

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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DEAN: Jeanette C. Takamura

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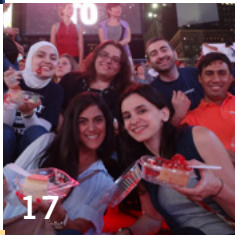
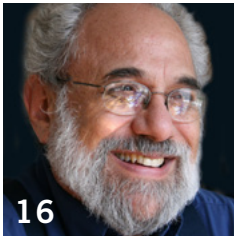
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Welcome from the Dean

As the 2011–2012 academic year draws to a close, we pay tribute to the School of Social Work faculty, alumni, and students who are leaving a mark and changing lives for the better in communities from Harlem and Washington, D.C., to the Middle East and Asia.

From my vantage point, it seems as though the stakes have never been higher. Last year in the spring, I was in Japan when a devastating earthquake and tsunami left tens of thousands of people desperately in need of social services. This year, all eyes are on the U.S. presidential race as candidates debate the nation's economic and social welfare policy. Both of these events underscore the importance of CUSSW's mission to train social work professionals equipped to go out into the world and provide services to diverse populations, conduct innovative research, analyze and advocate for life-improving policies, and lead government, private and nonprofit agencies.

The School's wide-ranging initiatives got a big boost in the fall when Marjorie S. Fisher and her daughter Julie Fisher Cummings '11 gave \$550,000 to establish the Fisher Cummings Washington Fellows Program. This generous gift will fund internships for CUSSW students interested in pursuing evidence-based approaches to social policy and in working across institutional and political lines in the nation's capital.

In this online issue of the Spectrum, you will read about efforts by other faculty, students and alumni to advance the profession and promote social justice at every level of society.

In Columbia's own backyard of Harlem, Dr. Ronald Mincy, the Maurice V. Russell Professor of Social Policy and Social Work Practice, delivered the keynote address at a panel discussion at the Abyssinian Baptist Church on January 24. Mincy's goal was to inform the local community about the benefits of the earned income tax credit for noncustodial fathers in New York state, an important but overlooked anti-poverty measure.

In a first for the School, five students from Jordan arrived on campus last fall as

part of the Open Society Foundations fellowship program, which until this year supported only M.S. candidates from Central Asia. The expansion of the program builds on several other CUSSW initiatives in Jordan, including the Jordan Social Work Education for Excellence Program (JSWEEP), and will facilitate the development of the profession as students return to Jordan with a new set of skills acquired at Columbia.

Beyond the Middle East, the School's global footprint extended to Asia, where Dr. Ada Mui helped organize an international conference in Beijing about productive aging. Mui, who is currently doing cross-cultural research in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China, is focused on making sure the experience and talents of older adults don't go to waste, particularly in China, where 438 million people will be 60 or older by 2050. Mui, who has also done research in the Asian-American community, has shown that productive engagement in later life boosts physical and mental health.

Adjunct faculty also continue to make notable contributions to the community. Professor Michael Friedman, an adjunct who teaches health and mental health policy, is featured in a story that touches on his mentorship relationship with students, including Kimberly Williams '04, who today directs an advocacy center that Friedman founded. Another valued mentor on campus is Dr. Steven Schinke, who was singled out for kudos by his students for his listening skills and his Socratic method of advising.

Other faculty members have been recognized this year as well, including Dr. Elwin Wu, who received a \$3.1 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to test couple-based interventions to prevent



the transmission of HIV among black men in same-sex relationships.

Dr. Ronald Feldman, dean emeritus of the School and Ruth Harris Ottman Centennial Professor for the Advancement of Social Work Education, was honored with the 2012 Distinguished Career Achievement Award by the Society for Social Work and Research.

No list of professional accomplishments would be complete, of course, without mentioning the outstanding track record of CUSSW alumni. Last December, the New York City chapter of the National Association of Social Workers honored 21 of its members for commitment and dedication. It should come as no surprise that seven of them – fully a third – were CUSSW alumni – yet another testimonial to the School's far-reaching and dynamic contributions to the field of social work.

The very best to you,

Jeanette C. Takamura
Dean and Professor

Alumna Julie Fisher Cummings 'II Makes Major Gift to Fund Washington Internship Program

BY ANN LEVIN



In the early 1990s, Julie Fisher Cummings started a foundation in Detroit to help at-risk children. Cummings was no stranger to fundraising. The daughter of the late businessman and philanthropist Max Fisher, Cummings has been involved in philanthropy for much of her life. But after a few years of funding summer camps and other programs, she began to see that her philanthropic investments were not going where they are needed most.

For the funds to have the biggest possible impact, she realized, she needed a better understanding of how government and the social service system work. So, at age 52, Cummings went back to school. In May 2011, she graduated from Columbia's School of Social Work with a master's degree in social work.

Cummings and her mother, who at 87 is still active in the Detroit-based Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, recently gifted \$550,000 to the School to establish the Fisher-Cummings Washington Fellows

Program to fund up to six social policy students for a semester-long internship on Capitol Hill. As the program takes shape over the next few years, Cummings dreams of nurturing a network of fellows committed to an evidence-based approach to social policy analysis and development, advocacy, and work across institutional and political lines.

“I really came to understand the power that staff and other policymakers have when they’re working for members of Congress,” Cummings said of her own recent internship on the Hill. “I want students to be exposed to people who have these positions.”

Cummings spent her final semester working on the Human Resources Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, joking to friends about “being the oldest intern on the Hill.” Although her boss was the Republican Chairman, Rep. David Camp, she also spent time with Democratic Rep. Sander Levin, Ranking Member of Ways and Means.

“We become so separated from people, we don’t try to understand the other side – the whole of it,” Cummings said. “The issues I worked on are not partisan – foster care, child care subsidies to help women get off welfare. I consider myself a child advocate.”

The program is expected to start in fall 2012 with four fellows selected primarily from among the School’s master’s-level students. Candidates must have an outstanding academic and personal record and the desire to work in a federal department or agency or at a non-governmental organization in the area of policy.

Over the four years that Cummings pursued her degree, and especially during her months in Washington, she saw how “insular” policy making can be. She described it as involving “four silos”: policy makers in Congress and government agencies; scholars in universities; agencies at the grassroots level responsible for implementing programs; and the private sector, including funders. Unfortunately, she discovered, the four silos aren’t talking to each other, or at least not enough.

“One of the problems I’m constantly

“I really came to understand the power that staff and other policymakers have when they’re working for members of Congress ... I want students to be exposed to people who have these positions.”

—JULIE FISHER CUMMINGS

encountering is a disconnect. You have people with money, you have people with needs, and it’s connecting the two. There’s no platform to get them connected,” she said. “In the long run, no matter what we fund, we must understand how policy works, how to work with or impact public funding. Otherwise you’re making grants, but you’re not changing the system.”

Cummings’ mother, Marjorie Fisher, said she was glad to have the opportunity to support the program, which furthers her late husband’s goals. “Julie’s father spent a great deal of time in the halls of Washington helping to craft meaningful policy that changed people’s lives,” she said. “She is truly carrying on this tradition and adding to it in a way that will inspire future leaders.”

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Professor Introduces Idea of Productive Aging to China

BY ALEXANDER GELFAND



A Chinese elder looks at her granddaughter.

In her 2008 book, *Asian American Elders in the Twenty-First Century* (Columbia University Press), Professor Ada Mui documented that involving older adults in meaningful work is essential to sustaining their physical and mental health.

“They can contribute to society to be healthy and happy,” says Mui, who began her career as a geriatric social worker at a large hospital in her native Hong Kong.

Since then, Mui has conducted cross-cultural research in Hong Kong, Taiwan, the People’s Republic of China and among Asians in the United States, where Asian Americans account for one of the fastest growing populations of adults age 65 and older.

Whether here or abroad, Mui wants to make sure that the wisdom and talents of older adults don’t go to waste; particularly in China, which is expected to have 438 million people 60 or older by 2050.

Last August, Mui, who has faculty appointments at universities in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China, helped organize a conference of international scholars in Beijing on the topic of productive aging, which seeks to engage older adults in society through employment, volunteering, caregiving and education.

Researchers have been investigating the benefits of productive aging for decades in the United States, where the first of 78 million baby boomers turned 60 in 2006. But it is a relatively new field in mainland China, and the event was the first of its kind ever held there.

Mui says older Chinese could be tapped as tutors and mentors for disadvantaged young people. “The science is very clear,” Mui says. “This is good for the older adult, and good for the care recipient – the problem youth or the young child with learning difficulties.”

She points to Experience Corps, which recruits older adults to tutor and mentor children in elementary school, as the kind of productive aging program that could be replicated overseas.

While she believes productive aging will offer the same benefits in China as it does in the United States, she also notes that the mainland Chinese face special challenges.

For example, China’s one-child policy, which penalizes couples for having more than one child, has deprived many older Chinese of the large multigenerational families that would once have supported them. At the

Mui says older Chinese could be tapped as tutors and mentors for disadvantaged young people. “The science is very clear,” Mui says. “This is good for the older adult, and good for the care recipient – the problem youth or the young child with learning difficulties.”



Professor Ada Mui and Sam Tin of the Hong Kong Tin Ka Ping Foundation.

same time, large-scale migration by younger adults from the countryside to the city means grandparents are often left to care for grandchildren.

Without adequate government support, these elders will not be able to take proper care of themselves, let alone their young charges. “Unless we care for the caregivers,” says Mui, “how can they continue to give care?”

And yet Mui, who has mentored students in Chinese universities and in 2010 received an award from the Gerontological Society of America for mentoring minority researchers,

sees China’s vast pool of older adults as a treasure trove of human capital. “Their contributions in dollar terms can be enormous,” she asserts.

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A Good Mentor Knows When to Talk and When to Listen

BY ANNIE LOK

To Dr. Steven Schinke, being a good teacher and a good mentor go hand in hand. But while the first role involves teaching a subject matter, the second requires guiding students toward their career paths. Both require attentiveness to students' needs.

"It's knowing when to talk and when to listen and trying to discern with the student what level of involvement from the faculty member would be helpful," Schinke said. "It could just be actively listening to a student. And if the student asked 'What should I do?' – it could be answering the question with a question."

Schinke's approach was helpful to Alexandra Grundleger '09, who conducted a meta-analysis on eating disorders in the Orthodox Jewish community in an independent research course with Schinke.

"He wouldn't answer my questions, but asked me intriguing questions to make me think," she said. With his guidance, including concrete advice and suggestions, Grundleger not only designed and conducted her study but also decided on the next step in her academic career – pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology.

"He showed genuine desire to help students," she said. "It was obvious he enjoyed mentoring and providing insight to us."

Schinke, the D'Elbert and Selma Keenan Professor of Social Work, became interested in social work after serving in the U.S. Air Force and attending the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he was initially a marketing major. But the social movements of the late 1960s and early '70s pushed him, quite literally, in a different direction.

One day, Schinke arrived at the university's business school for class to find a demonstration blocking the entrance. Dow Chemical was conducting interviews inside the building, and students were protesting their

production of napalm, which was then being used in Vietnam. He and other students who showed up for class joined arms and tried to crash through the crowd but weren't successful.

"Fists flew, shirts were rent, blood was spilled," he said. "All the mayhem called me to question what I was doing." The incident led Schinke to consider classes in the social sciences.

Since then, he has had a long and distinguished career, focusing primarily on adolescent health behavior and substance use. He is currently developing and testing interventions to prevent drug and alcohol abuse in young girls, and he chairs the National Institutes of Health's Risk, Prevention and Interventions for Addictions study section, which reviews research grant applications.

His own experience as a researcher and reviewer has influenced his advice to his mentees. "This work has caused me to caution my students about the need for rigor and care in their own writing," he said.

Having had a mentor himself, Schinke finds that it can make a tremendous difference to have someone whom you trust and respect, who is knowledgeable in the field and can "look into a crystal ball just a little" to help you plot your next moves. He believes that a mentor must be familiar with your work and your development and, crucially, have no vested interest in your success.

"A good mentor may be the only objective perspective you may find," he said. Advice from friends, family and colleagues may be colored by their own desires and interests,



such as for you to stay close to them or continue to work with them.

"There's very little objectivity," he said. "That's what a good mentor can bring into the conversation. Why do you want this job? What are the benefits and drawbacks?"

When Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley '08 received an award last year from the Council on Social Work Education for her work as a professor at the Howard University School of Social Work, she acknowledged Schinke in her acceptance speech. Schinke was her dissertation chair and mentored her long afterward.

"I would say he saw things in me others did not see," Bent-Goodley said. "He got to know me and invested in me. I think about him when I think about how to support my students and alumni – am I doing the things that I received as a doctoral student?"

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Noncustodial Fathers Not Taking Advantage of Earned Income Tax Credit

BY JESSICA TROIANO



Too many noncustodial fathers in New York State are not taking advantage of the earned income tax credit, an important but often overlooked anti-poverty measure. That was the message that Dr. Ronald Mincy, the Maurice V. Russell Professor of Social Policy and Social Work Practice, brought to Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem on January 24.

“Any social welfare tool like the EITC that contributes to the relief of parent poverty can arguably reduce the incidence of child neglect based on economics.”

—STEPHEN FORRESTER



Left to Right: Robert Carmona, Ronald Mincy, Frances Pardus-Abasessa, I-Hsing Sun, and Stephen Forrester.

His keynote address on participation and allocation of the state benefit was followed by a panel discussion with experts from government agencies and nonprofit organizations involved in employment, consumer affairs and child welfare.

The EITC is a federal and state tax credit for eligible low-wage workers and families. It lets workers keep more of what they earn and provides an incentive to remain in the workforce. Qualified claimants may receive a refund when the credit exceeds the amount of taxes taken out of their paychecks.

The state program seeks to extend the benefit to noncustodial parents because the federal benefit goes primarily to parents with children at home. Mincy, who recently completed a book about how the benefit is used by noncustodial fathers in New York State,

found low participation rates due in large part to lack of knowledge of the benefit.

“Those of us who are in children and family services touch families,” said Mincy. “We need to be broadcasting this information about the availability of the credit in order to enable these men to work, pay their child support and contribute to their families.”

Mincy, who directs the Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-Being, discovered in his research that eligibility requirements relating to child support prevented fathers from participating in the program.

In order to receive the credit, noncustodial parents must have paid 100 percent of their child support over the year. Yet the program is aimed at workers making between \$6,000 and \$9,000 a year, well below the federal

poverty level of about \$11,000 for a one-person household.

Mincy noted the paradox of the child support requirement. “How can someone in New York City make this much in a year and be in compliance with child support?” he asked. “He can’t.” His research also showed that the majority of fathers who owed child support would use the credit for that purpose.

Child support was a key topic the panel discussed in the question-and-answer session that followed Mincy’s presentation. The panel included Frances Pardus-Abbadessa, deputy commissioner of New York City’s Office of Child Support Enforcement, who outlined a number of programs available to noncustodial parents unable to afford child support due to economic hardship.

Another panelist, Stephen Forrester, a director at the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, remarked on the connection between poverty and child welfare. He noted that a failure to provide for a child’s basic needs due to poverty can be defined as neglect. “Any social welfare tool like the EITC that contributes to the relief of parent poverty can arguably reduce the incidence of child neglect based on economics,” he said.

The program concluded with remarks from the Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, pastor of the Abyssinian Church, about the late Mary Funný Goldson, a child welfare advocate and professor at the School of Social Work. The presentation was sponsored in part by the Mary Funný Goldson Memorial Program.

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Caucuses Enhance Students' Knowledge and Skills

BY ANNIE LOK

When he was preparing for his field placement, Patrick Burden '12 designed eye-catching fliers to advertise his support group for cancer caregivers.

Burden learned about such event marketing through his participation in the Black Caucus, a group for students interested in race at CUSSW and the larger community. As caucus secretary last year, he helped organize and promote a film series and other events. This year as treasurer, Burden is learning to create a budget and maintain records. Although these skills were acquired outside the classroom, he feels they will serve him well after graduation.

"It will be helpful in future jobs – it's not just meeting with clients but the administrative work that goes into every job," Burden said.

The School of Social Work now hosts 26 student caucuses for students to explore interests ranging from criminal justice and gender issues to disability awareness and new media. Typically, members organize events such as discussions, guest lectures, open mike nights and community projects. Many feel their participation enhances their experience at CUSSW and helps them develop skills and leadership abilities they can use in their careers.

Melissa Vollbrecht '12 is president of Advocates for Gerontological Education (AGE), a student caucus that seeks to advance aging as an important social work concern and encourage students to consider it as a field of choice.

"A lot of our work is marketing it to other students," Vollbrecht said. "No matter what field of social work you go into, you'll encounter older adults, people taking care of older adults or children being raised by grandparents. It has redoubled my passion for my work."

This year, AGE sponsored a lecture and organized a group to participate in the Walk to End Alzheimer's. In the spring, they hosted a dinner and conversation with experts in aging and intergenerational work, targeted to first-year master's students selecting their fields of practice.

New groups keep springing up as students discover others who share their interests. Last fall, Dee Suraweera '12, who led a drama club at her college, started posting fliers soliciting interest in an arts group.

Argenys Taveras '13, a spoken word artist who produced open mikes and other performances in his undergraduate years, had already contacted the administration about starting a writing group when someone handed him one of Suraweera's fliers.

"We got together and found out we had the same things in mind," said Taveras. "So we made a petition and that's how we started it."

Since then, the Social Work Arts Group has organized a yoga and writing event, a drama therapy workshop, and an open mike for students and professors. This spring the caucus will produce a full-length play comprised of a series of vignettes drawing on the experience of real students and professors.

As the arts group's founder and second-year representative, Suraweera has had the opportunity to practice what she learns in her course work.

"Here group work is emphasized so much," she said. "Working in a caucus really amplifies that. I am learning to work with outside organizations and companies, with so many different people and their different styles."



When students come to the arts group with ideas, Taveras and Suraweeras help them develop a timeline of when to rent a space and start advertising, and they check in with the students on how their projects are progressing.

For Taveras, his work in the caucus has shown him how to create a structure within which others can succeed. "We want people to feel empowered," he said.

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Alumni Honored with Leadership Awards

BY MICHELLE SCOTT OKABAYA

One honoree served as New York City's director of homeless services. Another is in charge of a mental health program for Asian Americans. Yet a third provides counseling and case management to adults living with HIV.



From left to right: Nancy Wackstein, Elizabeth Rogers, Natania Kremer

In all, seven CUSSW alumni were honored by the New York City chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the largest organization of social workers in the world. The local chapter, whose 9,200 members comprise one of the largest chapters, recognized 21 of its members at an awards dinner in December.

Among the honorees was **Nancy Wackstein '79**, named a top leader in the profession. As executive director of United Neighborhood Houses of New York, which oversees the city's 37 settlement houses and community centers, Wackstein credits CUSSW for nurturing her lifelong commitment to social justice.

She started working in child welfare and homelessness in the 1980s and in the early '90s was appointed by then-Mayor David N. Dinkins as director of programs on homelessness and single-room occupancy (SRO) housing.

In her current role, Wackstein says, she continues to work for social justice. "At a time like this when the governments are cutting back on funding, we are pushing back," she says. "This is not a time to retreat."

Two alumni, **Mouchuan Teddy Chen '86 '03 Ph.D.** and **Matthew Wofsy '92**, were singled out as mid-career leaders.

Chen, whose research focuses on Asian American mental health issues, directs a mental health program at a Chinatown-based community center recognized nationally for integrating behavioral and primary health care.

Wofsy, an adjunct lecturer at New York University, directs best-practice and evidence-based treatment initiatives at the Institute for Community Living, an organization that helps those at risk for mental and developmental disabilities.

Four other graduates of the School were honored as emerging leaders: **Natania Kremer '07**, **Kevin Queen '06**, **Elizabeth Rogers '04** and **Joseph Zagame '08**.

Zagame works in the HIV/AIDS outpatient clinic at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, where he facilitates a weekly gay men's support group and coordinates the clinic's community advisory board. He also provides

psychotherapy through the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services.

Queen is vice president/director of programs at the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens (NYFSC), where he supervises 10 senior citizen residential buildings, three senior centers and many of the foundation's social service programs for elderly New Yorkers.

He began his career as an undergraduate intern at the foundation and was later offered a job and promoted several times. When he started his M.S. through Columbia's Reduced Residency program, he recalls bringing situations from work into the classroom and working with others to figure out solutions. "Having the two happen at once—new responsibilities and going to Columbia . . . helped me grow," he says.

Rogers, a site supervisor in the Children's Aid Society preventive services program in the Bronx, has provided home-based social work services for the past seven years. "I really like to work with families in a way to help them stay at home and be self-sufficient," she explains.

Kremer, who was in the dual degree program with Bank Street Graduate School, directs early childhood support services and admissions at Jewish Family Services' Child Development Center. She started working at the agency during her field placement at CUSSW.

She is also involved in social justice efforts throughout the region, co-chairing the Manhattan White Antiracist Caucus at the Jewish agency. During her time at Columbia, she participated in the first Undoing Racism training on campus with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.

Echoing the sentiments of her fellow alumni, Kremer says her education and training at CUSSW were instrumental in shaping her career. "I am passionate about institutional change, and I learned a lot about this at Columbia," she says.

Training the Next Generation of Scholars

BY JESSICA TROIANO

To prepare the next generation of scholars for serious academic and research careers, the doctoral education at the School of Social Work focuses on solid training in research methods, relevant course work and close collaboration with faculty. The rigorous program continues to improve and adapt to provide students with the skills they need to become leaders in academia.

Guided by the leadership of Dr. Julien Teitler, who has served as doctoral chair since 2007, the doctoral education at CUSSW has shifted in a number of important ways. His emphasis on research and mentorship, paired with an up-to-date curriculum, ensures that graduates are prepared for scholarship on a broad range of issues from poverty to mental health to substance use.

Providing students with hands-on research experience was the first priority for Teitler when he took over as chair. Students are now guaranteed a living stipend in exchange for service as a graduate research assistant (GRA). “Without that experience, it’s impossible to learn how to do research,” said Teitler. “Ours is an apprenticeship model. You take your classes, but through your GRAship, you learn how research is conducted in the real world.” At the beginning of their course of study, students are paired with faculty members who specialize in the student’s area of interest. The research component of their training can range from conducting field work on an asset-building initiative in Uganda to analyzing national datasets. These experiences often lead to the area of inquiry for the student’s

dissertation, the centerpiece of their doctoral education.

The collaborative spirit of the GRAship and dissertation experience is one of the many reasons students elect to study here. Melissa Martinson ’10 chose Columbia over other top ten schools in order to have the opportunity to work closely with CUSSW’s policy faculty, including Dr.’s Teitler, Irwin Garfinkel and Jane Waldfogel. “They were doing amazing research and were looking at all of these big-picture policy questions,” said Martinson. “I also knew I would get the most rigorous methodological training at Columbia compared with other schools of social work.”

Students’ statistical courses are supplemented with regular workshops co-sponsored by the Office of the Associate Dean for Research. Advanced statistical tools such as latent regression analysis and hierarchical linear modeling, which are at the leading edge of social work research, are among the topics covered in these seminars. “If you want to have a research doctorate, the methodology needs to be strong,” said Associate Dean Dr. Allen Zweben. “Our students are well-prepared for academic careers.” Martinson credits the solid training she received at CUSSW



as the foundation for her work on health disparities, which has led to offers of tenure-track positions at universities around the country.

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Allen Zweben: New Approaches to Addiction

BY MICHELLE SCOTT OBAKAYASHI

Dr. Allen Zweben has spent decades seeking ways to help people overcome their addictions and lately he has had reasons for hope. His approach combines medical and psychosocial interventions, the two primary ways of treating addiction.

“Alcoholism is like many other chronic diseases,” says Zweben, “and most people with chronic illnesses require both pharmacological and psychosocial support. I’ve seen changes for 20 years now, and I see more people getting better and getting better faster.”

Zweben, associate dean of academic affairs and research, has devoted much of his career to helping people with alcohol dependence. He is currently working on two drug studies. One looks at the effects on people who are dependent on alcohol of varenicline (Chantix), which was developed to help people quit smoking.

The other focuses on the anti-epileptic medication topiramate (Topamax) to see if it is effective in people with alcohol dependence when combined with psychosocial support.

His most recent book, *Treating Addiction: A Guide for Professionals*, was published in 2011 and entered its second printing in January. With William R. Miller and Alyssa A. Forchimes, he co-authored the text, which recommends a combined pharmacological and psychosocial approach to treating addictions.

The approach is influenced by motivational interviewing, a technique developed by Miller and first used to help heavy drinkers. Zweben has been using the intervention since it first emerged in the 1980s. He has found that “a lot of people have the ability to overcome drinking, but don’t have the motivation.”

Motivational interviewing acknowledges that people know what they need to do to change, but lack the confidence to follow

through with it. Zweben sums it up as a “self-help procedure with support.”

Last year, Zweben taught a year-long course on the motivational interviewing technique. As he looks back on his career, what keeps him going are the questions that recur in the field of addiction intervention, most specifically with alcoholism. “I see connections that I wouldn’t have seen 20 years ago,” he says. “There’s much more information now.”

His years of experience have made him a valuable mentor for students, including Caroline Graham, who is currently assisting him on the topiramate study. Graham says Zweben regularly takes time out of his day to assist her and other students, refining their research, writing and analytical skills.

“Not only is Dr. Zweben prolific, he is a committed dean,” she says. “It has been an honor and a privilege to work with Dr. Zweben.”

As associate dean of research, Zweben sees his role as primarily that of helping others. “My job is really to facilitate, research and mentor,” he explains. After many years of success in the field, “I can help people with their careers and I can give something back.”

Zweben has been a principal investigator in several trials including the landmark Project MATCH and COMBINE study, both

funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The latter examined the effects of therapies that combined behavioral and pharmacological treatments in heavy drinkers.

His study of patients who received naltrexone, specialized alcohol counseling or both pointed out that the patients had the best outcomes after 16 weeks of outpatient treatment. The results were reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2006 and continue to inform Zweben’s work today.

“Alcoholism is a \$220 billion problem in this country,” he says. “If I feel I’ve made something of an inroad, then I’ve made a contribution.”



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UNICEF Funds Project to Move Jordanian Children Out of Institutional Care

BY ANNA BAHNEY



Children play football in Madaba, Jordan.

Three professors at the School of Social Work are working to develop community-based alternatives to institutional placement for children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Jordan.

Work on the UNICEF-funded project, Community-Family Integration Teams, or C-FIT, began in fall 2010 with interviews of 414 children across Jordan and their institutional caregivers.

“The effort that the Jordanians need to be commended for is attempting to transform those services despite resource constraints.”

—MICHAEL MACKENZIE

The children had been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect, or because they were in trouble with the law. The multi-year project, now in its second year, is a partnership between the Jordanian government, UNICEF and School of Social Work Drs. Robin Gearing, Michael MacKenzie and Craig Schwalbe.

“The effort that the Jordanians need to be commended for is attempting to transform those services despite resource constraints,” said MacKenzie, an assistant professor with more than 15 years of experience working with severely abused and neglected children in residential care.

Until recently, Jordanian children who were removed from the home had only one option – placement in an institution resembling a dormitory-style orphanage with up to 200 children living together under one roof.

Early findings from the research suggested that nearly 70 percent of the children exhibited signs of depression, not because of the caregivers, who the researchers said struggled to meet the needs of a large number of youths, but because of the system.

MacKenzie said Jordanian government officials are already moving children out of institutional settings into apartment-style homes with eight to 10 children and two housemothers per unit, each of whom works a weeklong shift alone. They are interested in foster care, which is a new approach in Jordan. “They recognize the benefit in care when it more closely replicates the family,” he said. The Columbia team is discovering that some methods do not translate, such as the “time-out.” Long an effective disciplinary tool for Western parents and caretakers, the act of separating a child who is acting inappropriately from the group for a period to get him or her to calm down is a deterrent

deemed worse than corporal punishment, Schwalbe said. That’s because children aren’t removed from the group in Jordanian culture.

“A ‘time-out’ is looked at as harsher than a spanking,” said Schwalbe, an associate professor whose areas of expertise include child welfare and the juvenile justice system. “So the ways these strategies in parent management training are implemented is likely to change.”

The group has completed Phase I of the project, which involved interviews with children under the care of 11 agencies; six care for children who are victims of neglect and abuse, and five are for juvenile offenders.

“We did in-depth interviews in Arabic, which allowed us to find out what their needs are,” said Gearing, an associate professor who has extensive clinical and research expertise in child and adolescent mental health treatment. “We also interviewed the staff about what they need, what they think of the children, what they think of themselves.”

Phase II involves implementing the pilot programs in two cities – Irbid and Zarqa. If they are successful, the programs will be expanded to other areas of Jordan.

Children who have been abused or abandoned will be placed in foster care with families that receive therapeutic and financial support to assist with the child’s development.

“Where possible, they are placed with kin,” said MacKenzie. “In cases of maltreatment or where the family origin is not known, we look for nonrelatives.”

Juvenile offenders will be placed in community-based diversion programs, which will work to reintegrate the youngsters with family, religious and educational networks

and help them develop an ongoing relationship with probation officers.

“For children who are at high risk of becoming chronically delinquent, services like probation and resources provided by nonprofits are often disconnected,” said Schwalbe. “C-FIT has a close collaboration between the probation officers and our partner NGOs so that everyone has an ongoing role to play in the care the child receives.”

During the first year, the project had nine full-time workers in Jordan and four in New York. In addition, one of the three Columbia researchers spent a week or more in the country each month. Still, the researchers say, the program wouldn’t be possible without the contributions of many Jordanians, including officials in the Ministry of Social Development, juvenile and family court judges, prosecutors, religious leaders, community elders and social service providers in Jordan’s three largest cities: Irbid, Zarqa and the capital, Amman.

“Because we are working with the ministry, NGOs and other stakeholders that will help us translate and adapt these evidence-based techniques,” said Gearing, “these pilots will have a real chance of succeeding.”

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Bringing a Lifetime of Social Work Experience into the Classroom

BY ANN LEVIN

Michael Friedman began his career as a social worker even before he had an M.S.W. He was counseling troubled teenagers at an East Village halfway house in the late 1960s. Later, during the height of deinstitutionalization, he helped people with severe mental illness make the transition from psychiatric hospitals into communities. “The need for more resources was what led me into mental health advocacy,” says Friedman, an adjunct professor at the School of Social Work for 12 years.

Over more than 40 years, Friedman has worked in many organizations and coalitions to bring about social change. He finds the long view helpful when he’s in front of a classroom full of students.

“I tell my students to look at what’s changed over the 40 years since I’ve been in the field and that they can look forward to similar change,” he says. “There has been tremendous growth in community mental health services, and more people get better care. But there’s much to be done, and students at Columbia now will have the opportunity to address these issues.”

In 1976 Friedman earned a master’s from Hunter College, and then joined the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services, where he became director of operations. Subsequently he served as the CEO of a mental health agency, a deputy commissioner of mental health for New York State and a hospital administrator.

During the decade before he retired, he founded the Center for Policy, Advocacy and Education of the Mental Health Association of New York City and was instrumental in establishing coalitions on geriatric and veterans’ mental health. In 2005, the Center’s Geriatric Mental Health Alliance helped win passage of legislation in New York State establishing a geriatric mental health planning council and a demonstration grants program funded at \$2 million a year.

Kimberly Williams ’04 considers Friedman

her mentor. She took an advocacy class with him, did her field placement at the center and is now the director. She says he has a talent for making complex issues understandable and an inclusive, collaborative style of supervision.

At the Center, she says, “he involved us in high-level discussions and invited us to meetings with important people in the field. He would always ask for input and feedback. He is a luminary in the field, and he’s treating me as his equal. That’s how I was able to smoothly take over – I was involved from the outset.”

Friedman currently teaches one class per semester at CUSSW in health policy and mental health policy. He also teaches a course in mental health policy at the Mailman School of Public Health. As an adjunct, he says, he offers a pragmatic perspective that complements the more academic orientation of his fulltime colleagues. “A lot of us are very active in the world of social work,” he says of the adjunct faculty. “We bring to the students a wealth of practical experience in the field.”

A tad older than baby boomers, Friedman, 68, is deeply interested in the mental health issues facing the generation born between 1945 and 1964, who not only have to deal with their own aging-related concerns but are also, in many cases, caring for elderly parents. In recent years, he’s blogged for *The Huffington Post* on issues ranging from elder substance abuse to antidepressants for people with dementia.

Besides teaching, Friedman is an avid photographer and jazz pianist. He first took



up a camera when his daughter was born nearly 30 years ago and hasn’t put it down. When he travels, he likes to go into less traveled neighborhoods to photograph the people, and recently he gave the School about a half dozen prints taken in India and the Caribbean, now on display on the sixth floor of the School. In June, he will deliver an address at the annual convention of the New York State Psychological Association on the connections between psychology and art.

As Friedman looks ahead, he is confident that CUSSW students are prepared to address the challenges of today’s social problems, including “lingering racism, growing economic disparity, and an inadequate health and mental health care system.”

“The young people I meet at CUSSW are very impressive,” he says. “They’re intelligent. They care. They have energy, and they’re willing to work hard. As a generalization, I think it’s a great generation. I hope I live long enough to see what they do.”

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CUSSW Trains Students from Jordan to Help Build Profession Back Home

BY ANN LEVIN



Top row, left to right: Asma-Abu-Dahab, Lina Hamdan, Shadi Bushnaq, Mohammad Al-Amoush. Bottom row, left to right: Samira Hajjar, Laila Abdul Majeed.

For the past decade, the Open Society Foundation (OSF) has supported a small group of master's degree students from Central Asia, who return home after graduation to help build the social work profession in their countries. This year, for the first time, five fellows have been selected from Jordan, joining five others from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

“Back home, there’s a gap between academia and what’s on the ground ... Here there’s a strong linkage between academia and practical issues – why this is happening, how can we change things, how can we make things better.”

—SHADI BUSHNAQ

The expansion of the program to the Mideast comes after several other initiatives the School of Social Work has launched in Jordan, including the Jordan Social Work Education for Excellence Program (JSWEEP), established in 2008 to help develop the profession.

“We look forward with great anticipation to the Jordan Fellows acquiring an M.S. degree in two years and then assuming leadership positions in their home country, just as has been the case with our OSF alumni who are doing important work throughout Central Asia,” said Dean Jeanette C. Takamura.

OSF was founded by Hungarian-born financier George Soros to support the development of democracy and human rights all over the world. Additional support for the Jordan Fellows comes from the School, the King Abdullah II Fund for Development and private donors.

The students from Jordan include Shadi Bushnaq, a Mercy Corps veteran who helped villages in Jordan manage scarce water resources through community action. He says his first semester at Columbia was both challenging and exciting. The first two months were difficult because everything was new – the country, the school, the teaching method, his living accommodations – but after that, it got easier.

“For me, the hardest thing to get used to in America was making really close friends,” he says. “I feel everybody is just kind on the surface – hi and goodbye. I’ve tried to mingle more but it’s not easy.”

What’s impressed him the most is the educational system at Columbia. “Back home, there’s a gap between academia

and what’s on the ground,” he says. “Here there’s a strong linkage between academia and practical issues – why this is happening, how can we change things, how can we make things better.” He also appreciates the field placement because it provides “a realistic opportunity to practice what we learn and learn from what we practice.”

The other Jordanians are Samira Hajjar, a psychosocial counselor who plans to work with abused children and their families when she returns; Lina M. Hamdan, a guidance counselor for a U.N. relief project in Syria; Laila Abdul Majeed, a project manager in a child safety program; and Asma Abu-Dahab, an advocate for people with diabetes.

After the rigorous selection process, the fellows attended classes in Istanbul last summer to refine their research and writing skills in English. They received their first field placement in January instead of September, as first-semester American students do, because of the many challenges of adapting to a new educational and social environment.

Fellows must complete a professional immersion seminar with Dr. Nabila El-Bassel, the Willma and Albert Musher Professor of Social Work, who helps them develop research projects and interventions to implement back home. Part of that process involves translating Western educational and social work ideas and methodologies into models that will work in their home countries.

“Students learn social work practice and research to come up with evidence-based solutions to social and health problems affecting their countries,” said Dr. El-Bassel.

Like Shadi, Samira initially found it overwhelming adjusting to New York and also being back in school, where she was confronted with “an immense amount” of reading and papers. But her professors have been “nothing but friendly, helpful and supportive,” helping her do well her first semester. “Living in New York was, and still is, a very enriching experience,” she says. “I’m learning so much about a myriad of cultures and beliefs. It’s helping me become more open and flexible to change.”

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1 Degree in Social Work, 3 Widely Divergent Careers

BY ALEXANDER GELFAND

A social work education can provide excellent preparation for clinical practice and research. But the knowledge and skills that Columbia University School of Social Work graduates rely upon each and every day are also useful in many other professions, as shown by the careers of three alumnae who have flourished in areas as diverse as law, real estate and entertainment.



Lillian Sing (photo by Luke Thomas)

Lillian Sing earned an M.S. at the School of Social Work, and then spent several years working on immigration and human rights issues in San Francisco's Chinese community, where she founded Chinese for Affirmative Action and served as associate director of the Chinese Newcomers Service Center.

When she concluded that the problems she was helping to solve at an individual level also required legal and societal remedies, Sing switched careers and became an attorney specializing in immigration law. That, in turn, led to a distinguished career as a Superior Court judge in San Francisco,

where she helped found the city's drug court to handle cases of substance abusing offenders. "The idea is to treat drug addicts who commit crimes for their drug habits," she says, "instead of having them take up a bed in jail."

The first Asian American woman to serve on the San Francisco Human Rights Commission and as a judge in northern California, Sing is now involved in efforts to reform the juvenile justice system in China through expert exchanges organized by the nonprofit San Francisco-based human rights organization Dui Hua. "We learn from them, and they learn from us," Sing says.

Recently, she helped found the Rape of Nanking Redress Coalition, a nonprofit dedicated to persuading the government of Japan to accept responsibility for the rape, torture and killing of hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians by the invading Japanese Imperial Army in 1937.

In each aspect of her multifaceted career, Sing finds herself relying on the knowledge and skills she first acquired as a social worker and community organizer. "I really use my social work skills on a daily basis as I dispense justice from the bench," she says. "As a judge, my best training was in social work school. You learn to work with people, to deal with people's problems, and to

handle the issues relating to people's lives. That's what law is all about. That's what the court is all about. And those are the skills I learned at Columbia."

Michelle Kleier has a similar view, although she works in a very different field. Like Sing, Kleier embarked on a career as a social worker after graduation, earning a citation from then New York City Mayor John Lindsay for opening one of the first community centers on the Upper West Side.

But in the course of searching for a new apartment, Kleier became friendly with her broker. After Kleier referred several friends to her, the broker encouraged Kleier to get her own license. Today, she is president and chairman of Gumley Haft Kleier, a boutique Manhattan real estate brokerage.

In addition to working with celebrity clients like Amy Poehler and Al Pacino, Kleier is featured on the reality cable television show *Selling New York*. She also recently penned a book about the real estate business, *Hot Property*, with her daughters, Samantha and Sabrina, both of whom work at her firm.



Michelle Kleier

“As a judge, my best training was in social work school. You learn to work with people, to deal with people’s problems, and to handle the issues relating to people’s lives ... And those are the skills I learned at Columbia.”

—LILLIAN SING

Yet for all its glamour, life as a high-profile broker in the rarefied precincts of high-end Manhattan real estate requires many of the same skills that Kleier used back on her old beat. “The truth is that real estate is very much like social work,” she says. “Real estate is a lot of handholding, and it’s very psychological.”

Kleier admits that the stakes involved in her current profession aren’t as high as the ones she faced in her old one. And that gives her an unusual perspective for a broker in a town where properties can sell for tens of millions of dollars. “Compared to all the life-and-death decisions I had to deal with as a social worker,” she says, “losing a commission isn’t such a big deal.”

But the sense of satisfaction that Kleier derives from helping a client find a new home is very similar to the one she used to get from social work. “There’s fulfillment,” she says. “You’re helping them with the most important decision in their life.”

Erinn Furey, meanwhile, has leveraged her own celebrity as a contestant on *American Idol* – she sang on the popular TV show in 2005 and has since toured with fourth season runner-up Bo Bice – to further her mission of combining social work with the performing arts.

Furey began singing and performing in community theater on Long Island as a child, and her commitment to helping others runs just as deep. “Even as a young kid, I was always volunteering for things,” she says. At age 18, Furey started working with the developmentally disabled. By the time she had acquired an associate’s degree in theatrical performance, she had already decided that the arts were about more than just performing – they were also a powerful means of

helping people. Her time at Columbia only strengthened her desire “to really take the power of the arts and performance and combine that with social work to speak directly to young artists.”

Today, Furey partners with nonprofit organizations to develop therapeutic arts programs for young people, ranging from hip-hop workshops for incarcerated adolescents to musical theater projects that cater to disadvantaged and LGBT teens. “Right now, I’m directing a group of kids ages 8 to 17 in a musical cabaret about helping people,” she says.

She never misses an opportunity to use the platform afforded by her stint on *American Idol* to promote her message of positive change. When she was featured on Levi’s *Shape What’s to Come* website, Furey described her childhood struggles with bullying and family dysfunction, and emphasized her career in social work.

Furey dreams of one day building a community organization that will embody her unique fusion of social work and the arts. “My goal,” she says, “is to have my own performing arts center that’s accessible to marginalized communities.”

“It’s been an interesting journey,” Furey says of her life on and off the stage. “But it’s all social work.”



Erinn Furey

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LEADERSHIP | EXCELLENCE | INNOVATION

FACULTY NEWS & NOTES



From left to right: Edward Mullen, Jane Waldfogel, Nabila El-Bassel, Sheila Akabas, Elwin Wu

TAKING NOTE

Ronald Feldman was honored with the 2012 Distinguished Career Achievement Award by the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR). The award was presented at the 16th annual SSWR conference held in Washington, D.C.

Professor Emeritus **Edward Mullen** was recognized by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Women's Council Mentor Recognition Program. He was nominated by some of his former Ph.D. students.

Barbara Simon was appointed to the National Committee on Women's Issues of the National Association of Social Workers for a 3-year term.

Jane Waldfogel's report, "Protecting Children in Tough Economic Times: What Can the United States Learn from Britain?" was named as one of the top Child Well-Being Index (CWI) resources of 2011 by the Foundation for Child Development. The CWI is the nation's most comprehensive measure of trends in the quality-of-life of children and youth.

SELECTED GRANTS

Akabas, S. (PI). *Quality Assurance Reviews of Union Assistance Programs*, Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Transport Workers Union Assistance Program and Employee Assistance Program, awarded \$174,353, July 2010–June 2012.

El-Bassel, N. (PI), Mapping of Eco-social and Genetic Factors of the Susceptibility to Tuberculosis of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev University/Center for Life Sciences, awarded \$276,780, August 2011–December 2011.

Garfinkel, I. & Mincy, R. (PIs), Fragile Families Summer Data Workshop 2012, NICHD, awarded \$82,157, September 2011–August 2012.

Kaushal, N. (PI), Understanding Very Low Food Security Among Children in the U.S., University of Kentucky/U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, awarded \$393,393, June 2011–December 2013.

Schwinn, T. (PI), A Web-based Intervention to Prevent Drug Abuse Among Adolescent Girls, NIDA, awarded \$3,177,157, February 2012–January 2017.

Wu, E. (PI), Couples-Based HIV/STI Prevention for Drug-Involved, African American MSM, National Institute on Drug Abuse, awarded \$3.1M, August 2011–May 2016.

Wu, E., & Terlikbayeva, A. (PIs), The PRIME Study, Republican AIDS Center in Kazakhstan, awarded \$19,988, June 2011–February 2012.

Zweben, A. (PI), 2/2 Multisite Study: Varenicline for Alcohol Dependent Smokers, NIAAA, awarded \$983,426, March 2012–February 2016.

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