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TRANSFORMING:

A UVM Department of Social Work Update

Transforming is an occasional newsletter for our UVM Social Work community intended to share information, provide an insight into Department goings on, and most importantly try to stay in better touch with all of you – our colleagues.



Welcome from Our New Chair

Dear Friends,

We are happy to be in touch again. You may be aware of some of the changes which have happened in faculty appointments since we last wrote, and of course I am now writing to you in my capacity as the new Chair of the Department.

Do let me say first how grateful I am to our outgoing Chair, Dr. Susan Roche, who now joins your illustrious ranks! Susan has done a very meticulous job of preparing the way for me, and has been gracious and helpful in smoothing the path for my transition into the role. You will learn a little more about me and the other two new faculty members (Dr. Christine Velez and Dr. Lacey Sloan) through interviews conducted by one of our MSW students, Rita Munro. These are published in this issue. I have visited Burlington many times before, attending Stan Witkin's "Transforming Global Social Work" Gatherings. Although I come via Australia, the UK and Canada, I feel very much at home here, particularly due to the very warm welcome I have received both in the Department and the broader university environment.

You may be interested to know that we have had some enthusiastic discussions about going forward in the department. Given all Susan's diligent work, and the dedication of faculty over many years, the department now feels like it is at a place to start capitalizing on these efforts, and to start implementing some of the many creative ideas which have been generated. Our future directions and initiatives include:

- Further international profiling of the department's transformative approach – we are planning an edited book
- More recruitment of international students
- Increasing the diversity of the faculty and student profile
- More emphasis on research and scholarship, especially research regarding transformative practice
- Development of a systematic continuing professional education program (in consultation with alumni and our professional community)
- Provision of a workshop on "Narrative Therapy and Transformative Social Work" (May 9-10 by Dr. Laura Beres)

- Establishing an international network of social work educators focusing on transformative teaching practices
- Organizing a small inter/national forum
- Formation of a diversity group to plan more details of our diversity policy in the department
- A conference on transformative social work
- Planning of a small research project regarding food insecurity amongst UVM students
- Discussion about principles of how to approach our work with issues regarding race and racism in our curriculum and also in the department

Other exciting news is that we have organized an **alumni meeting**. You should have all received an invitation from Ken Bechtel. Apart from a chance to get together, Susan Roche will speak briefly about the research she conducted with some of you. Please see the notice below.

My warm wishes to you all, and looking forward very much to meeting up with you.



Jan Fook
Professor and Chair, Department of Social Work

A Gathering for MSW Alumni

April 11th from 4:00-6:00pm
in the Department of Social Work
443 Waterman Building, 85 South Prospect St., Burlington

We would be delighted if you can attend. Star speaker will be our newly retired Chair of the Department, Dr. Susan Roche, who will speak on "Co-authoring Stories about Social Work as a Human Rights and Social Justice Profession" which she conducted with a group of alumni. Drinks and light refreshments provided. Key business of the evening is to organize the alumni group and discuss some activities which alumni might wish to organize.

Please RSVP to Ken Bechtel (kbechtel@uvm.edu) by April 8th

Please attend, and let any other alumni know as well. We do have in mind some activities you might be able to help us with so we NEED you! These might include:

- Developing and writing an historical timeline for the department
- Collecting information about past alumni
- Advising regarding continuing professional education
- Any other ideas you may have!!

Welcoming New Faculty

(With gratitude to Graduating MSW Candidate Rita Munro for conducting and transcribing the interviews)



Dr. Jan Fook, Professor and Chair

Dr. Jan Fook, Professor and Chair, was born and raised in Australia yet has spent the last 12 years of her career in the United Kingdom, Norway and Canada. Dr. Fook has loved her visits to Vermont throughout the years and is delighted to be the new chair of the UVM Social Work Department. She is a prominent scholar in the field of critical social work and critical reflection and has published 16 books and over 100 articles and book chapters. Her model of critical reflection, based on social science, critical theory and empirical research, is widely utilized in social work settings. Dr. Fook arrived in January 2019 and is teaching an MSW elective in her area of expertise: *Critical Reflection on Transformative Social Work* (SWSS 380). You can read more about her research interests and practice experience on the UVM Social Work Faculty page here: <https://www.uvm.edu/cess/profiles/jan-fook>.

Why did you want to come to UVM? What are you enthusiastic about bringing to the UVM social work department?

The transformative social work approach of the department really attracted me to UVM – my work fits well within that mold. Vermont is such a wonderful and unique place to be, as well, both culturally and physically. As the new chair I came for the opportunity to develop the department. It's really what I love to do. I enjoy the challenge of building up what's here, taking on new things and organizing folks to share more of their work. My goal is essentially to get the department on the national and international map in a significant way and partner with faculty, staff and students to make that happen.

What are your current research interests?

It's a good question because I don't do as much empirical research in the formal sense at this stage in my career. I've very much decided on what I like to do, teach and lead: it's critical reflection. I write a great deal on that topic and process. However, I would love to do more studies on the outcomes of critical self-reflection, yet funding for that is a challenge. I'm currently working on several books and essays, one how critical reflection is embedded in the learning process, another on the learner's experience of critical reflection, and a final project discussing transformative social work in education.

What in the past has contributed most toward your career today/ your faculty position at UVM?

Firstly, I must say that I love being an academic. In truth, when I was younger my mother wanted me to be a social worker, and at the time I wanted to be a teacher. So, I found in my work a path to contribute to academic social work that I loved. Studying and teaching critical self-reflection has given me space to do what I adore. I can see people making changes, feeling better about themselves and the work, and learning something new, all right in front of me. I love that. It brings all aspects of me and my values right to the forefront.

UVM @ NASW Advocacy Day 2019

What helps keep you focused on the work?

I need to feel like I've got a challenge. It is also really fundamental to me that I feel engaged, that I'm appreciated, and that I have a space for self-expression – specifically that all the parts of me can feed into my work and into each other.

What is something you do for self-care/ what do you think is important about self-care?

Home and family. My partner is also an academic – we have been together for over 40 years! – and we made a pact very early on to not work on evenings and weekends so that we could spend our time together. So, we were very focused on our work on weekdays and then would spend our weekends together out and about, especially with our two dogs. We love spending our time together. And home is self-care to me! At my home in England I have over 300 roses, and I used to craft quite regularly, though my eyes aren't what they were. A sense of home is very important to me. I could garden for days, but without the critical reflection bit I'd get quite bored of that.



Our own Representative Ann Pugh, on the Statehouse floor



Professor Lacey Sloan at the Statehouse with our students

ON JAN'S READING LIST

Mostly I've been reading and learning about the US and the context here, yet hoping to do so from a more cultural reference point than academic one. These are three I've been reading recently:

***Michelle Obama: A Life* by Peter Slevin (2015),**

***Democracy Now!: 20 Years Covering the Movements Changing America* by Amy Goodman, David Goodman, & Denis Moynihan (2017),**

***The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt (2018)**



Future legislatures at the Statehouse



Dr. Lacey Sloan, Associate Professor, MSSW, Ph.D.



Dr. Lacey Sloan, Associate Professor, MSSW, Ph.D., has a long and diverse background in social work education, activism and research. She has spent the last ten years developing social work education in the Middle East and in the USA. Before a transition to academia Dr. Sloan worked

in child welfare, crisis intervention and with survivors of sexual abuse. During the 2018-2019 school year she is teaching several MSW core classes and electives, including *Transformative Social Work I and II* (SWSS 314), *Advanced Social Work Research* (SWSS 327) and *Social Welfare Policy & Services II* (221). You can read more about her research interests and practice experience on the UVM Social Work Faculty page here: <https://www.uvm.edu/cess/profiles/lacey-sloan>.

Why did you want to come to UVM? What are you enthusiastic about bringing to the UVM social work department?

UVM, of all the options I had on the job market, I felt like I could be myself the most here. I feel that this department is the most consistent with my social work values, particularly in its dedication to bringing in more diversity and its efforts to focus on international social work.

What are your current research interests?

Ha! I currently have a lot. My research primarily addresses Sexual Rights and Social Work in Islamic contexts. Right now, I'm looking at women in the Middle East and how they see their own roles. My work highlights the voice of those being discussed as central to the conversation. On a broader level, as well, I'm working on projects developing social work education and practice in Islamic contexts.

What in the past has contributed most toward your career today/ your faculty position at UVM?

What comes to mind personally is that I was a child in a military family. We moved around a lot and were immersed in many different cultures – I think I decided continue in that pattern of moving as an adult to experience a diversity of environments. From those experiences and my own values, I feel committed to bringing marginalized and stigmatized voices to the center of the work we do as social workers. Moreover, my own experience as being a part of a marginalized group has allowed me a unique capacity to seek out and listen to those voices.

What helps keep you focused on the work?

This is a fun one – I can keep focused on the work because I can really see change happening in the world that is good and that I see that we do make a difference. As a social

worker I wanted the opportunity to help solve social problems, not just examine them, and it feel like a reward to be able to do that work among amazing colleagues and in Vermont.

What is something you do for self-care/ what do you think is important about self-care?

In this role I work hard and I play very hard. I love riding my motorcycle – it allows me to just think and be. I love the people that I meet when I'm riding and learning new things about where I'm traveling. I've got Utah, the Himalayas and Indonesia on my travel plans for the summer. These days too I'm trying to focus more on my physical health, eating better and trying to stay hydrated. This Saturday I'm going to a West African dance class, so I'm looking forward to that too.

ON LACEY'S READING LIST

***Becoming* by Michelle Obama (2018)**

Reading for upcoming trips, likely the *Lonely Planet* guide for Indonesia



Dr. Christine Velez, MSW, Ph.D. . . .

Dr. Christine Velez, Assistant Professor, finished her PhD in Social Work at Portland State University in the spring of 2018. She also holds an MSW from SUNY Buffalo. Her current research focuses on reproductive justice and women's health with an emphasis on women and youth of color. During the 2018-2019 school year she is teaching BSW *Theory in Social Work I & II* (SWSS 147 and SWSS 148) and two MSW electives *Rights, Justice and Intersectionality* (SWSS 200) and *TSW Responses to Violence* (SWSS 338). You can read more about her research interests and practice experience on her faculty page:

<https://www.uvm.edu/cess/profiles/christine-velez>.

Why did you want to come to UVM? What are you enthusiastic about bringing to the UVM social work department?

I was excited about being a part of a small department that was seeking and wanting change. On the campus visit, too, I was struck by how the faculty talked about students in a loving and caring way, how they wanted me to meet students and hear their input, etc. It's important to me that students are valued here. I also knew that there were no faculty of color at the time, which is quite common, and I was happy to contribute to the diversity here and am curious to see how that will impact me personally. I'm prepared, willing and ready to take on that challenge and hoping to continue to expand the number of faculty of color in our department. In addition, I'm from the Northeast and it's good to be back after seven years on the West Coast.

What are your current research interests?

I'm currently trying to build out an IRB around the positive sexual health experiences of Latinas. It's important to me to contribute to the field of positive sexual health, as so much of what has been written about women, particularly minorities, studies sexuality from a deficit model. My work very much seeks to speak to and serve the communities in which I live, so I'm hoping to expand my research in the coming years to explore service delivery to immigrant populations in Vermont.

What in the past has contributed most toward your career today/ your faculty position at UVM?

When I started my PhD program I thought I would go into research – not teach – but several years into the program I took on some adjunct teaching positions at the college for supplemental income. In those positions I met a lot of students of color and realized the importance of the presence of diverse identities to help all students succeed. Visibility and representation are essential to an empowering education for marginalized populations. I feel grateful, as well, that I love both the teaching and research part of academia – I get excited about research, methods and strengthening the connection between research and practice. I also really enjoy interviewing and hearing people's stories and trying to document their experiences.

ON CHRISTINE'S READING LIST

I'm reading a few great books right now that span several genres, from memoirs to novels to historical monographs. These are the ones that I'm either reading or are up next:

***Black Is the Body: Stories from My Grandmother's Time, My Mother's Time, and Mine* by Emily Bernard (2019),**

***There There: A Novel* by Tommy Orange (2018),**

***El Norte: The Epic and Forgotten Story of Hispanic North America* by Carrie Gibson (2019), *Becoming* by Michelle Obama (2018).**

What helps keep you focused on the work?

Ha! Well, the tenure track. But really my family, my kids, and that I enjoy my colleagues and the space I'm in professionally. The UVM social work department is a very woman-centered environment and I'm given plenty of space to engage with my own curiosities and interests. It is such a gift, privilege and honor to be with social workers day in and day out.

What is something you do for self-care/ what do you think is important about self-care?

I've learned over the years to prioritize sleep. Considering my post-partum experience (I have two young kids), I have learned to really value sleep. Choosing Vermont was also a part of making a nourishing and restorative choice. I get to be outside with my kids and we all get fresh air together. I think self-care right now for me means taking care of the basics: sleep, sunshine, regular meals, drinking water and connecting with friends that I feel are supportive and uplifting. Oh, and I listen to a lot of hip hop and rap.



MSW Students and the marshmallow challenge

Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evil-doer, the act of finding the third way that is neither flight nor flight, but the careful arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. — Shane Claiborne, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*

CONGRATULATIONS TO CELIA CUDDY LECTURER III

Who has been honored and recognized for her contributions to the department and UVM with the

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT OUTSTANDING PART-TIME FACULTY TEACHING AWARD



Saying Good Bye to Faculty & Staff Who have Moved On



Susan and Fiona
"graduate" together

Phyllis Paolucci-Whitcomb – Phyllis is happily retired, living in Burlington and continues to match her socks to all her outfits.

Gale Burford – is happily retired, continuing to work on restorative justice issues and is living in Vermont.

Gary Widrick – is happily retired, living in Vermont and traveling as often as he can.

George Liebowitz – is now working as a Social Work Professor at Stony Brook University on Long Island.

Julie Richards – is consulting and engaged in international development work.

Stan Witkin – is retired to Charlottesville, VA and continues to write and travel while remodeling his new home.

Fiona Patterson – retired at 80, remains an active rebel-rouser, and is spending time visiting children and grandchildren and carrying on research projects.

Jessica Strolin – is now a faculty member in the Department of Education and continues her work on behalf of children and families.

Susan Roche - has just retired as of 12/18 and is living herself into her new life, while continuing her research and writing and traveling.

Susan Haggerty – Susan is happily retired, with a passel of beautiful grandchildren and living in Vermont.

Cyrus Patten – is leaving after two years as a temporary lecturer for Champlain College Business School where he will assume the role of Assistant Dean.



Fiona "Fi" Patterson



Phyllis Paolucci Whitcomb,
Fiona Patterson, Marty Dewees
& Susan Roche



Ann and JB hammin' it up at Honor's Day 2018



Ken and Kate and last minute details



Brenda, killing us softly with her song...

The Hardy Remaining Few . . .

Ann Pugh - continues to be the utility player filling in where ever the teaching need is. She continues to be a state legislator and Chair of the House Human Services Committee.

Brenda Solomon – is coordinating the Title IVE student side of the program and is teaching in the graduate program. Her daughter just turned 9.

JB Barna – continues as the Field Coordinator. The UVM field program is considered a model and JB just keeps on innovating. Her daughter is now 16.

Kate Clem – continues to manage the business side of the department with the help of her 5-year-old daughter who also fills the department with her amazing artwork.

Ken Bechtel – aka “jack of all trades” who responds to everything and everyone is enjoying the early spring snow but is not looking forward to mud season.

Suzy Comerford - is currently coordinating the MSW program, and teaching in both the graduate and the undergraduate programs. Her girls are now 16 and 19.

Current Department Research Areas

Brenda Solomon – The construction of social difference & institutional ethnography.

Christine Velez - Feminist and critical research methodologies and theory; Sexuality, sexual health and sexual rights issues and communities of color; Anti-racist/anti-oppressive social work practice and education.

Jan Fook – Critical Reflection

Lacey Sloan – Gender and sexual based-rights, social work in Islamic countries & their intersections.

Suzy Comerford – Disabilities and the Education System & Refugee Reception Policy

Part-time Faculty



Erin O'Keefe with the newest member of the department, Dori

Celia Cuddy, Lecturer III Celia.Cuddy@uvm.edu

Danielle Jatlow, Lecturer I Danielle.Jatlow@uvm.edu

Laurie Larson, Lecturer III Laurie.Larson@uvm.edu

Erin O'Keefe, Lecturer I Erin.OKeefe@uvm.edu

Robin Pesci, Lecturer I Robin.Pesci@uvm.edu

Jennifer Phillips, Lecturer Jennifer.H.Phillips@uvm.edu

Corey Richardson, Lecturer I Corey.Richardson@uvm.edu

Veronica Saffo, Lecturer I vsaffo@uvm.edu

Alice Scannell, Lecturer I Alice.Scannell@uvm.edu

Jean Sienkewicz, Lecturer II; Jean.Sienkewicz@uvm.edu

Sarah Robinson, Lecturer Sarah.Robinson.3@uvm.edu

UVM MSW & BSW STUDENTS ATTEND...



The [International Federation of Social Workers](#) and the [International Association of School of Social Work](#) held the 36th Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations is scheduled on **Monday, April 1, 2019 in the ECOSOC Chamber.**

Social Work Day at the UN is a gathering place for people around the world who are working to make a difference. For 35 years students, practitioners, and educators have been convening at the UN to learn more about the UN, innovative projects and issues related to International Social Work and the critical role Social Work plays in the international arena.



New MSW Courses

Social Work with Refugees – concentration year focus course

Designed to provide an in-depth exploration and knowledge around: the social construction of “refugees” and the discourses and practices that surround it; the impact of that construction on the lives of the people who inhabit that role; and the rich, generative opportunities and challenges of social work with refugees. The heart of the course focuses on the resilience and human struggles involved in the human experience of living the refugee journey across the person-environment context from conflict and war in the home country, to the experience of flight and temporary asylum, and the process of durable solutions which for less than three percent of those deemed refugees ends in resettlement.

Poverty in America - concentration year focus course

Students will examine competing perspectives on the nature of poverty and inequality in American, the intersectionality of such dimensions as race, age, gender and disability, and the role of politics and public policy in producing, maintaining and alleviating it. It is designed to provide an in-depth exploration and knowledge around: the social construction of “poverty” and the discourses and practices that surround it including the media as well as research and the impact of those constructions on the lives of the people who inhabit that role; and the ensuring policy responses moving from case to cause and from “people-based” to “place-based” policies

Assessment in Social Work - concentration year focus course

Students will learn about and critically analyze the various components of the social work assessment process in mental health, forensic social work, and child welfare. Students will develop a conceptual understanding of practice principles in terms of evaluating clients' risks, needs, and strengths, and draw links to the outcomes research and effectiveness of specific interventions. Attention is given to culturally competent assessment, with diverse populations. Since no single theory or approach captures the totality of human experiences and meanings, students must construct their own multidimensional assessment and intervention framework by critically examining, integrating, and applying different theoretical approaches used in social work to understand the transactions between persons and their environment. Contemporary and traditional theories of human behavior and clinical practice are examined in terms of their relevance to assessment and intervention in social work with individuals and children and families.

Critical Reflections in Transformative Social Work-concentration year focus course

Critical reflection is often seen as the new orthodoxy in social work practice, but what does it really mean (in theory and in practice),

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The field education program continues to be vibrant and full of good stories and experiences.

This year we have:
95 students in field placements across the Senior BSW, MSW Foundation, and MSW Concentration years.

41 of the 105 field instructors and students are alumni of either our BSW or MSW program or both.

Field is such a wonderful way for us to stay in touch with you all. Please contact us if you are interested in engaging with our students in this way going forward. I'm happy to sit down, catch up, and talk about what is possible.

<https://www.uvm.edu/cess/socialwork/field>

Peace,
JB



and how is it related to a transformative social work approach? In this course we will examine and debate the different theoretical perspectives on critical reflection, and trace their different disciplinary roots, in order to develop ideas about how reflection can be transformative. Using these understandings to inform us, we will spend considerable time in practicing how to do critical reflection in order to improve and transform our practice. We will also try to conduct our own reflective research into what makes critical reflection transformative. Participants in the course will be helped to write up their reflective experience in a way which will allow their work to be submitted for publication in a journal.

Supporting Organization Change & Transformation in Human Services- concentration year focus course

Organizational change refers to large scale transformative change within an organization which requires the relational, coordinated actions of many and impacts all of the organization, such as the restructuring of the mission, restructuring how the organization will function operationally - internally and externally. The impact of the change reorients the way the organization functions through critical questioning of standing organizational discourse and practices. Topics will include personal and professional change, healthy organizations and the management of novelty/change, sense making in organizations, models of change, resistance to change, appreciative inquiry, considering social inequity and difference in the change process, challenges in the change process, why change efforts fail, and working with consultants in the organizational change process

Disability Rights & Transformative Social Work – concentration year focus course, New 2019-2020 Year

Disabilities Rights and Transformative Social Work is a focus course in the MSW program. In this course, students will be able to examine, through their own field of inquiry, disabilities, disabilities' rights and TSW practice with people with disabilities. Like other social identities, disability is a socially constructed identity that can vary from country to country and one generation to another. The understanding of disability as a social construct helps explain the differences globally, a) in what is considered a disability; b) how disabilities are manifested, and c) what is thought to be the cause of disabilities, from one culture to another. Ideas of mental health and mental illness occur in a cultural context with unique manifestations clearly associated with different cultures.

Transforming Homelessness – TBD – New 2019-2020 Year

Transformative Social Work Response to Violence - concentration year focus course

Violence and its effects are pervasive in the lives and communities of the people with whom social workers align in order to be of help. In this course we will ponder the possibilities for transformative social work with adults and older youth responding to violence in their lives and communities. One question will guide our inquiry: "How can our social work practices be accountable to them from a transformative stance?" To develop answers to this question, we will apply the World Health Organization's continuum for various forms of violence, from interpersonal to collective. We will root this study in the idea of social work as a human rights profession and violence as a violation of human rights. We will draw on international, social movement and professional approaches to policies and practices for transformative change, from the most public to the most intimate. We will apply a critical constructionist orientation to this study and to transformative social work to assist us in grappling with the complexity involved.

Addressing Substance Abuse - concentration year focus course

In this course, we will critically investigate development (etiological & contributing factors), gender specific and culturally responsive treatment strategies of substance abuse with an emphasis on: Motivational Interviewing, family systems, narrative/postmodern approaches, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques, recovery maintenance, and an integrative approach to treatment. Co-occurring mental health issues, violence and trauma among diverse populations as well as the relevant social policy issues will be discussed as it relates to social work practice.