UAlbany Navigator Program Impacts Students:

Emily (Two Year Navigator) suggests the richness and diversity of populations: “I can be scheduled on a shift in the morning working with a young population at the local Planned Parenthood and then in the afternoon be at a medical clinic for homeless individuals. The opportunity to engage with clients from a wide range of backgrounds is an experience I would be hard pressed to find anywhere else.”

Emma (Two Year Navigator) explains one skill set: “This is a complicated process. The win-win is that they (customers) are enrolled in something they feel confident in, since we all help to understand their health care needs and find a plan that best meets those needs. I use my interpersonal skills to work both with the client and with the call center at the Marketplace to provide best practice and best outcomes for the clients.”

Madeline (Two Year Navigator) perspective integrates class and field experience: “The skills I have learned as a Navigator helped me bring what I was learning from class into the field. It also allowed me to be the expert in class on health insurance related issues. In addition, this experience allowed me to bring into my field placement a different set of skills from my peers and also allowed me to apply my experiences as a Navigator into field and during class.”

Caroline (Two Year Navigator) talks about her experience with refugees and immigrants: “No matter what their first language is, clients here have no problem communicating gratitude. Their resilience, hopefulness and patience with the bureaucratic process never ceases to amaze me. I’ve had numerous clients here thank me profusely for taking the time to provide the service, though I know they must be waiting hours at each location where they are receiving social services. The service that I provide my explaining all of their options is something that takes time but it allows for any client to be purchasing a health plan that is meaningful to their health and wellbeing!”

The UAlbany Navigators are MSW students who are receiving an experience that is likened to having many years in the field. They gain the perspective of a varied customer base - those from all socio-economic backgrounds and especially those who social workers would be most likely to serve. The students practice skills - interpersonal, listening, open-ended interview, customer service, person in environment tools, policy to practice, outreach, and community organizing. They also learn a specific skill set about health insurance and are on the ground floor of a policy change making the policy meaningful to customers. The experience is rich and diverse.