

## Simone Rodriguez Brings Experience to Educational Counseling



Simone was a 2016/17 State University at Albany Masters of Social Work Intern at the WAGE Center, now serving as a Counselor at the Capital District Educational Opportunity Center in Troy. Her “role with students is to provide them with supportive services that will enhance their achievements as an EOC student. As a counselor, [she has] made a commitment to deliver knowledge and resources to students that will alleviate barriers that hinder the attainment of their goals.”

Long before she worked with participants at the WAGE Center, Simone realized her passion for the field of social work. She relates, “My initial encounter with the field of social work was at young age. Like many of the people I serve, I was raised in subpar environments and my family utilized governmental resources to sustain. In these conditions, my family had contact with social workers for undesirable reasons. Unfortunately, my interactions with social workers were unpleasant, due to their lack competence and judgement of my family. I vowed to myself, if I was ever in a position to help people I would have a positive impact on their lives.” At the WAGE Center, Simone was a strong advocate for her clients, listening to their needs and helping them achieve steps toward self-sufficiency through job searching, and job preparation activities that she tailored to each individual.

Of her MSW field placement, Simone says, “My internship at the WAGE Center provided the space for me to sharpen my skills as a social worker. I had the unique opportunity to serve a specific population who faced challenges, ranging from substandard environments to insufficient resources. My work at the WAGE Center revealed to me that individuals’ inability to find employment was mainly the result of inadequate education and educational access. The lack of education resulted in below average employment opportunities, which negatively impacted their quality of life. Despite their frustration and challenges, my clients at The WAGE Center were determined to improve their lives. Their desire for better inspired me to get involved and tackle this problem head on.”

Simone’s advice for those looking to get into social work is: “Social work is a challenging profession. Students entering this field, should understand the myriad of political, social, interpersonal and intrapersonal forces that affect the people we serve.” She goes on to say, “You must provide the appropriate service to people at any juncture in their lives. Impartial perspective is a skill one must hone in order to cultivate an honest rapport with people. In this field, you will encounter situations that are unfamiliar however, it is unethical to project your own biases or judgment as a social worker.”

“Regression is a part of progress,” according to Simone. “It is instinctive for social workers to want people to succeed. However, that is subordinate to the individual’s own process and progress, understanding that any form of success is not linear. It is through consistent means that individuals are able to accomplish their goals. A social worker is the consistent factor in that process.”

The WAGE Center’s Social Work interns offer intensive, personal assistance for those with employment barriers. Their commitment to serve makes the WAGE Center a stronger community resource for anyone seeking work and self-sufficiency. In turn, their field experience at the WAGE Center helps pave the path for successful Social Work careers.