Turning Social Workers into Web Conferencing Technical Experts via an Intensive Online Institute: The Institute on Technical Skills for Online Event Production

Network for Social Work Management Forward Thinking Summit
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Intro to the Columbia University School of Social Work’s Online Campus

- **Fully online Master’s of Science in Social Work**
  - Program options: 1) Clinical, 2) Generalist, 3) Management/Leadership/Entrepreneurship, 4) Policy
- Launched in Fall 2015; First graduates in May 2017
- Primary model: Weekly synchronous classes in Adobe Connect + asynchronous homework in Canvas
  - Each course is assigned a Live Support Specialist (LSS) as the member of the instructional team who manages the live class session technology for the full semester. LSS’s are CSSW alumni who took at least one online course.
  - To become a LSS, candidates must pass our Institute on Technical Skills for Online Event Production.
Overview of CSSW Online Campus
Faculty Development Overall

Foundational training:
1) Institute on Pedagogy and Technology for Online Courses
2) Institute on Technical Skills for Online Event Production

Ongoing training:
1) Annual Online Faculty Development Series
2) Intensive Workshops

Learn more about our Online Campus faculty development
# The Institute on Technical Skills for Online Event Production: Overview

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<tr>
<th>The need</th>
<th>The solution: This institute</th>
<th>The results</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Turn CSSW alumni into technical experts, so that they can manage the production of weekly live online classes</td>
<td>• Free for CSSW alumni</td>
<td>• Launched Summer 2017 &amp; offered twice/year</td>
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<td>• As the Online Campus grows, recruit and train additional Live Support Specialists</td>
<td>• 15 hours of training:</td>
<td>• 8 cohorts so far</td>
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<td>• Also: Offer ongoing professional development to CSSW online instructors, TAs, and administrators</td>
<td>○ 3 live class sessions</td>
<td>• 111 participants have passed so far; top participants are recruited for LSS openings</td>
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<td>○ Homework</td>
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<td>• Interactive, practical, and hands-on</td>
<td>• Average participant response to “How would you rate the overall quality of this Institute?” is 9.4/10</td>
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<td>• Passing = 90% or higher and earns a digital badge</td>
<td>• Won a 2020 <a href="#">International E-Learning Award</a></td>
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<td>• Initially created by Kristin Garay, now co-facilitated and co-led by Kristin Garay &amp; Krystal Folk</td>
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Why social workers for technical support?

How social work strengths lead to excellent technical support

• Social workers have unique skills that apply to technical support, including the clinical skills to defuse angry clients experiencing tech rage, the active listening and needs assessment skills to understand a problem, and the empathy and problem-solving skills to resolve a technical issue in a way that empowers the person experiencing the issue

Advantages for organizations

• Technical support opportunities inclusively empower social workers to use social work skills to use technology creatively and provide technical support empathetically
• Training social workers in web-conferencing technical skills benefits organizations because it leverages on their unique social work skills -- such as strengths-based support, needs-specific problem-solving, resource planning, and empathy -- to provide effective customer service as they resolve technical issues
From the perspective of the Institute creator -- Kristin Garay

“The social workers attending the institute already possess exceptional communication skills and those skills are the bedrock of all good technical support. This is one of the primary reasons social works excel in the technical support expert role. However, the technical skill level of participants at the start of the Institute on Technical Skills for Online Event Production can vary greatly.

With this in mind, I made the conscious decision to design the institute in a way that supported growth. The institute’s early modules, composed of formative assessments, have a lower grade weight to allow for the important process of learning from mistakes. The final module, composed of summative assessments, is weighted the most heavily because the final assignments are where participants demonstrate the skills they’ve honed over the course of the institute.”

Accepted for publication by the *International Journal of Advanced Corporate Learning* (will be open access)
Homework (graded using rubrics): self-guided preparation assignments that include quizzes, discussion forums, videos, and practice activities, to build tech skills & think critically about tech support that upholds social work values

Live class sessions: practice with web conferencing tools for interactive online classes -- including polls, status icons, webcam, microphone, chat, and breakout groups -- and discuss the technical support role and how to interact with & support students
“Social work skills make a tremendous difference in the quality and range of technical support that can be provided, and it's been so rewarding to see social workers take what they learn from the Tech Institute and make an immediate impact in online education. From solving technical problems via an empathic and human-centered approach, to empowering and equipping students and faculty/staff to successfully use technology in our virtual classrooms, to ensuring that the online class is accessible for persons with disabilities, it's been a game changer to see social workers merge their social work code of ethics and technical skills in online spaces.”
Resources to learn more about our online faculty development
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<th>Academic Publications</th>
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• Council on Social Work Education, 2020 - [slides](#)  
• Network for Social Work Management, 2019 - [poster](#)  
• Social Work Distance Education Conference, 2019 - [slides](#)  
• UPCEA Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference, 2020  
• UPCEA invited webinar, 2020 - [slides](#) | • International E-Learning Award (IELA, 2018)  
• International Award for Excellence in Training (USDLA, 2019)  
• Faculty and Staff Development Award (UPCEA Mid-Atlantic, 2019)  
• Learning in Practice Award (Chief Learning Officer Magazine, 2020)  
• The Best Teachers are Also Amazing Learners, USDLA Blog  
• Reflections from the Summer 2019 Institute, Teaching & Learning in Social Work Blog |
| Institute on Pedagogy and Technology for Online Courses | | |
• Network for Social Work Management, 2021 | • International E-Learning Award (IELA, 2020) |
| | | | |
| Annual Online Faculty Development Series | The Annual Online Faculty Development Series (in progress) | • The New School's Management & Social Justice Conversation Series, 2020 - [slides](#)  
• UPCEA Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference, 2020 - [slides](#)  
• Network for Social Work Management, 2021 | • Faculty and Staff Development Award (UPCEA Mid-Atlantic, 2020) |
| | | | |
| Webinar Series for Educators Moving to Remote Teaching Due to COVID-19 | Promoting Quality E-Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic via an Award-Winning Webinar Series for Faculty Transitioning to Teaching Online, *IEEE Xplore*, 2021 | • Sixth International Conference on e-Learning, 2020 - [slides](#) | • International E-Learning Award (IELA, 2020)  
• Crisis Management Marketing Award (UPCEA, 2020)  
• During Pandemic, In-House Expertise Anchors Faculty New to Teaching Online, CSSW News  
• Teaching Teachers to Teach Online, IELA Blog |
Connect with the Presenters

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