



GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE

Executive Summary **Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholars Program**

*Funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation of New York City
Administered by the Gerontological Society of America*

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Overview

This program addresses the lack of adequately trained gerontological social work practitioners needed to meet the social and health care needs of today and tomorrow's rapidly increasing aging population. The current shortage of social work faculty and mentors with geriatric expertise has resulted in a social work professional work force crisis. Noting the key role social work plays in geriatric programs and service delivery, the John A. Hartford Foundation has provided funding for the Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholars Program to be administered by the Gerontological Society of America and directed by Professor Barbara Berkman, the Helen Rehr/Ruth Fizdale Professor of Health and Mental Health at Columbia University School of Social Work.

The Scholars Program fosters an intellectually stimulating, mutually supportive network of colleagues involved in research and teaching in geriatric social work. These scholars will train the next generation of social workers to provide care to older Americans and their caregivers. The Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholars Program will enhance the effectiveness of faculty scholars as academic leaders, role models, and mentors for future generations of social work professionals.

Program Components

Program Committee. There is a National Social Work Program Committee to provide guidance and oversight to the program, as well as assume responsibility in the selection process.

The Research Project. Each Scholar proposes and implements a significant research project that addresses the knowledge needed to enhance the physical, social, and psychological well being of older adults and their caregivers. The research must demonstrate the intersection of social issues, health, and aging.

National Research Mentors. The Scholars are paired with National Research Mentors who provide in-person and long distance ongoing substantive and methodological review of the Scholar's research. Together with his/her mentor, an individualized research development plan is designed to enhance the Scholar's program.

Professional Development. Each Scholar identifies an Institutional Faculty Sponsor, a professional role model who can provide guidance and support, teach the intricacies of the work environment, and provide political sponsorship to facilitate entry into organizational and professional networks. Together with his/her Sponsor, the Scholar designs an individualized



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professional plan that will guide the development of the Scholar's effectiveness as an academic leader.

Faculty Development Institutes and Workshops. The faculty development of the Scholars is supported through learner-centered educational institutes and intensive seminars and workshops. These meetings focus on special skill-based topics in research, teaching, and leadership.

National Network Development. This program element represents a significant commitment to increasing the visibility and influence of geriatric social work through the recruitment of new stakeholders to the initiative. The Program supports networking and cohort building among the Scholars, National Research Mentors, and the Doctoral Fellows through in-person meetings and social events at institutes, the annual meetings of several professional organizations, and through long-distance communications (e.g. listserv, e-mail, and conference calls).

Educational Conference for All Cohorts. There will be an Educational Conference, in which the scholars from all cohorts have the opportunity to meet together to: reinforce a group identity; recognize their collective potential for heightening awareness and effecting change; and build a strong foundation for combining efforts to improve and expand the field of geriatric social work.

Expected Outcomes

It is expected that at the conclusion of the initiative, the Program will have:

- Nurtured the leadership development and enhanced the skills of faculty scholars, who are expected to become leaders in geriatric social work;
- Increased the visibility and desirability of geriatric social work as a field, supported by new knowledge of social work's contributions to health outcomes as reported by the scholars through presentations at major conferences and through publications;
- Developed a network of scholars who will continue their network development beyond the scope of the Program in order to improve and expand the field of geriatric social work; and
- Developed a network of social work mentors who have invested substantial time in the development of the selected scholars and who will serve as a continuing network for the identification and development of future scholars.