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Social Work Conference Promotes Cultural Humility, Social Justice

Diversity event includes keynote on 'Using Truth, Bravery and Compassion to Heal the World'

FEBRUARY 12, 2018 BY SARAH SAPP



Jennifer Stollman presents 'Using Truth, Bravery and Compassion to Heal the World' at the Department of Social Work's recent Diversity Conference. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Communications

OXFORD, Miss. – “You risk nothing by standing up for what is right,” Jennifer Stollman told nearly 200 attendees at the recent 2018 Diversity Conference, presented by the **University of Mississippi Department of Social Work**. “You risk everything by staying silent.”

Stollman, academic director of for the **William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation**, served as keynote speaker. Attendees included **Ole Miss** students, faculty and staff from the Oxford, Tupelo and DeSoto campuses.

Carlyn Allen Conn, a master’s student in social work from Natchez, touted the conference’s focus on cultural humility in effective social work practice.

“The biggest take-away for me is the reminder that different is OK,” Conn said. “Diversity is what makes the world so beautiful, and we should not be threatened by the difference of others.”

“It is so easy to see things through the lens of a white-male dominated society without even realizing that you are being arrogant or inconsiderate to another person’s cultural views and beliefs.”

The enthusiastic participation from students was a highlight of the conference for Desiree Stepteau-Watson, associate professor of social work and conference co-chair.

“Students were eager to learn, but not in a passive way,” Stepteau-Watson said. “They also contributed their own thoughts and experiences, which made this a lively and energetic exchange, from which all of us benefited.”

“The students seemed to respond in a really positive way to this experiential learning. Information was being shared and learning taking place, but in this environment students, seemed more excited and engaged.”

Amy Fisher, assistant professor of social work and the other co-chair, said she hopes students learned the importance of their voices in the work they will do for the advancement of human rights.

“Social workers stand at the front line of not only racial equity, but other forms of equity such as gender, class, physical ability, sexual orientation and religion,” Fisher said.

“I was reminded that it is important for students to hear how critical their work is. We need to step back and think about the bigger picture, the social justice aspects of our work, on a regular basis.”

Andi Hannaford, a senior social work major from Senatobia, commended a presentation by Na Youn Lee, assistant professor of social work, on cultural competency and social workers’ code of ethics.

“The code of ethics has actually amended the phrase ‘cultural competency’ to ‘cultural awareness,’” Hannaford said. “This, in turn, makes a huge difference in regards to how social workers should approach clients.

“By being competent, you are implying that you have knowledge of a subject, whereas ‘awareness’ promotes learning and starting where the client is – which is a topic discussed in every social work class. By showing humility

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to



Desiree Stepteau-Watson, associate professor of social work and co-chair of the Department of Social Work's Diversity Conference, welcomes a crowd of nearly 200 students and faculty from UM's Oxford, Tupelo and DeSoto campuses, Rust College and the University of Southern Mississippi. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Communications

and awareness, you can learn about diverse cultures and the individuals who practice them.”

The conference also included a presentation by Reginald Virgil, a University of Southern Mississippi social work student, on “Keep Calm and Discuss Racism” and a skit performed by the Rust College Department of Social Work.

“This conference provided students an opportunity to engage in discussion, network with students and faculty from other campuses and other programs in our state, and get inspiration as future social workers who will be on the front lines of working toward social justice,” said Daphne Cain, chair of the

Department of Social Work.

Teresa Carithers, interim dean of applied sciences, commended conference organizers for leading students in a thoughtful examination of diversity’s role in their practice.

“It always makes me very proud when the School of Applied Sciences provides leadership and opportunities for expanded dialogue on the broad scope of diversity,” Carithers said. “Our support for social work’s diversity conference continues that commitment.”

For more information about the Department of Social Work, visit <http://sw.olemiss.edu> or email socialwork@olemiss.edu.

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