

**THE CHAT ROOM TOOK PLACE BETWEEN 7 PM AND 9 PM EST ON
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2008**

Thank you to all the participants of the Chat Room; an edited copy of the transcript from the Chat Room discussion is below. Please note that to facilitate ease in reading, the order of the discussion may have been modified or edited to follow specific threads of conversation. We also noted that, due to the speed of the Chat Room, on occasion a question was missed; these answers have been inserted into the transcript after the chat room closed.

For follow up on any of the Chat Room topics, please call the Admission Office at (413) 585-7960. Or you may reach specific Chat Room facilitators as follows:

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IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Hello and welcome to the chat room!

MELODYMW: Hi, I am interested in the PhD program. Will you be discussing it?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Hi, Melody. No, this is specifically for MSWs.

MELODYMW: Ok, I will call and set something up. Thanks and good night.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Good night, Melody. Call me at (413) 585-7960.

MELODYMW: I will. Thanks!

LISAGALLEGOS: Hello! I am unable to be on for long, but I will definitely follow-up with the department in the next week. Thank you for providing this forum! I understand that the transcripts will be made available.

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: We're here to answer any questions you might have- anyone have something they're wondering about?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Welcome to the SSW chat room. I'm the Director of Admission and Carolyn is the Dir of Field work, and we're having some technical difficulties, but will be joined by Dr. Josh Miller soon, too.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Hi everyone, I am in a faculty member here - so please let me know what your questions are!

NAOMIMELLIOTT: Yes, is there a format for the expanded resume? My resume seems rather long.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: The resume format should follow a traditional resume (using dates, and dividing work and volunteer activities) but we want much more detail than a normal resume. Feel free to expand over more than one page.

BRUNOTRINDADE: Are field placements determined for an individual primarily on that person's interests or preferred geographical location?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: The field committee tries to take both into account- a student's geographic preference (particularly if they have family, partner, household, etc.) and a student's learning goals and interests.

LISAGALLEGOS: So, there is the possibility that a student may be placed in a geographic area different than the student's preference? Is that correct?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: We ask each student to identify 4 top choices and we try very hard to get students not only into one of their choices but one of their first or second if at all possible. We know that students oftentimes have personal/economic reasons to stay in a particular area and we try to meet that when we can - most students in fact get their top choices.

SARAHKEYES: Hello! I am wondering about submitting official undergraduate transcripts. I have official, sealed copies in my possession--is it ok to mail these with my application or do they have to come directly from the universities I have attended?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: You can mail them with your application as long as they are sealed; otherwise transcripts should come from the college.

BRUNOTRINDADE: Irene, I have some volunteer experience, but less than a year. Will this have significant impact on my desirability?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Volunteer work is very helpful but it is only one part of your application. We'd also be interested in what you majored in and what other activities you've been involved in.

JMYERS: Are students ever paid for field placements?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: We do have a few placements that offer stipends but there aren't really too many. We encourage students to apply for financial aid so that field choices don't have to be dictated too much by finances.

SARAHKEYES: Can you give a sense of what portion of incoming students do not have career or educational background in human services and how they adjust to the learning curve so to speak?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: I'd say there is a real mixture. Younger students often come from related fields, older students are often career changers but there are many who come from some human service background. In terms of their learning curve, I'd say they learn quickly (out of necessity); but most have some familiarity with the profession.

JMYERS: I wonder how closely the supervision is connected with the course work topics. Also, are there contacts between the student and the faculty on campus during the field work placements?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: The courses are very carefully designed to help prepare students for field and our students have the great advantage of entering the field placement after having taken 2 semesters of course work- it's a good preparation. Once in the field, students work closely with a supervisor from the agency and with a faculty field advisor from the school- They write to the advisor, the advisor calls twice a year, visits in person twice a year and keeps in close contact throughout.

STRELLAWILSON: I have been struggling with deciding what to include in my autobiographical statement, because the guidelines seem so broad. Do you have any tips for what the admissions committee will be looking for?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: My best advice is to answer the question, they really are looking for comments in all of those areas. In essence, we want to know who you are, where did you come from, what life events/relationships shaped who you are and shaped your current desire to become a clinical social worker.

BRUNOTRINDADE: Irene, my BA is in Religious Studies, and I also have an MS in Computer Science. I guess I thought that in my case, the volunteering I've done would have greater weight since I don't work in a related field.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: In light of your background I think the volunteer work would certainly add to your qualifications. What kind of volunteer work have you been doing?

BRUNOTRINDADE: I worked at McLean at first doing research, and then I lead a journaling group with in-patient teens. It was one of the things that solidified my decision to apply.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: I think that's excellent exposure and experience; it will be nice to read more about it in your sketch.

DNAYAR: Would the hours worked during placement count toward the supervised hours needed to achieve one's clinical license?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Graduating from an accredited program allows you to receive a certain level of license. Usually another 2 years with an MSW supervisor is needed to take the exam for the highest license - independent clinical social worker. Each state has slight variations on this.

ANACAROLINA: Carolyn: when the students are in the field placements are there writing assignments? And if so are they personally reflective or are they theory related?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: I'd say a bit of both. Students write once a month to their advisors and those narratives tend to be more personal and reflective- how it's going in the field, how the learning is progressing etc. Then there are more formal assignments- case studies, assessments, etc.

GRACEDANBORN: Could you tell us more about the overseas placement options?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: We have some in Thailand but are having discussions about expanding to other countries. Check back in with Irene in the Admissions office for an update.

MZANKO: Does Smith accept transfer credits from other schools of social work to substitute for classes offered there? And if so, how many classes can be transferred?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: We accept 18-20 credits from another accredited MSW program; these are approved by the sequence chair.

ANACAROLINA: If one has experience in the spiritual and healing arts field can that tie into the field work assignments and reflection work?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: These areas are certainly important aspects of people's lives and experience in those fields provides a nice background to what we teach here. This program has a defined clinical focus that would build on your previous work in important ways.

NICVENGROVE: Hello! I am wondering if you can describe what the supervision is like in the field? How involved is the onsite/fieldwork supervisor? If there are problems at a student's fieldwork site, does Smith faculty intervene and/or mediate?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Every student receives a minimum of two hours per week from an on-site, MSW supervisor. Then someone like me acts as a faculty field advisor. I

receive reports from students every month, call twice a year and visit twice a year. If there any problems to work out, I immediately engage in problem solving with supervisors and students.

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: I would add that our program provides more advising than most schools- I think it's fair to say that students form strong relationships with their advisors who become important mentors and sources of support.

BRUNOTRINDADE: I am also interested in international field placements. Is there a place to specify this in the application?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: International field placements are reserved for second year students. There is a process on campus for those who are interested to apply for consideration in their second year.

ANACAROLINA: It sounds like there may be flexibility if a student has experience with healing and spirituality as a form of therapy in their previous work? Are there courses that offer this kind of knowledge or give the student the ability to incorporate their spiritual work into a clinical practice?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: We offer an elective in spirituality and social work and in my disaster mental health course we do a mindfulness exercise at the beginning and end of class. Also, there are yoga, Tai-Chi and mediation offerings outside of classes during the summer.

ANACAROLINA: Interesting, Josh. I have a lot of experience with Shamanic work as it is a part of my culture. I would hope to integrate that into my field and school work.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: I would hope that we have space for you to integrate your meaningful experience. At the same time we are teaching new theories and skills which are important to practice and master.

JMYERS: I have a question about the social welfare and policy sequence -- especially in regard to advocacy. I'd like to know more about specific ways and avenues that social workers have advocated for social change. I guess I have thought this was more of a lawyer's realm and am very interested to learn more about the role of social workers in advocacy, especially for children.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: I am the Chair of the Policy sequence. Every policy course has a component that focuses on advocacy and social change, particularly from the perspective of clinical social workers. The social work profession has an outstanding history of advocating for social change. We are involved in influencing health care policy, mental health, child welfare, etc. We do this in a variety of ways - meeting with lawmakers, writing policy briefs, educating the public, demonstrating and through research and analysis.

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: You might be interested, for example, in the work we are doing with Hofstra Law School in which a social work student is placed in the law clinic itself, helping families that are court involved, refugees and immigrants in need of both legal and social support, advising around the needs of kids in need of service, etc.

JMYERS: Thank you for these examples of advocacy work. Josh, would social workers doing the kind of writing and research you mention do so as part of their work in a non-profit agency? I am more familiar with social workers within schools and clinical settings and am trying to picture what these other settings might be that provide such opportunities.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: All of our first year students have to do a community project which can involve advocacy work in a clinical setting, but also in more grass root agencies. Second year students have to do a major research project - a thesis. So, we are training our students to be able to be policy advocates and researchers as well as clinicians. Most agencies that employ clinical social workers need these skills - working with boards, school committees, local elected officials - analyzing client data. Also, most agencies join with other agencies to form coalitions to amplify their lobbying power. Do you want more specific details?

JMYERS: Josh, not right now -- the examples you and Carolyn have given are very helpful. I do want to learn more about this aspect of social work, however.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Although we are decidedly a clinical program we have a very strong policy sequence and our students graduate with a range of skills that permit them to intervene at many system levels.

ANACAROLINA: Are there specialties within the school of social work that a student could focus on?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Hi Ana, all of our students get a strong focus on clinical work with a specialization in mental health. Within that students can get a broad based exposure to lots of different populations and modalities as well as a specialized focus around particular areas such as work with children, families, medically ill clients, trauma, international work, etc.

ANACAROLINA: Thanks Carolyn, could trauma research and study be specialized? I have a lot of experience around trauma and sexual assault and would like to work with that population in my field work and clinical work.

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: This is a great example of how students can focus their field placements, course electives and thesis topic. A student might, for example, work with kids in the first year, perhaps some of whom have a trauma history, then with adult trauma survivors in the second year, select course electives to support that work and do a thesis in the area as well. We also have a wide array of course electives (more than most schools) so students can concentrate on particular areas of interest both in the classroom and in the field.

ANACAROLINA: Do students have a choice on what population to work with in their field placements? I know that students have choices on where they would like to be placed, does it specify the type of clients and work the students will be doing?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: The field committee looks at what a student has done before Smith and tries to select a first year placement that builds on that previous experience but doesn't replicate it. So if you've only worked with kids before, we might want you to "stretch" a bit and work with some adults in the first year. The second year- once you have a broad based set of practice skills under your belt- becomes the more clear opportunity for a defined specialization. Make sense?

STRELLAWILSON: How common is it for graduates of the program to work for one of the organizations where they did a field placement?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: It happens all of the time!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: One of the most common employers for our students has been one of their field sites.

GRACEDANBORN: Hi. I was surprised to learn that there are over 100 students in a summer class - is that correct? How many applications does the school receive? Are actual class sizes limited?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: We have a small program with each entering class being about 125 students. We receive about 350 applications a year. In all, with the doctoral students, there are about 450 students on campus. This lends to an intimate and personal teaching environments.

TOBY: Can you talk a little bit about the environment on campus in the summers? What's it like? I imagine things can get pretty busy with course work, etc. Do you think I will be able to work during the summer?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: The environment during the summer is very rich. We form a learning community with students from all over the country and world as well as a diverse faculty. Students rate their learning in our courses very highly but also seem to gain a lot from all of the other aspects of campus life - workshops, student organizations, lectures, films, lobbying and advocacy efforts.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: To add to what Josh offered, I'd say that a majority of our students work while they are in the field, but it is more difficult to work during the summer months.

GRACEDANBORN: Are accepted applicants allowed to defer?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Yes, accepted students can request a one year deferral.

TOBY: Do students have an opportunity to take electives?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: We have a wide range of electives in each of the academic sequences and second and third summer students are able to select courses that both support their particular field placements and their areas of interest for work beyond Smith.

NAOMIMELLIOTT: Will early application be processed when received or after the Jan. deadline?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: At this point, unless your application is already complete, you will hear the first week in February. Is your application in process? Once an application is complete, it takes 4 - 6 weeks to be reviewed... and we are pretty close to the Christmas break. So if your application is complete by 1/5, you will hear the first week of February.

STRELLAWILSON: I speak both English and Spanish, which I imagine would be an advantage in the social work field. However, I have had little opportunity to practice my Spanish in the last few years. Do you know if there are any opportunities on campus over the summer to brush up? Conversation classes or anything like that?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: There are often Spanish tables on campus where students like yourself meet and talk in Spanish to keep your skills up.

ANACAROLINA: Do you require transcripts from all previous colleges during the time of application. Or will the most recently attended University contain all the information you need?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: If the transcript from your final institution includes the classes AND grades from each of the previous institutions, we don't need transcripts from the other institutions; if the final transcript does not include that information, then we need all the previous transcripts.

GRACEDANBORN: Could you speak a bit more about the opportunities students have to help faculty with research projects?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: A number of us hire students to work with us on research projects. Also, thesis advisors and students sometimes collaborate using the same data sets. One of our faculty has done a lot of research projects with students while they are here and has continued to work with them - presenting at conferences and writing papers for publication.

GRACEDANBORN: Thanks, Josh. And are those collaborative relationships formed organically? Does faculty make research opportunities available formally?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: There is an application process and usually the faculty seeking a research student interviews those who are interested before making a decision.

ANACAROLINA: Thanks Irene. I still need to complete my last semester at Umass and I will be done after the spring session of 09. Will I be able to apply to start in the summer 09?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Send your transcript as of the time of your application and a conditional decision will be made. You will need to submit your final transcript later in the spring.

ANACAROLINA: How easily are students placed in jobs after graduation? Have the job placements been through the school and are they within the field of expertise?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: We have a great track record of placing students after graduation. Our career development helps out and also many of our students end up getting job offers at one or both of their placements. All of the alumni who keep in touch with me have jobs if they are actively looking.

BL_FLOWERS: Hello everyone! I live in Toronto Canada and of course what comes to mind is the fear of the cost to cover the 18 months as an advanced BSW candidate.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: The BSW program has changed for 2008. Advanced standing (AS) students get placed within a two hour distance from Smith. The program is now 18 months.

BL_FLOWERS: OK. That is helpful to know. Thanks!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: The other thing I should point out in the new BSW program is that field is three days a week, so that leaves more room to work while in placement.

MZANKO: How much exposure (working in human services, volunteering) to social work do you want to see in applicants? And how much does your college major matter in the application process? (Mine was English.)

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Exposure to social work or populations with which social work works should be either in your undergrad major or volunteer/paid work. In other words, we are hoping that you have had some exposure that informs your commitment to clinical social work.

JROBBINS: I'm here to see what kinds of questions others are asking (that maybe I haven't thought of!). I was able to attend the open house in October, which I found very helpful. One

question I had was about the research collaboration with faculty during the placements - how are these students selected? Is there an application procedure?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Last year about 6 - 7 students did research with faculty; they applied to positions that faculty posted once they arrived on campus.

ANACAROLINA: Is the financial aid and grants commonly given to students, and have students been able to get loans or grants to assist with living expenses?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: The SSW awards need based financial aid (\$1,000 - \$16,000 - grants) and we also help students secure federal loans. We also have a few merit scholarships. I'd say most of our students have a combination of aid, loans and some part time work.

IMOGENET: I went to U.C. Santa Cruz for undergrad and got narrative evaluations instead of letter grades. Will it be a problem that I don't have a GPA?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Imogene, this is not a problem at all. Sometimes narrative evaluations say a lot more than a letter-grade!

IMOGENET: Excellent. Thank you. What about the option of deferring for a year?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Imogene - yes, accepted students may request a one year deferral.

BL_FLOWERS: Is financial aid an option for non US residents?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Sorry - it is only available for US citizens and permanent residents due to limited resources.

BL_FLOWERS: OK, now I know that I have to work diligently at budgeting. I attended the Reaching for Excellence Forum and I am excited about getting my Masters at Smith so of course I want to get accepted!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Well, welcome! And we are looking forward to your application as well!

JROBBINS: The summer sessions seem like they are pretty intensive - do students often hold part time jobs during the summer as well as during placement?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: They are intensive and require lots of reading and writing as well as attending all classes. Some students do work as well during the summer but the number of available hours is limited.

ANACAROLINA: Is the part time work option affiliated with the school and social work type of position?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: The part time work students secure they secure on their own... and it can be in any area (I assume you are talking about working part time while students are in the field).

ANACAROLINA: Yes, Irene I am concerned about covering my living expenses during the last year or so into the program.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Working part time is very common while students are in the field and it is helpful in defraying costs.

ANACAROLINA: Yes. As a single parent this is very important to me and I also do not want to move as my children are finally stable here in Amherst.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: The field office works very carefully when placing students; having children is a priority in selecting a field placement that will work for a student.

ANACAROLINA: I really hope this works. I really look forward to this program and hope my application turns out well.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Ana - I would also suggest applying early admission as you will get priority in field selection; and about 85% of early applicants get their first choice of geography for field.

ANACAROLINA: Do you require the full application or can I send a main part of it in?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: You can send the main part independent of the rest and then just submit the other pieces as they are complete.

GRACEDANBORN: Carolyn, in the audio portion of the open house you mentioned that field work placement agencies must apply to be affiliated with Smith. How long does that process usually take?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Agencies apply to us and the field committee makes decisions every year about the range and mix of agencies in each geographic area. Because we take in roughly the same number of students each year we don't typically add very many new placements each year but each year we add a few as needed- again, based on the mix we need in each city.

NAOMIMELLIOTT: Can you give me an idea of how much time per week is spent on campus during the summer courses. This will give me an idea of how to plan the summer for my two children.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: You will be in classes about 22 hours per week. On top of that you will need some library time although you can now do a lot of research on-line. There are lots of optional things but you don't need to attend them. Every Monday there is a major lecture but these are also optional. There are always a number of parents with children who are often part of a support group and who try and pool resources and information about how to make the program work and also be an attentive parent.

BL_FLOWERS: I have another question about the scary topic of research! Do I have state in advance what areas I would like to concentrate on?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Research (which can sound scary but which students tend to actually end up enjoying- or at least valuing!) I would reassure you that you do not need to know now- though it's ok if you do- what area you might like to pursue. Students don't have to narrow that down until the second year.

ANACAROLINA: This sounds like a wonderful program.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: I do think this is a great program.... but you don't have to take my word for it. I'm happy to connect you with a student who can talk about it from his/her perspective.

ANACAROLINA: That would be nice Irene. One concern I have is evening classes and getting child care.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Email me in the morning and I'll connect you with our volunteer coordinator. With regard to evening classes, there are very few. I would also suggest connecting with our Registrar early on and seeing if she can help you with your schedule to accommodate your child care needs.

ANACAROLINA: Wonderful!

IMOGENET: Do most students live on campus during the summer sessions?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: About 1/2 of the students live on campus and 1/2 off... more first years are on campus.

JROBBINS: Related to research, can someone explain a bit more about the thesis?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Every second year student takes a required research class during their second summer. Then they are assigned a research advisor who works with them

during the placement terms. The thesis is an original piece of research - it can either involve direct research (e.g. a questionnaire, interviews) or a theoretical research which involves a more in-depth lit. review. What else would you like to know?

JROBBINS: Thanks, Josh, that's helpful. Are there any theses that are available to read? I'd be interested in getting a sense of how they are structured, though it sounds like this could vary based on the research method.

GRACEDANBORN: I live in Alaska and have some reservations about being away from my partner for 27 months. There's a Smith alumna, Kimberly Nelson, who did the same thing and told me it was well worth it. She's now a clinical supervisor at an Anchorage children's inpatient mental health facility.

IMOGENET: Are you in the process of or planning to expand the international internship placements?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: We currently have 3 students in Thailand and are hoping to expand our "global perspectives" focus to include work in Puerto Rico within the next year or so.

GRACEDANBORN: Sorry about that - could you give us an idea of what percentage of students go on to publish their research work or thesis?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Grace, I really don't have a figure. But if someone is serious about wanting to publish their thesis, then they usually do so. Also, our journal, *Smith Studies in SW*, which is a peer reviewed journal often publishes a number of thesis. Also, some students continue to pursue their research after they leave and publish things years later.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Grace - if you are interested in the kind of research students do complete, all theses are logged in the Smith College library.

NAOMIMELLIOTT: Irene, which part of the application is the main part?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: You can submit Part I to begin with (I think that's what I'd call the main part as it opens a file for you here in the office).

ELIZAK: I have been reading the conversation and it's very helpful.

NICVENGROVE: Thank you for all your help--I've really enjoyed this conversation!

JGASHLEY: I listened to your presentation and found it very helpful and well done!

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Do you have some questions about the program, that we might be able to answer?

BL_FLOWERS: Thanks to all who have joined in this chat. My questions were answered and I will begin my application process and hope for the best. Thank you very much and good night!

JGASHLEY: I would like to know the types of classes that are given during the summer. I looked over the offerings and wanted to know more.

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: In the first summer students take a 60 hour practice class which focuses on individual and family treatment, a family theory course, development courses, policy courses, sociocultural concepts, a group course- all of which help get folks ready for first year field,. Second summer offers more theory, more practice courses, a course on racism in the US and gets students ready to start the research project. Both second and third summers offer lots of electives to chose from.

ALSOALTO: I've been reading with interest both the questions and answers. I also listened to the virtual visit online - very informative and gives a great sense of the spirit as well as content of the program.

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Also - glad to hear it.

JGASHLEY: How are students evaluated in course work?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: We have a pass/fail system. Students are evaluated for class participation, written work and sometimes classes have group presentations. We emphasize giving students detailed comments about their work.

JGASHLEY: Could you expand on detailed comments?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: Rather than focusing on a grade, we try and give students lots of feedback about their ideas, clinical notions, creativity, critical thinking, writing style, and overall grasp and comprehension of the course material as evidenced in the assignment.

JGASHLEY: What are some typical subjects of research projects?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Students pursue a wide range of topics around clinical work with a range of populations, issues related to clinician's identities, specific clinical problems and presentations, antiracism work- It's hard to detail in full here so I'd encourage you to look at the full listing of recent topics on our web page.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: You can find a listing of all of last year's topics at http://www.smith.edu/ssw/admin/academics_titles.php.

JGASHLEY: Do you accept any transfer credits?

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: We do accept transfer credits from another accredited MSW program. One can transfer up to 18 credits at the discretion of the sequence chair.

JGASHLEY: Irene, thank you. I have a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from Boston University and would be a refugee from a Ph.D. Clinical Psychology program at Alliant International University and am not sure about those hours.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Unfortunately, our accrediting body only allows us to accept credits from another accredited MSW program.

GRACEDANBORN: Thank you all for your time. I've found this to be most helpful!

ELIZAK: Sorry if this has been answered before; I currently work in a school and really enjoy that setting. Do graduates find placement in either public or private schools as school social workers?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: We have a number of school-based placements in which students can train- and many students do go on to find jobs in those settings after graduation. We are in preschool, elementary, high school and alternative high school programs- a wide range of school settings

JGASHLEY: How do you develop your placement sites?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Agencies interested in affiliation apply to us and the field committee makes decisions each year about any new agency affiliations we might want to open. Decisions are based on the clinical populations available, the quality of supervision and the mix of settings we have in any given geographic area- We like to have a nice mix in each city of child, adult, inpatient and outpatient settings and we look for agencies with a strong commitment to our antiracism mission.

JROBBINS: Thanks to chatters for your good questions and to Irene, Josh and Carolyn for your helpful answers. I look forward to submitting my application!

JGASHLEY: And-what is the supervision level at the placement sites and how are students evaluated there?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: All of our students receive 2 hours of individual MSW level supervision each week from their agency-based supervisor. Oftentimes students also receive secondary or adjunctive supervision from other staff who may be of other allied disciplines. In terms of evaluation- we have defined learning objectives for first and second year field and students are evaluated on those objectives by the field supervisor. Students are also given feedback by their faculty field advisors who are in close touch throughout the year

JGASHLEY: Do you maintain data on licensure pass rates?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: We don't have statistics but all three of us, through our contacts with alums, think it is 100%

JGASHLEY: WOW!

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: We have great students here and our program covers all of the bases that a license exam asks about.

JGASHLEY: I understand your firm commitment to antiracism. As an older student, however I have encountered a lot of ageism at many levels. Could you please comment on that?

ALSOALTO: I am also an older student, so I am also interested in the issue of ageism.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: I know Carolyn is typing away at a more detailed response, but I will add that our student body ranges from 22 - 65 each year, so there are older students on campus!

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: I think this program (and the community itself) is mindful about a number of factors which impact people- including ageism. We have a growing interest here on campus in the important issues which impact people across the life-cycle and we have a very diverse student body- with a wide range of ages!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: There is a student group called "SAGE" on campus for any student who considers him/herself as "older".

ALSOALTO: That's very encouraging - I don't feel "older", though there are probably many others who might consider me to be older!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Not sure where you fit, but the average age is about 30... there really is a diversity of students!

JGASHLEY: Wonderful to have the SAGE Organization! I am also curious based upon class room experience with younger students if there are enforced rules about cell phone use, appropriate clothing (non-beach) and so on.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: We expect professional and respectful behavior in the classroom.

JGASHLEY: How many total hours are required for field placement over the total degree program?

JOSH MILLER, RESIDENT FACULTY: 1920, as opposed to the 900 required by our accrediting body.

ELIZAK: Thank you to all for the helpful conversation - good night!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Just a quick check-in...we have about 4 minutes left for any final questions....

KMCCARTHY: Do you ever have problems midway through placements? Have students raised concerns or had to leave before the nine months were up? If so, what happens then?

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: I would say that most students do very well, and that most placements work out very well. There are of course issues that can come up along the way, which is why we work to maintain a strong advising system to help students "problem-solve" along the way.

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: I would add that the Field Office is very accessible to help students work through issues.

IMOGENET: Thank you so much for your time and the information. I'm excited about this program and looking forward to applying.

MZANKO: It was helpful to watch this conversation. The program sounds wonderful. Good night.

JGASHLEY: Thank you for the information; The program certainly sounds like it measures up to its reputation.

KMCCARTHY: Thanks! Many of my questions were asked and I've appreciated all the answers. Great dialogue. Thanks again!

IRENE RODRIGUEZ MARTIN, DIR OF ADMISSION: Well - we've come to the end of our chat. Thank you all for joining us. Please email in the morning if there are left over questions! Good night!

CAROLYN DU BOIS, DIR OF FIELD: Good night, all.

ALSOALTO: Thank you for your insight and information on this wonderful program.