OPENING DOORS FOR MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS

For Hilary Hamlin (MSSW’76), a social work degree opened the door to opportunities she had never anticipated.

“We need to educate people about how useful a Master’s of Science in Social Work degree can be, and how many areas they can work in,” she says. “The sky’s the limit. I happened to stay in health care, but the skills are very broad.”

Her appreciation for the importance of social work education inspired Hamlin to include the College in her estate plan. A generous gift in her will will create the Hilary Hamlin Endowed Graduate Fellowship. The gift will support students in the MSSW program.

“An MSSW just opens up so many doors,” Hamlin says. “You can do a huge range of things. I hope that more people can take advantage of that opportunity.”
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During the course of her career, Hamlin worked at community mental health centers, state departments of mental health, and a software company developing systems for mental health service providers. Her professional achievements led to acceptance in the prestigious Kennedy School of Government’s mid-career program, where she received a Master’s in Public Administration.

Through it all, UT’s graduate social work program provided a solid foundation for her 46-year-long career. “It was a very positive experience, and everything else was built on that,” she says.

Hamlin recalls field placements at Montgomery Village and Child and Family Services in Knoxville as key elements in her learning.

“The longer I’ve worked in mental health, the more I see the need for social workers in the field.”

—Hilary Hamlin (MSSW’76)

After years of living far from Tennessee, a move to Atlanta gave Hamlin an opportunity to engage again with the College and visit the campus. In 2016, she was invited to join the Board of Visitors. She served as board chair from 2021-2023.

“It’s really exciting to see what’s happening with the College and to be involved in this way,” she says.

“The longer I’ve worked in mental health, the more I see the need for social workers in the field. I run into workforce issues wherever I turn. The more we can educate and support graduate social work students, the better.”

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