SSA Community Forum  
June 10, 2015  
(Updated July 13, 2015)

Report

The following report is written in the present tense, even though it reflects the past discussion at a community forum on Wednesday June 10. We sat in chairs arranged in a circular pattern in the SSA lobby.

Note: Individual student names have been redacted. This report uses pronouns that are assumed by the author and means no insult or harm if there is inadvertent misuse. Corrections in the use of any pronouns and/or other identifiers are welcomed and appreciated.

The Community Forum started at 1:34pm

KARLENE
Karlene Burrell-McRae is the moderator and host of the Community Forum. Karlene introduces herself as Director of OMSA at UChicago and is educated and trained as a Social Worker. Karlene describes herself as an immigrant from Jamaica who grew up in NYC, first generation college student, and graduate student, is a cis-gendered black woman who is a mom and spouse, uses she/her pronouns, and considers herself an ally and agitator who fiercely cares about equity, oppression, and related topics. Karlene recognizes that she stands before the SSA community with privilege. She has read the Elephant’s petition, several Facebook postings that have been sent to her by one person or another, and emails about the SGA election. She acknowledges that change isn’t easy and that the hurt and frustration felt by many in the SSA community has to mean something. She states that collectively, we the UChicago administrators have not done right by you (the students). She and the SSA faculty, staff and administrators are here to understand from you, the students, how to create a transformative and inclusive community at SSA.

Karlene continues that many people in community are hurting, but that we all come to this conversation with bias. Privilege and power play out in every interaction and that we need to think about intent and impact. Conflict is often necessary for growth, especially when trust has been shattered. It takes time to heal; it takes consistent work, forgiveness, risk-taking and courage. Karlene doesn’t believe in the language of safe spaces because whether we intend it or not, our words sometimes hurt others. Rather she believes in courageous spaces. Her hope for the forum is that we will show care for each other.

To demonstrate who is in the audience, Karlene asks the three primary groups in attendance to stand one at a time. Faculty, Administrators and Students each stand as a group. We are interspersed throughout the space. Karlene encourages us to be mindful of empowering folks in front of us. Karlene asks that student voices be the primary voice today, and that those students who choose to speak should speak from own position. She encourages them to be bold.

Karlene establishes “ground rules” that if someone says something that hurts you, say “Ouch”. If you say something you regret, say “Oops” and rephrase. Those listening will assume good will. Those speaking will share the time. This is not a space to be disrespectful; rather it is an opportunity to be mindful. We will have a hard stop at 3:00pm. Today is the beginning.
Karlene reads a letter emailed to her by a student (Laura) and uses it to encourage the value in speaking and responding to each other.

**STUDENT #1 (Biyang Wang)**
Karlene asks for the first student to speak and Student #1 volunteers. She walks to the center of the circle and introduces herself as a first year Masters student who intends to speak about the experiences of Asian American students. Student #1 shares that in the last nine months she has gained an ability to talk about social issues (poverty, race, discrimination) like never before and a lot of colleagues and teachers played a role in developing that ability. Student #1 shares that when we talk about race in the class or in books, it’s often about whites, Latinos and African-Americans but rarely are there stats on Asian Americans. Student #1 suggests that there could be a lack of research, or that perhaps Asian Americans are perceived within the “model minority myth” as not having issues. Student #1 wants to reiterate that Asian Americans also deal with poverty and to group them together in one group is difficult given breadth of races/ethnicities across Asia (e.g. Southeast Asia is different that South Asia is different than East Asia). She shares that it is hard for Asian Americans to access social services, mental health disparities exist in their communities and access to mental health services is lacking. In Student #1’s own experience, when she first come here she didn’t think about Asian American experience as something to think about or talk about. She internalized model minority status and still forgets sometimes how to be herself and think about what she wants. In classes, she feels Asian-Americans are lost in conversations about poverty that focus on African-Americans, Latino/a populations, etc. She feels unable to talk about Asian American issues, and when she recently asked a professor about Asian-American stats, the professor admitted that there isn’t as much research. Student #1 wants SSA to incorporate Asian-American experience more into curriculum. She also knows now that there is a commonality of experiences across minority groups, including Asian-Americans. She has learned a lot this year, shown even in her ability to stand up and talk about it in front of everyone here today. Student #1 has also found community at UChicago in Asian-American populations across campus.

**STUDENT #2**
Student #2 is next with the microphone. She identifies as a second year Masters student who earned a BSW in her undergraduate school and was excited to come to SSA because she thought it would demonstrate social work in its own practice. She’s been really disappointed to learn that hasn’t been the case. Student #2 admits not knowing how higher education works and so can’t suggest how administrators should do their jobs. But by the same token, in training to be a professional social worker, she hasn’t learned from as many instructors who have social work backgrounds. She admits that she has learned a lot, but the best classes have been with those that have a social work background who come into the class and norm the class. This hasn’t been the case where instructors don’t have social work background. Student #2 closes by asking the Administration to train faculty who don’t have social work credentials, specifically to train them in Social Work values and instruction.

**STUDENT #3**
Student #3 identifies as a first year Masters student. She brings up the SGA election and believes that the controversy over the election reflects larger issues at SSA and climate at SSA. Student #3 feels like nobody knew how to deal with the election which is why problems arose. She doesn’t feel prepared to have difficult conversations about race, gender, orientation, privilege and then even though SSA made a commitment to make students better prepared to have those conversations, she actually feels less prepared at this point. She feels that these are often the topics that nobody wants to talk about, and
that when it does come up, people look at students of color to represent all people of color. Put simply, this is bad and how the election was dealt with reflects our difficulty with these conversations. When something comes up in the classroom and we’re unprepared for it, we can’t expect to act or respond any differently than any other group of adults who try to engage these topics.

**STUDENT #4**
Student #4 agrees with Student #3. She has been in classrooms where faculty and students shy away from tough conversations about race, class, gender, etc. She has questions about the election because as a PhD student, she doesn’t know what’s frustrating. She asks to clarify that and also calls for SSA to address issues of how to be direct in having these conversations.

**STUDENT #5 (Keisha Keith)**
Student #5 identifies herself as a second year Masters student. She starts by addressing Student #4’s question regarding the election and says that she was the chairperson of the election committee. She wanted to have an election, and was excited to bring parliamentary procedure to the process. She wanted objective views from first and second year students. She says there were difficulties finding guidelines in any previous elections at SSA because it’s been so long and so the committee used outside sources to build their guidelines, specifically a central UofC document. In regards to complaints that have been filed regarding individual candidates and misinformation, she can only speak to Student #5 and her role. She wanted first and foremost to be transparent and approach entire student body. There may have been moves that she feels were in error so she stepped down as chairperson after filing formal complaint about actions of the committee. She says this to illustrate her challenge to anyone that is part of that process to look at themselves first. Elections got hard. She doesn’t want to talk about the merits of complaints.

Student #5 continues that she has cried in every class, including data analysis, and that she will be an active alumnus and loves the school. SSA has issues but she loves the school. She was a teen mom, has gone through every social ailment there is except drug abuse, and that everyone she met who was in a position to do something for her came from SSA. So she decided to reinvest in her and came to SSA. Doing so kicked a hole in the continuum of oppression. She recognizes that institutions duplicate society and SSA is no different. She’s a product of public schools and isn’t sure if she’s learned much after tenth grade. She’s also a product of DCFs, group homes, and that she was doing good just to get out of high school. Now she’s here at SSA and did what she needed to do to get here. Early on, she went to the office and was having issues about diverse learning styles. She mentioned that her printing budget has been blown up because she likes having something in her hands. Student #5 says there is nothing wrong with her, doesn’t have a diagnosis, no special education need but when she went in to the office and mentioned a concern, she was giving a brochure for counseling and special education office. She said that she used to say to Bharathi and Dean Bergman that she doesn’t belong here. But even though she isn’t walking on Friday, she is graduating and does belong here.

Student #5 has a few bits of advice. First, stop showing videos from Cabrini Green in 1972. Get some new videos. Student #5 says she is a Chicago Southside product but there is a broad spectrum of black peoples’ experiences. It hurts her to see so much attention given to African-Americans like it’s synonymous with poverty – this is not okay. She challenges us to remember the large spectrum of black experiences and that the largest numbers of people on tanf rolls are white people. She reminds us that there is a difference between Education and Instruction. She knows this because education is in her blood. If she comes into a classroom she gives 150% but if someone is in front of her talking about
something, she wants instruction. She encourages SSA to reflect on Marketing in this field and says the pictures on the website are deceptive. With regard to Field Instruction, Bharathi does a good job.

Student #5 adds that she came here because she wanted her degree to represent her field and give her some opportunities. She acknowledges that SSA put her in a space to access opportunities and that she will be a White House intern. Even so, this place and being here has been a traumatic experience. She closes by saying that she just wanted to be loved but she loves herself.

**STUDENT #6**

Student #6 is a second year Masters student. She says she met with Dean Guterman back in February to propose town hall forum. Student #6 says that she has had an amazing experience, largely because of faculty she’s had and that anyone who’s ever had class with her knows she’s vocal and brings larger issues into the classroom. She admits that her professors have allowed her to have that experience and be shaped in the way that all social workers should, but her experience was not the norm. Student #6 wanted a town hall forum to share not only the traumatic experiences, but also the great experiences that she’s had. She believes that she shouldn’t be the only one leaving the space shaped to be a social worker. She challenges faculty to step into "uncomfortability". She relates a story in which a long-time SSA professor made a microaggression against her. After a break, the professor recognized it and - in front of the entire class – asked Student #6 how to be better about it. Student #6 commends her because as senior as she is, she was willing to recognize own mistake and dive into that. It meant a lot to Student #6 that she’d be willing to look within herself, and that if everyone is too afraid to step into that space then why are we here? This is her second graduate program and is way better than the first, but Student #6 knows she will always have to learn, always need to read, etc. She challenges those who she graduates with, those coming after and those already in the field, that if we stop learning than we are not social workers. She acknowledged the petition and knows the experiences of her peers even though she has not always shared their experiences. She wishes others had spoken in class; maybe they didn’t because they weren’t as comfortable, but we ask clients every day to do things they aren’t comfortable with and so should hold ourselves to the same standard. She speaks to her fellow graduates and hopes that everyone steps into that commitment to lifetime learning and reflection.

**STUDENT #7 (Luke Robbins)**

Student #7 is a second year Masters student who identifies himself as a hetero white male who is firmly in the majority in just about every conceivable way. He finds it interesting that we as a society seem to have a first instinct to get defensive about why something that happened wasn’t racist, prejudiced, etc. He believes that there is always an extenuating circumstance and to acknowledge that an action might have been racist among so many other things that it also is seems foolish. He shares a story of prejudice and racism in which he instinctively covered his wallet while walking past a homeless black man. He can admit that and wishes others could admit the same about their actions. He adds that he doesn’t understand why statistically, so many people in positions of authority look like him. He’s been taught that the clients response and experience is what matters more so than what really happened. People need to be able to admit freely that they do things that are racist, prejudiced, etc. and admit that they are ashamed.

**STUDENT #8**

Student #8 is a third year Masters student in the EEP program who feels that the EEP program as a whole is often overlooked. She said that emails aren’t always sent to EEP and that EEP students are in other email lists that don’t apply to them. She feels that she has been taught self-advocacy skills at SSA
and in her communities. About two years ago, she asked the Administration why EEP students don’t have as many choices in coursework and whether we could perhaps incentivize professors to teach in the evening, but was told that daytime students are the bread and butter. Student #8 felt that was a microaggression because evening students tend to represent students who are working (she works fulltime) and historically, EEP has also been representative of people of color. Student #8 continued that she was having a class with a professor and described the difficulty of doing work in the community where you live - she works in same schools that she attended, bought a home in her community, etc. However, when trying to explain to professor how hard it was, the comments were that Student #8 is a present day settlement worker. Student #8 was especially frustrated because this person is on the website and someone that SSA promotes.

Student #8 wants to acknowledge how special EEP is and that prior to EEP, she didn’t need new friends but did get them anyways as part of that program. She is proud of people she’s interacted with on a daily basis. However, racial representation here is bleak; translates into hiring of staff and faculty and who is conducting research and how that research informs policy. She wants a commitment to racial equality in admissions, and from faculty hiring and in their research so that communities are equally represented in those areas.

STUDENT #9
Student #9 is a first year Masters student who feels uncomfortable and terrified speaking at the forum, or maybe just being there. She speaks from a place of experience as a candidate in the SGA election and as a student at SSA. She has strong feelings about the election and her future as a social worker and feels unprepared to handle discussions of race, privilege, and oppression in either of those positions in the first place. When the Anti-Oppression Slate ran their campaign, her instinct was to be defensive because when she came to SSA her goal was to learn to be inclusive and build community. She never wanted to be defensive and apologizes to the Anti-Oppression Slate for thinking their campaign was about her as an individual and not about the class of people she represents.

Student #9 thinks that at SSA, staff/faculty/admins have an opportunity here to help ensure students don’t experience what she experienced. She thinks these discussions can start in the classroom, where students feel it’s okay to ask ignorant questions and get honest and open responses and that this forum is so important as a first step.

STUDENT #10
Student #10 is a first year Masters student in the EEP program. He says that he was part of the Anti-Oppression Slate and that their campaign was intentional to force these discussions because they don’t happen in class. He wants to talk more about immigration. He says that he first met with Administrators to discuss his being an undocumented student and was told that they didn’t know what to do. Student #10 is tired of hearing the NASW code of ethics - he doesn’t know what they are and wants someone to explain. Even without knowing what they are, he feels the university doesn’t live up to NASW code of ethics. He states that SSA only has one or two classes about Diversity and thinks we would have more if school adhered to NASW code of ethics. He challenges professors to talk about class, race, privilege, and other issues in class.

STUDENT #11
Student #11 is a second year Masters student. She introduces herself as having been injured in January with two black eyes from a car accident. She reiterates that Student #6 said as social workers we have
to use ourselves as tools and so she’s doing that here. She thanks Celia Bergman and Joe Edwards for giving her space to cry in their offices, and thinks that professors have often used themselves as social workers in her classes and she wants to say thank you to all.

**STUDENT #12**
Student #12 introduces himself as a second year Masters student and outgoing President of AASA (African American Student Association). He says that based on what he sees, faculty/staff/administrators should be addressing the elephant as well. To him this means a question: what does African American leadership look like at SSA or in the field of social work? As president of AASA, made conscious decision to pass the torch to the incoming president and in the wake of the SGA election, AASA was misrepresented. This prompted him to send a letter to the community. He recognizes that some people felt uncomfortable with the letter. Student #12 sent the letter for 3 reasons: First, some posts on Facebook could have sent the message that AASA endorsed one candidate or another which they did not. Second, the posts could have been viewed as the organizations had formed a silo against some candidates which AASA wanted no part in. Third, African American vote has been assumed and wanted no part in that. He says that he has worked diligently to bring cohesiveness to SSA community and he refuses to believe that students at SSA could believe that his letter would be used to silence other members of the community. He feels slandered on Facebook, accused of being passive aggressive because he stood up for the organization that he is president of and that he came to SSA and walked past people who refused to tell him that he was in the wrong.

<An unidentified student speaks up from the audience and rejects his claims verbally. Though the specific comments were unheard by this writer, the message was clearly one of defiance; Karlene steps in to moderate>

**KARLENE**
Karlene summarizes that we must be willing to engage with each other and she briefly mediates the dispute between Student #12 and the unidentified student. Karlene says it is NOT okay to be unwilling to engage with each other. Not okay as social workers and not okay as human beings. Encourages Student #12 and the unidentified student to find people they trust to help them through their conversation and to meet after the meeting.

**STUDENT #13**
Student #13 is a first year Masters student and is the incoming president of Black Student Association (formerly AASA). She wants specific answers to things. Specifically, she wants to know:
- What are the socio-political world views form which SSA leaders are operating?
- What does it mean to be someone with a marginalized identity at a school that has to centralize its efforts?
- What protections do students in this position need? Other than faculty who look like them or live like them?
- Why is there an “Us versus Them” feeling of “SSA versus society”?

**STUDENT #14**
Student #14 is a second year Masters student. He identifies himself as a person with a criminal record and laments that 1 in 3 African American men have a criminal record, including some of the most talented people he’s ever met. God made it work for him and others could benefit too. Student #14 advocates for openness in admissions and field education. He understands that his peers are a product
of intergenerational family processes just like him. But in the classrooms, he feels a need to protect himself, but his cohort was cool and able to have lots of good conversations. He admits that he hasn’t had lots of problems with faculty, especially likes Gina Samuels, and that faculty have given him good information. He’s taken this journey with Student #12, both have similarities. He has been emboldened and challenged. Student #14 believes that you get the most out of what you’re going to get from being process-oriented rather than goal-oriented and encourages everyone to think about that.

**STUDENT #15**

Student #15 is a second year Masters student and outgoing SGA president. When he first came to SSA, a lot of people kept telling him the negatives (racism, obstacles, challenges, people not valuing their points, etc.). Student #15 had a mindset that things would be difficult and in that first quarter, he struggled but grades were okay. By the end of first year, he met a lot of great people, had good relationships, people encouraged him to step up and be president of SGA. He asked himself whether people would follow him if he led. He’s glad he did though because he’s been able to be exposed to great people.

Student #15 talked about living in a society that is racist where mindsets are already established. SSA is one part of that society, but we have a country and state and city where many things are racist. What do we do when we leave here? Student #15 says that students need to hold themselves accountable, if they never met someone that doesn’t look like them, shame on them. Students should ask themselves: What is one thing you can do for yourself? Is there need for improvement here at SSA? Yes, but there’s a lot of great things too. Student #15 thanks God for awesome people and he met a lot of awesome people at SSA.

**KARLENE**

Karlene closes student voices by reminding that this is the first of many community forums. She leaves us with the thought that we are really imperfect human beings full of contradictions and we can work to grow together by having the tough conversations that happen like at today’s forum.

**NEIL**

Neil Guterman is the Dean of SSA and starts by thanking Karlene. He admits being inspired by SSA’s students; he hears students and appreciates them holding a mirror to SSA. He reflects on one takeaway from the forum being that we take in what’s outside and that we aren’t perfect. We don’t always live up to our aspirations. This is the first of many moments where students will have opportunities to talk more openly with us so that we can be more responsive to all. If we haven’t done the best job we can, it’s good that students are telling us.

Neil speaks about this moment not being about just faculty or staff or administrators or students…we are all in this together. Those that are graduating and will no longer be part of the community but leave a legacy of helping to start this school-wide conversation and Neil asks them to continue engagement as alums so that we can be best school of social work possible.

Neil offers initial action steps, including:

- Meet with Elephant and Black Student Association and Latin@ Student Association
- Will respond to petition and will roll out a series of actions, a plan that the School will implement going forward to be more responsive to concerns student have brought to us
Neil states that the faculty has specifically been discussing a more robust institutional structure to take on issues at a pedagogical and school level. SSA should be a place where faculty are role models rather than followers and that this starts with institutional governance. Moments like this are good, but then what? He wants to build in something at the institutional level so that there is an enduring mechanism in place to address the concerns raised over time. The School will be addressing issues in the classroom with build in pedagogical training to address instruction that may be insensitive, exclusive, and/or racist. He will move forward on training for faculty and instructors because these groups should be training students AND themselves, too.

Neil does not believe that communication on these concerns has always been effective and wants to see improvement in that area. As an example, students have not been part of the governance and so he wants to improve communication by adding the voices of students on committees (e.g. curriculum policy committee).

Neil reiterates that he hears the need for action and is committed to advancing us as a community and wants students to tell him if they have ideas of ways to do that. He encourages everyone to come to him and to Celia Bergman. Neil closes by thanking everyone for coming today.

CELV

Celia is the Dean of Students at SSA. She wants to add to Dean Guterman’s remarks and thanks students for speaking today. She deeply appreciates feedback because this is how we get better. SSA’s motto is Identify Problems and Create Solutions and we have an opportunity to do that. She thanks Student #6 for putting the idea for a town hall in their minds so many months ago. She underscores the plan to continue creating these sorts of spaces because they can be productive and helpful.

Celia acknowledges that she is deeply sorry for anything she did or said surrounding the election and it wasn’t her intention to create further tension in any way. She says that next steps in the election will be the formation of an independent review committee to look at the process, complaints, and decide on appropriate next steps. The committee will have central administrators, reps from the SSA faculty and student communities, as well as SSA alumni. As soon as they have reached a decision, she will report back.

Celia reiterates the invitation to talk to her, to Dean Guterman or to Associate Dean of Students Joe Edwards. There is also an email list host being created to funnel suggestions and she will circulate that email address soon.

Celia thanks the evening program (EEP) students for making time to come during the day and lets everyone know a separate meeting will be held for other EEP students who could not attend today’s forum.

Celia closes by letting everyone know that Karlene and Tamara Johnson (Director, Faculty Diversity Initiatives, Office of the Provost) will be available to speak with anyone that needs some additional support following the forum.

Meeting ends at 3:02pm.
Addendum:

After the meeting a second year graduating student spoke with Celia Bergman. She indicated that due to time constraints she was unable to speak but she appreciated having her comments also reflected in the meeting notes. She indicated she was initially very excited to come to SSA and had specifically been recruited by Charles Payne and Gina Samuels. She turned down generous offers from Washington U and Michigan to come to SSA. But her experience at SSA has been marred by the pain of many students of color, and now she feels she cannot recommend SSA to other students, particularly students of color. Her first year cohort was immediately confronted with these issues in the 301 course. Issues of race, privilege, poverty were passed around the room like a “hot potato.” Neither students nor the instructor were equipped to discuss these topics. Because of her prior experience, she felt she was more knowledgeable than the instructor; in fact she has felt the need to teach her professors about these topics repeatedly while at SSA.

This student is also active in advocating for a trauma center on the south side. Her field placement, which is a combined clinical and admin placement, is impacted by the lack of a trauma center. She was told by an SSA administrator that SSA was not going to intervene when students, alumni, and community members were recently arrested during a trauma center sit-in because no SSA students were arrested; however she feels that SSA students were and are being impacted. She also mentioned that her field instructor was one of the people assaulted outside of Rockefeller after a trauma center protest; so in fact, members of the SSA community are being directly impacted. She wanted to stress that what happens in the community directly impacts SSA and wishes that SSA would be more mindful of this. She is willing to continue to be engaged with SSA on these topics and has offered to be a resource and participant for future conversations.
SSA: Extended Evening Program (EEP)
Community Meeting: June 16, 2015, 5:30 p.m.

Report

In attendance:

4 EEP students (each recently completed the first year in the evening program)
Neil Guterman, Dean of SSA
Celia Bergman, Dean of Students, SSA
Sarah Morgan, EEP Field Coordinator
Karlene Burrell-McRae, Director, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
Tamara Johnson, Director of Faculty Diversity, Office of the Provost

Although there was some back-and-forth conversation with the administrators in attendance, the purpose of this report is to capture the issues/concerns raised by the evening program students. We welcome feedback on any unintentional omissions or inaccuracies in this report.

Karlene Burrell-McRae welcomed everyone and facilitated introductions of all participants. Karlene reiterated Dean Guterman’s remarks from the community forum on June 10th that we want to create spaces for all students to participate and share about their educational experience at SSA. EEP students are a vital member of the community and we appreciate having this opportunity to hear from them. She then opened the meeting up for student feedback.

EEP Student Feedback:

- Evening program students have had many opportunities to discuss issues of race, power, privilege, as well as national events in their evening classes. The instructors have initiated and welcomed these conversations. Most of the EEP instructors have been individuals of color.
- Because the evening program is more diverse than the day program, issues of race, power, privilege and oppression naturally flow into the conversations. Also, EEP students are generally working in social services already and are eager to discuss with their classmates and professors what they experience in their jobs, thus “real life” concerns are naturally integrated into the curriculum.
- EEP students were not as aware of larger concerns at SSA regarding educational climate and the SGA election. They are a bit more sheltered from these topics because they are not generally on campus during the day and don’t always have time to read all the emails from the administration and/or students about these topics.
- Because EEP students are only in the building in the evenings, there is a disconnect between the evening program and the larger SSA.
- EEP students often feel like “second class citizens” because they do not have access to the many programs at SSA, e.g., special speakers, student group meetings, professional/career development programs, etc.
- EEP students should be given priority registration for evening courses since generally they are only able to take courses in the evening because of their work schedules.
There should be a greater variety of classes offered in the evening; evening program students may never have the opportunity to take courses with certain professors who do not teach in the evening or take classes on certain topics that may be of interest to certain students.

Since EEP students have to come to SSA 6 different Saturdays during the year for field seminar, additional programs, e.g., professional/career development programs, should be offered also on those Saturdays since the students are already in the building. Students wouldn’t mind staying at SSA longer on those days if they knew there would be professional development opportunities on those days.

EEP students do not have the same opportunities as day students to specialize their curriculum, e.g., Programs of Study or admin clusters. This was not made clear in the admission process and students only learned about this after they arrived to SSA.

There needs to be a greater variety of field placements for evening program students; the options are very limited. There should be a greater emphasis to field instructors on the value-added of hosting an evening program student; SSA needs to sell agencies on what the evening program students can offer.

Could evening students do a placement as a summer block? Some evening students work in schools and thus have more availability to do a placement in the summer.

SSA should provide tailored programming for evening students. Topics might include work/life/school balance, changing jobs while in school and how to communicate this to a potential new employer; how to find jobs with flex time making it easier to navigate working and going to SSA; networking among the EEP cohorts; utilizing EEP alumni for mentoring; etc.

Concerns were expressed about the field seminar: what is the purpose, can it be structured so that students can learn from each other (e.g., since most students are already working and have valuable experiences to share); can evening program students across the program (years 1-3) gather together to learn from each other; could the field seminar days be longer but less frequent.

Students would like more services available in the evening, e.g., café, library, opportunities to meet with the administration.

EEP student group GLOBES was recently developed and had their first social; this group will be a good resource for incoming evening program students.

There should be a peer mentoring program for evening program students; opportunities for incoming students to ask questions about work/life balance, career advancement, classes, etc., to current evening program students.

Questions were raised about the level of scholarships evening program students receive; why is it less than daytime students; how are tuition dollars used; what are the criteria used to increase scholarships in the second and third years; more transparency around issues of funding and tuition.

Who is making admission decisions? Who is on the admission committee and how are determinations about admissions being made?

Could the scholarship committee look at need as much as merit when making scholarship determinations?

While SSA has made efforts to provide programs for evening students, the 4:30-5:30 timeframe does not work since evening students are just getting off of their jobs and getting to the building right before class starts at 5:30.
• A concern was raised about taking classes with day students who do not understand/appreciate the schedules of evening students, e.g., group work with classmates cannot necessarily be done during the day since evening program students are generally working at that time.
• Evening program students would be willing to come to SSA on non-field seminar Saturdays for programs that are specifically geared toward evening students; attendance will certainly fluctuate with the topic of the program; some students may not be able to come to Hyde Park to attend programs (since many evening program students live outside of Hyde Park).
• Suggestion to gauge EEP student interest in various program topics at the beginning of the year as well as get a sense of when they might be available to come to such programs.
• Could SSA have a student-run café with extended hours (more akin to the Divinity School model)?
• EEP students want more exposure to faculty; very few tenured or tenure-track faculty are around in the evening.
• Could summer courses be offered? This would help lighten the load for EEP students who are already juggling work/family/school/field placement obligations.
• Need to update field placement agency database; some agencies are coded as EEP but in fact they have no idea what the evening program is about or how it is structured, and the students have to educate the potential placements about the evening program.
• Could the first year placement be more aligned with their concentration? Since EEP students already have professional experience, do they have to do the core/clinical placement?
• Could incoming EEP students look at the field database and prioritize their top 3 placements for the field office with the goal of being matched with one of their top 3 choices?
• Request for more targeted communication to EEP students; more opportunities for discussion and time with the administration next year.

The meeting concluded with final remarks and thanks from Karlene as well as from Dean Guterman and Dean of Students Bergman. Participants were informed that the notes from the meeting will be included in the larger report from the prior week’s community forum. Karlene, Dean Guterman, and Dean Bergman reiterated that there will be more opportunities for conversations with EEP students next year.

The meeting ended at approximately 6:45 p.m.