

[Home](#)

[Appointments](#)

[Awards & Honors](#)

[Chapter & Verse](#)

[In Memoriam](#)

[News Briefs](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Presentations](#)

[Titan Sports Weekly](#)

[Archives](#)

[CSUF News](#)

**News Tools**

[RSS Web Feed](#)

[Experts Guide](#)

[Send Us Your News](#)

[Inside Staff](#)



David A. Cherin, professor and director of Cal State Fullerton's MSW program, bottom left, with the first class of soon-to-be MSW graduates. Photo by Kelly Lacefield.

## First to Finish

### Inaugural Class of 18 Set to Complete Master's of Social Work

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May 19, 2009  
By Mimi Ko Cruz

The first class to complete Cal State Fullerton's Master of Social Work program is set to take part in commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 23.

The soon-to-be graduates are:

- Kimberly Basaker of Aliso Viejo
- Mercedes Marti of Anaheim
- Denese Boyer, Gretchen Cabrera, Veronica Gonzales and Kylie Nguyen of Fullerton
- Young Nguyen of Garden Grove
- Deanna Echevarria of Huntington Beach
- Brenda Carigma of La Mirada
- Glenna Hobbs, Alexander Lane and Olga Moreno of Long Beach
- Patricia Elizarraras of Orange
- Nicole Humphreys of Perris
- Lindsay Parker of Placentia
- Veronica Diaz and Emi Itagaki of Riverside
- Tess Pham of Westminster

Most already have job offers.

Glenna Hobbs, for example, has accepted a job as a therapist at Portals Clubhouse, a division of Pacific Clinics.

The 27-year-old enrolled in the MSW program when it began in 2007.

"From Cal State Fullerton's excellent MSW program, I learned to always do what is best for my clients," Hobbs said. "This is done by focusing on learning, being personable, genuine and above all, ethical. I learned this from the curriculum and through faculty example. I thoroughly enjoyed the program. I am proud to be part of the first graduating class."

The two-year, 60-unit graduate program, which includes 1,000 hours of fieldwork, is growing, said David A. Cherin, professor of social work and program director.

Fifty students have been accepted to begin the program this fall and 60 will be accepted in 2010, he said, adding that the demand for social workers is high throughout California.

"I have no doubt the MSW program will gain full accreditation next year because of the high quality of its faculty and because of its thorough and rigorous curriculum," said Roberta E. Rikli, dean of the College of Health and Human Development. "There has been a need for additional social workers in Orange County for a long time. With this first graduating class, the students and the community gain from the program."

Raised by different foster parents since she was about 2, Tarae Graves, who is completing her bachelor's degree in criminal justice and human services this month, said social workers can make a big difference in a child's life.

The winner of Cal State Fullerton's 2009 Dr. Robert Palmer Fellowship, the EOP William Hernandez Scholarship and the African American Faculty and Staff Association's Outstanding Senior Award, Graves is one of the 50 students beginning the program in the fall.

"I'm looking forward to this program," said Graves, who also was accepted into USC's MSW program but turned it down. "It's new and I might even get to provide input. I was helped by a social worker and I want to become one to help other foster children."

The MSW program, under review for national accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education, will be offered to part-time students on the Irvine Campus in the fall.

There are eight full-time faculty members teaching in the program, which places students in internships at Orange County's social service agencies with an emphasis in children and family welfare and community mental health services.

Cherin said the program prepares students to:

- Enhance the social functioning and the interactions of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities by teaching strategies to involve targeted populations in accomplishing goals, developing resources, and preventing and alleviating distress.
- Become change agents who will work effectively in increasingly complex, culturally and racially diverse communities.
- Understand the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression in creating

and maintaining barriers to effective participation in American society.

- Understand the relationship of the economic, political and social systems to the state of poverty and oppression in American society.

More information is available about the program on the [Master of Social Work website](#).

Photos are available online at [www.fullerton.edu/newsphotos](http://www.fullerton.edu/newsphotos).

▲ [Back to Top](#)



Produced by the Office of Public Affairs at California State University, Fullerton.  
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