Grand Challenges: What Does it Mean for Field Education?

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CSWE, APM
October 19th, 9:00 am -10:30 am

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University of Maryland School of Social Work

AASWSW as Host of GCs

- Honorific Society established in 2009 through combined effort of 6 major social work organizations
  - 6 original members has grown to 111
  - Intended to offer our nation a scientific resource for scholarship on social matters (as a complement to NAS, NAE, and other Academies)

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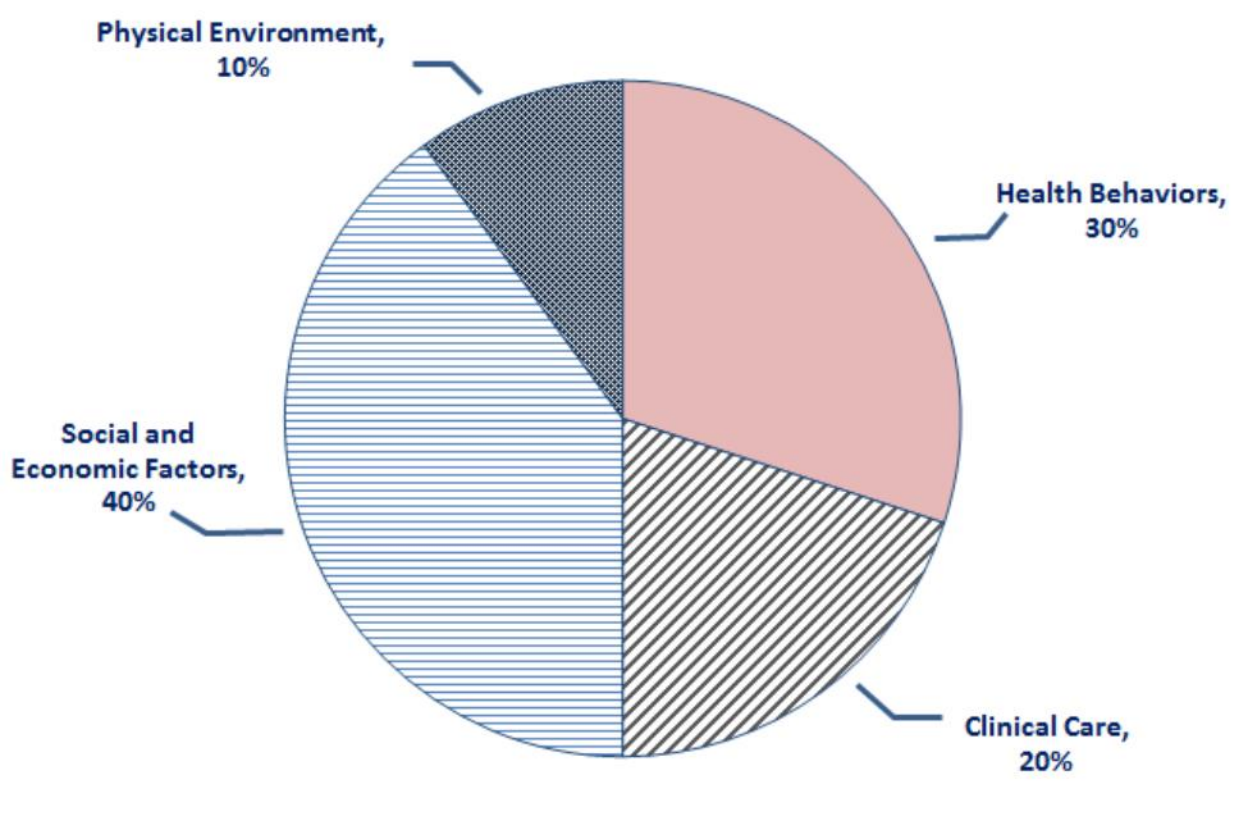

Modifiable Factors That Influence Health

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… And Nearly Everything Else

- Climate Change
- Mental Health
- Educational Outcomes
- Peace
- Longevity
- Family Functioning
- Crime
- Opportunity
- Justice
- Brain Development

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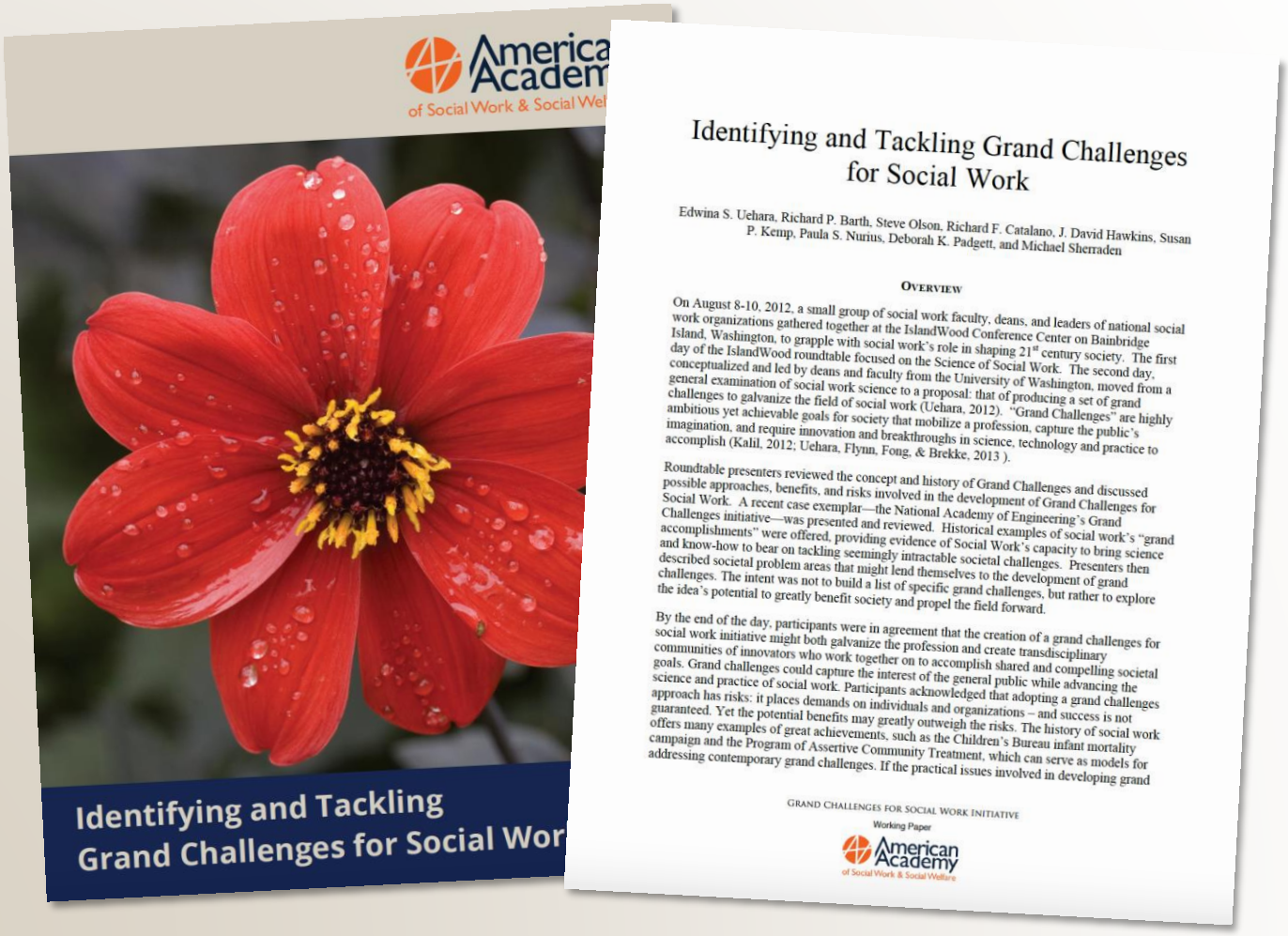

Identifying and Tackling Grand Challenges for Social Work

Edwina S. Uehara, Richard P. Barth, Steve Olson, Richard F. Catalano, J. David Hawkins, Susan P. Kemp, Paula S. Nurius, Deborah K. Padgett, and Michael Sherraden

Overview

On August 8-10, 2012, a small group of social work faculty, deans, and leaders of national social work organizations gathered together at the IslandWood Conference Center on Bainbridge Island, Washington, to grapple with social work's role in shaping 21st century society. The first day of the IslandWood roundtable focused on the Science of Social Work. The second day, conceptualized and led by deans and faculty from the University of Washington, moved from a general examination of social work science to a proposal: that of producing a set of grand challenges to galvanize the field of social work (Uehara, 2012). "Grand Challenges" are highly ambitious yet achievable goals for society that mobilize a profession, capture the public's imagination, and require innovation and breakthroughs in science, technology and practice to accomplish (Kalil, 2012; Uehara, Flynn, Fong, & Brekke, 2013).

Roundtable presenters reviewed the concept and history of Grand Challenges and discussed possible approaches, benefits, and risks involved in the development of Grand Challenges for Social Work. A recent case exemplar—the National Academy of Engineering's Grand Challenges initiative—was presented and reviewed. Historical examples of social work's "grand accomplishments" were offered, providing evidence of Social Work's capacity to bring science and know-how to bear on tackling seemingly intractable societal challenges. Presenters then described societal problem areas that might lend themselves to the development of grand challenges. The intent was not to build a list of specific grand challenges, but rather to explore the idea's potential to greatly benefit society and propel the field forward.

By the end of the day, participants were in agreement that the creation of a grand challenges for social work initiative might both galvanize the profession and create transdisciplinary communities of innovators who work together on to accomplish shared and compelling societal goals. Grand challenges could capture the interest of the general public while advancing the science and practice of social work. Participants acknowledged that adopting a grand challenges approach has risks: it places demands on individuals and organizations – and success is not guaranteed. Yet the potential benefits may greatly outweigh the risks. The history of social work offers many examples of great achievements, such as the Children's Bureau infant mortality campaign and the Program of Assertive Community Treatment, which can serve as models for addressing contemporary grand challenges. If the practical issues involved in developing grand

Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative
Working Paper
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How we got here

- Process started in 2011
- Engaged the field to identify GCs
  - ❑ Call for ideas (80+)
  - ❑ Working papers (40+)
  - ❑ Broad input and review
- Focus groups (undergraduates to Pioneers)
- Official launch – SSWR 2016
- 22 Working papers in the series

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- **Big, compelling and important**
- **Amenable to analysis, assessment, improvement**
- **Demonstrable progress in a decade**
- **Cross-sector interdisciplinary collaboration**
- **Significant innovation**

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The 12 Grand Challenges
(Handout)

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Adopting a Grand Challenge

- Think about which **one** you are already most involved with and can build new work on
- Think about **one** that you aspire to become more involved with.
- Write those two down and think about how the rest of this keynote might apply to work on them

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Launch at SSWR 2016!

Grand Challenges for Social Work

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Grand Challenges Progress

- After the Launch at the SSWR 2016 Conference - we are **generating a BUZZ**.
  - Conferences themed around GCs
  - Special issues of journals
  - Social media presence
  - Schools and sister organizations, on board!

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Why do we need GCs?

- An organizing framework that can be used in research, education, practice, and policy, in part, because:
  - Complexity of big social problems
  - Focused interventions, that we can take to scale
  - Need for transdisciplinary approaches and team approach
  - Reframe how SW is perceived
  - Attract new students

- Social Work is credited for lifting a Social Agenda and championing policy and program changes
- Social Work is organized nationally to advocate and help resolve critical social problems
- Social Workers are seen as the leading profession responding to these problems
- Social Work Science gains new respect

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Grand Challenges for Social Work

Where Are We and Where May We Be Going?

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imagine that Corporations…

… adopt ***Grand Challenges***

END HOMELESSNESS

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Strong National Practice Networks Emerge

BUILDING BLOCKS NOW IN PLACE:

- GC Networks are well-established
- Webinars and meetings for each Network routinely present research and share best practices
- ***Thread Through*** strategy with events at SSWR, CSWE, NASW, GADE, and in regions

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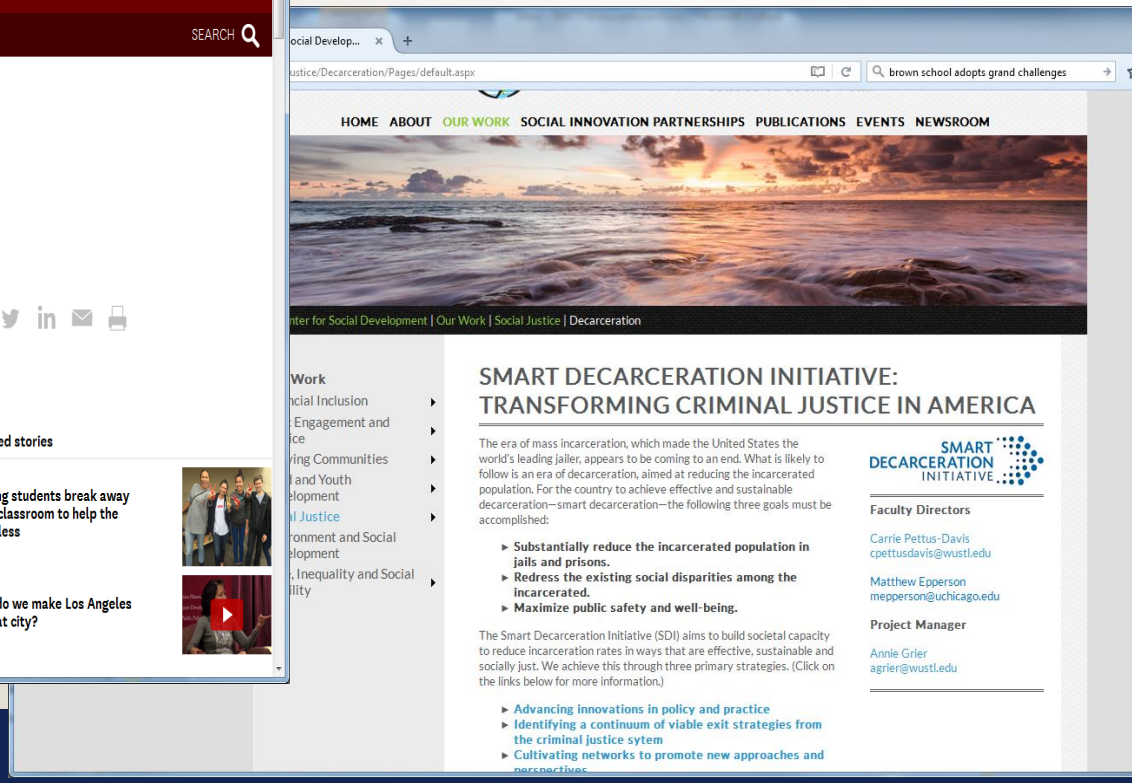
Campuses and Centers Adopt Grand Challenges



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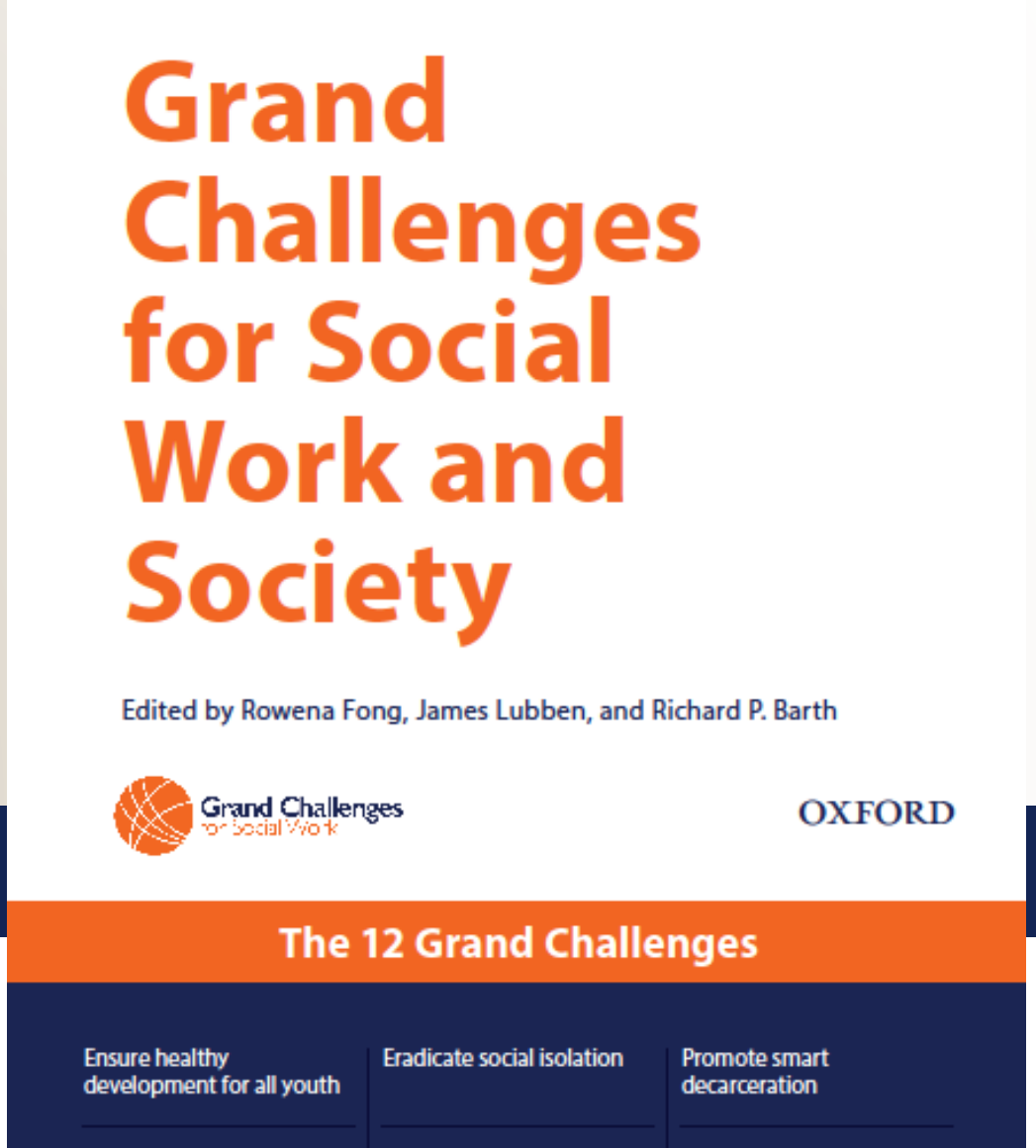
GC Book Series Published by NASW and Oxford University Press



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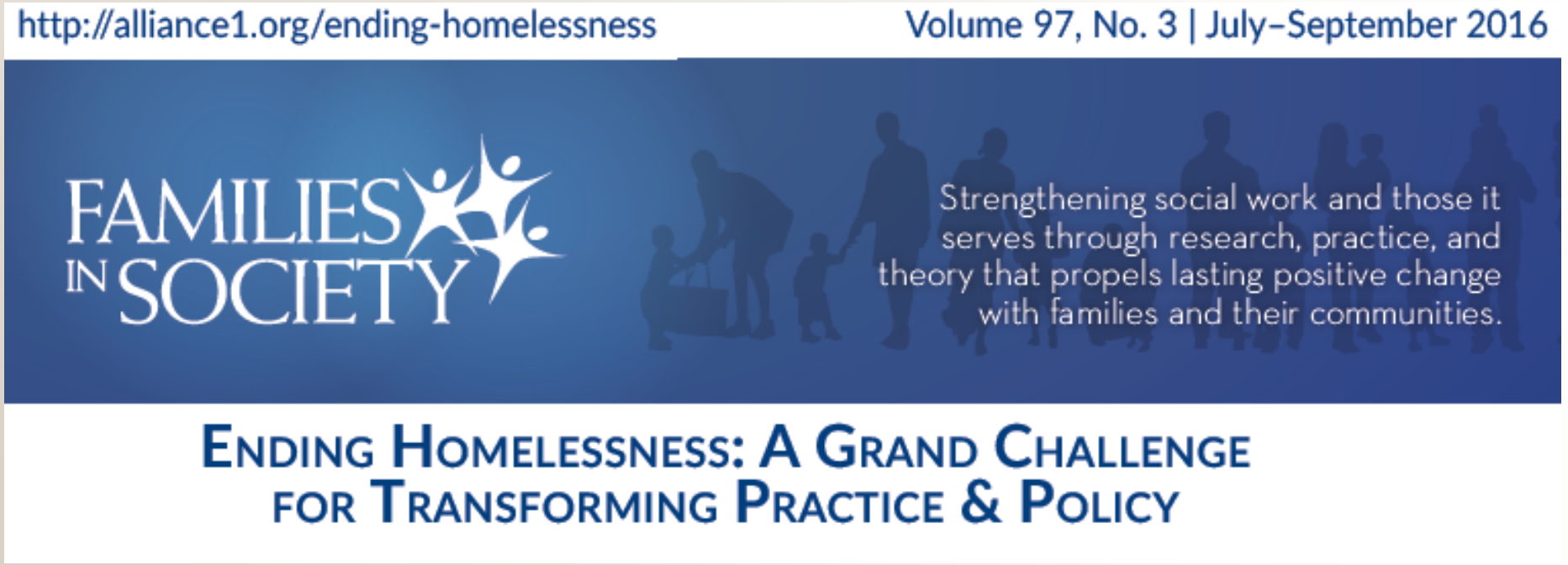
Accelerated Knowledge Building



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Adopting Grand Challenges

- Schools can adopt one or more
- Field departments could, too
- Individuals can become involved

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Looking at Field Placements with a GC lens

- Query field data and numbers of students.
- Asking important questions.
- As example, do we have an adequate number of field placements that focus on each GC?
- If not, where do we need to expand?
  - Implementing task supervisor model and other solutions to moving into new areas of social work practice

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Innovative Field Practicums

- Social Work students placed in libraries (Baltimore- UM SSW, LA-USC, and New York- NYU).
- USC School of Social Work, has an enhanced field Placement on Ending Homelessness.
  - Meeting monthly, they are: implementing best practices in homeless services, reviewing policy and advocacy efforts, and involvement in the 17 LAHSA Homeless Count

Implications for Field Education

- Focus on transdisciplinary learning opportunities, team approach, and innovation
- Possible creation of new field placements and expansion of partner agencies
- Additional preparation for students related to **prevention**
- Recruitment of new students to become SWers

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Innovative Field Partnerships

UM SSW-led Homelessness Council, Samuel Little, PhD, includes:
25 members and 6 partner Schools of SW in the region!

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People often overestimate what will happen in the next two years and underestimate what will happen in ten.

Bill Gates

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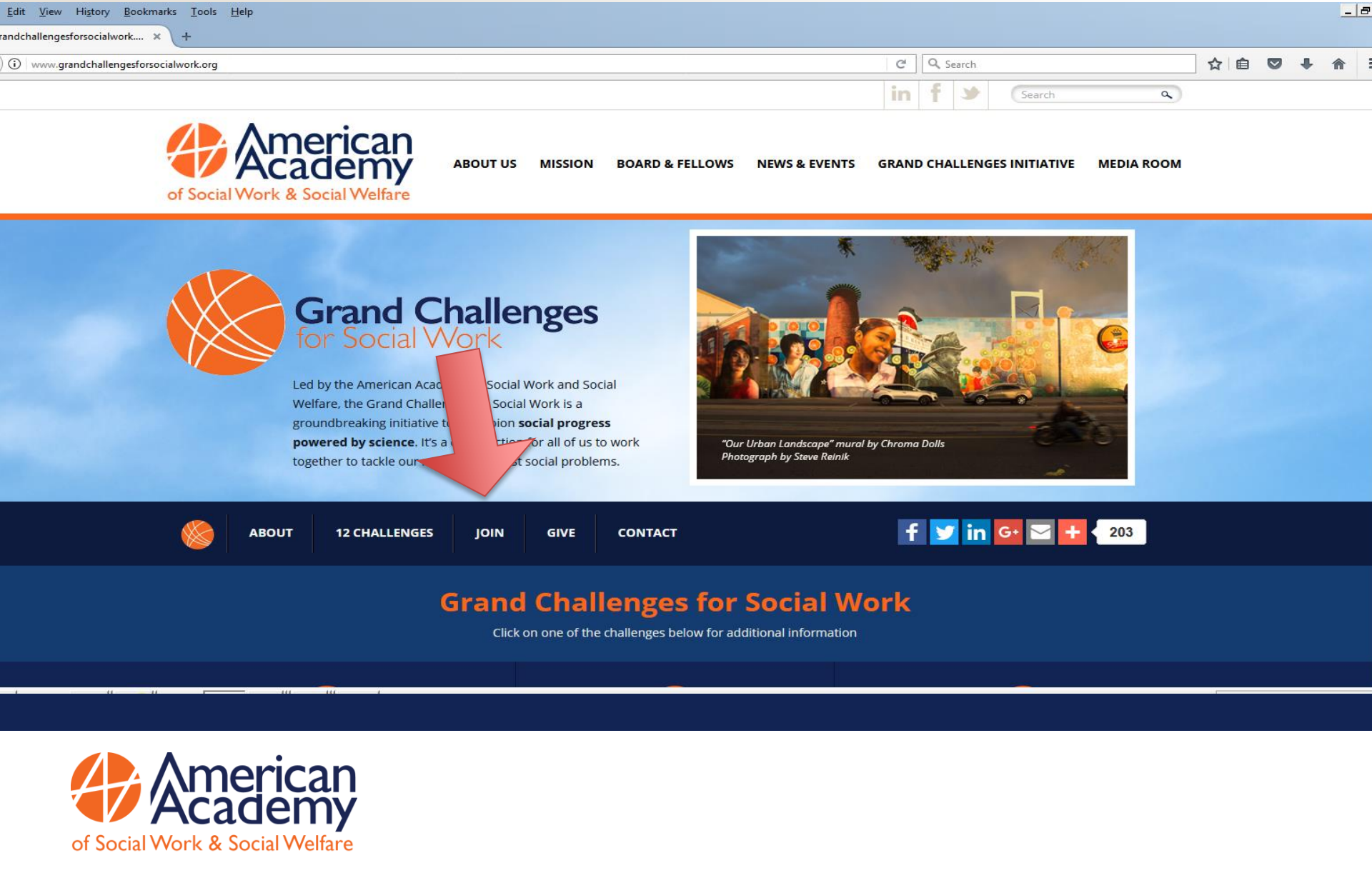
Significance of SW Having a Unified Message

- CSWE, CRISP, NASW, GADE, NADD, SLG, SSWR, have all embraced GCs!
- This unity is the result of deliberate and calculated engagement
- Indication that the SW profession recognizes that we can be more effective collectively and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts

Join Our Mailing Lists!



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