

ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

THIS SPRING, **KIMBERLY MEDINA** CONFIDENTLY AND PROUDLY WALKED ACROSS THE COMMENCEMENT STAGE TO RECEIVE HER MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (M.S.W.) DEGREE EARNED AT CAL STATE LA DOWNTOWN. NOW IT WAS TIME TO PUT WHAT SHE LEARNED INTO PRACTICE BY FINDING A JOB WHERE SHE COULD HELP TO BRIDGE SOCIETAL DIVIDES.

Through the Cal State LA School of Social Work's M.S.W. ASP (Advanced Standing Program) program, students like Medina master leadership skills to analyze, intervene and evaluate with diverse, underserved, and oppressed clients and communities. Because of the program's Advanced Urban Generalist focus, Cal State LA M.S.W. graduates assume multi-faceted roles as clinicians, group facilitators, supervisors, community organizers, advocates and policy analysts.

According to Siyon Rhee, M.S.W., Ph.D., professor at the School of Social Work, due to Cal State LA's geographic locale, the M.S.W. program curriculum is uniquely designed to reflect the environmental needs of eastern Los Angeles County, especially East Los Angeles or of any urban environment.

” TODAY'S SOCIAL WORKER HAS TO BE READY TO TAKE THEIR PRACTICE TO A HIGHER LEVEL; TO MOVE BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL TO PREVENTION AND INTERVENTIONS PROVIDED ON A LARGE SCALE THAT AFFECT ENTIRE COMMUNITIES AND SYSTEMS OF CARE.

SIYON RHEE, M.S.W., PH.D.



Because the median income of East Los Angeles is lower to other comparable local communities, elective courses within the M.S.W. curriculum provide Cal State LA students with education and training on public and political advocacy, including evidence-based research and statistics, to match the environmental needs of both individuals and the larger population like those within immediate reach of the University. “The urban generalist social worker has to have the capacity to become a change agent to improve systems that will lead to increased mental health outcomes and that is what our program tries to achieve,” says Rhee.

Another key component of the M.S.W. ASP program, says Rhee, is the role of professors who can share their professional practice experiences with students to reinforce course work and allow for lively classroom engagement.

“To prepare students to undertake the rigors of social work, my teaching emphasizes actual client stories culled from years of experience as a social worker. Students tend to remember critical thinking applications better this way and not just through what they've read in textbooks,” says David Green, M.S.W., professor of social work. “I like to think that as professors, we're keeping our students on the cutting-edge of what's going on in the social work universe to help them better understand the field of social work, shifts and trends in the industry, and among populations with the most need.”

► According to U.S. News and World Report (2018), Cal State LA ranks as one of the top M.S.W. programs in Los Angeles County. Rhee believes that a key reason for this achievement is that Cal State LA is a teaching University that places an emphasis on faculty and student interaction and mutual respect. “I encourage active relationships among faculty and students alike. This is the foundation of a quality program,” says Rhee.

“I respected and admired the professors in the program as they provided me with the most current information about the social work field,” says Medina. “Social work is evolving to be more than what it’s been in the past in order to fix some of our nation’s social challenges in a new and exciting way. As a social work urban generalist, I am well-prepared to move beyond direct practice to work toward just social policies, as well as conduct and apply research.”

Almost immediately upon graduation, Medina secured a position at Amanacer, one of Los Angeles’ largest mental health and case management agencies providing services primarily to Hispanic neighborhoods in central and downtown Los Angeles. 🌱

” I APPLIED TO THIS PROGRAM BECAUSE I WANTED TO LEARN, COLLABORATE AND NETWORK WITH OTHERS WHO HAD THE SAME PASSION FOR PROMOTING HUMAN WELL-BEING WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES. MY SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AT CAL STATE LA DOWNTOWN HAS PROVIDED ME WITH THE ETHICAL AND CRITICAL THINKING TOOLS THAT I NEED TO SUCCEED TODAY.

KIMBERLY MEDINA



**CAL STATE LA + MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES
= COMMUNITY-READY SOCIAL WORKERS**

