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**NEXUS**  
THE PRACTICUM NEWSLETTER

*NEXUS provides news, practicum features,  
supervisory tips and resources to our field instructors.*

 Washington University in St. Louis

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## IN THIS ISSUE

[Click Titles to link to Articles](#)

- ② [Ensuring Student Success: Tips for Preventing Failure in the Field](#)
- ⑤ [Amanda Moore McBride Named New Associate Dean for Social Work](#)
- ⑥ [Field Education Around The Globe and In Our Community](#)
- ⑧ [Nominate Students for Practicum Awards](#)
- ⑨ [4th Annual Institute for Public Health Conference: "Beyond Borders: Transforming Health at Home and Abroad."](#)
- ⑩ [MPH Accreditation Update](#)
- ⑪ [Field Instructor Benefits: Professional Development Workshops](#)
- ⑫ [Field Instructor Appreciation Day](#)
- ⑬ [Field Education Calendar](#)
- ⑭ [Office Of Field Education Staff](#)

Visit [brownschool.wustl.edu](http://brownschool.wustl.edu) for the latest news and events, plus access to field instructor resources.



# Ensuring Student Success: Tips for Preventing Failure in the Field

While the vast majority of our students succeed in their practica, we occasionally encounter a problem that results in the termination of a practicum experience or a failing grade.

We have reviewed some of these cases and determined that while it's difficult to identify one primary reason for failure, there are some consistent areas of concern: **supervision, boundaries, personal issues, and communication.**

## Supervision.

As a field instructor, you are one of the most influential people in our student's professional development. Your guidance and mentoring contributes directly to a student's ability to successfully complete hours and learning objectives. Issues arise, however, when the field instructor and student are not meeting regularly either because they haven't established a regular meeting schedule or due to frequent cancellations. Sometimes we find that the student isn't utilizing supervision well because they are coming to meetings unprepared or avoiding self-reflection altogether.

## Solution.

- Set a regularly scheduled time every week for an hour. Allow only few exceptions for interruptions at these meetings.
- Challenge students who do not come prepared, and give them a list of expectations about how supervision time should be spent.
- Work with the Office of Field Education. We can provide you with a "Practicum Improvement Plan" form to complete with the student to help get the practicum experience back on track.

### **Boundaries.**

Field instructors sometimes inappropriately play the role of therapist for students experiencing personal challenges. Supervisors who ask students to babysit, walk the dog, housesit, attend parties, or invite students to be “friends” on Facebook, blur boundaries and confuse students about their roles at the practicum sites. These situations become particularly sticky at the time of evaluation and should be avoided.

### **Solution.**

- Establish clear boundaries and guidelines about your role and your student’s role, and use supervision to discuss boundary issues as they arise.
- “Field Instructors should help students with networking and career advice” (Council for Public Health). Invite students to connect with you on LinkedIn, a professional social network.
- Engage students in the learning process. Make it clear that your evaluation is based on their performance as an entry-level practitioner.

“Social workers who provide supervision or consultation are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries”

– NASW Code of Ethics 3.01.b

### **Mental Health and Personal Issues.**

Mental health issues have been on the rise on college campuses this past decade. In 2008, The American College Health Association in the annual National College Health Assessment reported that the top five impediments to academic performance were:

- 1 stress
- 2 cold/flu/sore throat
- 3 sleep difficulties
- 4 concern for friend/family, and
- 5 depressive/anxiety disorders

These issues often impact a student’s ability to successfully complete a field experience.

### **Solution.**

- If you are aware of a student experiencing any type of mental health issue or personal crisis, notify the Office of Field Education as soon as possible. Our ability to address problems quickly, before they snowball into bigger issues, is critical to a successful resolution.
- Students can access support and counseling services on campus or even take a leave of absence without financial consequence.

### **Communication.**

Poor communication (on the part of either the field instructor or the student) is often at the root of failure. Students have described situations where field instructors

promise learning opportunities that never come to fruition, and field instructors have reported situations where students have missed appointments, not returned calls or emails, and simply stopped coming to practicum without any notification.

### **Solution.**

- Good communication that includes clear expectations about learning opportunities, performance, and professionalism should be outlined in the initial interview to ensure success.
- Work with your student to identify mutually beneficial goals and objectives when drafting the Educational Learning Agreement (ELA).

Ultimately, we want to help you help our students succeed in the field. If you are challenged in any way, let us know and we'll work with you and the student to ensure a **successful practicum experience.**

- During weekly supervision sessions, the field instructor can model good communication by using the time to actively listen, demonstrate an interest in the student's professional development, process the student's experience, exchange ideas, and provide critical and supportive feedback.

## Amanda Moore McBride Named New Associate Dean for Social Work

Dear Field Instructors –

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your service. We regard field instructors as partners, building the capacities of our students to take on leadership roles through applied learning and community engagement.

This year we will provide online tools for field instructors and new opportunities for professional development and networking. We appreciate your support as we work together to enhance the field education experience for you and our students.

Best wishes for our continued success,  
*Amanda Moore McBride*



Dr. McBride's research focuses on community and civic engagement, including international service, national service, and service learning. She also teaches classes on social justice, program evaluation, and social work practice with organizations and communities.

In addition to her research and teaching responsibilities, she leads the University's Richard A. Gephardt Institute for Public Service, which promotes sustained community impact through service initiatives. As research director for the Center for Social Development, she advances the Center's research on civic engagement and service.

As Associate Dean for Social Work, she is responsible for all facets of Brown School's Master of Social Work program, including the field education component of our pedagogy.

### ONLINE SERVICES LAUNCH FALL 2012

The new service will allow our field instructors and students to electronically manage the development of the Education Learning Agreement. We plan to pilot the online submission process, including a customized administrative portal, this summer to ensure a seamless process.

# Field Education Around The Globe and In Our Community

The Office of Field Education likes to highlight the learning experiences of some of the students who recently completed practicum. Last summer, students participated in practicum in 19 states, the District of Columbia, in 16 countries, and right here in St. Louis. The following stories provide a sense of the Brown School's impact on the world.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Student:** Max Holtz, MPH, 2013  
**Agency:** World Health Organization  
**Location:** Mongolia



This past summer, I spent two months in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, working for the World Health Organization (WHO). I was interested in incorporating an international component into

my MPH curriculum and wanted to gain valuable work experience working abroad.

I knew that I wanted to spend my summer working in Central Asia because of my interest in the challenges that former Soviet republics have faced after the

collapse of the Soviet Union. The WHO's regional office offered me a position as an infectious disease epidemiology intern.

At the WHO, I worked closely with the Communicable Disease Technical Officer, as well as with physicians in the STI and HIV/AIDS clinic at Mongolia's National Centre for Communicable Disease to evaluate an intervention to eliminate congenital syphilis (CS). A lack of appropriate screening and treatment as a standard for prenatal care were contributing to a national spike in cases. The One Stop Services to Eliminate Congenital Syphilis program –

was implemented in order to improve syphilis screening, reduce turnaround time for results, and facilitate follow up. To evaluate the program, I traveled to four Mongolian provinces to conduct interviews with providers and administrators and to collect data. The research culminated in a case study supporting the efforts of the Mongolian Ministry of Health to improve prenatal screening and treatment. Ultimately our work will add to the body of evidence for other programs to eliminate CS.

## HOSPICE CARE

**Student:** Crystal Yang, MSW, 2012  
**Agency:** Heartland Home Health and Hospice  
**Location:** St. Louis



My seven months as a practicum student at Heartland Home Health Care and

Hospice completely changed my view of hospice and the people who are on it. I chose this for my first practicum because I wanted to do something out of my comfort zone, but did not know it would shape my views on life and death.

When I first started to visit patients with my supervisor, I was nervous. I had no idea what to expect. I traveled to nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and private homes. I expected to feel sad, and at times I was. What I didn't anticipate was

the happiness, appreciation, and even fun I felt interacting with these patients and their families. Over time, I formed relationships with them. Patients weren't just their diagnoses—I knew their stories.

Not only have I witnessed the devastation of loss, but also the devotion of love and the relief of peace. I learned the practical skills that go along with being a hospice social worker. I wrote visit notes, conducted psychosocial assessments, and attended interdisciplinary team meetings. Those were important parts of my practicum experience that will be beneficial in whatever career path I follow as a social worker.

## DISEASE PREVENTION

**Student:** Wei Chang, MPH, 2011  
**Agency:** Clinton Global Health Initiative  
**Location:** New York



For my practicum in the summer of 2011, I wanted to gain more in-depth knowledge and

practical experience in one specific public health problem affecting the developing world. I was truly lucky to get an internship with the Clinton Global Health Initiative, one of the leading organizations in the fight against HIV/AIDS worldwide. Based in New York, working on projects in Africa, and teamed up with professionals with years of experiences in finance, business, and medicine, I had diverse international exposure while staying within the U.S. I was responsible for developing a knowledge database on the

effectiveness and efficiency of HIV prevention interventions. I learned the difficulties in translating research findings to practices and realized the importance of transdisciplinary problem solving approaches. All of these experiences made me realize how much I enjoy doing practice-oriented research, and helped me decide to pursue a PhD.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Student:** Jasmine Bass, MSW, 2012  
**Agency:** Project ARK  
**Location:** St. Louis



When I picked my foundation practicum at Project ARK (AIDS, Resources, Knowledge)

I was seeking the opportunity to work on a micro level while also understanding the administrative aspects of running a non-profit and the impact of the HIV disease in low-income communities.

I assisted in group facilitation and community outreach. One of my most rewarding experiences was assisting in facilitation with the L.I.F.E. program. The program specifically worked with women from a low socio-economic status and gave them the tools to cope

with living with the disease. I was initially nervous about how the women would perceive me (someone from a different socio-economic status and not living with HIV). However, at the end of the program I felt very accepted by the women and forever changed by the impact of HIV on individuals, families, and communities. I was inspired by these women because they realized life did not stop after HIV and were working to live healthy lives.

## PRACTICUM AWARDS

The **Dr. Clara Louise Myers Outstanding Practicum Student Award** nominations are due **March 9**.

This award is given to recognize one outstanding student in the MSW program from each concentration area:

- Children, Youth & Families
- Gerontology
- Social Economic Development
- Mental Health
- Health
- Individualized

Candidates have completed a concentration-level practicum and are eligible for graduation in December 2011, May 2012, or August 2012. These students have demonstrated initiative, self-awareness, and commitment to the ethical values of the profession.

**Nominate** your public health student for the **MPH Outstanding Practicum Student Award** by **March 9**.

## 4th Annual Institute for Public Health Conference: "Beyond Borders: Transforming Health at Home and Abroad."

On October 5, the Institute's conference brought together 295 health care professionals and students for poster presentations, break-out sessions, and an informative key note address: "Global Health in the 21st Century: A View from Fogarty," delivered by **Dr. Roger Glass**, Director of the Fogarty International Center.



*Suzanne LeLaurin, MSW, LCSW, leads the discussion, "Our Newest Neighbors: Meeting the Needs of St. Louis' Increasingly Diverse Population."*

Field Instructors **Suzanne LeLaurin**, International Institute of Metro St. Louis Senior Vice President, and **Kristin Bulin**, Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma Executive Director, served as panelists. Their discussion explored the cultural context and challenges of health care services for immigrants and refugees in St. Louis.

Field instructor **Cindy Mense**, Trailnet Director of Community Services, presented "Community-wide obesity prevention: Re-connecting

public health, urban planning, and public policy in three Missouri communities." Her team's poster was one of two "2011 Outstanding Conference Abstract Award" winners. Field Instructors **James Teufel**, OASIS, Center for Tobacco Policy Research, and **Katie Duggan**, Brown School, Prevention Research Center, were a few of several field instructors presenting posters.

Student **Whitney Key** teamed with recent MPH graduate **Dr. Ravikumar Chockalingam** and field instructor **Zeena Johar**, President, IKP Centre for Technologies in Public Health, India, to submit an entry for the Chronic Disease Risk Factors category. Student **Anne Roux** worked with



*Dr. Chockalingam's presentation "A Transdisciplinary Approach Towards Understanding Hypertension in Rural India" was an award-winning poster.*

Brown School professors **Paul Shattuck**, who served as her practicum field instructor, and **Matt Kreutter** to submit an entry for the Mental Health category. Other MPH alums with poster presentations included **Amelia Brandt** and **Andrea Spray**.

For more information about the Institute and upcoming events, visit [publichealth.wustl.edu](http://publichealth.wustl.edu).

## Anyone at your agency considering a master's degree in social work or public health?

Learn about the Brown School curriculum, admissions requirements, scholarships and practicum opportunities from an admissions representative and current students.

### **Master of Social Work Information Session**

Tuesday, March 20, 2012  
Goldfarb 132  
6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

### **Master of Public Health Information Session**

Wednesday, March 21, 2012  
Goldfarb 132  
6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

For more information contact [brownadmissions@wustl.edu](mailto:brownadmissions@wustl.edu).

## MPH ACCREDITATION UPDATE

The Brown School submitted its self-study document to the Council on Education Public Health last fall. A team of representatives from CEPH visited our School in December to assess our MPH program. While here the team met with student representatives, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and community leaders. They presented a preliminary report that was very promising. We met over 90% of the criteria.

We expect a final vote on accreditation in June 2012. We appreciate all of your feedback concerning practicum experience.

## Professional Development Workshops

We offer a 40% discount to Brown School field instructors. Most of our classes are eligible for Missouri & Illinois Social Work continuing education units (CEUs). For complete course information and to register, visit [brownschool.wustl.edu/profdev](http://brownschool.wustl.edu/profdev).

### Federal Grantseeking – 6 CEUs

Friday, March 30; 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

This course is designed to demystify the process of identifying and developing successful government grant proposals and to help you determine what to do once the grant is received. You will learn the steps of completing a federal grant and construct a tool-kit that will support their government grant writing efforts.

### Time Management Strategies for Social Services Professionals – 3 CEUs

Friday, April 13; 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Are you overwhelmed? Inundated with email, reports, articles and meetings? The science of stamina has advanced to allow individuals, teams, and organizations to significantly increase their capacity to get things done. Learn some practical, straightforward interventions to improve your productivity and help you control your time.

### Improving Your Program Design Process: Using Models to Identify Opportunities and Outcome Measures – 3 CEUs

Friday, May 4; 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Managing staff presents a myriad of ethical challenges as the caring supervisor attempts to balance interests of individual staff members while firmly pursuing organizational goals. Even good managers can lose their ethical balance or fail to see ethical conflicts until after a questionable decision has been made. This workshop will leverage the NASW Code of Ethics to help managers be alert for challenges on the horizon and be proactive in preventing ethical breakdowns.

## RESOURCES



Are you familiar with **Heard@Brown**? The Brown School hosts an array of social work, social policy, and public health lectures. We have compiled an online audio library of key speakers that are available to field instructors who can't make it to our campus for lectures. You can listen in your office or download the MP3 to take it on the go.

## Field Instructor Appreciation Day March 16, 2012

**Early Bird:** **Ethical Considerations When Working With People With Cognitive Impairment** – 1.5 CEUs  
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.  
Presenter: Cheryl Wingbermuehle,  
*MSW, Alzheimer's Association*

This session will cover ethical issues that may arise when working with individuals with cognitive impairment, the use of decision making tools and processes, and the role of the social worker/ health care advocate.

**Lunch:** 12:00 pm - 12:50 pm, Brown Lounge

**Afternoon Workshops:** 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm  
Select up to three (3) of the following afternoon workshops.

**Session 1:** **Recognizing and Resolving Ethical Dilemmas in Suicide Prevention** – 1 CEU  
Presenter: Brad Overmeyer, *LMSW – Veteran's Affairs Medical Center Suicide Prevention Team, Suicide Prevention Social Worker*  
This presentation is intended to train social workers and mental health providers to identify and to appropriately problem solve ethical issues related to suicide prevention.

**Session 2:** **Field Instructors Evidence-Based Database** – 1 CEU  
Presenter: Sylvia Toombs, *Washington University, Brown School*  
The workshop will be hands-on for practical experience and will cover the Field Instructor's Evidence-Based Database.

**Session 3:** **Effective Communication Builds Effective Professional Relationships** – 1 CEU  
Presenter: Gerty O'Leary, *O'Leary, Brokaw and Associates, Inc.*  
Guided inquiry and a managed conversation will be the means by which to identify common communication issues that impact the quality of the workplace environment.

**Session 4:** **Beyond Today: Tools for Professional Transition** – 1 CEU  
Presenter: Robert Cazy, *Brown School*  
Are you building capacity for a new role in your organization, in your field, or beyond? Does your resume speak to your potential? Bring your resume for an exercise at this session.

[Click here to register for workshops.](#)

# FIELD EDUCATION CALENDAR

SPRING 2012

## MARCH

- 9 Dr. Clara Louise Myers Outstanding Practicum Student Award **nominations** due
- 
- 9 MPH Outstanding Practicum Student Award **nominations** due
- 
- 12-16 Spring Break
- 
- 16 Field Instructor Appreciation Day **Event** (Brown School)

## APRIL

- 6 **Collaborative Field Instructor Training** Session #5: Field Instructor as Teacher, Mentor, and Supervisor (UMSL)
- 
- 27 **EBP Training**, Part 1 morning (Brown School)
- 
- 27 **EBP Training**, Part 1 afternoon (Brown School)

## MAY

- 3 Final Evaluation of Practicum due
- 
- 4 **EBP Training**, Part 2 morning (Brown School)
- 
- 4 **EBP Training**, Part 2 afternoon (Brown School)
- 
- 11 **Collaborative Field Instructor Training** Session #6: From Practicum Student to Professional Social Worker (Brown School)

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your contact information.

Join the Brown School Community on



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Connect with us  
on LinkedIn.**

**Join our Group:**  
Brown School at Washington  
University in St. Louis,  
March 1 -22 to be entered  
to win prizes.