Fourteen Human Services majors were immersed in intensive field placements during this past Summer Term I and II, 2014, a new opportunity to fulfill their internship requirement. During their seminar discussions, students reported having greater life balance and six were offered paid employment in their agencies upon the completion of their commitment. Human Services majors were immersed in intensive field placements during Summer Term I and II, 2014, a new opportunity to fulfill their field experience requirement. The Professional Human Services Internship Seminar summer section (HUMCTR 420) was developed and taught by CPCS faculty member, Beth Clemens, DSW and offered students an alternative to balancing their required hours with their fall or spring course load. The internship course enables students to apply theory to practice in Human Services through supervised internship and professional seminar. With a new range of placements available in Metro Boston, students were prepared to move forward toward completing major requirements and better balance work, school and family responsibilities. The students worked with diverse consumer groups in settings such as a community health center offering substance abuse services; an inpatient psychiatric hospital; a program offering affordable housing assistance; a domestic violence shelter; a residential center for at-risk youth; a community health center serving the LGBT community and a Boston hospital program for gunshot victims and their families. Interns were placed with a supervisor who, where possible, had an advanced degree in social work or public health.

Throughout the summer, the class met in their professional seminar class to integrate human service theory with practice in the field. Students discussed important matters arising from their placements such as practical applications of their classroom training and the identification of ethical issues and effective interventions with consumers at risk. Moreover, the students were encouraged to be conscious of any personal or professional biases they may have had during these class discussions. With a diverse student body, a genuine sense of inclusiveness and open-mindedness prevailed. Students were confident to weigh-in on challenging issues witnessed in their internship experience in a confidential and safe environment. As parents and working professionals, many students were comfortable trouble-shooting innovative behavior management strategies for those interns working with at-risk youth. Some students were confident to offer advice such as, “This worked for me as a parent,” while others suggested a different strategy gleaned from personal experience.

During their summer placements, the students brainstormed about intervention techniques; worked on process notes and maintained reflection journals about their experiences—essential for development and preparation to become better case managers and direct service workers. Along with the Summer Case Management class offered during Summer Term I and II, Internship Seminar students got a head start on their course requirements for the major, including Human Services Policy and Practice Capstone taught by Professor Clemens. In order to be pro-active, Professional Internship Seminar student, Betsy Birns, sought out her internship placement with faculty assistance as she registered for the course this past spring. She decided to investigate three potential placements and then researched the agency that best suited her. Having worked with

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adolescents during her service learning experience at CPCS, she considered a placement that would build on the skills and assets she had accumulated from her major courses. This past summer, she secured a placement in a residential care facility for adolescent boys who are under the care and supervision of the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. This facility works with these youths individually and in groups in order to realize its goal of helping them develop the skills they'll need to become contributing members of their community. By providing structure and a firm but fair disciplinary approach, Betsy became immersed in the daily routine of these boys and worked to develop their trust. Consequently, her presence was welcomed by them and Betsy then applied learned patterns in management techniques which enabled the boys to be empowered enough to make their own decisions. In addition to working with direct care, Betsy put in extra hours preparing a training manual as well as attending workshops with the other employees at the residential care facility.

Betsy admits that arriving at a point in her career where she could utilize all of her skills evolved gradually over time. She started out as a communications major at American University in Washington, D.C., but health problems at the time caused her to re-evaluate her academic and personal choices. She switched her focus to Human Services and continued her coursework at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester. By taking advantage of the MassTransfer block, she began studying at the College of Public and Community Service (CPCS) as a Human Services major. When asked why she ultimately chose CPCS, Betsy said, “What makes CPCS an exceptional place to study is the quality of the learners who have a passion for Human Services.” In fact, many are adult learners who have considerable and significant life experience. In addition to the internship component of the Human Service major, the service learning requirement prepared her for the challenging role she took on this past summer. She cites Charlie Applestein’s No Such Thing as a Bad Kid: Understanding and Responding to the Challenging Behavior of Troubled Children and Youth as a text which was instrumental in developing strategies and a vocabulary for working with all populations of kids. For example, after working with middle school students at the Walter Denney Center Youth Center, she adapted lesson plans from leading the Healthy Cooking class to her recent internship. By instructing the boys there on how to cook nutritious foods and develop healthy meal plans, she enabled them to feel confident enough to make recipes on their own.

Realizing success in this internship really paid off for Betsy and she eventually received a job offer as Per-diem Direct Care Counselor at the residential care facility. Her achievement there has convinced her to apply for graduate school to study social work with the goal of becoming licensed as a School Social Worker/School Adjustment Counselor. In retrospect, she knows that the contacts she has made and the relationships she has developed have proven invaluable and provided her a clear career path beyond graduation. Professor Clemens states that six of the fourteen students enrolled in the Summer Professional Internship Seminar received offers of paid employment from their internship sites upon completion of their commitment, offering a clear trajectory to a career in human services for our students.

Alumni and Student Career Networking Event
Tuesday, December 2, 2014
6 to 8 p.m.
Campus Center, Alumni Lounge

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