

freedom to be creative and inventive. Being a professor is the greatest job that I could think of. It's fantastic!

What is Social Work Education?

Social Work Education prepares students to help others with the stressful problems of living by means of counseling, advocacy, education, and referral. The field includes problems dealing with mental health, family relations, child welfare, unemployment, marital and sexual difficulties, and alcohol or drug abuse. Although these are very serious problems, I teach my students how to confront these social and personal problems with confidence, competence, and even humor. Social work education is characterized by a balance of classroom and field training. Social workers were originally trained in social agencies and later moved to the university for classroom instruction. Today, we continue to have field studies in agencies as part of social work education.

Can you say something about the history behind these agencies?

Social workers began around the First World War to work in these social agencies, especially in helping immigrants. The famous places were like Hull House in Chicago with Jane Addams [1860–1935], which was called a settlement house. There were settlement houses all up and down the Eastern seaboard and some in the Midwest. Social workers were the employees of these "agencies." Other private and governmental agencies were established during the Great Depression to assist people in need. As that work matured, social work education developed its own body of knowledge and skills, even began teaching people in the agencies. Then the universities began to take it over more and more — the educational part of it. But the agencies continue to be a major part of the education. Our students today spend about half of their time in agencies practicing social work. As a result, our students get a good balance of learning theory and developing their skills. I, therefore, believe social work education is very practical.

What motivates people to go into social work?

I think the majority of the persons who go into this field have done some work with people and liked it. They have been a parent aide in a classroom, volunteered to answer a hotline, worked in a church or hospital, and so forth. From these experiences, they decided to work with people, rather than things, in their careers. As they looked around at the different possibilities for working with people, social work stands out as an ideal choice because both the education and potential employment emphasize direct person-to-person contact.

What attributes make for a good social worker?

Helping people with the complex issues of life is an extremely complicated task that requires intelligence and training. Just relying on one's limited social experience and background without education and training is inadequate. So just being a good guy is not going to do the job. Let me give you an example. A 24-year-old woman goes to work for a social service agency, and she gets as her first case an emergency response situation in which a grandfather is accused of molesting his granddaughter. The grandfather is the employer of the girl's father and has made it clear to the father to, in his words, "Shut that girl up, or I'll fire you!" The father puts pressure on the daughter not to tell. But the daughter has already told some of her girlfriends and school personnel. The social worker is called upon to investigate the case, appear in court, provide services, and, if appropriate, reunify that family with as little disruption as possible. Handling this type of case takes a lot of knowledge, social work skill, and personal strength. Unfortunately, this case is not unusual. It is almost a garden variety case in many agencies. And I don't think people realize the kinds of complexities that the average social worker faces — legal, ethical, social, psychological, and personal complexities. Therefore, being a social worker requires an intelligent, dedicated, and well-trained individual.

Which areas of social work are you particularly interested in teaching?

Self-esteem and human sexuality. Think about it, what is more basic to our personality than our view of ourselves [self-esteem] and our sexuality? My goodness, that permeates so much of our character, our life, our existence, and I have the good fortune to teach about those things. I did my doctoral dissertation on self-esteem. I'm interested in what causes low self-esteem and how to raise it, improve it, and feel better about yourself.

How do you get good self-esteem?

You must value who you are and what you are. In a nutshell, value yourself and conduct your life in such a way that you are positively reinforced — because self-esteem is, in part, developed by how people treat us. If all you hear is that you are no good, you will likely evaluate yourself negatively and feel depressed and self-conscious. Supporting and valuing yourself involves positive thinking, positive behavior, and helping other people to treat you with respect and dignity, including respect for your cultural background, social status, and chosen lifestyle. When I give a lecture on self-esteem, I get a lot of students nodding their heads and agreeing with me.

Can you say something about your experience teaching here?

Fresno State is a great place to teach! The university and the California State University system emphasize teaching, as opposed to research. I believe that classroom education at CSU, Fresno is outstanding because that is our mission and that is what we concentrate on doing well. I am proud and pleased to be a part of this fine university and the California State University system.