Welcome to Spring 2014!
A new semester, another newsletter.

The mission of the School of Social Work’s Ph.D. program is to prepare graduates to conduct interdisciplinary research and become exemplary social work scholars and educators.

Greetings, from the University of Maryland School of Social Work PhD Program Newsletter! This Spring 2014 edition highlights some fantastic past happenings and provides guidance and advice for the future, including attending conferences as a professional and life as a student in Baltimore. Melissa Bessaha shares information on keeping it safe in her Baltimore Comes to Life column. Some sneak peeks into the personal lives of students are provided via family snapshots, a big thank you to all who contributed such wonderful photos. Additionally, this issue’s Lunch With article spotlights Matt Conn, Assistant Dean for Communications here at the School of Social Work. Also featured in this issue is Liz Aparicio, who recently accepted a position at the University of Hawaii and provides some insight on the job search process. Happy reading folks, and warm wishes for a safe and productive spring semester.

Notes from 550 West Baltimore is a twice-yearly, student published newsletter. We are always looking for volunteers, ideas, submissions, and tidbits to share. All are welcome. Contact Catherine “Kelly” Moon or Mary Hodorowicz.
On a recent and rare sunny, not snowy, day on campus, I had the pleasure of meeting with Matt Conn for lunch. Having attended the MSW program here, I have been familiar with Matt’s name for, well, a long time. Almost a decade. Almost, but not quite. If someone outside the school had mentioned Matt Conn, I would recognize the name and be able to share a little bit about his role in the school. But, embarrassingly, if I had tripped over Matt Conn in a coffee shop, or the subway, or the halls of the SSW, I would not have been able to recognize him. It was only recently that I officially met him and finally had a face to go with the name that has been on emails landing in my inbox for much longer than I would like to admit. And it wasn’t in a coffee shop, or the subway, or the halls of the SSW that I met him. It was even in Dallas. It was in Dallas. And I thought to myself, this is absurd that it took such a long time for me to meet Matt. So I sat down over lunch with this man of mystery, to get to know the person behind the name.

And so it goes, Matt took the time to let me interview him, and I got to know much more than the answers to eleven questions. I learned that Matt came to the school in 2001, shortly before September 11th. Interestingly, he has a background in sports broadcasting, not Social Work. In the 1990s he was looking for a job where the hours would allow more time with his family and began a career in higher education. He chose to come to Maryland because he felt a desire to help tell the story of Social Work. Over the course of our lunch, in bits and pieces of conversation, between bites, it became apparent to me why the job was a good fit.
When I first moved to Baltimore from New York, I knew that the only way for me to get past the horrid reputation of this town was to explore it for myself (during reasonable hours for starters of course!). So in each newsletter edition, I will highlight a few of the places I have been to that made me grow to appreciate what Charm City has to offer (aside from being the backdrop for “The Wire”).

Keeping it Safe

The high crime rates in Baltimore city are not unknown and have unfortunately instilled fear in many UMB students. This issue highlights some tips and programs that are available to you on campus that will help make your educational experience a safe one. Some of the information below may not be new to you but it may be to some of your peers you meet around campus. Please share your knowledge with others; after all, it’s the social worky thing to do 😊

UM Alerts. The University has an alert system that notifies the campus community, via cell phone and email, of inclement weather closings and emergencies. All students should sign up for this alert system, which can be found at: http://www.umaryland.edu/alerts/um-alerts/

Self-Defense Classes. I enrolled in the free campus self-defense class, called Rape Aggression Defense (R.A.D.), during my first semester in the program. I was worried about the time commitment (held twice a week for six weeks) but it was one of the best decisions I made that only cost me 10 bucks! Not only did I learn about my strengths and weaknesses in protecting myself but I learned techniques from the best instructor possible, a retired Baltimore police officer! Another perk is that you can repeat the class as many times as you want as a refresher for free. There are females only AND males only classes held EVERY semester. It is ALSO open to faculty and staff. Can you tell that I’m enthusiastic about sharing this? It’s a short time commitment and definitely worth it! More course and registration information can be found here: http://www.umaryland.edu/urecfit/safety_ed/rad.html

Campus Escorts. Admittedly, I have not used this service but I know several students within the SSW and in other schools who have. It’s a 24 hours a day/7 days a week service that should be taken advantage of more often. If you expect to stay on campus after business hours make sure to walk on high traffic and well lit streets or call a campus escort before leaving the building. Keep their number (410-706-6882) handy just in case.

Parking Garages. Many of you park in the student lots that are a few minutes walking distance from the SSW building. What has worked well for students in the past to make them feel safer walking back to their cars is to walk in pairs/groups after classes. Try to coordinate with others before leaving on your own especially in the evenings. Another safety tip I heard from the R.A.D. course and from word of mouth, is to park near elevators/stairwells and lamp posts. Yes, this sounds like common sense but you’d be surprised how often people park at the first available spot they see rather than drive up another floor to park closer to elevators/light posts. Also, note that after 4pm and on weekends, you can park at any campus garage with your parking permit.

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Pets can be a grad student’s greatest support system. Take a moment to revel in the cuteness.

Gia reminds Lisa Fedina of the important things in life (i.e. belly rubs)

Bonkers and Bubbles remind Elizabeth Hoeffler how to relax in style.

How does Leah Bartley resist Ruby and Blue’s sweet faces?

Gidgette reminds Kelly Moon every day, although she is grateful for the rescue, it is too cold to go outside for any reason. Really.

Andres Winters’ Lizzie wants to play

Toby, assists Emily Goerning with her finals.
Issue 2, Spring 2014

Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)
Research for Social Change: Addressing Local and Global Challenges
San Antonio Texas
January 15 – 19 2014

UMB SSW faculty and students presented in 34 sessions at this year’s conference. Doctoral student presenters included Leah Bartley, S. Colby Peters, Seokho Hong, Hyun-Jin Jun, Sang Jung Lee, Sally A. Hageman, Kyeongmo Kim and Mark Lardner.

Hyun-Jin Jun (right) presented: “Individual and Neighborhood Influences on Alcohol Use in Early Adolescence” with Dr. Paul Sacco and Dr. Charlotte Bright at SSWR.

Viking Josey’s (right) mom, Colby Peters, presented “Testing a Model of Environmental Risk and Protective Factors to Predict Middle and High School Students’ Academic Success” as a part of symposium on education.

Princess Arghi’s (above) mom, Sally Hageman, presented “Social Workers Involvement with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program” with Dr. Vernon Loke.

Doctoral student Leah Bartley (left) with Professors Pamela Clarkson Freeman and Diane DePanfilis after their workshop session “Using Organizational Assessments to Inform Implementation and Build Sustainable Capacity.”
Before attending, plan your networking goals and opportunities. Interested in meeting a particular scholar? Be sure to see whether s/he is presenting and plan to attend the session. Interested in learning who is active in your field of work? Examine the program and determine which presentations or events are best aligned; then, attend as many as you can, and be sure to introduce yourself to presenters and attendees. Attend as many networking events as your schedule permits (e.g. plenary sessions, sponsored lectures, award presentations).

Volunteering is usually a good experience—you get to meet a lot of people, see how a conference actually is run (the backstage activities), reduce some of the costs for attending, and add a new item to your growing CV. Most conferences need volunteers and reimburse them for their time—a great way to save money and connect with some other students.

It would be important to attend some of the main talks (like plenary sessions) that will help define and guide the direction of the discipline.

Remember that every interaction has the potential to enhance (or detract from) your reputation. Attendees might remember your professionalism at the bar, the gym, or the airport, so conduct yourself accordingly.

“Go to them. Even if you don’t have a paper accepted. Even if you think you can’t afford to go.”

See if this can become part of your GRA—it could also help out the professor you are working with.

“Attend some of the main talks and smaller sessions on topics of your interest.”

Even if you don’t have a paper accepted, try to get to SSWR each year—at first just to learn, then to plan for your own transition to a faculty role, and then to interview for faculty positions.”
Don't be afraid to ask questions of the speakers and presenters. What you want to ask and know is very important and is probably similar to what others want to know (they just haven't asked the question yet).

Prepare your elevator speech. You should be able to describe your interests in just a few sentences.

“Be inquisitive and take the opportunity to learn and gain new knowledge.”

Once you identify individuals you would like to meet, familiarize yourself with their work. This will allow you to ask educated questions. It is a good idea to prepare some conversation topics or questions in advance, especially if you are nervous about approaching someone. Most scholars relish the opportunity to discuss their area of research, teaching, etc.

Do a little homework beforehand to see if there are any faculty members from other schools that share their topic area and try and set up a time to grab some coffee and chat.

“Network and be mindful of your interactions.”

Students should know that if they think it’s too expensive to attend, and they aren’t presenting, it’s still valuable to go, most conferences need volunteers and reimburse them for their time- a great way to save money and connect with some other students.

For students who are new to conferences and have not yet narrowed down their topic area, should attend at least 1 SW conference, and should spend time going to a few different session in areas of potential interest to help expose them to what’s going on in those areas, and should spend a little time during poster sessions to see what may be expected of them one day. They should also try and attend a reception or two to connect with other students and faculty.

“Plan in advance, everything from travel details to desired networking interactions.”

*This list was compiled by pestering a handful of administrators, faculty, students, and staff. This was in no way, shape, or form, a survey and is quite possibly not representative of the entire SSW community. We thank those individuals who were solicited for opinions and provided the feedback seen above.
Something to Celebrate

The Baltimore Running Festival
October 13, 2013

Dori Sneddon got married on August 25, 2013!

Hugo Uretsky keeps getting cuter!

Dori honeymooning in Cartagena, Colombia

RIGHT: Nadine Finigan, Dante DeTablan, and Mary Hodorowicz enjoy the pre race festivities hosted by Dean Barth in his office at the SSW
LEFT: Karen Burruss nears, as she is about the cross the finish line of her first half-marathon
Bethany Backes and her husband welcomed Emelia Helen on September 16th. In her spare time, Bethany also managed to publish two articles: *Building a Solid Foundation for Sexual Violence Research: Applying Lessons Learned to Inform Research Priorities* and *NIJ’s Program of Domestic Violence Research: Collaborative Efforts to Build Knowledge Guided by Safety For Victims and Accountability of Perpetrators.*

Saltanat Childress published her article "*A Meta-Summary of Qualitative Findings on the Lived Experience among Culturally Diverse Domestic Violence Survivors*" in *Issues in Mental Health Nursing.* Saltanat was kind enough to share her family’s holiday portrait (above).

Liz Aparicio will be joining the faculty of the University of Hawaii at Manoa in August

A few notes from Liz about the job search process:

“The job process was intense and took a great deal of time and energy. I felt like I couldn't do much else while prepping my letters, waiting to hear back from schools, and preparing for interviews at CSWE, by Skype, and on campus. However, I felt very well-prepared for my interviews and had a lot of support in getting ready. Donna and several other faculty members gave me feedback on my letter of interest and CV, I did several mock interviews, and PhD students and faculty helped me with my job talk. You will be pleasantly surprised how well UMB's program prepares you to be competitive on the market! People liked my teaching experience, research experience, publications, and practice experience. UMB provides many opportunities to become a well-balanced applicant and build an impressive CV. I'm happy to talk to anyone who would like to chat about the process.”

Liz, her husband, and her daughter, at the beach the day before her interview.

Liz wearing the lei the faculty gave her during the introduction before her colloquium.
Lunch with… (Continued from page 2)

Matt is articulate, entertaining, and enjoyable to be around. (And I don’t say this just because we share the common bond of being Steeler fans in this Raven’s loving city.) He is a thoughtful man, dedicated to his family and committed to his job. In addition to learning about our mutual love of the city of Pittsburgh, I learned that Matt has spent some time traveling, engages regularly in his hobbies, and makes time for doing things he cares about and being with those he loves. He likes music-bands that are not mainstream and songs that have meaning. He enjoys searching for treasures at yard sales. One of his daughters (he has three) recently earned her MSW from the University of Pittsburgh. His trip to Alaska was with his siblings and his terminally ill father. He is currently organizing a trip to El Salvador this summer, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. I observed him as both proud, when speaking of his daughters, and humble, when speaking about himself.

While not formally educated as a social worker, Matt informally exemplifies core values of the Social Work profession - service, social justice, dignity and worth, importance of human relationships, and integrity and competence. Dining with Matt reminded me of how fortunate I am to be part of such a great community of people here at the School of Social Work. It also made me regret that it took such a long time and a CSWE conference in Dallas for me to meet him. Hopefully, if you didn’t before, you now have a sense of the person behind all those emails, or at least a face to go with the name. And you didn’t even have to fly to Texas. But don’t take my word for it. Walk on over to his office, in what is jokingly referred to as "The West Wing", and introduce yourself. I wish I had done it 8 years ago.

Looking to get involved? Have an idea or suggestion for the spring issue? Contact Catherine “Kelly” Moon cmoon@ssw.umaryland.edu or Mary Hodorowicz mhodorowicz@ssw.umaryland.edu

Keeping it Safe (Continued from page 3)

Cell Phones. By now you must have seen several signs around campus cautioning students to not talk and text while walking around campus. Unfortunately, I still see folks with their shiny expensive cell phones out in the open for all to see despite the alerts of theft and assaults. I understand the need to text if you are running late but it’s not worth the risk if you’re out in public especially during evenings and in low traffic areas.

Safety Awareness Committee. Feel unsafe because of a broken streetlight or are concerned about where you park your car? If you have questions, suggestions, or non-emergency concerns, then please do not hesitate to contact the campus Safety Awareness Committee. This group of UMB staff and faculty as well as representatives from the Baltimore Police Department meets bimonthly and wants to hear from you! Contact the Committee at http://www.umaryland.edu/police/committee.html

These are only a few of the resources on campus that can help you feel safer and gain more street smarts around Baltimore and in general. Of course, if you see or hear anything suspicious don’t hesitate to report it. For more safety awareness tips, visit the UMB Safety and Police website: http://www.umaryland.edu/campuslife/community/safety/index.html or you can call: 711 or 410-606-3333 (for emergencies) and 410-706-6882 (for non-emergencies).