

CCCPA Confluence

Words to live by

**Professor's research
spawns life-altering
writing workshop**

Camps connect
grandparents to grandkids

Professor studies
sustainable cities

Social media fosters
civic engagement



When you hear the word “research,” what comes to mind? Do you think of scientists in white lab coats? Microscopes and beakers? The College of Community and Public Affairs might not have any germ-free laboratories, but our faculty engage in ground-breaking research year-round — and this research is making a real impact.

Take, for instance, Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee, who conducts research with grandparents raising grandchildren in the Binghamton region. Through interviews, she found that both grandparents and grandchildren in this situation deal with some very critical issues. To address these issues, she developed a series of interventions and is now developing a model to guide professionals working with grandparents raising grandchildren in other parts of the United States and the world. You can find out more about this story on page 6.

Lee’s work is just one example of the kind of applied research taking place at CCPA. Whether it’s the impact that social media has on the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations (page 12), the positive effects of narrative interventions (page 14) or the ways in which cities are

addressing sustainability (page 9), our faculty are making critical contributions in their respective disciplines and in transdisciplinary areas, and are making a difference in the local community, the nation and the world.

Along with innovative research, CCPA continues to make great strides both locally and globally — from our continued growth of the local Promise Zone program to work in other parts of the United States as well as multiple efforts on each of the continents of Africa, South America and Asia.

We hope you enjoy the second issue of CCPA’s official magazine, *Confluence*. You’ll see that not only do we teach about leadership and civic engagement — our faculty, staff and students are actually changing the world!

Laura R. Bronstein

Laura R. Bronstein
Dean, College of Community and Public Affairs

JONATHAN COHEN

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■ **Victoria Rizzo**, chair and associate professor of social work, is a master griller, a loving grandmother and a researcher passionate about the impact of social work interventions on older adults. Get to know more about her in “Beyond The Classroom”!

On the cover: Myra Sabir, assistant professor of human development, hosts a narrative intervention workshop known as Lifewriting. Photo by Jonathan Cohen.

**COLLEGE OF
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PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

DEAN
Laura Bronstein

CONFLUENCE

EDITOR
John Brhel

ART DIRECTOR
David Skyrca '85

UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHER
Jonathan Cohen

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Brian Crawford
Rebecca Kahn
Katherine Karlson
Terasa Yu
Elizabeth Mellin
Erin Rosenblum

**CONTRIBUTING
PHOTOGRAPHER**
Jonathan Heisler

COPY EDITORS
Katie Ellis
Diana Bean '81

CCPA launches official blog

The Greater Good, CCPA's official blog, launched in fall 2014. Aimed at creating a dialogue between CCPA, community partners and students, *The Greater Good* spotlights important faculty research and noteworthy developments taking place at the college and in the community. The blog is managed by doctoral student Stephanie Malmberg, '12, MS '14, who thinks it is a great tool to demystify the type of research and other activities taking place at CCPA for students, local constituents and people around the world..

"There is so much great research going on in CCPA that there is always something interesting and innovative to blog about," Malmberg says.

Read an excerpt from the blog written by Elizabeth Mellin, director of CCPA's doctoral program, on page 21.



"The combined knowledge and skills of researchers from multiple disciplines... can generate new ways of thinking."

— From "Interdisciplinary research: greater than the sum of its parts" by Elizabeth Mellin, PhD, program director.

 **MORE AT** ccpablog.com

Office of Career and International Programs going strong



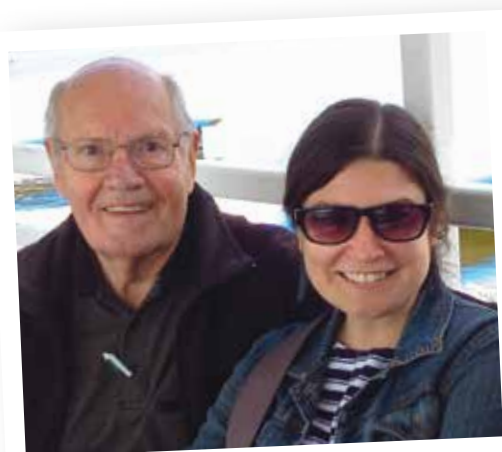
Stacy Marrow, coordinator of career and international programs, consults with a student.

The Office of Career and International Programs for CCPA has gone from a good idea to a high-impact office in just three short years. The office supports CCPA's mission by providing focused career development for students and the coordination and promotion of international opportunities to foster global perspectives.

"I was given a lot of autonomy in this position, and I think that, as scary as that was at the time, I had the tools to make this office what it needs to be," says Stacy Marrow, coordinator of career and international programs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe's grandfather Robert Appe was one of Binghamton's earliest graduates. Robert graduated from Triple Cities College, the earliest incarnation of Binghamton University, in 1949.



Robert Appe and his granddaughter, Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe, spend time together in Florida.

 **READ MORE** in the Binghamton University Magazine: bit.ly/appefamily

Ugly Sweater Run/Walk raises money for Promise Zone



Approximately 100 people donned their dreadful apparel for Binghamton University's first-ever Ugly Sweater Run/Walk. Profits benefitted the Broome County Promise Zone community schools program.



MOYLAN EVALUATOR ON \$975,000 GRANT

Assistant Professor of Social Work Carrie Moylan will serve as the evaluator on a \$975,000, five-year grant as part of an initiative to fund regional centers for sexual violence prevention in six designated high-risk areas of New York state.



APPE SELECTED FOR FULBRIGHT GRANT TO ECUADOR

Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe has been selected for a 2015-16 Fulbright U.S. scholar grant. Her research examines civil society networks as key instruments used by non-governmental organizations to shape the sector in Latin America. In Ecuador, she will explore the responsibility networks have assumed to meet the demands for organizational and sector-level capacity building.



CHAUDHRY RECEIVES GRANT TO STUDY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Lubna Chaudhry, chair and associate professor of human development, has received a research grant from the Spencer Foundation to support a project titled "Narratives on Education from Swat Valley, Pakistan: A Gendered, Classed, and Ethnicity-Based Analysis."

Campbell featured in *Wall Street Journal*



David Campbell, professor of public administration, was interviewed for a *Wall Street Journal* story about philanthropy courses that teach students how to give wisely.

 **MORE AT** bit.ly/campbellWSJ

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Home improvement in Peru



Associate Professor of Public Administration Nadia Rubaii, Assistant Professor of Public Administration Susan Appe and a group of students worked alongside the women of the Alto Los Incas Comedor Popular — a grassroots women’s kitchen that feeds nutritious lunches to a community on the outskirts of Cusco, Peru — to demolish an old adobe structure that was collapsing and replace it with a new brick structure.

MORE AT:
Learn more about service learning in Cusco at bit.ly/serviceinPeru.

DID YOU KNOW?

CCPA’s public administration and social-work programs were included in SUNY’s “Best Graduate” Tracks for 2015!

MORE AT
bit.ly/CCPAgradtracks



CCPA builds bonds in Malawi, Africa

Dean Laura Bronstein, Assistant Professor of Social Work Lisa Blitz and Binghamton native Steven Koffman spent their winter working with children, many orphaned and living in extreme poverty, in partnership with the Malawi Children’s Mission (MCM), which provides nutrition, education, healthcare, and emotional support to children near Blantyre, Malawi. Bronstein and Blitz are in the early planning stages of developing an academic opportunity, in conjunction with the University of Malawi and MCM, that hopes to send transdisciplinary teams of students and faculty researchers into rural Malawi to create an asset-based community development assessment and to support the goals and vision of Malawians for their next generation of leaders.



MORE AT Learn more about the Malawi Children’s Mission at malawichildrensmission.org.

New to CCPA



ELIZABETH MELLIN

Elizabeth Mellin joined the PhD program in Community and Public Affairs in September 2014 as director and associate professor. Her scholarly interests focus on exploring the role of commu-

nity in promoting mental health among youth including: multiparty collaborations, expanded school mental health and alternative school discipline approaches for students with emotional or behavioral needs. Previously, she was a faculty member at the Pennsylvania State University and a community mental health counselor in Atlanta, GA.



ALANA GUNN

Alana Gunn joins the Department of Social Work as an assistant professor in August. After earning her PhD at the University of Chicago, she worked as a postdoctoral behavioral scientist at

the National Development and Research Institutes, Inc. Her research focuses on how women who have experienced incarceration and substance abuse experiences manage multiple stigmas as they reintegrate back into their communities and families.



NADINE MASTROLEO

Nadine Mastroleo is an assistant professor at Brown University and the Center for Alcohol and Addictions Studies. Her primary area of research is the examination of brief interventions aimed at

reducing alcohol use and HIV-risk behaviors in high-risk populations (college students, emergency department patients). She will join CCPA in the fall.

Bronstein shares vision for “Binghamton in 5”



Dean Laura Bronstein shared her vision for a “Binghamton in 5” in the *Press & Sun-Bulletin*, Binghamton’s daily newspaper.

“In five years, we hope that the efforts of CCPA’s growing student body, faculty and staff contribute to making Binghamton a place where increasing numbers of people choose to live and work,” Bronstein says.

READ MORE about Bronstein’s vision for Binghamton at bit.ly/binghamtonin5

University welcomes school officials from Shenzhen, China

A delegation of leaders from Shenzhen University visited Binghamton from Sept. 28 through Oct. 9. The group came to learn about American higher education — specifically in regard to assessment, classroom management, and balancing research and teaching.

“I believe that it’s going to create partnerships and opportunities for students on both sides,” says Stacy Marrow, coordinator of career and international programs.

MORE AT: Learn more about the Shenzhen visit at bit.ly/shenzhenvisit

CHANCELLOR’S AWARD RECIPIENTS

- *Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching*
DINA MARAMBA, Department of Student Affairs Administration
- *Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Faculty Service*
NADIA RUBAII, Department of Public Administration
- *Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service*
TAMMY BEHONICK, dean’s office
- *Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Classified Service*
AMY EDWARDS, Department of Social Work

Filling a generation

Educational “camps” provide meaningful interaction for grandparents raising grandchildren

By Katherine Karlson

“These grandparents have needs — everything from lack of transportation to their relationship with the schools — that aren’t being met.”

—Youjung Lee

A surprising statistic caught the attention of Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee while she was conducting referral interviews for counseling at Binghamton West Middle School in fall 2010.

“Of the eight students I interviewed, five or six of them lived with their grandparents,” Lee says. “My radar went up.”

Through a series of interviews with 23 of these non-traditional parents, conducted from spring 2012 through fall 2013, Lee uncovered three major themes: Family trauma has multigenerational impact, custodial grandparents contend with multiple stressors, and family resiliency can promote healing and growth.

Grandparents most often step in as caregivers following traumatic events, such as family violence, abuse, death or incarceration of a parent. They may not have the resources — either financial, social or medical — to resume parenting duties, but are forced back into that role. However, this “second chance” provides them an opportunity to correct any previous child-rearing mistakes and also enjoy a loving, rewarding relationship with their grandchildren.

Michelle Gray-Smith characterizes each one of Lee’s findings. This 53-year-old grandmother became the guardian of her 9-year-old grandson, Camron, when a social worker intervened shortly

after his birth. At that time, Gray-Smith was a full-time commercial bus driver and part-time student. She tried to maintain her previous routine while caring for then 3-month-old Camron.

“I felt like I was losing my mind. Getting up three times a night with an infant was too difficult, so I quit that job and school,” says Gray-Smith, who started a full-time job last October as a teacher’s aide at East Middle School in Binghamton.

Gray-Smith says her relationship with Camron is close and affectionate. “He’s so special, just perfect. He’s my third child.”

“This winter, he wanted me to go outside and make snow angels with him,” she adds. “That keeps me young.”

Sadly, Lee found that non-traditional families such as these often fall outside the scope of the helping professionals in schools.

“These grandparents have needs — everything from lack of transportation to their relationship with the schools — that aren’t being met,” Lee says.

“Family engagement is not the primary goal of the school; education is. But without it, there is no success,” she adds.

Gray-Smith agrees that schools don’t understand nontraditional families headed by grandparents. They may not realize the best way to communicate is by telephone and not by e-mail, for example.

Lee learned through her custodial grandparent

interviews that they wanted more meaningful interaction with their grandchildren, and they also wanted activities that would help grandchildren meet their peers.

Her solution was to develop a series of themed “camps” for both children and grandparents, which debuted on campus in winter 2014. This collaborative effort with the Decker School of Nursing, Harpur College and the Graduate School of Education, in conjunction with the Broome County Promise Zone initiative, resulted in hands-on activities that focused on science, mathematics and general education, as well as an information-gathering forum for the grandparents. The program is supported by local public schools through the Promise Zone initiative to develop and support community schools.

“These activities are the vehicles that address the family’s well-being. The goal is to address the mental health issues they face,” Lee says.

Three weekly science-based camps were followed by mathematics and health-studies camps. Between 15 and 20 children attended each hour-long camp with about 10 grandparents over five months. Nearly three-quarters of the 2015 contingent of campers and grandparents are repeat participants from last year.

“Education students must deepen their understanding that children develop in multiple contexts. This setting outside school provides that

Michelle Gray-Smith and her grandson, Camron Harrison, conduct an experiment during a science camp led by Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee.



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opportunity,” says Elizabeth Anderson, an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education who holds a joint title in CCPA’s Department of Social Work.

“The social work orientation Dr. Lee provides is helpful because she recognizes the strength in all families, traditional or not,” she adds.

Anderson’s graduate students helped create math activities using low-cost household materials and also provided grandparents with a list of the

terms now used in schools for math instruction.

“The grandparents told us they wanted to understand what their grandchildren were learning, especially Common Core math,” she says.

“Common Core math has thrown all the children into a new way of learning, and one with a learning disability (like mine) goes into a tailspin,” says Mary Patrillo, 64, who has raised her 15-year-old granddaughter, Kendra, for the past eight years.

“The camp not only has helped her understand the math better, but it’s been a huge help for the grandchildren, who often feel like they don’t fit in to the traditional school environment,” Patrillo says.

While creating experiments to demonstrate the conservation of mass or exploring light optics problems, both grandparents and children were fully engaged, says Bonggu Shim, assistant professor of physics.

“The adults had a good knowledge of science even though they didn’t think they did,” he adds.

This hands-on activity showed the grandparents their children were enthused about science even if they had only limited exposure to it.

“Camron was so excited that he could do something with a laser,” Gray-Smith says. “I realized there is a possibility he could become a scientist.”

Other presentations for grandparents focused on issues of health in aging, disease prevention or side effects of medications. Grandparents also learned about helpful social services available to them, such as Family Enrichment Network grants.

The mutual emotional support is as important as the information on daycare, Gray-Smith says.

“It helped me tremendously to meet other grandparents. They understand why you sacrifice and why you’re doing it all over again,” she says.

Lee hopes this increased confidence that the camp experience has built in the grandparents will develop their greater involvement in the schools.

“They have more confidence in helping grandchildren now that they have been involved in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities, and they have a sense of connection and support from the same age cohort,” she says.

For her future research, Lee wants to compare her data with national findings on custodial grandparent mental health, since it has a major impact on their grandchildren’s success. Locally, she hopes grandparents use their newfound confidence to attend Board of Education meetings and speak up for themselves and their grandchildren. “There should be grandparent-led Parent-Teacher Associations in each school district,” she adds. ■

Youjung Lee, assistant professor of social work, discusses her research on grandparents raising grandchildren at the “Productive Aging and Families Across the Globe” presentation.



INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPOSURE

Grandparents and their custodial grandchildren are not the only ones to benefit from hands-on learning at Assistant Professor of Social Work Youjung Lee’s camp program.

“As an educator, I teach the young professionals who will work with multigenerational families. My focus is on mental health, but there is an interdisciplinary team that addresses the whole family,” Lee says.

Ashley AuPont, a second-year graduate student in the joint Social Work and Public Administration program, is interested in seeing the education that future teachers are getting regarding the social-emotional understanding for their potential students and their families.

“There is a real give and take between the future educators and their response to students’ needs,” AuPont says.

She has contributed to this exchange by showing her counterparts in education the best approaches to dealing with children, she adds.

The education students broadened their thinking by exposure to all three peer groups—social work, science (physics) and nursing, says Elizabeth Anderson, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education.

“They learned how the grandparents’ health could impact their children’s education, and what the psychosocial problems are, from the social-work students. They also learned more science content and, in turn, showed science students how to teach or engage the children,” she adds.



Journalist-turned-professor explores sustainable communities

By Rebecca Kahn

George Homsy is on his third career. He was a producer for public radio, a city planner in upstate New York and is currently an assistant professor of public administration at the College of Community and Public Affairs. Homsy’s positions, however, have not been a collection of random interests. His passion is sustainable communities, and his professional career trajectory is a direct reflection of that.

Homsy started out as a journalist with an interest in environmental issues. He helped start a show for public radio called “Living on Earth,” focusing on environmental protections, and then another show called “The Cultivated Garden.” After earning his master’s degree in city

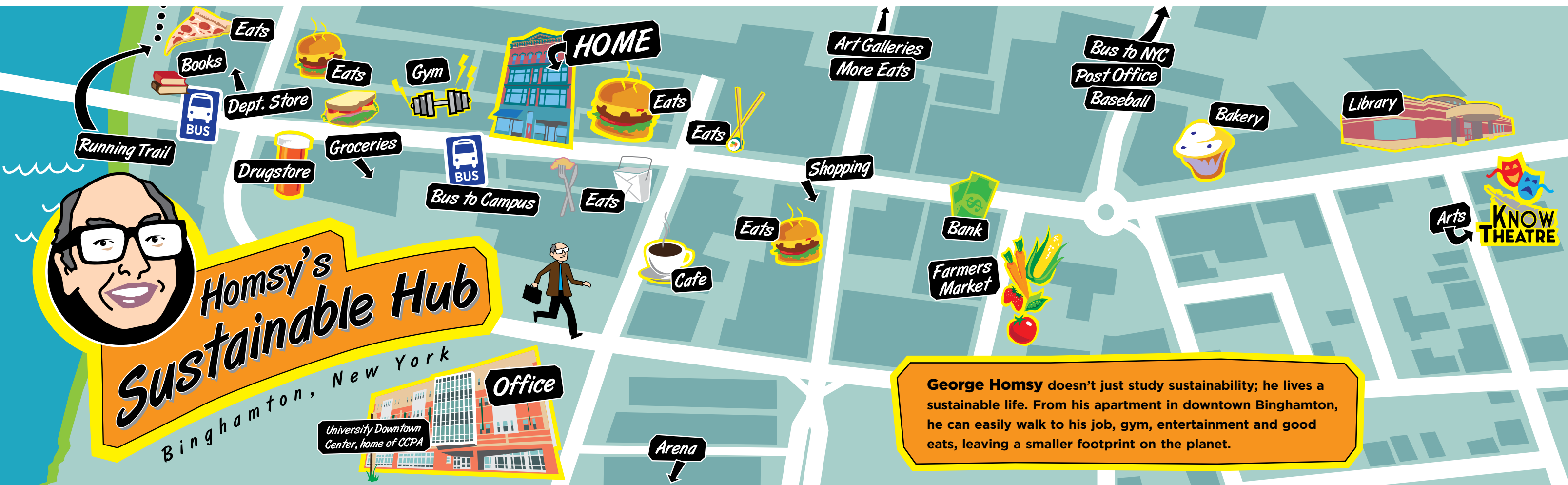
and regional planning at Cornell University, he worked as a planner in upstate New York for five years, working largely on environmental protection and economic development issues.

“I went back to Cornell for my PhD and thought after graduation that I would have to be willing to go anywhere for a tenure-track job,” Homsy says. “Little did I know Binghamton was trying to start a sustainable communities program. I got hired not even 60 miles down the road!”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has recognized Homsy’s expertise on sustainability issues, awarding him a \$150,000 research grant in 2014 to study rural sustainability. His project will examine how rural municipalities balance economic development and environmental protection, how local

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“If a place feels greener, if it’s walkable, if there’s green infrastructure — these are the things that make communities more attractive to people.”

—George Homsy

economic development policy has shifted since the recession, as well as how rural communities have responded to climate change.

“We’ve already done an economic development survey that includes questions about environmental protection and social equity,” Homsy says. “And we’re also going to be doing case studies research around the idea of what drives officials of local governments to worry about climate change. It’s interesting theoretically in terms of urban policy, but it’s also important practically because it will inform municipal policy makers about best practices.”

Homsy’s students are fortunate to have the opportunity to try to answer some of those questions.

“One of the first things we wrestle with in class is trying to figure out what sustainability means, because it means different things to different

people,” he says. “In my opinion, the simplest definition of sustainability is the ability to protect future generations without depriving the current generation.”

To analyze what that means on the local level, Homsy’s students take advantage of a resource just a few steps outside their classroom door: downtown Binghamton.

“In every class, we always have some way of practicing or observing,” Homsy says. “In my Planning Sustainable Cities and Regions class, we take a walk to the VINES urban farm, and on that walk we talk about what we are seeing. Do we see buses? Cars? Are people walking? Does it feel safe? When we get to the urban farm, we talk about the role of food in a neighborhood and in society, as well as its role in producing carbon emissions. This past semester, students would go out in groups and spend part of the class examining the city from different perspectives — transportation, walkability, green infrastructure and economic viability. It allows the students to see on the ground what they read about in class.”

This experiential learning helped Sabrina Scull

learn more than she would have grasped in the classroom alone.

“The opportunity to analyze sustainability within the local community really brought what we were learning in the classroom to life,” says Scull, a senior majoring in environmental studies.

Homsy finds a way to weave the topic of sustainability into all of his classes. Last semester, the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) and Broome County Transit wanted to gather information about their riders so they could figure out if they needed to adjust services. “So the students in my Research Design and Methods class created a survey, boarded the buses, handed them out, collected them and then tabulated the data,” Homsy says. “In their literature review, the students wrote about the benefits of public transportation from an environmental and social perspective.”

Many local governments are starting to balance the issues of the economy and the environment, Homsy says. And governments that are doing so reap the benefits.

“Many cities recognize sustainability as an

George Homsy doesn’t just study sustainability; he lives a sustainable life. From his apartment in downtown Binghamton, he can easily walk to his job, gym, entertainment and good eats, leaving a smaller footprint on the planet.

economic development tool. Often, the companies that local leaders want to attract, as well as the employees of those companies, put a high value on being green. It’s a quality-of-life issue. If a place feels greener, if it’s walkable, if there’s green infrastructure — these are the things that make communities more attractive to people, especially people who want to invest in a city’s future.”

Homsy enjoys focusing his research on smaller cities such as Binghamton. And Binghamton seems to be making progress, he says.

“Binghamton’s done a great job in terms of livening up our downtown,” he says. “Now we need to work on attracting more professionals downtown. There’s a growing number of us who live downtown, and it’s because we like that we can walk out of our apartments to eat and shop. I can walk to work at the Downtown Center and easily take a bus to the main campus. More and more businesses will open downtown if there are people living there. There are ways to get around the tension between the environment and the economy, and the good news is local governments are getting better at figuring it out.” ■

#CiviCE D agm en t

Public
administr
ation
professor
teaches
the value
of social
media

“Social media
can teach an
organization
about the
public it
serves and
how the public
perceives it.”

One professor
sees social
media as a
tool for
professional
purposes.
The rapid
increase in social
media use among
students has
attracted the
attention of David
Campbell, chair
and associate
professor of public
administration. According to
the Pew Research
Center, 90
percent of college-
age Internet users
access social
networking sites.

“I was intrigued
by the fact that



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media to advance their organization’s goals. In an article that will soon appear in *Public Administration Review*, Campbell and Lambright show that social media is underutilized among regional agencies. “Most organizations don’t have a strategy. Most just do it because they think it is what everyone else does,” Lambright says. “They base it more on intuition rather than a thoughtful approach to engaging with the communities they care about.” “Organizations tend to have a narrow view regarding their use of social media,” Campbell says. “They tend to use social media as a way of saying, ‘Here’s what we do,’ rather than as a means of establishing two-way communication with clients, donors and the interested public.” Campbell suggests that there is a lack of good social media examples in the Binghamton area. “Our region is semi-rural, and I think that the adoption rate is different here than you’d find in a larger city,” he says. In addition, organizations often lack resources to keep their media outreach current, and governmental agencies, in particular, tend to follow “command and control management structures,” that limit their use of social media.

per week to a fund; Campbell matches the total, which is again matched by an anonymous alumnus. The author of each week’s winning organization, on the other hand, he says, then chooses a local nonprofit as the recipient of the award. “Social media can teach an organization what it needs and serves and how the public perceives it,” Campbell says. “Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, and the next generation of social media, are helping to democratize social service by encouraging conversations with the public and fostering a sense of shared commitment to solving problems in the community.” “Will” the next generation of social workers and public administrators have a more strategic perspective on the use of social media? Campbell says so. When she began using social media in her class, she says she didn’t see the relevance of Twitter, or any social media, to the resource. But how she’s a future social worker student has just been accepted into the MSW/MPA program and began to wonder how consistent it is an incredibly easy and inexpensive way for nonprofit organizations to spread their message and generate change,” Hayes says. “It’s a challenge to think about what could be done with just one tweet.” ■

DID YOU TAKE THE CHALLENGE?

Last year, more than 2.4 million individuals posted videos to Facebook showing people pouring (and sometimes failing to pour) buckets of ice water on themselves. The Ice Bucket Challenge raised more than \$100 million for the ALS Association in its fight against the illness, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Associate Professor David Campbell suggests that there were a number of reasons for the Ice Bucket Challenge’s popularity, and that philanthropic organizations are hoping that some of the campaign’s magic might be duplicated. “The Ice Bucket Challenge took advantage of the way Facebook can develop conversations between friends to advance a cause,” Campbell says. “It encouraged users to find creative ways to engage potential donors and the people they serve in ways that were memorable — it truly was a social-media phenomenon.” Leaders at philanthropic organizations worried that the challenge would crowd out giving to their own charity. “But I don’t think that was the case,” Campbell says. “Instead, it just added to the pool of money, and people just gave more.” The challenge for organizations now is to find ways to replicate the success of the challenge. “The question is, what can we learn from this?” Campbell says. “How can we use Facebook to advance our cause? And how do we adapt it in a way that doesn’t look like a cheap knockoff?”

MORE AT
Join the conversation
about philanthropy on
Twitter at **#BUTweeters**.

Wet WRITING

Human development professor researches the life-changing effects of expressive writing

By John Brhel

Tim Williams hadn't gardened a day in his life. But last summer, at the age of 50, he grew a slew of fresh vegetables in his back yard — collard greens, kale, broccoli, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and more.

Just what prompted Williams to discover he had a green thumb? Expressive writing.

Williams took part in a narrative intervention known as Lifewriting, an eight-week program in which participants work through unresolved experiences in their lives through intensive written and oral exercises.

For Williams, it was working through his difficult teenage years. Forced to watch over his 14 younger brothers and sisters, he had little time to pursue his own interests. At the age of 15, he reached a breaking point, dropped out of high school and moved in with his dad in New York City. The experience left a bitter taste in his mouth. But he's ready to move forward, and he credits Lifewriting. Starting a garden is just one result of his renewed outlook.

"I started digging and putting it together because it was just like 'Do something.' Good, bad, indifferent. Even if the plants all die, at least you tried," Williams says.

"I'm at the point now where I'm dealing with all of the aspects of my life. Whatever it is that's coming my way, I'm going to start looking at it for what it is."

Lifewriting is the brainchild of Myra Sabir, assistant professor of human development. Unresolved experiences like Williams' retain a continuing influence on the psyche, she says.

"You're part of the equation of everything that happens. And your interpretation of events shapes how they impact you," Sabir says. "If you're convinced that you aren't worthy of love, for example, you're going to interpret situations from that perspective ... You bring that to every encounter."

Last spring, Sabir recruited 24 participants, including Williams, from three community organizations in Binghamton: Trinity AME Zion Church, Broome County YMCA and Volunteers of America. Of the 24 participants, 17 completed a questionnaire before and after the workshop. Analysis of the 17 questionnaires, conducted by Associate Professor of Social Work Suk-Young Kang, showed that participants reported significantly less depression, significantly less anxiety and significantly greater life satisfaction after completing the workshop series.

Wet writing —
Participants in Myra Sabir's Lifewriting workshop call it wet writing because so many cry when sharing their stories.



Myra Sabir, assistant professor of human development, leads a group of men through a Lifewriting workshop at the YMCA in downtown Binghamton.

These kinds of results are nothing new for Sabir; more than 25 years of research has shown the benefits of expressive writing. But she doesn't want to merely replicate her research. She wants to expand it and discover the ways in which participants actually begin to change their lives and impact their communities.

Sabir notes that no one has looked beyond the psychological and physical health benefits of expressive writing to study the impact it has on one's life. "What does it mean in terms of your personal life and the way you interact with other people?" Sabir says. "Now that you're healthy, what does that mean for your local community and for society at large?"

Reliving a moment

Lifewriting is more than glorified journal writing. Participants dig deep into their past and "relive" their unresolved experiences.

"You're actually reproducing a moment. ... It's the only way to work through an impactful experience," Sabir says. "Because if you stay in your head, reporting it, it stays the same; you don't change the impact of it. You've got to relive it, and this time, do something differently with it than you did before."

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From street life to family life

For "Don" (a parolee who wishes to remain anonymous), Lifewriting couldn't have come at a better time. At the time he learned of the program, he was estranged from his wife and three sons, and was ready to "let it out."

"Being at the point that I was at in my life, I didn't really find it difficult because I realized that those were the things that were contributing to the difficulties," Don says. "So it wasn't hard for me to really express myself in the class because I knew that it was helping me."

Now that he can see things for what they are, he says he's leaving the street life behind and is focusing on being a good husband and father.

"This course helped me get a lot of things out that I wasn't paying attention to, that were factors in a lot of my failures or difficulties," Don says. "Once a lot of that stuff came out, everything just seemed easier."

While he says that his life hasn't changed overnight, for the time being he is focused on the good. He recommends the course to others; he even refers to it as "www.getyourlifetogether.com."

"In a way, it saved my life, thus far," he says.



LEFT: Denise Taylor, a full-time truck driver, writes her thoughts down when she's on the road.

RIGHT: Tim Williams tends to the new garden in his back yard.

Sabir received a 2015 Phoenix Award from Citizen Action of New York for her Lifewriting work.

Sabir starts each Lifewriting session by sharing pieces of her own story and teaching participants how to find the moments to recapture. Participants must learn the subtle distinctions between different emotions to best capture these moments, she says.

"If you fail to precisely identify the emotion, you have not understood the experience," Sabir says.

During the first few sessions, participants share stories so Sabir can teach them how to do it correctly. All writing from that point on is completely private. Most people do share, however — and things can get pretty intense.

"Some of them call it wet writing," Sabir says. "There are a lot of tears shed."

At the end of the eight weeks, Sabir asks participants what they are doing now that they weren't at the start of the workshop. Many become better able to solve problems.

"Suddenly they're centered enough to start to do things, to start to be more resourceful," she says.

That is the case for Denise Taylor, Williams' wife of 22 years. At the age of 16, she got pregnant and didn't talk to her father for nearly 30 years.

"It was just that one incident that I didn't realize marked me and hurt me so bad," Taylor says. "And she [Sabir] brought me back to that moment itself, not just the memory of it, but actually being in that moment — and it hurt like hell."

Going through this experience gave her the courage to call her father, and now she talks to him once a month.

"I realized that, you know what, I really need to talk to my father. I really need to stop being stubborn because I'm hurting me and I'm hurting my

father," Taylor says. "That was one of my biggest breakthroughs."

Building a community of Lifewriters

Sabir hopes to stay in touch with Williams, Taylor and other participants as long as she can. She wants to facilitate a support gathering for those who have done narrative work.

"If I can get all these people together who've actually cleared up their stuff, what kind of community might they create?" she asks.

Along with supporting past participants, she wants to train others to host the workshops. There are a lot of people out there who could benefit, she says.

"Everybody needs to do it. Nobody's had a perfect history," Sabir says.

Taylor agrees. "We need to go through something like this because there are a lot of people who have stuff that blocks them from moving forward, experiencing life and loving one another," Taylor says. "And this releases it. It's a tool to bring you forward."

As for Williams, he plans on growing even more veggies this summer. Now that he understands his path, he's got a clearer view of the future.

"We all go through the same thing: jealousy, hatred, anger, frustration, fear, cockiness, teasing, being teased," Williams says. "Everybody goes through that stuff. But it's how you bounce back off of it. And that's basically how I see the program." ■

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JONATHAN COHEN

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Tanairy Carbo: Agent of change

Social work student aims to make an impact

Change is what propels Tanairy Carbo '14 forward in life.

"You don't have to stay this one, stagnant person," says Carbo, a Bronx, N.Y., native and first-year graduate student at the College of Community and Public Affairs.

One change that she experienced was transitioning from majoring in human development as an undergraduate to majoring in social work as a graduate student.

"I'm always open to everything because social work is such a diverse major and career," she says. "You never stop learning, so I really enjoy that aspect."

Carbo's love for learning does not go unnoticed by Carrie Moylan, assistant professor of social work. She finds Carbo to be a bright and vibrant student.

"(Tanairy) is a pleasure to have in class — always actively participating, with a warm, joyful demeanor that fellow students appreciate," Moylan says.

In addition to her role as a student, Carbo is also a graduate assistant in the Department of Social Work. Her responsibilities include working in recruitment for the social work program and providing administrative support.

"It feels like I'm kind of part of the faculty, which is good," Carbo says. "I think that's my way to contribute back to the school, by promoting such a great program to people."

Before assuming her graduate assistantship, Carbo worked as a peer counselor for Binghamton University's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Department of Human Development. As an EOP student herself, Carbo has nothing but praise for the program.

"It's beneficial, and it's an environment that fosters learning and advancement," she says.

Carbo has also helped people through several off-campus activities. She was a mentor for Uplifting Through Unity Responsibility and Nurturing (U.T.U.R.N.), where she taught life



skills to young women in juvenile detention. And she had job-shadowing experience at Habilitat Alternative Drug and Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center in Kaneohe, Hawaii.

"It was great because it (brought) people back to where they (came) from," she says about her work in Hawaii. "It really challenged them to look inside themselves and think about what caused their addiction, or why they're doing certain things."

Carbo says her work as an undergraduate student solidified her desire to become a social worker, and she hopes to go into gerontology.

She says she is receiving a lot of support and help from faculty. "The best part (of being a CCPA student) is the family aspect. People actually care about what you're doing."

CCPA has made a strong impact on Carbo. The college has taken her to great heights, she says.

"I always wanted to be a person who can be an agent of change and helpful in the community on a client level, so (CCPA) is giving me the skills that I need." —Terasa Yu

"I always wanted to be a person who can be an agent of change ... (CCPA) is giving me the skills that I need."

—Tanairy Carbo

In case of emergency

MPA grads turn passion for public safety into career

Robert Cohen '12, MPA '14, became interested in emergency medical services when he volunteered at his hometown's fire department during high school.

"I loved it," the 24-year-old Katonah, N.Y., native says. "I met many friends and mentors and community leaders, and I think, most importantly, I learned what teamwork really was — individual people, with their own varied experiences and distinct perspectives and skills, working toward a common goal."

Cohen's volunteer firefighter experience led the political science and history major to join Binghamton University's student-run

ambulance service, Harpur's Ferry. Among his many unforgettable memories as an emergency medical technician for Harpur's Ferry is working during the flood caused by Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011.

"I served at the Events Center shelter as EMS group supervisor and was involved in planning and coordinating our response to the medical emergencies that arose," he says. The Events Center sheltered 1,800 people at the height of evacuations in Broome County.

Cohen says his experience with the 2011 flood gave him an appreciation for the field of emergency services and emergency management. His undergraduate work led him to the College of

Community and Public Affairs' Master of Public Administration program.

"I had a great experience (in the program)," says Cohen, who is now an inter-agency after-action report coordinator for the New York City Office of Emergency Management. "My classes enabled me to focus on different aspects; in some classes I looked at flood planning for rural or small urban communities, in others I looked at how emergency management offices are staffed and led, and how they fit in with other governments in other cities and counties."

Associate Professor David Campbell, chair of the Department of Public Administration, understands why Harpur's Ferry volunteers such as Cohen are attracted to the graduate program.

"The Harpur's Ferry people are just delightfully motivated," Campbell says. "(They are) people who have a singular interest in emergency service, and they see the MPA program as the place to develop that career. A number of students who are graduates of our program have gone on to very solid careers in emergency service."

Michael Ponticiello '07, MPA '09, also got started in the fire department in his hometown of Nissequogue, N.Y. He says Binghamton University helped refine his interest in the management side of emergency services.

"I wanted to expand my involvement in EMS at college," Ponticiello, 29, says. "Harpur's Ferry was a natural fit for me to do so."

Ponticiello, now a disaster preparedness coordinator at the Broome County Office of Emergency Services, became curious about the MPA



RIGHT: Robert Cohen '12, MPA '14, works with teams from NYC Emergency Management and other city agencies to identify what went well and what didn't go as well as they had hoped in the city's emergency responses and drills.

OPPOSITE: Michael Ponticiello '07, MPA '09, is a disaster preparedness coordinator at the Broome County Office of Emergency Services.



JONATHAN HEISLER

JONATHAN COHEN

program because of his mentor — David Hubeny, the University's emergency manager. Ponticiello says that after talking with MPA faculty members, he believed the program would enable him to take a broader approach to emergency management and give him the skill set to run an emergency management program within local government.

"I felt that [the MPA program] challenged me to expand my thinking and embrace new ideas and concepts," Ponticiello says. "I also feel that it did an exceptional job at teaching me how to apply theory to practice."

The MPA program consists of seven full-time faculty members and 87 students.

"(Having a small department) means students get to work directly with our faculty members," Campbell says, "and in collaboration with either local government or local community-based nonprofit organizations as part of the degree program."

Campbell urges students to consider the MPA program. He says it will prepare them for lives of active citizenship.

"If you want to make a difference, if you want to be someone who says at the end of his or her life, 'I changed the world in a meaningful way,' then an MPA degree is a sure way to set you on that path," he says. —Teresa Yu

"I felt that [the MPA program] challenged me to expand my thinking and embrace new ideas and concepts."

—Michael Ponticiello

More than a checkbox

Students affairs professor gives voice to marginalized Asian-American students



“The point of my research is to be able to have these voices from usually marginalized places heard. I want their stories to be told.”

—Dina Maramba

Pick up almost any college application and you’ll see that most institutions of higher education lump Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) ethnic groups into one broad category. That’s one small checkbox for one incredibly large group.

For Dina Maramba, associate professor of student affairs administration, the AAPI option is an over-simplified misnomer that makes no distinction between Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino and the many other AAPI subpopulations.

“To aggregate every Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic subgroup within one huge category leads to gross misrepresentation of this extremely diverse population of students,” Maramba says. According to her, the way AAPI students are categorized within most higher education institutions fails to acknowledge the differences in areas such as immigration histories,

language and religion for each subpopulation.

Maramba has conducted extensive research on the influence of educational institutions and campus climates on the access and success among students of color, underserved and first-generation populations; more specifically, AAPI students.

Within the context of higher education, when institutions combine AAPI students under one category, they fail to portray an accurate picture and do not address the true needs of this population, Maramba says.

Her research has shown that, in reality, there are ethnic groups within the AAPI category that experience huge educational disparities, limited access to education, high dropout rates, low socioeconomic status, and language and immigration concerns. When schools do not recognize these issues, it has grave implications for how AAPI students are perceived and treated.

According to Maramba, one of the first steps for institutions to better understand and address the needs of AAPI students is to begin to disaggregate the data on this population.

“When institutions do not accurately disaggregate, the data becomes misleading because Asian or Pacific Islander becomes a large number,” she says. “However, when you critically analyze this number, you see that the ethnic groups are disproportionate.”

As a Filipina American who also worked as a student affairs professional for more than 10 years, Maramba has always worked toward increasing the success of underserved and underrepresented students. Her personal background, professional experience and students continue to inspire her research.

“The point of my research is to help higher —education institutions create more conducive and effective learning environments for all students, and allow voices from usually marginalized places to be heard,” Maramba says.

“Their stories need to be told and institutions need to pay attention.” —Erin Rosenblum

JONATHAN COHEN

Interdisciplinary research: Greater than the sum of its parts

EXCERPT FROM *THE GREATER GOOD BLOG*

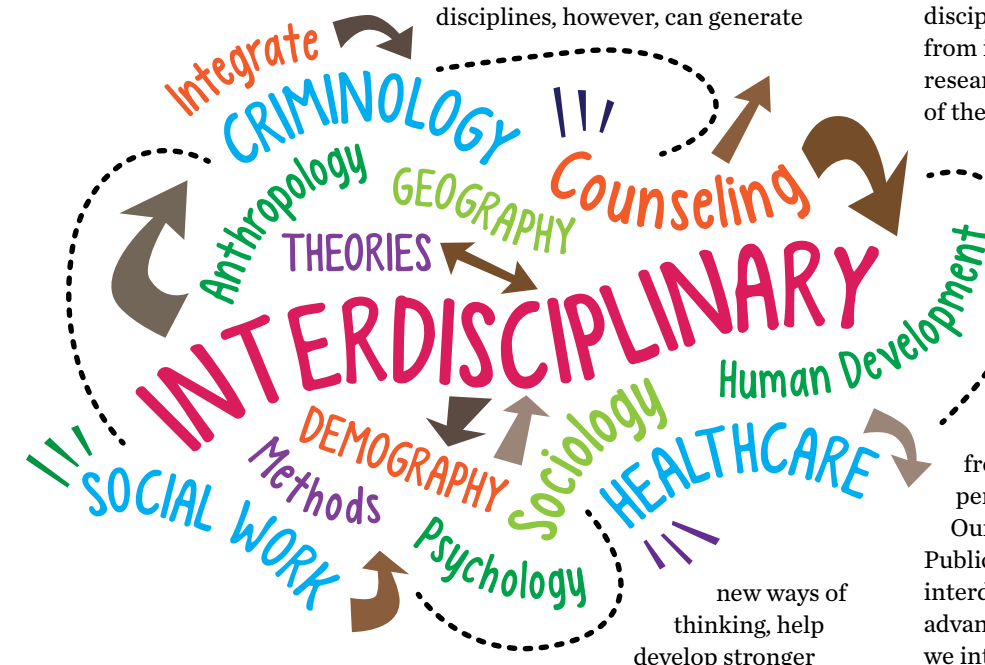
By Elizabeth Mellin

Researchers are challenged to address some of our nation’s most critical social issues, such as drug abuse, educational inequalities, healthcare access and mental health stigma. No one discipline can research these complex issues effectively if done in isolation. The combined knowledge and skills of researchers from multiple disciplines, however, can generate

remains within traditional disciplinary boundaries. Interdisciplinary research, however, can be distinguished based on its purposeful integration of ideas across two or more disciplines to create a new and holistic understanding of complex social issues.

Too often researchers promote their work as interdisciplinary when it is more accurately multi-disciplinary. A key question to distinguish multi- from inter-disciplinary research is whether the research would be different or suffer if a member of the research team from another discipline left the table. If the answer is no, the research is not really interdisciplinary. My own research, for example, on the role of multiparty collaboration in expanded school mental health services, could not continue without the expertise and skills from highly respected interdisciplinary scholars from education, mental health and policy who have deep experience studying collaboration from a range of methodological and theoretical perspectives.

Our new doctoral program in Community and Public Affairs (CPA) aims to prepare students for interdisciplinary research. With a commitment to advancing research on complex social problems, we intentionally recruit and admit students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to this program so that every class serves as a workshop for learning how to do interdisciplinary research. Our curriculum draws from varied disciplines (e.g., anthropology, demography, criminology, geography, sociology and psychology) as well as professions (e.g., counseling, human development, public administration, student affairs administration, social work) to research the dynamic interplay among individuals, the organizations serving them and the institutions in which they are embedded.



new ways of thinking, help develop stronger research questions, and assist with the dissemination and translation of research findings across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Although interdisciplinary research is increasingly encouraged, one of the greatest challenges it poses is distinguishing it from related types of research. “Multidisciplinary” and “inter-disciplinary” are often used incorrectly and interchangeably; when clearly defined, these terms more accurately represent a continuum of research. Multidisciplinary research draws on theories and methods from other disciplines but

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A WINNING COMBINATION

Alice Sounthala '11, MSW '14, was well-prepared for her position as a crisis counselor at nonprofit agency The Neighborhood Center, thanks to the combination of classroom instruction and field-service training offered by Binghamton University's College of Community and Public Affairs. "My experience in the field gave me the opportunity to work with real clients in real-life situations, while my courses gave me a general understanding of the mental health population as well as taught me both specific therapeutic techniques and how to interact with clients in particular situations."

New York state support and tuition cover a fraction of Sounthala's education. Help others like her prepare for impactful careers. Give to the Binghamton Fund for CCPA at binghamton.edu/giving.