Putting knowledge to work

Path to Licensure scholars begin implementing what they learned and showing their pride in the Institute

A few months after the first cohort of Path to Licensure scholars headed back to their campuses from the three-day intensive training in Culpeper, Virginia, Education and Training Senior Manager Jan Fitts got an interesting request. The scholars, all on the faculty of schools of social work in the United States, were interested in some kind of logo or seal to highlight their participation in the Path to Licensure Institute and program.

Fitts, who spearheaded the Path to Licensure Institute, was surprised by the request. “They’ve all submitted models for how they intend to infuse regulation and licensure throughout their social work degree programs,” says Fitts. “I was excited about how the scholars were identifying with Path to Licensure and looking for ways to draw students’ attention to their efforts. But, at the same time, we need to be certain that anything they use represents ASWB and the Path to Licensure program appropriately.”

Working with Fitts, ASWB’s Communications and Marketing department designed a logo that is available exclusively to schools participating in the Path to Licensure Institute and provided clear guidelines for usage in print and on the World Wide Web.

Path to Licensure mentors and scholars (left to right): mentor Deana Morrow, scholars Jane Hurley-Johncox, Kelly Bass, Carolyn Szafran, Shakira Kennedy, Joan Groessl, and mentor Dorinda Noble.
Given how enthusiastic the participating scholars are, Fitts was glad to provide the new resource. As the participants have gone back to school for the fall semester, Fitts says, “they’ve all been really active and have developed a student survey to find out what their students already know about social work licensing and regulation.

“One scholar gave a presentation at her program’s faculty retreat,” Fitts says, “and invited her colleagues to document how they can address regulation in their coursework.” Another scholar is integrating the “three pillars” formulation that ASWB has used to describe the relationship between educators, regulators, and practitioners. A third has engaged with his state’s social work licensing board and NASW chapter to help students learn more about licensing. “They’re sharing some ideas with one another,” says Fitts, “but they’re also actively figuring out how to make Path to Licensure work for their school.”

In addition to integrating licensing and regulation into their curriculum, Path to Licensure scholars are expected to develop research projects that focus on social work regulation. Two scholars are thinking of collaborating on a mixed-methods design examining the correlation between continuing education requirements and violations for failure to comply. They have reached out to Mark Gianino of Boston University about working on the research project with them. Gianino has served on the Massachusetts Board of Registration for Social Workers and currently chairs ASWB’s Continuing Competence Committee.

All five scholars will check in with Fitts in January for a midyear conversation about their efforts. Fitts is energized by the work the scholars are doing—from their research to their work to increase understanding of social work regulation at their schools. “They’re all committed to engaging students, faculty, and administrators about regulation and licensing,” she says, and their success will inform future Path to Licensure efforts.