



Worksite-Based Field Placements

Author(s)

Suzanne Sankar, MSW

Editor

Moderator

JoAnn McFall, MSW

Michigan State University

Chair, CSWE Council on Field Education

Field placements in a student's place of employment can provide a viable alternative to traditional agency-based placements for students who cannot disrupt salaried employment. For many students, the option of doing an employment-based placement is a key factor in being able to pursue graduate education. Nonetheless, several drawbacks have been associated with these placements including student role confusion, difficulty creating comparable learning experiences, inability of the agency to fully support student-learning experiences, and the additional time required by the field department to arrange and monitor such placements.

The Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), Standard 2.1.8, which addresses employment-based placements, can be confusing to interpret. Standard 2.1.8 reads: Develops policies regarding field placements in an organization in which the student is also employed. To ensure the role of student as learner, student assignments and field learning supervision are not the same as those of a student's employment. Schools struggle with how much leeway is allowable in arranging job placements. What are the limits in how the standard is applied? Will the standard be revised for 2015?

The Field Educator asked four distinguished social work educators to participate in a conversation to tackle these and other questions on the topic of critical importance to field education: employment-based field placements.

Rebecca Brigham, MSW, Director of Field Education, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and member of the CSWE Council on Field Education, Peter Vaughan, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University, and Steve Holloway Ph.D., Director of the Office of Accreditation at CSWE, participated in this issue's Conversations interview moderated by Jo Ann McFall, MSW, Associate Director of Field Education, Michigan State University, and Chair of the CSWE Council on Field Education. – Editor's Note



Jo Ann McFall: Welcome, everyone, and thanks for your willingness to participate in this conversation for *Field Educator*. I'm the Associate Director for Field Education at the Michigan State School

of Social Work, and I'm currently the chair of the CSWE Council on Field Education. Let's start with introductions.

Rebecca Brigham: I've directed the field program here at UNC Chapel Hill for eight years. I came directly from the practice community where I worked in child welfare and child welfare management for more than twenty years. I joined the Field Council a year ago, and very much enjoy serving on it.

Peter Vaughan: I'm the Dean of the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University in New York City, and I'm entering my thirteenth year. I am ending my career at the end of this year. I've been a field instructor for twenty-seven years, and I also had a field department reporting directly to me at another university, so I've been a part of the evolution of field instruction for many years.

Steve Holloway: I'm currently the Director of the Office of Accreditation at CSWE. I've been in social work education since 1970, and I served on three faculties, doing field advising on the first two, and I would very much consider myself a "friend of field" as well.

Jo Ann: Our topic addresses the issues of employment-based placements and the interpretation of EPAS 2008 standards with regard to these placements. Our goals today are to have a conversation identifying the concerns that schools, field faculty, and students have, and also to ask for clarifications of standards, as well as possibly offering some future considerations on this topic.

Jo Ann: From where you sit as a field director, can you describe the challenges that employment based placements present for students, for agencies and for schools of social work?

Rebecca: The first challenge is to ensure that the student/learner roles and tasks are separated from the employee role and tasks. This can be a complex challenge as factors at the agency level and at the student level must be considered. Also, the student's fluctuating role at the agency can have an impact on other staff in the agency. It is sometimes difficult for everyone to understand that the student/employee is a learner while concurrently being an employee. For example, we've had circumstances where staff members have become confused and sometimes resentful that the student has become privy to information at a leadership level that they wouldn't have had access to in an employee role.

One of the specific challenges we've had is when students are concurrently in direct practice roles in their employment and are moving into more macro practice roles in their student learning. These students are more experienced and are coming to school to learn management and administration, as they are hopeful that they will move into leadership positions in their agencies. As part of their placements, they are given not only access to decision-making at the management level in their agencies but also, on occasion, an opportunity to provide input. Their colleagues can become envious about

their new student roles; in other words, it can create dual roles for the students. We've certainly had experiences where students have been provided with information that they might not otherwise have had as an employee. Then, if the students return to the employment roles they were in prior to graduation, the agencies begin to realize that they have provided access to management decisions that other employees did not have.

Along with that, it is important to protect the learning environment from the various conflicting employment demands. For example, if you have an employer-based placement and a student's client is in crisis at a time when the student is working in the learning role, it can be common for the agency, of course, to want to meet the client's needs first and to temporarily pull that student back into their employment role. For the agencies, it can become very challenging to meet workload demands while also meeting the school's requirements.

In these circumstances, it can feel to the student that their own learning and career goals are playing "third fiddle" in an effort to please the agency and the school. Trying to make employer-based placements a win-win-win -- a win for the agency, a win for the school, and certainly a win for the student -- can require a great deal of negotiation and communication by all parties at the planning stage and throughout the course of the placement. With employer-based placements university resources must also be considered. Employment-based placements take much more time to set up and monitor. We're absolutely committed to doing this at UNC because we think it is best for students and the agencies, but it does certainly take many more field resources (time) than the traditional placement.

Steve: I have a question for you, Rebecca. I'm particularly interested in this business about information that one obtains as a student that one wouldn't obtain as a regular employee. I'm not sure I've experienced that. Could you give us an example?

Rebecca: Sure. Students who are afforded the opportunity to attend agency board meetings is an example. Typically, a direct practice employee wouldn't have that opportunity.

Steve: This would particularly be the case in public agencies which are very hierarchical. I get it now.

Rebecca: I think that happens more in the larger organizations, hospitals, school systems, and child welfare agencies, of course.

Steve: Right.

Rebecca: But we've had it happen in nonprofit agencies as well, and smaller organizations where students are gaining access, at least as perceived by their colleagues, that the colleague doesn't have, and that results in resentment.

Steve: That's interesting.

Jo Ann: Let me move on to the next question related to yours, Rebecca. What are the issues for employment-based sites in rural or under-resourced areas? This is a concern that we have here in Michigan. Do you think there are special concerns with such placements in rural areas?

Rebecca: We're in a somewhat suburban setting, though we do certainly place students in rural areas in North Carolina. These challenges are similar to what we have for our field program as a whole; they are not specific to employer-based placements. That challenge is about accessing MSW field instructors. It can be much more difficult to find an agency where there's an MSW or an offsite MSW field instructor who is willing to supervise students in their employment settings. Of course, the offsite field instructor/onsite task supervisor model brings its own set of challenges irrespective of whether it's an employer-based placement or not. This has been a challenge for us in rural school systems, for example.

Jo Ann: Rebecca, do you think it makes a difference if students are doing only a portion of their nine hundred hours of placement in an employment placement? Do you think it makes a difference if students are allowed to do only one of two placements in their place of employment, and then do their other placement somewhere else?

Rebecca: Yes, I think it makes a difference. This type of scenario would make it very difficult for the student who is likely to have entered school with a hope to continue employment in their agency throughout their matriculation with us, whether it is two years or three years. In order for a student to do two employer-based placements in the same agency, we have found that we have greater success when students have come from large agencies that have multiple service functions. This type of agency makes it more likely for a student to have access to different types of populations of clients, with different interventions, and at different intervention levels so that they are able for both field placements to stay within the same agency, but have access to different kinds of experiences. When you require students to do one of their field placements outside of their agency, you either are overburdening them in terms of time, because they're trying simultaneously to go to school, to keep their job, and to do a field placement, or they're feeling pressure to do a placement outside of their employment, which brings another set of challenges for their families, and their other life responsibilities.

Jo Ann: Right. Well stated. Peter, my next question is for you. For a variety of reasons making part-time programs and employment-based placements available to students allows schools to admit well-qualified students who might not otherwise be able to even consider graduate social work education. From the dean's perspective, what are the challenges these placements present?

Peter: The challenges that we face relate to us having promised more than we can give or guarantee. It's very difficult for us here to find opportunities within even the large agencies for students to move into job placements because the financial constraints for the agencies are so great. Whereas we expect that the agencies will provide a different kind of experience, and the agencies also agree to provide an experience different from regular work, it is not uncommon at the end of the work site field placement for those students to comment, "You know, I had sort of an unholy duo with the field instructor where the assignment was not very different from work, and I didn't tell anyone." So, we really have not had the kind of learning for the student that we had hoped or expected, and it's sort of been fudged so the student could get through and the agency wouldn't be too terribly damaged by not having that extra worker.

The variety of work available at a larger agency really means less of this happens, but in New York City, what we've even done with some of the students who come from Administration for Children's Services (ACS), is to require a second placement in one of the contract agencies. In that way we have been able to get around the some of that. In small agencies, it's almost impossible to have a student do two field placements because there just is not the variety. The function of the agency is much narrower in scope, and the varieties of experiences are not necessarily available. Also, many times the agency cannot provide two different MSW field instructors, other than the person who's running the agency and who's supervising the person already.

As I look at the standards, and as I talk to our field people and hear about the difficulties that they have, it's getting more difficult to keep people in their work sites and to guarantee different kinds of experiences. Also, in New York City, we look for agencies where we can help create Saturday and evening experiences. This would allow students to stay with their agencies and do something different for a placement. Unfortunately it's hard to make weekend and evening placements work because we can't always arrange the necessary supervision. Many students feel very vulnerable when we put them in those sorts of nontraditional settings. Even when we are attending to their learning needs, if an emergency comes up, they can feel unsupported. So running a big program as we do, it's just been another really critical kind of concern that I have had about liability, not only for the students, but for the clients they serve.

Steve: Peter, I assume that students who are seeking these placements are admitted with the understanding that the school of social work will facilitate finding a good placement. Does your field department actually get engaged in the admissions process to make sure that these placements are going to be viable at the point at which the student is admitted to the program?

Peter: It doesn't, Steve, except towards the end of the admission cycle, and by then we've admitted those students. We're dealing with two separate functions that really impact on field placement, and I talk to the other deans in New York City, and they're confronted with the same thing. We're so

tuition-driven that our admissions people have to go out and get people admitted who are qualified students, and, of course, we say we have nontraditional field placements. Well, we do have some nontraditional field placements, but we have a lot fewer than we did six years ago, because agencies are laying off people in large numbers, or hiring workers who are not MSW-prepared. So last year, for example, admissions said, "We've admitted a certain number of students," and the field department says, "But we can't place all those students." So we decided to cut off admissions, and in some ways we cut off our noses to spite our faces. If we had moved in a different direction, if field and admissions could have worked better together, the field department might have found some of those students field placements outside the city, and students would have been willing, we think, to have gone to these placements. So that's a real problem. The two departments don't talk with each other, and there's not a natural kind of connection between those two functions in this particular school. I was in another school where admissions and field work together very closely, and we were able to really keep some of these kinds of problems from happening, but it's been a real problem for us here at Fordham.

Jo Ann: Peter, I really liked your comments. We have been speaking to this all along — promising more than what we can actually deliver with regards to placements for students. This just happens in the course of marketing the program and admitting students. When the rubber hits the road and we're trying to place these students, there is not always the possibility of finding something that is going to work well. Then we are all scrambling at the last minute.

Peter: Entering students all complain, "I didn't get the field placement I wanted. I came and I wanted to have a drug treatment field placement." My stance is always, "You came here to learn to be a social worker, and your first year, hey, we'll teach you how to be a social worker, but it may not be with the field of practice or with the clientele you want. In your second year we will give you a much better shot at doing that." I say this knowing that in the second year we tried very hard to match the students, but a number of students aren't going to get those particular placements because they just aren't available.

Jo Ann: Steve, given the concerns that Rebecca and Peter have identified, we hope to better understand the EPAS 2008 Standard 2.1.8 pertaining to employment-based placements. From my perspective, these concerns have become a priority topic of discussions within field advisory councils, consortia, the Field Council, and other settings. Standard 2.1.8 has not changed; it has been the same for many years. The standard focuses on the *conditions* for these placements, and not on the *learning* outcomes. Specifically, the condition that student assignments and field instruction differ from the responsibilities and supervision associated with the student's employment. So, in other words, the focus is on the *condition* and not on the **learning**. Given that, Steve, is there currently discussion on the part of the Commission on Accreditation (COA) to consider the complex realities of employment-based field placements and to conceptualize the standards differently, particularly in light of

the 2008 EPAS focus on competencies and demonstration of learning outcomes? What do you think, Steve?

Steve: First of all, the Commission on Accreditation interprets the existing standard to the extent that there would be consideration of modifying the standard. It will be the Commission on Educational Policy which will come up with a new iteration of EPAS in 2015. I would say that the Commission on Accreditation has spent some time struggling with the meaning of 2.1.8. Peter sits on the commission, actually, and was a major contributor to those deliberations, and the deliberations really revolved around the assumption that the standard as written is desirable, and the circumstances, as we've identified in the conversation so far, the circumstances that we're struggling with now regarding agencies with constrained resources, and so on, make it very difficult to meet the letter of this standard. I think following a rather long consideration of those issues, the Commission on Accreditation agreed that as the group reads self-studies and interprets Standard 2.1.8 they will attempt to attend to the spirit of the standard as opposed to the letter of the standard.

Jo Ann: Well, that's a great answer, Steve, and that's the question we had — how rigid is the interpretation of that standard because complying with it can be so difficult. From your answer, I'm assuming that CSWE in general, the COA, and the Commission on Educational Policy on which I sit, might be open to updating the standards and the interpretation and base them more on the evaluation of student competency outcomes as opposed to the conditions of the placement. What do you think about that?

Peter: Could I just say something about that? I think that the standard should not focus solely on the student competency outcomes. I think the spirit of the commission has been that we are working with colleagues who are our peers, and they should be able to interpret what is best, as they have to figure out and arrange these complicated field placements. And I think that has been the spirit. Would you not agree, Steve?

Steve: Yes, absolutely.

Peter: Yes.

Steve: Jo Ann, this really moves us into a large arena. When CSWE took on the competency concept, which completely changes the focus of the standards from curricular inputs to student learning outcomes, implicit in the notion of competencies is the assessment of competencies that students currently possess. Now, the Commission on Educational Policy has not considered this notion so far, but it at least opens the question to whether standards will open the door for programs to begin to assess competencies that students bring to the program upon admission, and therefore modify their expectations, for example, the number of hours in field, the extent of the placement, and so on. The

standards currently proscribe giving credit for what they characterize as life experience, which in higher education is essentially inconsistent with the notion of a competency-based curriculum.

Jo Ann: Great point, Steve.

Steve: Now, I can't predict where that's going, because in my long experience in social work education that has been basic catechism for us, right?

Jo Ann: Absolutely.

Steve: No matter where you were prior to admission, how old you are, what you did, who your grandmother was – this is irrelevant to the dictates of doing two field placements.

Jo Ann: I think the idea of progressive competencies may speak to future considerations. While this concept isn't likely to take hold in the near future, it may be that this is a missing link for non-traditional/returning students who are currently employed in human service organizations. We haven't measured the social work competencies that come with students at admission, and I suspect there will be considerable energy placed in staying away from any notion of credit for life experience.

Peter: I suspect that the Commission on Educational Policy will be confronted with this as they consider the 2015 standard. Frankly, you know, our notion about social work education, when we think about our educational model, is really predicated on the original notion of three days in the field and two days in the classroom. We've manipulated that model, and twisted it, and reconfigured it, but, basically, it still is the model to which we attend, conceptually, and I think there is this kind of semi-conscious fear that if we break that open, the slope is so slippery that we'll just slide right down it, and I think that's part of the resistance to taking on some of these issues full face.

Jo Ann: I agree. And in some ways that degree of change would probably feel complicated to folks. How would we then organize field if we didn't organize it the way it has always been organized?

Peter: Yes.

Jo Ann: Steve, so given that that might be our future direction, I've got a couple of questions for you about the current state of affairs. At the past few Annual Program Meetings (APMs), field directors in some of the sessions have shared their implementation of standards and what they're actually doing. A fellow educator and I came up with two basic models. The first model has students doing completely different jobs, with completely different supervisors as field instructors. In the second model, students are allowed to remain in their current positions for some or all of the placement hours with the justification that the learning plans and competencies then mandate and shape the design of the

current positions. In the second model, the field instructors differ from the supervisors.

Steve: Right.

Jo Ann: Those are two models. My school does both, and maybe Rebecca can speak to what UNC does? But we've been told that the focus on competencies makes the position different. Are you aware of programs following the second model where students are allowed to stay in their current jobs and focus on the competencies?

Steve: Yes, that's an example of what the COA was referencing when it said that it was attending to the spirit of this standard as opposed to the letter of this standard, although there was a consensus that it is a second best alternative, that to the extent that the supervision is completely different, and the setting is a different department within the agency, the learning potential of the placement accelerates. And conversely, when it's the same job and the same supervision, the situation that Peter describes is much more likely to happen, which there becomes this implicit deal between the agency and the student that they won't completely express the extent to which the learning has taken a significant backseat to the job demands.

Jo Ann: Exactly. It can be a second best alternative. However, if it is to work well, employment-based placements require additional time, energy and expertise to develop and monitor these placements effectively.

Peter: Well, could I say something about that? One of the things that really troubles me about our profession and how field has evolved is that I believe schools over the last thirty years have increasingly held the field at arms' distance for a whole set of reasons, partly institutional pressures in the academy and partly costs. This could be interpreted as having walked away from field. I believe that our institutions, our programs, have to consider what resources are necessary in order to deliver the kind of educational outcomes that accreditation requires and good practice dictates. There is a direct relationship between how much time and effort one invests in shaping a placement, monitoring a placement, working with field instructors around the character of the assignment, and the quality of the placement, and the breadth and learning potential of the placement. I am convinced that our schools have not struggled with that to the extent that they should.

Jo Ann: Would anyone else like to respond to that?

Rebecca: Well, I've been in the process of preparing a "Future of Field Education at UNC Chapel Hill" presentation for our faculty, which I'm going to deliver in November. As director, our field program can sometimes feel a bit like a "house of sticks": if one stick gets pulled out a serious problem could be created. For example, if our large local medical center that provides several field

placements for us decides to restructure, there's nowhere else for us to go to recruit more field placements in a healthcare setting. So, what does that mean for the curriculum that we've invested in, for the faculty who do health care research and for all of the health care aspects of our masters program?

I'm feeling increasingly pressured to provide field placements only through the traditional (volunteerism) model that we have had for more than one hundred years. I'm beginning to question whether or not we need to develop new models of providing field experiences for students.

Steve: I would argue that to some extent that's a function of how much of a priority field is for the entire program. If the dean and the advisory council were really preoccupied with the deterioration of opportunities in the field, they'd be talking to the board of the hospital, and the executives in the hospital, and there would be a level of political pressure that might generate outcomes that no matter how much energy you and your colleagues in the field department invest, it just isn't going to happen.

Rebecca: I couldn't agree with you more, and, in fact, it's one of my points that these relationships have not been built and maintained at the institutional level.

Steve: No, absolutely not.

Rebecca: We'll need to use the board and our dean to strengthen our existing relationships and to build new ones.

Steve: Build them.

Rebecca: Yes.

Jo Ann: A lot of this needs to be addressed at a policy level. There are schools where the field departments are terribly under-resourced, so they can't even make the best possible effort at creating good placements and doing the monitoring and the follow through that's needed. So, it's kind of a two-pronged issue: supporting the field departments but also seeing beyond that to what needs to happen externally from a policy perspective.

Peter: I agree with all that's been said, and I don't necessarily see it changing especially in health-care where the board we deal with is not a board downtown. It's a national board. It's Sentara, a regional nonprofit. Decisions are being made at a level that is not local. But I think that in some ways what fieldwork departments can do is to help us rethink what it means to have field be the signature pedagogy. Can we do some things differently? Are there combinations of experiences that we can put together using a variety of agency contacts in terms of consortium arrangements? That kind of

direction and leadership is going to have to come from the field as we figure out that social workers are practicing differently. They're practicing in consortium arrangements, and they're practicing in ways that I certainly never would have envisioned when I entered the profession fifty years ago. The field departments can take the leadership. The faculty talks about how they know what goes on in field, but they don't really know. Unless they work as a faculty liaison, they don't have an appreciation for what it is that our students and field departments are up against.

Steve: No, they don't have a clue.

Rebecca: Right. I agree.

Jo Ann: OK. Let's move back to the employment-based placements. I think you know we're addressing a larger issue there but it certainly impacts everything that we've been talking about today, and I'm really glad that we touched on it. I have two more questions. Steve, the next one is for you. Does CSWE collect annual data from the schools on the numbers of students doing employment-based placements to give us a sense of trends?

Steve: I'm not sure. Peter, do you recall whether it's in the annual statistics or not?

Peter: No. No, it hasn't been.

Steve: Then we don't.

Jo Ann: I didn't think so because I've been completing the CSWE statistics for years and I have never seen it. So, would it be a good idea to incorporate data on employment-based placements?

Steve: I think it's a great idea, and actually we have an opportunity to look at the entire package of annual statistics that we collect now, because we're in the early stages of transforming the entire accreditation operation from a paper-based system to an online system, and that would mean that the preparation of the self-study would be online. It would all be submitted electronically. It would be formatted like a federal grant application, so that you would fill the information in where it asks for it and it would make the writing of the self-study infinitely easier. But it would also tie the annual statistics to the entire accreditation process. And most of the vendors that have developed these systems build in a benchmarking function so that individual programs can identify the programs with which they want to develop benchmark data. In order for that to be as useful to programs as possible, I think we would start by consulting with programs about what kind of data they would find useful for us to collect. So, I suspect that as we begin to move into that area, we'll survey the programs and ask them what sort of data would be useful. It sounds like some of the data around the employment-based placements would be part of that.

Jo Ann: This is the last question. Are any of you aware of schools with innovative models for structuring employment-based placements? Is there anything new going on in this area?

Rebecca: That's probably a good question for the Field Council, too, Jo Ann.

Peter: There's something going on in New York City at the Administration for Child Services (ACS), the public child welfare agency. There was a feeling on the part of a consortium of schools of social work in New York City that the entire field instruction piece needed more support. What has taken place is that faculty members have volunteered to work regularly with field instructors and task supervisors in the five borough agencies to help ferret out some of the difficulties they are having, to figure out some of the things they ought to be doing with students, and to provide them with the support to do field instruction for the ten schools in the area. That has worked very well. People have been funded for doing this by the foundation at SUNY Albany. It has gotten really rave reviews from the field instructors and task supervisors. They feel very privileged to have these ongoing kinds of opportunities for conversation and problem solving. Certainly the administration of ACS has expressed a great deal of appreciation for what we've done. Even when people have the same task supervisor as was their supervisor at work, it adds something to the status of the task supervisor that they're participating in these groups.

Steve: Wow, talk about back to the future.

Peter: Yes.

Steve: That is what the field looked like.

Peter: One hundred years ago.

Steve: Yes, that's exactly right.

Jo Ann: Isn't that interesting?

Steve: Before I took this current position, I was doing accreditation consulting, and in some rural areas, I came upon relationships between the state agencies, whether it was Health or Child Welfare, and the schools of social work, where there was really collaboration. The agencies very much needed trained social workers and were prepared to work out collaborative relationships with the schools such that it would translate into some tuition support and supported placements, not unlike the IV-E model. But the critical variable is the absence of trained social workers, which leads these large public agencies -- and in one case, actually, a voluntary hospital -- to extend themselves to the social work

programs.

Rebecca: It would be interesting to look at the IV-E model. And, of course, we know that the IV-E program includes funding, money for workforce development and, therefore, more likelihood of having an agency investment. But it would be interesting to look at that model and apply it to other areas of service that equally, at least in our area, need an MSW workforce — for example, the increasing need of the military and their families; and also the needs of refugees and immigrants. We have a number of agencies here that provide services to those populations but do not employ MSWs. It would be interesting to build a coalition of a number of agencies to come together and see if they're invested in building an MSW workforce.

Steve: It would.

Jo Ann: Absolutely. Just one other idea that we've been playing with and I believe we're starting a pilot with one student this year. The concept is for an employment-based placement for a student who is nontraditional, and has years of human service experience. We're conceptualizing this as a project-based employment-related placement, whereby a project gets identified and designed. The student then implements the project under supervision with all of the competencies addressed. The idea is to create a different but educationally valuable experience, as well as an often much-needed product for the agency.

Rebecca: You know, Jo Ann, that was exactly what I was thinking about when you were saying earlier that there are two models of approaching employee-based placements. One is developing a new package of learning for a student within an agency. The other is finessing the student's current job in order to make it an educational placement. What I was thinking about is some sort of a project-driven model.

Jo Ann: All the ideas that we've discussed seem like good ones that we probably want to pursue and talk about through the Field Council. Another important part of all of this is disseminating this information to schools. For example, I think it would be good to disseminate Steve's meaning of the COA's interpretation of the employment-based standard, because I think there's a great deal of anxiety out there about how to implement an employment-based model that meets the standards. People are anxious about interpreting the standard correctly.

Steve: The one question that I would like to ask is, "From the field, are there some suggestions as to creative ways that we ought to go?" Because I think the field really ought to be informing us.

Peter: I agree.

Jo Ann: Right. One accomplishment of the Field Council last year was that we have been successful in nominating and appointing field directors to some of the CSWE commissions and councils. The goal is that there will be more input from some outstanding and seasoned field directors on a variety of commissions and councils, in addition to the Council on Field Education.

Rebecca: It would be important for the members of the Field Council to have input on any review by the Committee on Educational Standards of any field standards.

Steve: Well, Jo Ann sits on the Committee of Educational Standards, which is very important. We did this in response to the Field Council recommendation. We do have, I believe, one field director on the Commission on Accreditation. We tried to appoint a second and weren't successful, but we're going to try again next year.

Jo Ann: The Field Council is encouraging field directors be trained as site visitors so that they are eligible to sit on the COA. That's our job.

Rebecca: Right. Jo Ann, I guess one last thing that I would say, as I always hate to end any conversation on "we have a big problem," is that there are benefits to the agency in engaging employer-based placements. For an agency that's invested in growing its MSW workforce, students bring back a great deal of new learning, access to literature that the agency likely doesn't have, and the opportunity to retain a valuable employee. It's important for us to continue to emphasize to the agencies that they're not just giving something here, that hopefully they're gaining something very beneficial which will positively impact the services they provide in their communities.

Steve: I agree.

Jo Ann: Absolutely, yes.

Peter: That's true.

Jo Ann: Thank you all very much. I also want to thank the Field Educator editorial staff for conceptualizing these important conversations. I've learned a great deal today, and I've been a field director for twenty-three years. Sharing information and sharing it online in this format is a wonderful contribution.