

## Nancy Kelly

I'm very happy to return to the University of Maine to honor Nancy Kelly as she retires after 28 years as the Field Education Director. I believe that the position of Field Director is one of the most difficult and challenging positions in Schools of Social Work, and I think this is true for our School as well. The Field department is often the lightning rod for student anxiety, expectations, dreams, and fears as internships are planned, developed, and enacted. Field is also the place where faculty and field instructors evaluate students' readiness for a professional social work career – and this evaluation process is often muddy and fraught with complex and competing views. Field was named the “Signature Pedagogy” in the latest version of the Council on Social Work Education accreditation standards because it is the interface between the didactic, academic learning (online and in the classroom), and the application to the real world of social work. As the Field Director for these past 28 years, Nancy has provided extraordinary leadership, commitment, and creativity to making the School of Social Work field curriculum that “Signature Pedagogy”.

Nancy came to UMaine in 1992 during the very beginning stages of the development of the MSW program – our fourth year since inception. This was a time when we had experienced three field directors in four years. In many areas of the state we did not have MSW level field instructors, and internship sites were few or non-existent in the most rural areas of the state. The MSW field curriculum needed major revisions (as did parts of the BSW field curriculum), and the infrastructure for field education – student, faculty, and field orientation programs needed to be created as well as many new policies and procedures. Nancy jumped into her work as Field Director with much passion, commitment and creativity – developing many new field internships, creating field orientation programs, revising the curriculum, and slogging through the creation of policies and procedures. Nancy did all of this with her “glass half full” response to life. She is someone who plunges into challenges with a “can-do” spirit and many times was the person who came up with creative problem solving.

Nancy has been selfless in her willingness to volunteer for many service responsibilities in the School. For example, she sat on the curriculum committee, the MSW admissions committee (and was chair for many years), and every faculty search committee for the past 28 years. She was recognized as UMaine Professional of the Year for her outstanding work organizing the UMaine Mental Illness Awareness Week. For many years, she was the School's point person in the organizing and delivery of our annual Child Welfare Conference - a very time-consuming task. When the School had an opportunity to develop exchanges with Shanghai Oceans University Department of Social Work, Nancy immediately volunteered to co-teach and arrange field visits for a summer exchange program of Chinese students. She has given selflessly to multiple social service organizations including Board chair for Wellspring and a Board member on SAGE. I worked closely with Nancy in developing relationships with Maine's Tribal communities over the course of four Indian Child Welfare grants and beyond. When Nancy arrived, there was only one Native American director of Indian Child Welfare among the four tribal communities. Over the course of her career at UMaine, she built trust and close working relationships with Maine's Tribal health and human services departments. Nancy was

especially good at encouraging Native American health and human services employees to enroll in our BSW and MSW programs. She understood the importance of creating a space within the School for Native American students to feel safe and supported in their educational pursuits.

Nancy went above and beyond as Field Director. She completely revised the BSW Junior Field Experience to give our students a preview to all aspects of the profession. Her recent collaboration with the American Red Cross involved an MSW student intern preparing BSW juniors to provide smoke detectors for Maine's rural elders. Nancy was on the bus or van with students on multiple Saturdays so that students could have this community outreach experience. With our international exchange grants – she offered her home to incoming students before the dorms opened, found supplies for them, offered dinner, and scheduled special field trips. She was creative in figuring out how to translate the workings (and non-workings) of the US social service system for our international students. She routinely provided MSW field instruction to students so that the School could utilize innovative internship sites that lacked MSW field instruction. Over many years, she worked closely with Dr. Len Kaye and the Center of Aging staff in the development of aging-related field internships in support of the Center's multiple educational grants. She was an academic advisor extraordinaire – always trying to figure out the best ways for students to stay on track and meet their educational goals – and routinely carried a heavy load of student advisees. She also volunteered for the not-so-exciting tasks as well such as giving major help to the cleanup in the School after our BSW graduation reception – so that other faculty could attend commencement. One year that involved trying to get a lot of blue icing off our old carpets!

There are many more examples that I could highlight of Nancy's contributions to our School. But I will end by wishing Nancy the very best in her well-deserved retirement. She can be very proud of all that she has accomplished for the School, University, and Profession these past 28 years.