

Deirdre Finney Boylan

I'm very happy to return to the University of Maine to honor Deirdre Finney Boylan as she retires after almost 17 years as our Program Coordinator for the Hutchinson Center social work programs. Deirdre brought to the School of Social Work an extensive background as a clinical social worker in several behavioral healthcare settings. She also brought an interesting background in theatre including her undergraduate major at Wesleyan University and career experience working in repertory theatre. The combination of her keen clinical expertise, "can-do" attitude from working in the theatre environment, and her excellence in interpersonal communication made her a great match for when we opened our MSW Weekend program at the Hutchinson Center in 2004. Deirdre also brought strong teaching expertise to the position as she had already been teaching part-time in the MSW program for several years. So 2004 she plunged into the complete unknown of helping to develop and coordinate an entirely new way of delivering MSW education at UMaine. This plunge was not for the faint of heart. There were a lot of bumps in the road, missteps, and challenges. Deirdre was always an enthusiastic and committed coordinator as she dealt with interfacing between the School and the Hutchinson Center, thinking creatively about how to deliver the curriculum in a weekend compressed delivery, and supporting students – the majority of whom were working fulltime with significant family responsibilities.

Deirdre has also been a part of the "Field Team". As the Weekend MSW program grew, she took on additional responsibilities for developing field internship sites, communicating to field instructors, and meeting students' needs. In addition, she also volunteered to provide MSW supervision when an agency lacked on-site MSW Field Instruction. These activities expanded with our implementation of BSW courses at the Hutchinson Center. Deirdre showed wonderful flexibility in meeting the needs of the School and students as the live Weekend program changed to meet growing demands across the state – first adapting to the use of a three-site video-conference format, and then to online education. With each change in format, Deirdre maintained her positive attitude, and collaborative team problem solving.

Deirdre continued to practice part-time as a clinical social worker during her time at UMaine. Students often commented on Deirdre's extensive knowledge of social work practice, especially in behavioral health, and her ability to bring the "real world" into their learning. Her high-quality social work practice was also evident in her service to the School. Deirdre provided multiple workshops on social work ethics and psychosocial assessment - topics necessary for Maine's human services community to meet continuing education requirements. She was a member of the MSW admissions committee since she began at the Hutchinson Center. Her professionalism was always evident at MSW Admissions Committee meetings when she offered her cogent insights and raised pertinent questions related to applicants.

During the last several years, as the MSW Weekend program changed into a fully online program, Deirdre worked more and more closely with our Field Team – the

Field Director and our MSW Distance Coordinator – most recently with Nancy Kelly and Leah Maxwell. As the numbers of BSW and MSW students dramatically increased over the last ten years, the demands on the field department also substantially increased and Deirdre became an integral part of that department.

Deirdre can be very proud of all that she accomplished as a key collaborator in the School's field department, and MSW weekend and distance programs. I want to wish Deirdre the very best in her well-deserved retirement.