



Gratz Insider, September 2013 - Story Continuation

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The Penn-Gratz Partnership: Positioning Graduates for Success

For years, Alexandra Fertig had known that she wanted to pursue a profession focused on helping others and on fostering social justice, making social work an obvious choice. But Fertig's passion for the Jewish community also factored into her career aspirations. Therefore, her goal was to find a graduate program that would allow her to pursue studies both in social work and in Jewish communal service.

Fertig soon discovered that there were only a handful of dual programs in the entire country that combined social work and Jewish studies. Within that select group, however, she had excellent options to choose from because of her impressive credentials. In considering the Penn-Gratz program, she reached out to Deborah Aron, the advisor for the Jewish Communal Service and Jewish Nonprofit Management programs at Gratz.

"Once I contacted Debbie," said Fertig, "she became a large part of the reason why I ended up in Philly. She also became a wonderful advisor to me, extraordinarily kind and helpful."

Aron explains that "this niche of offering increased Jewish literacy to the young leaders who will be the people providing future vision to the Jewish community is an educational framework that Gratz College stands behind."

In fact, the relationship between Gratz College and the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice has existed for at least 20 years. Students enrolled in the program earn a master's in social work (MSW) from Penn and a certificate in Jewish Communal Service or Jewish Nonprofit Management from Gratz. It is also possible for students to earn a dual master's degree: an MSW from Penn and an MA from Gratz.

Some graduates of the Penn-Gratz programs have found positions as professionals in Federations, Hillels and Jewish Family Service organizations. Others have opted to apply their skills at Jewish senior facilities, camps and community centers.

“What I particularly like about the program,” says Aron, “is that the graduates easily have the ability to go between the Jewish community and the general social service/nonprofit community in their careers, and they most certainly do in order to take advantage of excellent promotion opportunities.”

Fertig herself is an apt illustration of this point. As a student in the program, she did an internship at Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Greater Philadelphia. In fact, she wrote her award-winning case study on her work with a client there. Although she is currently gaining experience and building her resume as a social worker in an agency for adults with chronic mental illness in her home state of Maryland, her ultimate intention is to return to Jewish communal service.

As Aron explains, what is particularly valuable about the Penn-Gratz degree in today’s economy is that “it positions the graduates well to do a variety of things.”

For more information about the Penn-Gratz programs, contact Deborah Aron at daron@gratz.edu or at 215-635-7300, ext. 115.