The first cohort of any new program is special. Like first children, first students are trailblazers. But when the first 18 St. Kate’s – St. Thomas Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) students graduated in May, they became something more. They became torchbearers for the only program of its kind in the world.

The DSW was launched in 2014 by the School of Social Work as the only online doctorate in social work to focus on education as practice. The DSW emphasizes leading-edge pedagogy to prepare scholars to teach in higher education through practice, scholarship, leadership and service.

Will Wong ’17 DSW discovered the St. Kate’s – St. Thomas DSW while he was considering PhD programs in California in order to qualify for a tenure-track position. Wong is an adjunct professor at California State University, Los Angeles. His “day job” is in the Los Angeles County Department of Family and Child Protective Services working on adoptions, but he wants to teach full time to share what he’s learned in nearly 20 years of clinical work so the next generation of social workers can thrive in a “very difficult practice.”

As a PhD candidate Wong felt he would be asked to distance himself from his clinical practice to focus on research. In contrast, he said St. Kate’s – St. Thomas’ education as practice DSW program embraced his clinical background and passion for teaching. As practitioners, he said, “We bring the voices of what’s happening in the field to students.”

Mary Tinucci ’17 DSW holds a BSW and MSW from St. Kate’s – St. Thomas, to which she now has added the doctorate. She has taught at St. Kate’s – St. Thomas and developed an arts program for children with behavioral disorders in the St. Paul schools. Tinucci had resisted going back to school for a doctorate, despite nudges from Dean Barbara Shank, but when she heard about the new DSW at her alma mater, “I got goosebumps,” she said. “I wanted to know who I could be as a teacher.”

Preparing the Next Wave of Social Work Faculty

DSW students come to the program with teaching experience in higher education – but they need a doctorate to attain tenure-track positions in higher education. As social work faculty, they share a mission of developing social workers capable of tackling critical issues.
Tinucci was originally asked to teach at St. Kate’s – St. Thomas because, she said, she was good at it. But she wasn’t entirely confident. The DSW validated Tinucci’s conversational style of teaching. At the same time, she learned to be more versatile. “I have to stretch myself to meet the needs of all of my students,” even if that means giving a 10-minute PowerPoint lecture – something Tinucci avoided assiduously before understanding lectures give context and reach certain students really well. Tinucci not only examined her own philosophy of teaching in the program, she wrote her dissertation on how to prepare social work educators to be the best teachers in preparing the next generation of social workers. “Although 50 percent of professors in the academy will have teaching responsibilities,” Tinucci found in her research, “few programs include coursework on how to teach.”

**Online With a Residency**
While the DSW’s teaching focus has struck a chord with many social work educators, not all of them felt comfortable taking their next step online. “I was nervous to be an island in an online program,” said Michelle Gricus ’17 DSW. Fortunately, online education has become extremely interactive with video chats and virtual classrooms. Furthermore, the DSW kicks off with a required two-week residency on the University of St. Thomas campus, including orientation and a rigorous 3-credit course in the history of social work and social work education. That gave Gricus the chance to develop relationships and “get right into the rigor of the program,” she said.

Some chaffed at the idea of dorm living for two weeks, however. Being the first cohort to experience the program, they questioned why, if they lived nearby, they couldn’t go home at night. Now they wouldn’t have it any other way. In the residency students cook together, play games and share personal stories. “They love each other,” Shank said, and that’s largely because program designers insisted students get to know each other face to face.

These interpersonal connections also have professional benefits: Susan Schmidt ’17 DSW noted that, “We developed a strong collegial network across the country and now we also have a network of professional colleagues we can turn to with questions, or to collaborate on presentations and articles.” The residency, which is annual, also gives students a chance to witness great teaching up close. Associate Professor Jessica Toft had the honor of being the program’s first teacher and her engaging style was a lesson in itself, according to Gricus and others who appreciated that Toft expected students to jump into teaching by leading class discussions and presenting material.

**Rethinking Scholarship**
Every angle of the new DSW was carefully crafted to fill a need. In addition to its focus on teaching, the practice doctorate embodies rigorous scholarship, but with a twist. Having reflected on their own mountainous dissertations that had to be reworked for publication, faculty collaborated on a distinctive three-part dissertation they call the “banded dissertation” to give students an edge in publishing their work.

Three scholarship products are distinct but unified by a topic, population or theory. Two of the three are papers, one of which is research based; the third product may be a presentation or paper. By breaking the dissertation into parts, St. Kate’s – St. Thomas doctoral students create publishable works by the time they graduate. For instance, last spring, one part of Schmidt’s dissertation was published in a leading journal on migration and human security.

The DSW has helped Schmidt meet another key goal too. Schmidt has accepted a tenure-track position at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. She is grateful to Shank and DSW Program Director Carol Kuechler for their heavy lifting in making the DSW a reality. “Because they had the vision I now have a DSW and am on the path as a social work professor,” Schmidt said.

Wong applauds the DSW program’s willingness to push against the tide of PhD programs with the unique doctorate. He also believes the St. Kate’s – St. Thomas’ DSW is unusual among doctoral programs for its level of faculty support and accessibility. “The faculty genuinely care about the students,” Wong said.

Acknowledging that it took “grit” to enroll in the first cohort of a new program, Wong is out to prove that he made the right decision. “I am hoping I can do some really great things for our profession. I’ve been reinforced and validated by the leaders of this program. They’ve proven themselves in the social work education realm – and I am happy to be a mini-me of them,” Wong said with a smile.

Meet the DSW Class of 2017 »
Nontraditional social work students typically have life experiences that draw them to the profession. These students experience unique challenges in completing a degree when compared to their traditional counterparts. Adcock’s banded dissertation explores the nontraditional social work student in three products: First, a conceptualization paper posits that the nontraditional social work student is better prepared for the field based on life experience. Next, the results of a qualitative research project are presented in which the participants were social workers that completed their degrees as nontraditional students. Finally, the presentation of the work at a national conference is reviewed.

Adcock is an associate professor in the Carver School of Social Work at Campbellsville University, where she also serves as the BSW program director. Her teaching experience includes human behavior, practice, research, policy, leadership, global issues and health care. Her practice experience is in hospice care and child behavior health therapy.

The field of social work has historically held the tensions between the scientific grounding of knowledge and skills, and the art of practice through the disciplined use of self. Social workers are being trained from a competency-based approach and increasingly use evidenced-based practice interventions. Brennan’s research responds to the trend toward manualized treatment by focusing on the development of skilled use of practitioner wisdom. The teaching of micro practice skills using social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and reflective practice (Kinsella, 2009) aided by digital taping is evaluated for skill attainment and increased self-efficacy.

Bretzlaff-Holstein’s scholarship focuses on lessons social work and social work education might learn from the humane education discipline in its journey toward a more ecocentric vs. anthropocentric lens. Her first product is a conceptual article making the case for humane education in social work education by examining similarities and differences between the two disciplines. In a second, research-based article, findings from interviews with social work educators and humane educators are presented. In a third conceptual article, Bretzlaff-Holstein makes the case for humane education in social work education as an integration of the Christian faith tradition and social work.

Coleman’s research focuses on advancing a deeper understanding of the development of effective interprofessional education teams. Findings from a qualitative research project showed that interprofessional education faculty placed a high priority on collaborative planning and facilitating and evaluating interprofessional education activities. In other words, the process of interprofessional education was important. The research findings supported the development of a mutual aid conceptual model to form interprofessional teams. The mutual aid processes, typically applied to direct social work practice, were adapted to a process of creating an effective task group of interprofessional educators.

Coleman is the social work program director at the University of Saint Francis, Indiana. Her research interests are in the development of effective interprofessional education teams, specifically using mutual aid processes. Coleman has presented her work related to the use of mutual aid to develop professional groups at two social work conferences.
Interdisciplinary collaboration is necessary to address complex social issues, and barriers exist to hinder that collaboration. Migas Collins' scholarship examined the role of interdisciplinary education at the university level in a mixed-methods study that assessed the attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of students. Results indicated that students value interdisciplinary education and collaboration, and although interdisciplinary skills were taught, students were not consistently able to identify concepts related to interdisciplinary work. This incongruence supports the research and finding that students could benefit from further interdisciplinary educational opportunities.

Migas Collins is associate professor and BSW program coordinator in the social work program at Concordia University in Mequon, Wisconsin. Her interests include child welfare, policy, global child advocacy, human trafficking, interdisciplinary studies and international social work.

Retchenda George-Bettisworth identifies how undergraduate social work programs are guided in providing culturally competent education. First she argues for the need to look beyond the EPAS diversity standard to the explicit incorporation of the 10 NASW Standards of Culturally Competent Social Work Practice within the curriculum. Next, a contextual analysis of the EPAS iterations since the start of accrediting undergraduate social work programs is completed to gain a better understanding of how EPAS has guided programs in providing culturally competent practice. Finally, she identifies specific ways culturally competent practice is being applied in distance education.

George-Bettisworth is clinical associate professor and chair of the Social Work Department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She has been in academia for eight years and is committed to providing access to quality higher education for students in rural and remote areas, and culturally relevant practice for all individuals.

Social workers are responsible for interpreting their professional code of ethics in such a way that they can provide competent services dependably. Gricus’ scholarship addresses and explores the effects of those interpretations. A systematic review of the literature revealed that social workers’ perceptions of what constitutes ethical and unethical practice are inconsistent. These inconsistencies can, at times, lead to social workers engaging in unethical or unprofessional practice. An exploratory mixed-methods study examined a group of social workers disciplined by a state licensing board for such practice and found that the experience had significant psychological and vocational impacts on their lives.

Gricus is passionate about developing learners into competent, compassionate and ethical practitioners. After a 17-year career in community mental health, she has accepted a position as an assistant professor of social work at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland.

In higher education, the perception of adjunct faculty as valued team members contradicts academia’s lack of supportive programs and educational opportunities for them. Harris’ work examines the attitudes, perceptions and behavior of adjunct faculty integrating into higher learning communities based on their experience with supportive programs and educational opportunities. She explored how institutional support enhances teacher effectiveness and academic quality, and increases the likelihood of a positive academic experience for adjunct faculty in higher learning. Results from her scholarship suggest new practices and perspectives that would both value and support adjunct faculty.

Harris is a clinical assistant professor and BSW field coordinator in the School of Social Work at Indiana University Northwest. Her teaching experience includes macro courses in community engagement, analyzing policy, field seminar and developing online courses across the undergraduate and graduate curriculum.
JUDY HOY, MN  
BSW, College of St. Catherine  
MSW College of St. Catherine - University of St. Thomas  

Banded Dissertation: Creating Meaningful Learning that Lasts: Emotion, Self-reflection and Action in the Classroom  

Hoy’s scholarship explores the social/emotional domains involved in learning with particular attention to the findings of affective neuroscience, a subgroup of brain science that provides evidence of the strong relationship between emotional engagement and motivation for learning. Hoy explored how these findings could be used to enhance educators’ classroom instruction methods, particularly in clinical practice courses. Drawing from constructivist, narrative and experiential learning theories, she describes an innovative teaching method used to teach students how to simultaneously balance affective and cognitive processes in order to create meaningful, long-lasting learning.  

Hoy has been a community faculty member at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work since 2003. She has taught numerous courses including practice with families, groups, trauma and children. She serves as a consultant for Washburn Center for Children and maintains a part-time private practice.

CINDY E. LOCKLEAR, NC  
BSW, University of North Carolina at Pembroke  
MSW, Fayetteville State University  

Banded Dissertation: Professional Socialization and Identity Development of Social Work Students  

Professional identity has long been a concern of the social work profession, and social work education programs have taken the lead to define and teach professionalism. Locklear’s scholarship provides a current picture of theory and available empirical data related to professional socialization and professional identity of social work students, and presents a student developmental model specific to undergraduate social work students. Within this context, she offers a model to help social work educators enhance professional identity development and professional socialization through the explicit and implicit curriculum.  

Locklear is an assistant professor and MSW field director with the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. She has been a social worker serving as an administrator, case manager, advocate, clinical social worker, faculty member and supervisor in rural North Carolina for the past 12 years.

BRITT E. RHODES, IA  
BA, Luther College  
MSW, Augsburg College  


Higher education in the 21st century must attend to both public goals and private needs. As a response, Rhodes’ scholarship highlights the importance of social work’s dual focus in 21st century liberal education. Grounded by student development theory, trends in higher education, the foundations of liberal education and best practices in social work, her work addresses intercultural development, contemplative pedagogy and pragmatic teaching for 21st century social work education. Trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy that bridges literature on trauma-informed care and contemplative practices in higher education is presented as an innovative pedagogy for social work education.  

Rhodes, associate professor of social work and program director, has taught at Luther College since 2003 and previously worked in child welfare and family services. Her current scholarly work focuses on trauma-informed care and contemplative practices, and the role of preprofessional programs at liberal arts colleges.

SUSAN G. SCHMIDT, MN  
BA, Houghton College  
MSSW, Columbia University; MTS, Boston University  

Banded Dissertation: Lessons from Listening to the Voices of Unaccompanied Central American and Mexican Children  

Schmidt’s scholarship gives voice to the experiences of unaccompanied Central American and Mexican children through secondary analysis of interviews conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The analysis focuses on the children’s accounts of child maltreatment and their recommendations for how to help other children like themselves. In addition, Schmidt examines research lessons from working with a young and hard-to-access population. Policy and practice implications are included for social workers, government adjudicators, attorneys and for interdisciplinary practice, in order to assist a population that has neglected vulnerabilities and overlooked potential.  

Schmidt is assistant professor of social work and field director at Luther College. In addition to teaching, she has worked for more than 20 years on programs, policies and research at the intersection of immigration and child welfare matters. She holds master’s degrees in social work and theology.
Tinucci’s scholarship focuses on the development of teacher identities, philosophies and pedagogical approaches of social work educators, and explores her own development as a postmodern teacher/researcher in social work education. In a conceptual paper, she argues it is incumbent on social work doctoral students to take initiative to prepare for teaching in higher education. Through personal narrative, she reflects on pivotal life experiences and examines the function of story on her developing pedagogy and teaching practice. Through self-study research, she examined how a constructivist teaching philosophy informed her pedagogy, and to what extent her teaching philosophy was evident in her teaching.

Tinucci brings 29 years of social work experience to her teaching as an adjunct for over 15 years. She has accepted a full-time one year faculty position as an assistant professor in the St. Catherine University - University of St. Thomas MSW program.

Van Tol's scholarship integrates the findings from previous self-efficacy research and applies it to people who are criminal justice-involved and pursuing general education diplomas (GEDs) or college credentials. Utilizing social cognitive theory as the conceptual framework, she explores internal and external barriers these students encounter while attempting to successfully obtain a degree. The qualitative data collected for this research study indicates that positive self-efficacy plays a significant role in educational achievement. Students with high self-efficacy see barriers as difficulties to overcome, not insurmountable problems. This work enhances the understanding of students who are justice-involved and their educational experiences.

Van Tol has over 15 years of experience in the criminal justice and education fields. She currently administers a re-entry program at Western Technical College in Wisconsin focused on reducing education and employment barriers. Her scholarly interests include social welfare policy, trauma and improving outcomes for individuals who are justice-involved.

Trauma as a concept and a theoretical framework for contextualizing the human experience is becoming recognized as a foundation in contemporary academic and social service settings. Vande Berg explores the topic of trauma as it has evolved as an overarching lens in the social work profession and social work education. Specifically, her scholarship covered the following dimensions: the extent and methods used to introduce bachelor’s level social work students to trauma concepts; the lived experience of social work educators with integrating trauma content into their curriculum; and applications of a trauma-informed perspective to the university classroom.

Vande Berg teaches in the BSW program at Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota, where she also serves as the field director. She teaches field and policy courses, and is involved in several community-engaged scholarship initiatives around her practice interests of interprofessional education, school social work and teaching about trauma.

Clinical social workers place a high value on personal relationships, and in this context Vizina-Roubal addresses questions about the efficacy of technology-mediated therapy. A common concern with technology-mediated practice is the lack of body language that could impede the formation of a therapeutic alliance. Personal relationships are also valued in the educational environment. The Community of Inquiry (COI) framework conveys the ideal online educational experience through the concepts of a social, cognitive and teaching presence. She explored the transference of these COI concepts from online teaching to online therapy. Furthermore, perceptions of technology-mediated role-plays were explored utilizing a mixed-methods study.

Vizina-Roubal’s recent professional focus includes technology-mediated social work practice. She has been called upon to present this work at national and international conferences. Vizina-Roubal teaches primarily in the MSW program at Ferris State University in Michigan.
AMY LARY WHITE, MN
BS, Bethel College
MSW, College of St. Catherine - University of St. Thomas

Banded Dissertation: Supporting the Development of Racial Identity and Cultural Humility in Higher Education

Lary White utilizes Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a lens for understanding the needs of students of color in predominantly white, faith-based institutions. In both her scholarship and teaching, she has addressed the importance of understanding institutional racism in higher education; strategies for implementing a more inclusive learning environment for all students; support for the development of racial identity; and the effectiveness of intergroup dialogue in the development of cultural humility and increased engagement across race.

Lary White is associate professor of social work and faculty diversity liaison in the College of Arts and Sciences at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her 25 years of social work practice in mental health, adoption and community-based practice inform her teaching and research interests.

WILLIAM C. WONG, CA
BA, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
MSW, California State University, Los Angeles

Banded Dissertation: Terraforming Public Child Welfare Practice - Enhancing Worker Retention Through Intentional Resiliency

Wong’s scholarship work addresses sustainability needs of social work practice in public child welfare (PCW). A conceptual article calls for expanded content to include resiliency competencies in social work education. A systematic review using the ecological model as a framework synthesized current literature to identify research gaps that examine organizational factors influencing turnover among PCW workers. Finally, at a conference presentation at the Child Welfare League of America’s national conference in Washington, D.C., Wong delivered evidence-informed strategies for public child welfare workforce retention to stakeholders. He concluded with policy and practice implications for practitioners, agency leaders, policymakers and social work educators.

Wong is an adjunct professor at California State University, Los Angeles, teaching foundation and practice courses in social work. He also is a social worker in public child welfare. His scholarship focuses on child welfare practice, ethics and resiliency in social work practice.

FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
By Carol Kuechler, DSW Program Director (through August 2017)

In addition to the accolades going out to Cohort 1, DSW Class of 2017, we would be remiss if we didn’t acknowledge the scholarship and participation of all of our doctoral students. A dozen of our DSW students from Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 attended the Baccalaureate Program Directors annual meeting in New Orleans in March, many of them sharing research related to their banded dissertations. Watch for DSW student publications and other scholarship-related news now being posted on our DSW current student news web page.

As you’ve read, my message for this edition marks several milestones and a major transition. In July, I will have the honor of welcoming our fourth DSW cohort, which will join Cohorts 2 and 3 on campus at the University of St. Thomas for Residency 2017. We also will have celebrated the graduation of our very first cohort. These 18 DSW graduates have been energetic, engaged and enthusiastic pioneers. They have been guided, nurtured and taught by an equally dedicated group of faculty and staff. We have taken this program from proposal and draft status to a lively curriculum grounded in our teaching philosophy and competencies that support the education of transformative teachers, scholar practitioners and community leaders.

A very special thank you to the Class of 2017 for their generous DSW class gift to the Barbara W. Shank Endowed Scholarship in Social Work, which will provide scholarship support for doctoral social work students from underrepresented/diverse backgrounds.

As I launch into retirement at the end of the summer 2017 session, I am confident in the continued success of the program. Beginning with the 2017-18 academic year, Dr. Catherine Marrs Fuchsel will take on the position of DSW program director and, along with our dedicated faculty and engaged students, will lead the next stage of development for our St. Kate’s - St. Thomas DSW program.

So I wish you the fortitude, persistence and vision that will sustain you in living your values and attaining your goals. Keep in mind the Susan B. Anthony mantra: “Failure is impossible.”

DID YOU KNOW?
• Two DSW grads are now “trifecta” alumnae, earning their BSW, MSW and DSW from the St. Kate’s - St. Thomas School of Social Work. Congratulations Mary Tinucci and Judy Hoy!