our research intensive, Tier1 universities. We need you to take leadership roles in addressing the grand challenges. We need you to innovate and seek evidence-based social strategies to improve our society. We need you to become active in the process of building and shaping the intervention research and, rather than necessarily *using* and *borrowing* from other disciplines.

However, we also need some of you to assume positions in the smaller social work programs. We have about 535 BSW and 262 MSW programs. Although many of the BSW programs will likely primarily focus on teaching, we also need you to take your research skills and interests to these primarily teaching schools. As a commissioner on the Commission of Accreditation for almost 6 years now, I visit many of these small programs. Many of these programs are populated by faculty with MSW degree. I do not mean to diminish the strength of those programs but I do know that many are interested in hiring PhD level faculty but struggle to do so. Many presidents of these small universities ask me for ideas on how to recruit PhD level social work faculty. Despite having few resources to support their faculty, I know that they value their faculty doing research and they celebrate research products.

Whatever direction you take, we need you to use your research and teaching skills address the many health and social issues facing our country. We need you to bring your knowledge and skills to social work education to address the challenges emanating from the many changes taking place.

We need you in all areas of academia and the profession. And thus, know that, whichever path you take, you will be needed. Just follow your passion.