



MSW Program at West Chester University

Summer 2016 update

This summer the MSW Program is celebrating our newest graduates and preparing to welcome new cohorts of students. We are also updating our curriculum so it continues to reflect the latest topics in social work.

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Diplomas awarded in West Chester and Philadelphia

*68 students graduate from
two campuses*

For the first time this May, the MSW Program awarded master's degrees during ceremonies at two campuses: West Chester and Philadelphia.

The commencement at the Friends Center in Philadelphia was particularly special because it marked the first time students have graduated from WCU's campus in Center City. The commencement address was delivered by Dr. Mildred C. Joyner, former director of the BSW Program at WCU, a founder of the university's MSW Program, and currently Vice President of the National Association of Social Workers.

This was also the first year in which students and faculty chose graduates to receive a series of awards recognizing a commitment to social work values. The recipients are [listed here](#).

The MSW Program is delighted to welcome these graduates as social work colleagues.

Group helps alumni achieve clinical licensure

MSW alumna runs clinical supervision group

Many beginning social workers plan to earn clinical licenses as a way of opening more career options. One necessary step toward this level of licensure is documented clinical supervision – a sort of mentoring relationship designed to increase a social worker's competence with clients. However, not all work settings provide the supervision social workers need.

For this reason, the MSW Program at WCU created a supervision group in which alumni are receiving the supervision necessary for clinical licensure.

The group is led by Lisa Cerullo, MSW '09, LCSW, who has also served as a Field Instructor while working as a therapist at the [Center for Addictive Diseases](#).

Up to six alumni who work in a variety of agencies have been meeting weekly since October. Discussions include challenges with clients, child-abuse reporting, and case studies of mental health diagnoses.

"It's an eclectic group," Cerullo says. "It allows us to be social workers and look at issues and perspectives through different lenses."

Cerullo is also earning a PhD in social work at Widener University. This fall she plans to defend her doctoral dissertation, a study of the effects of teaching clients with substance abuse disorders about the neuroscience behind addiction.

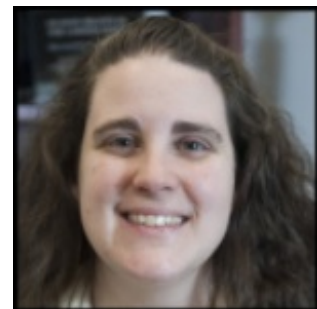
MSW courses to spotlight sustainability, communities, and health

Environmental justice is new curricular focus

One of WCU's main strategic initiatives is [sustainability](#), a concept that means preserving the health and welfare of people and the environment. As one piece of this, Drs. Amber Holbrook and Christina Chiarelli-Helminiak of the MSW Program joined several other faculty around the university to include more sustainability-centered concepts into their courses.

This effort was named the Brandywine Project, after the Brandywine Creek that runs through the greater West Chester area.

Chiarelli-Helminiak redesigned the required MSW course, Human Development



*Dr. Christina
Chiarelli-Helminiak*



Dr. Amber Holbrook

Across the Lifespan, to have more content on how people's health is affected by their socioeconomic status and the environments they live in.

Holbrook is designing a new elective course on social work and [environmental justice](#), which may be offered in the spring or summer of 2017. She says the course will focus on how human behavior affects the environment, how these environmental changes effect people, and how social workers can facilitate community action to bring about positive changes.

She said neighborhoods near Philadelphia oil refineries – which [have been linked](#) to health problems like asthma – are one example. "Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately affected," Holbrook notes.

She is also on the outreach committee for the [March for a Clean Energy Revolution](#) in Center City. This event is planned for Sunday, July 24, the day before the Democratic National Convention starts in Philadelphia.

Recent faculty publications

- **Buck, P.W.**, & Sowbel, L. (2016). [The logistics of practicum: Implications for field education](#). *Field Educator*, 6(1), 1-11.
- **Chen, W-Y.**, Corvo, K., Lee, Y., & Hahm, H.C. (2016). [Longitudinal trajectory of adolescent exposure to community violence and depressive symptoms among adolescents and young adults: Understanding the effect of mental health service usage](#). *Community Mental Health Journal*. Advance online publication.
- Spencer, R., Tugenberg, T., **Ocean, M.**, Schwartz, S.E.O., & Rhodes, J.E. (2016). ["Somebody who was on my side": A qualitative examination of youth initiated mentoring](#). *Youth & Society*, 48(3), 402-424.
- Stanhope, V., **Tennille, J.**, Bohrman, C., & Hamovitch, E. (2016). [Motivational Interviewing: Creating a leadership role for social work in the era of healthcare reform](#). *Social Work in Public Health*. Advance online publication.
- Thomas, R.L., **Chiarelli-Helminiak, C.M.**, Barrette, K., & Ferraj, B. (2016). [Engaging MSW students in faculty research: Students' perspectives of involvement in a program evaluation](#). *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 36(3), 275-288.

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