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Utah State University Moab’s Social Work program has a history of collaborating and placing students in local agencies for practicum experience. The list of agencies just got longer, as one social work student will soon gain her practicum with the Moab City Police Department.

Katie Creighton, a master’s student in USU Moab’s Social Work program, will become the first student in the program to work directly with Moab City Police. She sees a great opportunity to bring greater collaboration between the police department, mental health professionals, first responders and social workers.

“There recently has been a nationwide call for more collaboration between law enforcement, social workers, first responders, healthcare providers, and other social service practitioners to better address mental and behavioral health and social needs in our communities,” Creighton said. “Through this partnership, we hope to identify social needs that are not being adequately addressed within our existing crisis response system and design holistic and compassionate solutions to fill in those gaps.”

Jen Evers, a clinical associate social work professor at the Moab campus, worked with police chief Bret Edge to create the practicum. She had long hoped to create a placement within the criminal justice system because of how often it overlaps with the mental health system.

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Evers praised Chief Edge for his willingness to participate in the practicum and sees this as something that will benefit the community for a long time.

“I was impressed that Chief Edge had such a progressive vision for our community and saw an opportunity to work together to effect positive change for our small town,” she said. “Katie and Bret met to discuss details and determine whether or not it would be a good fit and we all agreed it seemed rife with potential.”

Creighton will start her practicum in August. She will work in tandem with Chief Edge and Professor Evers, learning from both while also aiding the police department in its endeavors.

“This is exactly the kind of collaborative, intersecting, community-level issue I am interested in engaging with and working on,” Creighton said. “Collaborating with Bret and the Moab City Police Department to help find holistic solutions that may better address the social needs of our community is a challenge I’m very excited to be part of.”

A field practicum is considered the culminating social work educational experience at USU. For her part, Evers meets with students to get information about their interests and needs, then looks for matches within the community.

“At times, this requires me to develop new opportunities, as is the case with the new placement at the Moab Police Department,” Evers said. “I am responsible for identifying...
and developing appropriate placement opportunities for students in the Moab community. This means that I have to re-establish relationships with incoming supervisors at community agencies on a regular basis in order to ensure quality placement opportunities for students.”

Creighton is excited to begin her master’s degree at USU Moab. She is glad to stay in the community she loves and learn how to make that community a better place to live.

“I have lived in this community for a long time and have had a growing desire to give back to it in a more calculated and meaningful way. I hope to take the skills, knowledge, and experience I gain from this program and participate in helping improve our community and better address the needs of those who live here.”

For more information on USU Moab’s Social Work program, visit statewide.usu.edu/degrees/?id=2.

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