Four Texas State Hogg Foundation Bilingual Mental Health Fellows Meet the Dean

On Nov. 10, four Hogg Foundation Bilingual Mental Health Fellows who are pursuing graduate degrees in Social Work at Texas State University-San Marcos met with Dr. Jaime Chahin, Dean of the College of Applied Arts to discuss their plans for the future. The students were awarded tuition-and-fees scholarships for Fall 2010/Spring 2011 by the Hogg Foundation to encourage more graduate students to pursue careers in bilingual mental health.

Sable Galindo, a resident of San Marcos, says that she discovered her passion for bilingual social work during her summer internship working with immigrants from Central America. She saw first-hand the kinds of barriers and limitations Spanish-speaking populations face and the great need for bilingual workers in social services. After graduation, Sable plans to utilize pet therapy to treat Spanish-speaking children with mental health issues.

Veronica Soto hails from Corpus Christi, Texas, and is pursuing her MSW degree part-time. After graduation, she plans to work with refugee children who have immigrated to the United States from Central America.

Cecilia Actis works part-time as an AmeriCorps member with Communities in the Schools at Simon Middle School in Kyle. She says her bilingual skills help her connect with Spanish-speaking families whose children attend the school. She wants to pursue mental health work with Spanish-speaking children and their families after completing her MSW.

Erika Gomez comes from Del Rio, Texas. Currently an employee at the Department of Family and Protective Services and a part-time social work graduate student, Erika plans to return to the Del Rio area after graduation to provide mental health services to Spanish-speaking migrant workers.

Dean Chahin challenged students to be thinking ahead of the kinds of needs geriatric patients will be requiring in areas of the country that are largely Spanish speaking. He noted that he has seen no nursing homes or assisted living facilities where the kind of home atmosphere so important to Latinos has been re-created. Although Latino families have historically cared for the elderly in their own homes, the kind of work demands of the twenty-first century that often require both couples in a family to hold down full-time jobs may also require Latinos to consider utilizing nursing home facilities. If so, these environments need to provide the kind of food, music, home atmosphere, and language familiar to Latinos in order to ward off depression, said the Dean.

The Hogg Foundation and Texas State’s Center for Children and Families is sponsoring two speakers to address bilingual social service issues. Dr. Rosamaria Murillo, who has worked with Spanish-speaking HIV/AIDS patients in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, spoke on Nov. 8 about the growing need for bilingual social services throughout the United States. On Nov. 22, Abel Rodriquez, an MSW alumnus of Texas State who has worked extensively with bilingual youth, will address the growing need for bilingual workers in Hospice care. Both speakers are sponsored by the Phi Alpha Social Work Honor Society and the Organization of Student Social Workers. The Hogg Foundation Bilingual Mental Health fellows are special guests at these presentations.