

PFF Program Alumni Spotlight - Nicole Footen Bromfield, M.S.W., Ph.D.



About Nicole

Nicole Footen Bromfield received her M.S.W. from West Virginia University in 2000 and her Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration from VCU in 2007. Nicole currently serves as the Director of Student Services for the VCU School of Social Work, where she has worked since 2005. Nicole's dissertation research was on the making of human trafficking legislation in the U.S., and she has recently had her dissertation published as a book (in press). Nicole has presented on human trafficking issues at international conferences in Mexico, Germany, and Alaska, where she was supported as a Young Scholar at the Northern Research Forum International Conference. Nicole also is a pet loss support counselor for VCU's Center for Human-Animal Interaction and facilitates a bi-monthly pet loss support group. Nicole was awarded the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement during the 2008-2009 academic year.

When you hear "PFF Program", what are some of your first thoughts and memories?

When I hear students mention the PFF Program, I tell them that they should definitely take advantage of it. The PFF Program gives graduate students a candid look at both the benefits and pitfalls of an academic career and also prepares its students for classroom teaching and the academic job market.

How did your experiences in the PFF Program enhance your understanding of what it means to be faculty and impact your plans for a career in academia?

The PFF Program took a lot of the mystery out of what it is to be a faculty member. Even though I have been working in an academic environment for quite some time before joining the Program, the PFF Program helped me to gain insight into the balance that is necessary in teaching, scholarship, and service in order to be successful in academia. I also learned about life as a faculty member in other academic environments such as small colleges and community colleges.

How did experiences with the PFF Program and receipt of the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement give you an 'edge' in your career?

I have chosen an administrative track rather than a tenure track for the time being. I realize, after participating in the PFF program, that I will need to pay attention to scholarship and service, as well as teaching, if I want to have a chance for a tenure line in the future. In other words, the PFF program has helped me to figure out where I need to focus to ensure that particular doors do not close for me.

The capstone experience of the PFF Program is the internship/externship in which the student is mentored by a senior faculty member. Tell us a little bit about your internship/externship experience, and share with us the impact that the project and the mentoring relationship had on you.

For my internship, I chose to become a field liaison and work with M.S.W. and B.S.W. students in their field placements under the mentorship of Dr. Marcia Harrigan. Dr. Harrigan has been working with students in field for years, and I felt lucky to have her guidance and to benefit from her wisdom. Dr. Harrigan's mentoring ensured that I was prepared as a field liaison when I took on my own students the following year.

What is the most crucial piece (or pieces!) of advice that you would give to students currently enrolled in the PFF Program coursework?

Enjoy the time that you have in your graduate program. It is a special once-in-a-lifetime experience that most of us don't appreciate until we are looking back on it. Keep a notebook of important tidbits that you learn while in the PFF Program. I jotted down notes about scholarship opportunities, teaching, publishing, job search tips, etc. that I referred to often. Make friends. One of the coolest aspects of the Program is that you get to meet people from all over the academic and medical campus.