



Three E's of Exam Committee work: Excellence, Energy, Engagement

Four Exam Committee members receive service awards in August

“Three E’s and a fee.” The description is a mnemonic encapsulating the requirements for social work licensure: education, experience, and the exam (and of course payment). ASWB President M. Jenise Comer riffed on the mnemonic when she thanked the Exam Committee for their service to ASWB, calling them “engaged, energetic, and doing an excellent job” during the presentation of service awards to committee members ending their terms. The celebration took place in New Orleans, the Birthplace of Jazz and a city where celebrating is almost an art.

Once a year the Exam Committee and Board of Directors hold their

meetings at the same time and in the same place. Board members are invited to observe the work of the committee to gain an understanding of how the questions, or *items*, that appear on the social work exams are selected. It is also a time for the Board to recognize the contributions of these committee members who serve on the front lines ensuring the validity and reliability of the exams.

Comer spoke with appreciation of the work that the committee does, calling it “amazing.” She thanked the committee members for giving up their most valuable resource—their time—noting, “All of you love the work you do and your work together as a committee.” She



Mary Stebbins (VA) and M. Jenise Comer

presented service awards to four members of the committee: Mary Stebbins, co-chair of the Bachelors exam committee; Adolpha Bassett and June Yee of the Masters exam committee; and Bora Sunseri of the Clinical exam committee. Stebbins received a rosewood box for her service as committee co-chair for the past two years. Bassett, Yee, and Sunseri received three-year “tombstone” awards, so called for their shape.

Following each presentation by Comer, the respective committees presented individual gifts to each departing member. The tradition allows committee members to express their appreciation for one another and to share something of their hometown or area, a memento to remember them by. For example, Stebbins, who is a runner, received gifts with a running theme from her committee members. One gift, a running item from The Gap clothing store, was given in recognition that “as you run away, you’ll leave a gap.” Gifts presented to the other committee members were similarly thoughtful and given with recognition of the recipient’s unique contributions.



Adolpha Bassett (NC) and M. Jenise Comer



June Yee (AB) and M. Jenise Comer



Bora Sunseri (LA) and M. Jenise Comer

“An amazing journey”

With countless items written, reviewed, and shepherded through the exam development process, David Aiken will retire at the end of this year from ASWB’s exam development program after serving ten years as an item development consultant. The exam development process relies on the expertise of many different people, including the item development consultants. The experts who serve in this capacity work individually with item writers to review the items and provide feedback and coaching. The item development consultants are the first gatekeepers in the development of items: Only after the item meets with a consultant’s approval does it get forwarded for review by the Exam Committee. The consultants also attend Exam Committee meetings to participate in the next review process, to share their knowledge and support committee members as items are considered for fitness to debut on the exams as unscored questions. Item development consultants gain their knowledge of item development from experience with ASWB as item writers and serving on the Exam Committee.

ASWB President M. Jenise Comer presented a wall clock to Aiken in honor of his service, noting, “The time exceeded all our expectations.” During that tenure, Aiken coached many item writers. Bynia Reed, also an item development consultant for the Clinical exam committee, said that Aiken trained her as an item writer and as a consultant. “I get good feedback from my writers because of what you taught me,” Reed told Aiken.

Nancy Sidell, item development consultant for the Masters exam committee, presented Aiken with a wall hanging that she had made that was signed by all Exam Committee members. The Clinical exam committee individually presented gifts to Aiken as they had to the other members leaving the committee. One member said: “I will miss the stories—the case studies involved with items.”

Aiken thanked everyone for their words and the gifts, saying: It’s been an amazing journey. I learned more than I imparted to my writers in terms of social work and psychometrics. I will miss all of you.” Aiken lives in Ft. Myers, Fla., where he does volunteer work with the Lee County Sheriff’s Office.



Dave Aiken (FL) and M. Jenise Comer