



## Bringing regulation to life for students

*“Now we know this licensing thing is really serious!”*

**One student’s comment while attending the board meeting hosted at the Texas State School of Social Work campus**

Getting to witness regulation “in action” offered many teaching moments for both social work students and faculty of the Texas State School of Social Work, which hosted the December 5-6 meeting of the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners at its campus in San Marcos. Probably the most gripping, reported Dorinda Noble, director of the school and ASWB president, was the Ethics meeting, where students and faculty listened to actual cases of social worker misconduct, including breaching confidentiality, engaging in financial fraud with clients, operating outside the scope of practice by using the Bible as a clinical therapeutic tool, misrepresenting the level of licensure to the public, and conducting an inappropriate relationship with a client (among others). The success of the interaction between board and school was summed up by one student who said: “Now we know this licensing thing is really serious!”

“My idea behind this gathering was to offer students and faculty a chance to see the board in action and learn more about licensure and regulation,” said Noble. “Since Texas State is one of the institutions that is engaged in the Pathways to Licensure project, I thought that bringing our faculty and the board together would help build a bridge between education and regulation.” She approached Board Chair Tim Brown, LCSW, another long-serving ASWB volunteer and former ASWB treasurer, about holding the meeting at the school, and he agreed.

Logistics were quickly ironed out. Because San Marcos is about 50 miles south of Austin, where the board typically meets, the board staff had to transport their case materials to the school. To make it easy for them, the school offered student help to move materials and provided complimentary parking (no easy feat on a college campus). Board members ate their lunches and held their meetings in the LBJ Student Center. The school also advertised the board’s meeting at Texas State on the school website, the school’s Facebook page, the university website, and the internal educational



*Tim Brown, chair of the Texas State Board of Social Worker Examiners and a former ASWB treasurer, and Dorinda Noble, Ph.D., director of the Texas State School of Social Work and ASWB president, collaborated to bring the state regulatory board meeting to the San Marcos campus to give students and faculty an opportunity to experience regulation “in action.” The two were photographed in front of a classic Duesenberg at Dick’s Classic Car Museum. A replica baby Duesenberg can be seen in the background.*

platform for students. Several faculty offered students extra credit for attending the meetings.

More than 100 students attended the various meetings, although Noble said that the school did not keep an exact count. During the Ethics meeting, for example, many dozens of students and probably ten faculty members attended. The board graciously welcomed students as well as other members of the public and explained the processes they followed to students. There were some opportunities for students to talk to board members as well.

After a full day of board meetings, the school hosted a dinner at Dick's Classic Car Museum in San Marcos. Board members and staff, faculty and staff, and the School of Social Work scholarship recipient students enjoyed wandering through the displays of vintage and classic cars, some of which are quite rare and valuable. The group enjoyed a delicious dinner there and had the opportunity to visit with each other. This was interesting for board members, said Noble, because they learned more about the modern educational landscape and some of the new teaching strategies that educators use. They also learned about the kinds of students who now populate the social work program and the school's field placements.

In describing the students' reactions, Noble noted that they were intrigued by the meetings: "Their anecdotal comments indicated that it was a great learning experience." Faculty members also found the meeting to be quite informative. Although the school incorporates teaching about regulation into its curriculum, faculty members who attended the Ethics meeting left with new realizations of elements they should emphasize with students when thinking about applying social work concepts to actual practice. "I now see that I need to teach my students more effectively about confidentiality and documentation," one faculty member said. Of an event that served to bring the subject of regulation to life for her students and staff, Noble said, "I believe we were very successful."