Dear community members;

On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law as one of the nation’s most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation. For 25 years, the ADA has been the cornerstone in the protection of the civil rights of people with disabilities. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it prohibits both public and private organizations from discriminating against individuals on the basis of disability.

On college and university campuses around the country, the ADA has meant the removal of numerous obstacles to education. It prompted the identification and dismantling of many barriers to participation in campus life—a process that continues today. The pursuit of higher education became more accessible to people with a wider range of abilities and experiences.

As social workers, we know that access and equity are the keys to unlocking the full potential of individuals and communities. We have a keen awareness of the harm that is done when access is denied and equity is absent—and we see the effects of this harm as ripples that extend from the individual to the family, community and society. We know, also, that the impact of discrimination is compounded when it is experienced on multiple fronts. As a result, we believe that efforts to improve accessibility and equity must be built on an intersectional social justice foundation.

At the School for Social Work, our faculty and staff are committed to working toward greater access in our educational programs. This approach means that fewer students would need to register for classroom accommodations in order to participate fully because, to the greatest extent possible, accessibility would be built into the program. By reducing ableism in how we provide access, we aim to create an educational community in which all participants feel valued.

On the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we celebrate and honor the progress that has been made by affirming our commitment to full implementation of the ADA and to continuing our efforts to create consistent and empowering access for all at the Smith College School for Social Work.

In honor of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Students Impacted by Ableism group at the School for Social Work are pleased to offer a discussion with adjunct professor

AndreAs Neumann-Mascis

on July 30, 2015 at 5:45pm in Seelye 201.