

**GADE Award for Educational Leadership in Doctoral Education Award
Comments by Inaugural Recipient Dr. Paula Nurius
At the CSWE Annual Conference Doctoral Student Breakfast
November 4, 2016**

Good morning to all of you Social Work Leaders of Today....and TOMORROW!

It is a genuine privilege to join this VERY EARLY event with you and to receive this award.

I have flown from Seattle to Atlanta to be with you for this event for one central reason. Ok, maybe 2 reasons.

First, I wanted to stand physically before you to say loud and clear. You all matter ... BIG TIME! I wanted to say to you that you have unprecedented careers in front of you. As researchers, educators, communicators and connectors in pursuing solutions to our Grand Challenges, and many other forms of leadership.

I wanted to say that I am deeply honored and humbled by this award..... This is an area of unflagging passion for me.....AND I am quite enthusiastically looking for allies and co-conspirators!

The second reason for trekking....Seattle got three times, THREE TIMES, the average rainfall this October and the forecast said sun in Atlanta! So....

Take Home Point From My Comments

You all are absolutely essential, and greatly valued, emerging scholar colleagues that are joining a rapidly changing landscape of science, of team collaboration, and of many roles of bridging science with service. You are standing in the translational intersections between generating new knowledge and moving that knowledge toward impact, moving toward meaningful and sustainable changes in policies, practices, and alliances relevant to the communities and commitments that we as a discipline serve.

You also have some challenging career elements before you. You know that. We are in the midst of a rapid increase in the generation of scientific knowledge that more fully operationalizes levels of complexity not before fully accessible. Conceptually envisioned, yes; but operationally tangible in measured forms....that's new.

We are seeing striking advances in scientific methods and increasing expectations of accelerated impact of research. This is good! It's just that this complexity now requires strategic and multi-level capacity for integrations—across disciplines, across systems, across stakeholders.

One Strong “Up Side”

Social work researchers hold special and possibly distinctive capacity as integrative thinkers, scientists, and partners. I fully believe that the shifts we are seeing in the academy (and they are considerable); in the scientific marketplace, in the conference rooms, board rooms and street fronts wherein scholarship passes to the hands of implementers. Here social work can combine strong 1) communication, 2) engagement, and 3) process skills in combination with 4) scientific skills to play productive team functioning and science bridging roles.

Prepare to be Social Work Science Emissaries

But, how broadly is this recognized? How frequently do groups (research, review, advisory) say “You know, we really must ensure we have a social work researcher at this table”? Not enough; At least not yet..... I, like all the other later career folks here, have often been in national or campus work groups where I was the only social work trained person in the room. Not uncommonly have I (and others) received surprised reactions—like, I did not realize social work researchers had advanced training in research methods, or had this range of theoretical expertise, or would be able to help us cross-walk our model building from some of these environmental to social to biological processes (or whatever levels of analysis is relevant to the question at hand).

That is when we all smile, take a deep....cleansing..... breath, and say “I hear what you are saying. Let me tell you a little more about what social work researchers can bring.” This will be considerably more prudent than one time I was so exasperated that I brightly informed an NIH reviewer that not only did I have those skills butwait for it....I could chew gum at the same time! Sigh....learn from elders’ mistakes.

These are not dumb, rude, or clueless people. They are simply operating from their experiences and perceptions --- like we all do. For many, perceptions of social workers stem, at least in part, from personal experiences they or their families have had—whether in health care, school, gerontological, youth, family, or other service settings. They have some ideas about social workers as professionals, but not always as researchers, scholars, and science translators.

So, one of the places I want you all to be? At tables where you are the only social work trained person in the room. Not because I want you to feel isolated. Rather, you are scientific emissaries. When others have an opportunity to see and hear social work PhDs at work---new lightbulbs turn on, new understandings of our value-added contributions are formed. These, in turn, strengthen the platforms for team and institutional involvement so germane to your vigorous careers...and to our disciplinary impact.

What This Award Helps Us Accomplish

This award will be highlighting, year by year, individuals such as myself and Chris this year. But, let’s step back a moment to reflect on what is really important about the creation of this award. It serves as a new light beacon – a new tool-- to broadly illuminate what all too often remains the relatively under-detected, under-resourced, and under-championed contributions of so many! Doctoral training, by its nature, requires a considerable degree of individualized and deep investment of training, mentoring, advising, modeling followed by additional layers of training, mentoring, advising both within the walls of our schools of social work and across our campuses.

It is the rare School of Social Work that is able to fully credit this work effort that is embedded in doctoral training, not to mention in the service activities of organizations like GADE and SSWR that scaffold doctoral education nationally. This award will stimulate faculty (and their deans!) to think about the quiet, steady, and often subterranean contributions of their colleagues in doctoral education. This award will serve to better illuminate the creative pockets of innovative training nationwide that many faculty are developing to strengthen doctoral training.

And, it will help us all think about ways to include doctoral student and early career colleagues in these movements. To that end, let me introduce a metaphor.....

Metaphoric Illustration

Institutions (whether universities, systems like child welfare or juvenile justice, the Research and Development units of organizations Kaiser Permanente or Casey Family Programs) are rather like the Queen Mary ship—lots of space and services, literally a boatload of people. Capacious and impressive, but not exactly nimble. Consider the time it takes to change course, to convey communications from one end to the other, from the boiler room to the bridge.

YOU, on the other hand, are like sleek speed boats, complete with a sharp-eyed crew (yourself and each other) and an ever growing repository of really cool tools (the latest navigational devices, chart plotters, means to calculate complex relationships among wind, depth, all manner of potential hazards, long range communication systems—think metaphorically with me here).

We each have our purposes. The crews of the Queen Marys must stay the course, weather the really big storms and plough through the ice, all the meanwhile keeping the many people and functions running. Yet, ideally, we have symbiotic relationships. You speed boats are the advance scouts. You buzz out in front to see what is needed, what new formations are in play. You can make quick headway; you can team up with this boat or that, create temporary flotillas.

AND, you can tap, tap, tap on the side of Queen Mary hulls to send messages to the crew. Note I said tap, rather than bludgeon bludgeon bludgeon.....! The metaphor here is intended to highlight the important and I would say imperative roles that you have in advancing social work's mission of research and translational capacity building.... And to go looking for roles.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by acknowledging the enormously dedicated and forward looking set of colleagues who make up the GADE Board of Directors. The GADE Board has long been a hardworking and determined set of leaders to whom we owe a great deal. I would like to note in particular the innovative, sophisticated, and outright full throttle advocacy that characterizes Drs. Liz Lightfoot and Cynthia Franklin as President and President Elect. Will you join me in applauding the contributions of our GADE Board and leadership!

Finally, finally....let me urge you to reach out to your own program directors. Ask them what they took away from the latest GADE meeting. Ask them what they are excited about in the future of your program. Ask them what seem to be the most strategic ways you can bump your speedboat selves about the hull of your program or university. Connect with the SSWR doctoral task force or join the doctoral student facebook account that provides supports complementary to GADE, spanning doctoral training through early career years.

Lastly.....Get involved and stay involved.....ONWARD social work! Thank you so much.