# Lowcountry Graduate Center

# Healthcare & Community Wellness Advisory Board

# Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Sept. 12th, 2019

1. **Call to order**

Dr. Nancy Muller opened the meeting at 4:37 PM in conference room 148 at the Lowcountry Graduate Center.

1. **Introductions**

**Those in attendance were:**
Andrea Clements – Roper St. Francis Hospital
Katie Zimmerman – Charleston Moves (Call-in)
Emily Cedzo – Coastal Conservation League
Rachel Levkowicz – Medtronic
Paul Weiters – City of Charleston
David Carroll – Palmetto Primary Care
Margriet Wright – University of South Carolina, Master of Social Work site director
Nancy Muller – Lowcountry Graduate Center
Jonathan Solomon – Lowcountry Graduate Center

1. **Presentations & Discussions**
	1. Dr. Muller began the meeting with a letter of support from the Lowcountry Graduate Center (LGC) regarding a BUILD Discretionary Grant Application for the City of Charleston, advocating the building of a pedestrian bridge across the Ashley River to connect West Ashely and Downtown Charleston. The letter was sent to the Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chao and is the third attempt to seek funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

	Currently, there are over 73,000 jobs located within a 20-minute walk or bike ride from the bridgeway, and with the addition of the pedestrian bridge, the Charleston community could see more environmentally friendly, sustainable options for mobility, as well as reduce the number of vehicular accidents and fatalities.

	The project is being advocated by Charleston Moves, a non-profit organization that promotes mobility by bicycle, foot, and public transportation for the improvement of the health and well-being of the Greater Charleston area.
2. Next to present, Dr. Margriet Wright, the Charleston-site coordinator for the University of South Carolina’s Master of Social Work (MSW) program offered at the LGC. The MSW program has been a main-stay for the LGC for the past six years and is the only academic social work program within the Lowcountry region.

Dr. Wright played a video from a TEDx Talk with the former Dean of the College of Social Work, Dr. Anna Scheyett entitled “Social Workers as Super-Heroes.” There are currently 600,000 social workers within the United States alone who work to promote and support community well-being and fight social injustice. According to Dr. Scheyett, social workers understand the connections between people and their communities, families, policies, etc. Everyone, no matter how old or young will need a social worker at some point and the field is an essential aspect of every sector of society. Currently 70% of all mental health counseling sessions are conducted by social workers.

The Master of Social Work program is offered on the Columbia campus, as well as at satellite campuses at the LGC and the Greenville University Center. The program is also offered internationally in South Korea. Students in the program attend and study for three years and are typically part-time while they work. The program consists of 60 credit hours and over 900 field hours. The MSW program utilizes practical applications of lessons, where students work as case workers within the community. Within the second year of the program, students are placed in the field with organizations around the local community, working 16 hours a week as an unpaid internship/volunteer opportunity. These students are highly motivated and care about understanding human behaviors, even when their own interests may be at risk.

The program also teaches students how to understand patients and clients while also being able to demonstrate empathy. According to Dr. Wright, these are the roles of a social workers, with the addition of never assuming and always demonstrating evidence-based practices. One course that has become an essential within the program is a course in diversity due to many social workers helping in communities of vulnerability. But empathy is not the only value that students garner from South Carolina’s MSW program. Dr. Wright explains that students preparing for a career in social work must demonstrate a willingness for service and social justice, as well demonstrate dignity, the importance, centrality, and worth of human relationships. Social workers ought to also have integrity and competence within the field and profession.

The current trends of the profession of social work tend to be positive. Currently, there is a demand for healthcare (physical, mental, and emotional); substance use disorders; children, youth, and family services (i.e. dealing with attachment issues); K-12 social work; military/V.A. trauma; social activism and addressing disparity and oppression.

From the University of South Carolina’s Master of Social Work program, there are roughly 80,000 alumni and currently over 400 students enrolled in the program in total. When asked about what would make the ideal MSW recruit, Dr. Wright suggested a student with life experiences of being involved in the community and collaborative approaches; engaged in what is happening within the community; practical application skills of lessons; and self-efficacy.

**Conclusion**

Nancy ended the meeting at 5:50 PM