Communitas
Florida State University College of Social Work
2021–2022

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Cover Photo Top Row: Dr. Jennifer Farinella (Assistant Dean for Academic Programs), Julian Levy (MSW student; BSW, 2021)
Middle Row: Carol Edwards (BSW Program & Professional Development Director), Dr. Craig Stanley (Interim Dean & Teaching Professor), Keithen Mathis (Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion)
Bottom Row: Shannon Shannon (MSW, 2022; BSW 2021), Ariel Valdez-Smith (MSW Student; BSW, 2022)
The past couple of years has seen a tremendous amount of change at Florida State University and the College of Social Work. We welcomed our 16th FSU President Richard McCullough in 2021 and applauded the advancement of our former dean Jim Clark into the role of FSU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the beginning of 2022.

It is my honor to serve as Interim Dean for the FSU College of Social Work as we continue to move forward as a University and College, including an impending dean search. FSU continues to rise in the rankings as a top 20 Public School and is rated No. 5 Best Value Colleges (U.S. News & World Report).

Our College continues to rank number one among social work programs in the state of Florida. And after the challenges of the pandemic we have increased our dedication to translational research and education that impacts the individuals and families and our larger communities.

In 2022 we are particularly excited to celebrate the creation of the position of Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, a role filled by veteran social worker and educator Keithen Mathis (p. 5).

In this issue of Communitas, we explore leadership and growth within the College, providing us opportunities to welcome new faculty and leaders as well as to learn from and explore the past and the experiences of trailblazers in the field.

We also highlight the significance of research coming from our talented faculty and collaborators along with the important growth taking place at the institutes and centers housed within the College of Social Work. Lastly, we celebrate our staff and alumni making great contributions to our college, the university and society.

I invite you to enjoy this issue and thank you for your continued dedication and support.

Go ‘Noles!

Craig Stanley
Interim Dean & Teaching Professor

Dr. James J. Clark served as the dean of the College of Social Work since 2015. In January 2022, he stepped into the role of Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs.

As Provost, Clark serves as Florida State’s chief academic officer, the second-highest ranking officer at the university. He will oversee Academic Affairs, including all colleges, centers, institutes and academic services; the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement; The Graduate School; the Division of Undergraduate Studies; and The Ringling, the State Art Museum of Florida.

“It is an honor to be chosen as the next Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs of Florida State University—a university community I’ve grown to love through my experiences as dean of the College of Social Work,” Clark said. “Through university-wide collaborations I’ve come to appreciate the deep levels of talent, collaboration and commitment across the university. I’m excited to work with President McCullough, and I’m confident that we will elevate FSU to even greater heights.”

Dr. Clark was honored by the College at a celebration on April 12, 2022 at the Dunlap Champions Club.
FACULTY FEATURE

FACULTY APPOINTED TO CHILD WELFARE PROFESSORSHIP

DR. MELISA RADEY was appointed to the Agnes Flaherty Stoops Professorship. She is the second faculty member to hold this honor. Retired professor Dr. Karen Randolph held this honor for 13 years. In her research, Radey develops strategies to promote the survival and well-being of low-income families in disadvantaged environments. Recently she examined the impact of COVID-19 on single-mother families, noting a severe disruption of support and resources during the pandemic.

She also studies the demands and well-being of frontline workers who serve low-income families. In this area, she is currently researching violence perpetrated by clients. Early findings suggest that the context surround incidents of violence, such as level of spontaneity, personal attack or agency responsiveness also contribute to worker retention and well-being.

Radey is also a faculty affiliate of the Florida Institute for Child Welfare where her work focuses on improving the delivery of support services to promote better outcomes for children and families.

The professorship provides financial support to aid Radey’s research in the field of child welfare. “The professorship provides essential support to enhance my research and collaborations,” said Radey. “I am excited about the opportunity to advance my work to inform service delivery for some of the most vulnerable among us.”

The professorship was fully endowed in 2004 by Jeffrey and Agnes Flaherty Stoops, FSU alumni and longtime supporters of the College of Social Work.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST FACULTY MEMBERS!

Dr. Kristy Anderson  
Assistant Professor

Jessica Greil-Burkhart  
Assistant Teaching Professor

FACULTY BOOKS CELEBRATED AT AUTHORS DAY

Two College of Social Work faculty members were honored at an Authors Day celebration in 2022 for books published during the pandemic. The books included:

- *The Handbook on Child Welfare Practice* by DR. JENNIFER GEIGER and DR. LISA SCHELBE, an associate professor in social work.
- *Combat Social Work; Applying the Lessons of War to the Realities of Human Services*, by DR. BRUCE THYER, a distinguished research professor in social work.

FACULTY AWARDS

DR. AMY AI, 2022 Distinguished Research Professor Award from FSU which recognizes outstanding research and creative activity from a full professor.

DR. LISA JOHNSON, 2022 Excellence in Online Teaching Award at FSU, recognizing innovative and outstanding teaching in distance learning courses.
The year 2022 marks a major milestone for the College of Social Work with the establishment of a new deanship to amplify diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Long-time faculty member Keithen Mathis stepped into the role as the college's first Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

"Through his teaching and service, Teaching Professor Keithen Mathis has been instrumental in improving the college’s culture by addressing issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion," said Dr. Craig Stanley, interim dean and teaching professor. "He is an educator and social work practitioner with deep expertise in community development and anti-racism. His passion and experience make him the perfect person for the post."

Holding true to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics to promote, respect and be competent on cultural and societal diversity issues, Mathis is in charge of implementing a strategic plan developed by a committee of social work faculty, staff, alumni and students. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan outlines actions, goals and strategies to enhance the college’s culture and learning environment.

"There is work we can all do as a college and university to make our campus community welcoming to everyone," emphasized Mathis. Some of his top priorities in the first year in the role as Assistant Dean of DEI have been to increase the visibility and inclusion of efforts that celebrate and educate on diversity and equity.

Mathis, with the help of social work staff, students and faculty, has seen a great acknowledgment of the role diversity plays in the social work field and communities to enrich them and positively impact those in most need of assistance and advocacy. From unsung historical figures to current social work practitioners and students, he has sought a greater acknowledgment of the contributions to the profession and education.

A prime example is the lineup of events and highlights during Black History Month in February and Social Work Month alongside Women’s History Month in March. This trend is one that he intends to continue into the future.

An emphasis is also on growth at the individual, community and societal level, to engrain the value and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels of daily life.

On a personal level, DEI has always been central to Mathis’s interests as a social work educator and practitioner. He holds two degrees from FSU, including a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice and his Master of Social Work degree before working in social work and criminal justice settings. He has been a social work instructor at FSU for more than 25 years.

"Celebrating and increasing the visibility of diversity is not enough," he stressed. “We need to educate and offer experiences and resources for us to challenge ourselves to consider the lives and experiences of others, especially those that may differ from us. It helps us to become more comfortable with and open to new and different cultural perspectives and worldviews.”
The college hosted a hybrid event in February 2022 for Black History Month. Participants shared their experiences and professional insights as Black social workers in the Big Bend region of North Florida. Social workers featured on the panel included:

JOCELYN HAYDEN
Instructor, Florida A&M University
Researcher, FSU African-American Alzheimer’s Caregiver Program (ACTS2)

DR. BRENDA JARMON
Retired Professor & Former Department Chair of Social Work, Florida A&M University

APRIL MCCRAY
Therapist/Special Projects, Center for Health Equity

LASHAE ROBERTS
Assistant Dean, FSU Undergraduate Studies
Director, FSU Advising First

DR. FRED SEAMON
Executive Vice President, MGT Consulting Group

CHRISTOPHER WELLS
Clinical Program Director, Sickle Cell Foundation, Inc.

VICTOR WILLIAMS
Disposition Specialist, Public Defender’s Office, 2nd Judicial Circuit Court of Florida

The event contextualized the experiences of Black social workers in the Big Bend region around Tallahassee, Florida. Each shared a different journey, but all of the panelists had a desire to help people and many had models of social justice from an early age.

“I have always wanted to be a social worker,” said Victor Williams. “It’s something that was ingrained in me when I was a child growing up by my father.” His father, originally from Montgomery, Alabama, was active in the Civil Rights Movement and emulated activism on behalf of African American communities throughout his career in insurance.

“I would wonder why my dad would take me on these outings with him in the community,” Williams remembered. “As I got older, I used to go to these conferences. I remember all these people that would be giants in social justice, civil rights, criminal justice reform…and my mother’s side of the family, we have a lot of pastors in our family…I had the opportunity to do a lot of volunteer work and engage with people.” Williams grasped the impact of his parents when he recognized his father in pictures with civil rights legends including Martin Luther King, C.K. Steel and John Lewis.

Sometimes a mentor’s influence includes not only modeled behavior, but identifying and cultivating the potential in someone they care about.

“I was exposed early on,” recalled April McCray about serving others, “because my godmother took an interest in me. She saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself.”

Dr. Fred Seamon grew up with a similar belief to Victor Williams that “service is the very purpose of life.” Dr. Seamon focused on the medical field at Bethune-Cookman University and quickly transferred to sociology. An internship with the Florida Parole and Probation Commission propelled him into a career in criminal justice.

Hired as a probation counselor after graduation, Dr. Seamon’s director encouraged him to get his master’s degree to increase his influence in the field. Dr. Seamon joined the largest cohort of Black MSW students at that time at Florida State. He and his six classmates were star students. He would stay on at FSU to earn his doctoral degree in higher education and then to run field education for the Social Work and he also taught for almost a decade with the School for Public Administration and Public Policy.

Universally for the panelists, what brought them to a career serving others was noticing a population in need, and making it a part of their personal mission to address that need.

For Dr. Brenda Jarmon, as a young single mother her observations of her children and their peers struggling in the public-school system led her to join the inaugural class of Delaware State University’s MSW program, specializing in school social work. A McKnight Doctoral Fellowship would bring her to FSU.

Jarmon’s passion for teaching, social work and working with young people would come together after graduation. She was hired as an FSU social work faculty member. She remained on faculty at FSU for fourteen years until she joined the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) social work program faculty. At FAMU she would eventually head the social work department and play an integral role in many young lives, including several of the panelists.

Many of the panelists shared their struggles in school to find a major and focus that met these goals and aspirations. Changing majors and exploration was all part of the path to self-discovery.

“I always knew I wanted to help people, as young as I can remember,” claimed Christopher Wells. “I wanted to talk to people, which was odd for me. People who know me know that I am an extreme introvert.” Despite his shyness, Wells majored in psychology at FAMU, but was quickly referred to Dr. Brenda Jarmon. Walking into her office he remembers how “she got up and hugged me. We sat down and talked for four hours about...
social work and the impact I can make in the community. I was sold. There was nothing else I can do. She pumped me up and that day she gave me my superhero cape.”

Jocelyn Hayden, had a similar experience at FAMU, ready to go into teaching. “I was that child that taught her stuffed animals and baby dolls,” she said. Hayden tried education and business majors, but neither were the right fit. A visit to Dr. Jarmon’s office helped her find her place. “She explained how broad social work is, the impact and influence,” she added. “She said those words and I thought, that’s me! I love to motivate and encourage, and impact and share, help and love on people. I think I changed my major that same day to social work.”

For all of the panelists, the path to social work involved many twists and turns, one common hurdle was getting past the misconceptions each held about the profession. “It was never in my trajectory at college,” said April McCray, who shared Dr. Seamon’s dream of medical school. “The first class I took was interviewing and recording. It was the first time I got to tell my life story and that’s when my life changed. Social work has truly changed my perceptions of what it is, what society displays it as.”

“I’ve been in social work since the early 2000s and I’m just happy to be here,” added Hayden. “It continues to open doors.”

“I too had different ideas about what social work was. And I found out it’s totally different,” imparted Dr. Jarmon. “I found it to be an exciting career.”

LaShae Roberts further emphasized how important it is for someone interested in helping professions to continue learning about the field and yourself. She would realize only after starting social work courses that it had been a part of her life from the beginning.

“We had children in and out of our home. I never connected the dots until I took a class with Carol Edwards. My grandmother was a foster parent because she saw a need in our community,” Roberts disclosed. “She went through the process to become a foster parent because there were children in our community going without food, without support and parents never home. That influence, without even realizing, actually impacted what I do today.”

Dr. Brenda Jarmon remembered what it was like growing up during segregation, going to a newly integrated school in the 60s and how hard it was. “I would come home and cry about the things that were happening to me. My dad would say, ‘You cannot let a few bad apples ruin the whole barrel. You are just as good and you are going to make friends,’” she remembered. “I say all this because it has shaped everything I do now. What I learned is that we can all change things. I had to set the example for my students, for my family. So what do I do? I teach diversity courses.”

Whether through direct social work practice or at the macro level, the panelists have had to look at social work and its impact in new and creative ways.

Dr. Seamon found his way to consulting with MGT Consulting Group, where he’s conducted more than 250 disparity studies in numerous states, counties, cities and special districts to improve equity for minority and women-owned businesses.

One of the most critical skills that each panelist carries with them is a need to advocate and to educate.

“Through work at the Sickle Cell Foundation what I take most seriously is educating the people who directly impact patients’ lives,” declared Christopher Wells. “Emergency room physicians, hematologists, nurse practitioners. All these people you would think understand what sickle cell disease is and what it does to a person...that’s what I take so seriously, to highlight that these people are human and not just another number.”

Both he and LaShae Roberts have both witnessed how many different values and biases people can have, even in social work. “We may have to educate our colleagues,” Roberts pointed out, noting that she tries to do so whenever there is a need to respect the dignity and differences of all people.

“I have the honor and privilege of doing what I love to do, which is teaching...but for me social work is also a lifestyle...to love people and live by the NASW code of ethics,” elucidated Jocelyn Hayden.

Each panelists’ unique story brought them to social work and a life’s service. Although in different phases of their career, each has remained dedicated to the field, making it more accessible and beneficial to diverse populations, to help the most vulnerable.

“Your career is made up of everything that happens in your life. You’re exposed to many different things, but with those opportunities, it’s not for you. It’s for someone else,” April McCray underscored.
Social work is an established profession with roots dating to the late 19th century. The field has grown and refined itself, but one early trailblazer who witnessed and experienced these changes is Monticello (Monti) Campbell, mother of Carol Campbell Edwards, graduate and director of the BSW Program and Professional Development at the College of Social Work.

Born in 1932 in Bristol, Virginia, Monti turned 90 years old in 2022 and retains a wealth of knowledge she shared with a virtual College of Social Work audience during Black History Month. Joining FSU faculty, students, graduates and family members via Zoom, Monti enthralled her virtual audience with recounts of how social work has grown and became a legacy in her family. Although new to a virtual platform, Monti is an experienced presenter. She received a standing ovation during the 2019 NASW Florida Chapter Conference after her keynote address.

Monti graduated from a small high school in 1948 and joined Fisk University, a historically Black college/university, as a 16-year-old freshman. “It was founded after the emancipation of the Black slaves in 1866 as a small liberal arts college,” Monti shared. “Everybody knew everybody. We had a lot of fun.” At this time, she explained, the college experience was very different. There was a dress code, with expectations to dress up for dinner each night and women mostly wore dresses. Students were even restricted on behaviors like riding in a car. Relationships with professors were also closer and more open.

As a sociology major, Monti was interested in working with people. “My first introduction to field work was at a community center, or settlement house,” said Monti, based on a social model developed by social work pioneer Jane Addams to provide a community center for skills training and resources. “I taught a sewing class. I was assistant director of a Girl Scouts group, supervised skating parties. I did it all.” Her first job as a YWCA program director kept Monti’s focus on entering the social work field, a rapidly growing field in the 1950’s.

She moved to St. Petersburg, Florida after graduation and became a school social worker in 1959. Monti remembered schools and daily life as very segregated. Even though American schools were desegregated in 1954, desegregation took time. She was one of two Black school social workers in the county at the time.

“We were hired as visiting teachers,” she expanded. “This was before the term school social worker became a legal title.” Although we were all colleagues and trained together, we could not work together on school property or even keep records on Black and white children in the same location.

Social workers faced a lot of misconceptions, something the profession faces today. Monti and her colleagues would get past racial divides in the workplace by socializing in their private homes. “I started building diverse friendships through luncheons. We also had an excellent supervisor who was very instrumental in bringing about integrated situations in our department,” she said. “We became very, very close.” Her daughter Carol confirmed the importance of observing integrated friendships like her mother’s, motivating her to cultivate her own diverse friendships. “I think I was really modeling what I saw my mom do around racial barriers and getting beyond that.”

“We had a lot more freedom,” Monti emphasized when discussing her work with her clients. “We would make home visits to verify eligibility for school lunches. One of our major roles was truancy. We made home visits when kids were out of school. We also had the authority to go to court for kids or with parents.” On many occasions, Monti recalled collecting students who were missing school, helping them get ready and taking them to school.

“As a kid my mom was a single parent and there were occasions when I would go around with her on some of her visits,” added Carol. “I became a social worker at about eight-years-old.”

By the 1960’s, Monty recalled, school desegregation was changing the role school social workers played. Teachers and social workers alike received “sensitivity training” to familiarize them with the customs and cultural leanings of a more diverse student body. A saying of the time that stuck with her was, “grooving with people, not coming on like a savior.” The 1960’s also brought about new social programs, established by President Lyndon Johnson and the “War on Poverty,” Monti recalls fondly establishing a school community program to improve parent engagement. “We were able to
establish these in Title I schools, which were the poorest schools. These are the parents that are most reluctant to come to school for conferences. Parents who probably had not been to high school, but were empowered by our program to feel special and to be part of the school." This experience stuck with her for its instilling of hope into communities and individuals.

By the 1980’s, social workers were an integral part of a team of guidance counselors and psychologists. Carol went from accompanying her on home visits to joining her in the field, spending a year working with Monti as a school social worker. "I learned a lot about professionalism from her. I just thought she was the best social worker I’d ever seen," Carol reminisced.

Monti not only experienced social work becoming an indispensable part of the school setting, she witnessed social work being included into a growing number of work environments. Her career grew as well to include grant writing and developing training programs, but her philosophy never changed. "Be yourself, be an advocate and be a change agent" she stressed to her rapt audience.

For Monti, her legacy is not only the direct impact she has had on countless clients and colleagues but the effect it has had on her children, all of whom who have gone on to careers of service. Her infectious sense of passion and purpose has had a ripple effect, helping others has impacted countless lives. "All of those things can't happen overnight," she concluded, emphasizing that the most important thing is nourishing the soul and a sense of self.

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**STUDENT ACTIVISM & SERVICE**

Students participate in campus activities and student organizations, but College of Social Work students also frequently participate in activism and service. Diversity, equity and inclusion remains a key component to curriculum at the College, including classes in social justice, policy and community organizing.

Throughout this school year students participated in outreach, service and community organizing projects. Many took place on FSU’s campus in order for social work students to engage their fellow students to vote and receive information on legislation and initiatives that impact them.

Above: Chris Collins’ group projects for social policy and programs
Right: Keithen Mathis’ Diversity & Social Justice Class

Social Work Month kick-off March 2022

Carol Edwards’ class in Landis Green

Carol Edwards’ class community project for Pineview Elementary
EXAMINING RESEARCHERS STUDY THE IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTER SHELTERS

FAMU-FSU College of Engineering (COE) and FSU College of Social Work (CSW) researchers received a grant for more than $500,000 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to examine hurricane and natural disaster preparation that co-occurs with public health emergencies.

“We want to develop effective methods to handle hurricane shelters in the midst of a pandemic,” explained Dr. Arda Vanli, principal investigator of the project and an associate professor in industrial engineering.

The dangers of hurricane season are an annual threat to the coastal regions of the United States and emergency response has become more complicated with additional health and safety concerns to address, including the coronavirus. The three-year project has engineering and social work collaborating to find ways to safely meet shelter and evacuation needs during a hurricane without the spread of infectious disease.

“Natural disasters like hurricanes disproportionately affect disadvantaged and minority populations, particularly in rural areas like the regions along Florida’s Panhandle,” said Ellen Piekalkiewicz, a co-principal investigator of the project and director of the FSU Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families and Children.

The Gulf region has seen a sharp uptick in severe storms in recent years, including Irma (2017) and Michael (2018). The Center worked with Save the Children in 2018 and 2019 offering training to local mental health service providers and area children to help with resiliency and coping skills.

“Communities are still struggling to recover from Hurricane Michael and Irma,” Piekalkiewicz explained. “The co-occurrence of geophysical hazards with COVID-19 has challenged the resilience of the most vulnerable populations,” explained Dr. Eren Erman Ozguven, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering and co-principal investigator of the study.

Social work assistant professor Dr. John Mathias and Piekalkiewicz bring a social work perspective and community-engagement approach to ensure these needs are addressed and are a critical component to the study.

“Engaging community stakeholders and surveying local service providers will ensure the data is relevant to the needs of their most vulnerable populations.” - Dr. John Mathias

By including insight from local government and community stakeholders, the project team can best understand the Big Bend regions most vulnerable communities and their needs. This includes meeting with local stakeholder focus groups and surveying area social service and emergency management workers. The ultimate goal is to put in place a supportive framework that will help public health and emergency management leaders with allocating resources and minimizing spread of disease.

“The study combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods to produce plans that address diverse factors in vulnerability and resilience,” emphasized Dr. Mathias.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY AND PROMOTION OF COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

The CFC Center has teamed up with the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering along with faculty from the FSU College of Social Work on several research projects to understand the impact of natural and catastrophic disasters on public health, particularly vulnerable populations and communities.
THE EFFECTS OF CATASTROPHIC EVENTS ON RESPIRATORY HEALTH

An interdisciplinary study, supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation is allowing researchers from the FSU-FAMU College of Engineering and College of Social Work to understand how flood disasters impact health. Examining prior information and knowledge gaps, the team is focusing on flood analysis, indoor air quality, public health and the psychosocial determinants of respiratory health with at-risk populations.

“Until now, research has been limited on the impact of floods on public health including how different levels of flooding can impact respiratory health, including how flood-induced mold growth impacts those at risk for allergy and asthma issues,” said Dr. Michael Killian, a social work associate professor working on the project.

“As catastrophic events increase there is a need to understand the public health risks they pose,” noted Dr. Ebrahim Ahmadisharaf, a senior research associate in civil and environmental engineering and principal investigator of the study.

Leading the National Science Foundation’s Grants for Rapid Research project, Dr. Ahmadisharaf hopes to build an informational database on perishable data like that coming from catastrophic events. The project is collecting and identifying data that will inform how designers and occupational scientists can create more resilient indoor environments to combat the impact of floods and other natural disasters.

The project looks at the relationship of HVAC air conditioning systems, human behaviors and vulnerability to mold growth in built environments. Looking at the time people spend indoors, the ventilation of HVAC systems and how they relate to asthma symptoms will provide a better understanding of how these characteristics interact and lead to ways of reducing poor health outcomes.

The team also hopes to better understand flood-induced mold growth and asthma risk to help public health officials and emergency management personnel to develop strategies for disaster management.

Dr. Ahmadisharaf and Dr. Killian will start gathering data from submerged homes across New Orleans, New York City and Philadelphia. The project is a part of the College of Engineering’s Resilient Infrastructure and Disaster Response Center effort to address issues related to disaster response and the impact on vulnerable populations.
In 2021, the word the Institute for Justice Research and Development (IJRD) team focused on was “amplify,” particularly through the impact of its research. The institute set about expanding the reach of its data-driven solutions for criminal justice reform. It also sought to become a megaphone for the voices of people impacted by the criminal justice system.

Since opening its doors in 2018, IJRD has used science to improve lives, communities and institutions through researching, developing and implementing innovations that reduce unnecessary reliance on the criminal justice system. The institute’s criminal justice reform solutions have helped provide greater equity and prosperity across race, socioeconomic class and behavioral health status.

With experienced researchers and staff living in 10 different states, IJRD enjoys a unique position compared to other research institutions. These team members are able to conduct comprehensive examinations of regional criminal justice problems while also providing tailored, practical reform solutions directly to policymakers and administrators.

The IJRD team also generates, delivers and researches a range of evidence-driven interventions, each tailored to help justice-involved individuals, their families and the professionals with whom they interface thrive.

Using a localized, rapid dissemination approach allows the institute to quickly publish and disseminate policy relevant research to policymakers, community partners, those with lived experiences and other critical stakeholders to reform.

Since it was founded, IJRD has released 25 policy impact briefs and research reports designed specifically for policymakers to inform data-driven criminal justice reforms. The institute has also delivered more than 60 presentations on its research to policymakers, professionals, advocates and other community members. IJRD has also co-hosted four press conferences with state governors and other leaders to highlight research informing their policy reforms.

The institute’s team also delivered Congressional Briefings on police reforms and promotion of racial equity and has assisted with six national policy working groups on criminal justice reform and smart decarceration.

IJRD has created seven policy and practice toolkits designed to infuse these data-driven criminal justice reform solutions into policy and practice.

Because public awareness is important for policy reform, IJRD’s research and policy implications have been featured in the media over 100 times in the past three years.

The institute has 15 active projects currently being worked on, each of which examines and tests ways to achieve equity across the criminal justice system from an individual’s first contact with law enforcement to their release from incarceration. Across each project, IJRD has identified high-impact leverage points at which to infuse their innovations, maximizing impact and generating lasting change.

IJRD.CSW.FSU.EDU
FSU RESEARCHERS RECEIVE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH GRANT TO ADDRESS RACIAL INEQUITIES IN HEALTH

In October 2021, Dr. Sylvia Naar (College of Medicine), Dr. Norman Anderson and Dr. Carrie Pettus (College of Social Work) received a $3.1 million-dollar Director’s Transformative Research Award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to investigate race-related health inequities in the United States’ healthcare system. The award is the first of its kind to be administered by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, a part of the NIH.

“We are very pleased to receive this transformative research award,” said Richard McCullough, FSU's president upon the announcement of the grant. “The NIH is putting considerable resources behind this extraordinary FSU research team to address a critical societal problem.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the recent coronavirus pandemic has brought health inequality to the “forefront of public health.” Identifying some of the factors affecting health equity facing minority groups including discrimination, health access and use, occupation, education, income, wealth gaps and housing.

“With everything that’s been going on in the world, it’s a recognition of the effect of racism on health and morality, which is an affront to the social structure of society,” said Dr. Sylvie Naar, principal investigator of the project.

The interdisciplinary award signals a shift within the NIH, moving in the direction of funding to investigate behavioral and social issues that affect public health, such as racial inequities within the healthcare system.

The project will map out the impact of racism in primary health, which then leads to notable health disparities in not only the diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental health conditions, but the prevalence of these issues. The results are poor health outcomes and ability to address the needs of populations affected by health inequities. The goal is to develop new organizational and policy-level interventions, which can reduce and eradicate health disparities based on race.

“The scientific literature has clearly established the existence of racial bias within the healthcare system, so much so that it has recently been declared a public health emergency,” said Dr. Norman Anderson, professor within the College of Social Work and FSU assistant vice president for research and academic affairs.

Since receiving the award, the research team has begun establishing relationships with patients, community members, health administrators and healthcare providers to identify innovations and collaboratively work towards the adoption of evidence-based practices to change the way care is delivered. The team has begun with qualitative research methods to examine how racism influences patient care, policy, practice and organizational functioning.

“Throughout the five-year grant, qualitative data will be combined with quantitative research methods to identify points within healthcare systems where antiracism methods might be effective,” explained Dr. Anderson. Patients will be recruited with the help of the Florida Department of Health within Florida’s more than 3,000 patient-centered medical facilities.

“The benefits and outcomes of this unique approach to developing antiracism innovations extend beyond traditional healthcare settings,” emphasized Dr. Carrie Pettus, associate professor at the College of Social Work and the founding executive director of the FSU Institute for Justice Research and Development. “We can apply this model throughout our nation’s other critical systems of care, including the educational, criminal justice and mental health systems.”
The Florida Legislature's 2021 General Appropriation Act provided the Florida Institute for Child Welfare $10 million in recurring funds to expand its scope and mission, as mandated by Senate Bill 1326. Over the past year, the Institute initiated the:

- Development of a statewide professional development network for child welfare workers,
- Redesign of curriculum for social work students,
- Development of the infrastructure to enhance workforce well-being, and
- Capacity to increase research and evaluation efforts.

**GROW CENTER**

Many of the Institute's new initiatives are housed in its new Greater Resilience Of the Workforce (GROW) Center, with the goal of creating a continuum of learning opportunities and ongoing support for child welfare workers. This continuum extends from the college classroom to case work to competent leadership in order to build the capacity towards meaningful, systematic change in the Florida child welfare system.

The cornerstone of the GROW Center are the findings from the institute’s Florida Study of Professionals for Safe Families, a five-year longitudinal study led by FSU College of Social Work Professors Dina Wilke and Melissa Radey. Results from the study indicate that 81% of newly hired frontline social workers in child welfare leave their original agency within 3.5 years, a majority leaving within the first 18 months. The GROW Center is implementing three initiatives with the aim of improving child welfare workforce retention in the state of Florida:

**Professionalizing the Child Welfare Workforce**

With an eye on improvement, the institute is exploring experiential learning and state-of-the-art virtual technologies to redesign child welfare-related curriculum so that students enrolled in social work and related programs are better prepared to understand and work with the complexities child welfare-involved families face.

The institute is working with the FSU College of Social Work to reinvigorate the curriculum for its Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work programs. The goal is to transform classrooms into engaging, collaborative environments centered on case-based learning, so students learn the skills to successfully navigate real-world practice challenges. This reframing of the classroom environment targets student-driven learning for the development of advanced problem-solving skills, complex reasoning, and ethical decision-making.

The ALIGN initiative is a learning community that offers holistic support and advancement opportunities for child welfare professionals throughout their career. Three professional certification pathways are under development in partnership with the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Institute for Family Violence Studies, and the Center for the Study and Promotion of Communities, Families, and Children. In addition to the advanced certification courses, The ALIGN community will offer a myriad of specialty areas for child welfare professionals to take courses and training, learn about relevant issues and gain experience in problem solving to become more confident in their approach and feel supported throughout their learning pathway.

The AWE initiative focuses on building a learning community offering holistic support to child welfare professionals and advancement opportunities throughout their careers. The initiative prioritizes leadership development and organizational well-being for Florida child welfare agencies. Two affiliated organizations began year-1 of their 3-year AWE program in 2022. These organizations will participate in comprehensive assessments to determine organizational strengths and challenges and cocreate assessment plans to address identified challenges and guide implementation activities. In addition, the AWE team will facilitate sustainability planning and conduct project evaluation.
Institute researchers Dr. Michael Henson, Dr. Hunji Lee, Dr. Lisa Magruder and Dr. Lisa Schelbe of the College of Social Work are working on a project focused on assisting youth in foster care to develop life skills to become self-sufficient adults. The project focuses on Florida youth in foster care based on Senate Bill 80, effective October 1, 2021. The institute was mandated to:

» Evaluate whether the state’s current approach to helping youth in foster care develop life skills is adequate, and
» Develop recommendations for changes to enhance the effectiveness of the state’s approach to prepare youth for self-sufficiency.

In Spring 2022, the project team began interviews within lead community-based care agencies related to operations focused on life skills development. Surveying of foster care and child welfare professionals, caregivers and youth will conclude in 2022.

Another institute research team, Dr. Hyunj Lee, Dr. Kasey Longley and Dr. Lisa Magruder, are also working on a secondary analysis of permanency, or finding a forever-home, outcomes for children in the Florida foster care system. The team aims to identify patterns in regards to how long it takes to find a forever-home, the types of permanency outcomes and how these vary based on the statues of the rights of the parents of children in foster care.

The Florida Department of Children and Families was required to develop a statewide accountability system for residential group care based on measurable quality standards. In 2015, the Florida Coalition for Children and the Florida Institute for Child Welfare established a core set of quality standards for licensed group homes for children and youths. Led by College of Social Work faculty member Dr. Shamra Boel-Studt, the institute and a network of service providers, consumers and researchers developed and validated the Group Care Quality Standards Assessment, research-based, best practice standards for residential group homes.

“Providing high-quality services is a key issue for residential treatment providers serving youths with acute emotional and behavioral disturbances,” Dr. Boel-Studt explained.

The multi-year contract ensures research-informed practice standards, ongoing assessment and perpetuated quality improvement for outcomes of youth in Florida group homes. Read the final reports at ficw.fsu.edu/GCQSA.

Since 2021, Dr. Boel-Studt and Dr. Jonathan Huefner have partnered with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the University of Texas Health – San Antonio to implement the quality health system in Texas youth residential treatment homes.

The institute was awarded contracts in 2018 and 2020 to evaluate Florida’s Early Childhood Courts (FECC) to examine court outcomes compared to traditional dependency courts to determine if FECCs are more effective, efficient, child- and family-centered, and ultimately more cost effective than traditional dependency courts. Read the final reports at ficw.fsu.edu/ecc.
A new Student Resilience Toolkit has been created at FSU by The Clearinghouse on Trauma and Resilience within the Institute for Family Violence Studies (IFVS), College of Social Work. The new Toolkit is a full-color, 64-page spiral bound workbook containing evidence-based resilience information and exercises designed to help students learn about and build personal resilience skills in an intentional, relaxing way at their own pace.

The institute developed the toolkit from research arising from FSU’s Student Resilience Project, also developed by the institute in 2018. The toolkit is available at no cost to the FSU community in both English and in Spanish, to make recognizing and honoring the vibrant and diverse Hispanic/Latinx student community on campus.

The toolkit introduces students to components of resilience and provides exercises to help identify and affirm their strengths. Alongside resilience exercises, the toolkit provides information and practice guides for relaxation techniques and strategies for addressing times of stress. A key component of the toolkit are the interactive activities that allow students to write, draw and reflect on what they have learned.

RESEARCH AWARD
Karen Oehme, institutional director, and staff members Kelly O’Rourke and Lyndi Bradley, received the 2022 Meyer Elkin Essay Award from the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The award is bestowed on the authors of the best article published in the association’s journal, the Family Court Review.

The article “Online Virtual Supervised Visitation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: One State’s Experience,” published in 2021 (Volume 59, Number 1) explores the institute’s study of how 20 supervised visitation programs in Florida met the challenge of rapidly transitioning from in-person to virtual supervision during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACADEMIC RESILIENCE CONSORTIUM COMES TO FSU
During the fall of 2022, the College of Social Work will welcome the Academic Resilience Consortium (ARC) during the Fall 2022, an international organization that is shaping and leading college student resilience efforts in the United States and globally. The dynamic, two-day conference will be held in-person October 25–26, 2022 and features more than 20 presenters from around the world.

The consortium is chaired by Karen Oehme, a research associate with the College of Social Work, director of the Institute for Family Violence Studies and the mastermind behind bringing the ARC conference to Florida State. In 2021, a new 15-member team lead by Oehme was created by the consortium to lead the efforts of the organization, which boasts more than 600 members from 360 schools, in 45 U.S. states and 17 countries.

"Now more than ever institutes for higher education need to concentrate on resilience efforts to support students and campus communities," Oehme avowed. "The pandemic isn’t over and even as we are transitioning out of lock-down, students are still faced with coping with the effects of COVID-19 and isolation."

With this in mind, the ARC conference’s theme focuses on “A More Resilient Future” with more than 20 presenters from across the US and abroad with several breakout sessions each day alongside resilience-centered social activities. Topics include fostering, belonging and wellbeing, resilience team building, resilience program building, addressing trauma and building resilience.

“The College of Social Work is so proud of the work of Karen Oehme and her team at the Institute for Family Violence Studies,” said Craig Stanley, interim dean of the College of Social Work. “Their FSU Student Resilience Project and its evidence-based toolkit has become a national model. FSU is primed to be a leader in the charge to building improved resilience programming and support for our academic communities.”
#FSUCSW BY THE NUMBERS

## 2021–2022

### TOTAL STUDENTS ENROLLED
1,190

- BSW: 153
- MSW: 976
- PhD: 27

### JOINT DEGREE STUDENTS MSW &
- MPA: 21
- MBA: 3
- Crim: 10

### 955 STUDENTS IN THE FIELD

### 900 AFFILIATED FIELD AGENCIES

### SUPPORT FOR THE CSW
389 UNIQUE DONORS

TOTALING 2021–22 DONATIONS $2,159,439

### $ STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2019–2020: 103
- 2020–2021: 100
- 2021–2022: 196

- 2019–2020: $97,600
- 2020–2021: $97,336
- 2021–2022: $168,740

### NUMBER OF DEGREES AWARDED

#### 2020–2021
- Bachelor’s Degree: 307
- Master’s Degree: 97
- Doctoral Degree: 3

#### 2021–2022
- Bachelor’s Degree: 372
- Master’s Degree: 99
- Doctoral Degree: 3

### CURRENT #FSUCSW ALUMNI
18,030

### NEW ENDOWMENTS
- Delia Sanchez Social Work Scholarship
- Katherine Kole MSW Scholarship
- Donald J. Hevey Memorial MSW Scholarship
Students participate in Welcome Week (Aug. 22-26, 2021)

Student Association of Social Workers Vision Boards (Aug. 31, 2021)

Substance Use Disorder Symposium (Sep. 24, 2021)

Faculty Vicky Verano & Jessica Greil-Burkhart at Clinician Awareness for First Responders (Nov. 2021)

Hands-On Social Work Statistics Activity (Nov. 18, 2021)

Homecoming Breakfast (Nov. 21, 2021)

Fall Graduation Event with hot chocolate bar (Dec. 10, 2021)
Society for Social Work and Research Conference (Jan. 2022)

Children’s Day at the Capitol (Feb. 1, 2022)

FSU Day at the Capitol (Feb. 9, 2022)

Volunteer Day at Second Harvest of the Big Bend (Mar. 24, 2022)

Diversity & Social Justice Class Project, Landis Green (Apr. 19, 2022)

First In-Person Intensive Week for Online MSW Students since 2020 (May 2022)

Spring 2022 Graduation Event (Apr. 29, 2022)

Summer 2022 Graduation (Jul 29, 2022)
SERVICE TO YOUR COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY

“I grew up with two immigrant parents who always encouraged me to dream big and work diligently,” said Trinidad Pascual proudly of her parents who came to the US from Mexico for a better life. Being raised in a small Georgia town within a large family made Trinidad appreciate the necessity and payoff of hard work. She recalls working in agricultural fields during summer breaks to afford clothes and supplies for school.

She knew she wanted to be a part of something bigger than herself and that included pursuing higher education. After high school, she joined the Army Reserves to serve her country and to fund her education. As a 92Fox petroleum supply specialist, she fuels military aircrafts and vehicles, handles petroleum products and paperwork needed for petroleum testing.

Trinidad truly values her military experience for teaching her self-motivation, discipline, attention to detail, responsibility and diligence. These traits have served her well juggling the demands of coursework and her military career.

When she decided to pursue her bachelor’s degree, Florida State University’s emphasis on excellence, student success, leadership, social justice and a diverse student population appealed to her as did the social work program.

“Through my military career I also witnessed the trauma and mental health struggles that many military service members face.”

At FSU, Trinidad became an active member of the university community, being a part of PeaceJam Southeast, the FSU Student Association of Social Workers and the Mexican American Student Association. As a member of the Garnet and Gold Scholars Society, she volunteered with the Florida Department of Children and Families, Leon County Schools and the PAEC Migrant Education Program in Gadsden County. She is particularly proud of her roles as a PeaceJam mentor/facilitator for Florida high schoolers, teaching them about local and global social issues.

With graduation in the near future, Trinidad is excited to welcome her first child and plans to settle into parenthood returning to her goals to earn her MSW and licensure. With a passion for working with adolescents and veterans, she hopes to work with these populations in the areas of mental health, advocacy and community organizing.

“What I learned most during my time at FSU is to stay persistent, not to forget your why and to give back to your community,” concluded Trinidad. “The biggest thing is to embrace each moment and make memories.”

PUTTING A PERSONAL STAMP ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

Avelene Siffort, a Haitian American from Orlando, Florida knows first-hand how much social injustice can impact people’s lives. Growing up in a socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood put into perspective how disproportionate the allocation of resources can be. But, she also witnessed what benefits a few dedicated organizations and individuals can bring to a community.

From these experiences, she took up an interest in social policy eager to improve the lives of those around her. In high school, a speaker from the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) at Florida State University described program resources for first-generation students. Jumping at the opportunity, Avelene applied and was admitted to FSU.

She recalls feeling scared and unsure about college life, but that the CARE Program and her CARE Ambassador gave her reassurance and a sense of community on campus. Wanting to make the same difference for other first-generation students, Avelene served as a 2021 CARE Ambassador and quickly became a campus leader.

“I cannot sit idly by and watch others being negatively affected by social injustices and a lack of essential social policies,” she described when finding opportunities to hone her social justice warrior skills.

She quickly became an inspiration to her peers, braving imposter syndrome and the fears that come with new situations, joining several campus organizations and
The College of Social Work was a natural fit. "I love that social workers don’t have to be affected directly in order to care and take action, and I like to acknowledge the beauty within advocacy," she elucidated. "It is the heartbeat of social justice and reform."

Avelene even established her own macro social work initiative, Let’s Heal Initiative, spreading awareness about sexual assault and violence through advocacy and service. "I started this initiative based on my personal experiences, but most importantly, to inspire light and recovery when one doesn’t think it possible," she stressed. Her organization has partnered in Tallahassee with both Refuge House and the Big Bend Homeless Coalition.

In her final internship with the Oasis Center for Women and Girls, Avelene has set her sights on working in the child welfare system. She also plans to attend law school to advocate for children in foster care. "I’m excited to break down barriers and inspire future generations in my family," she emphasized.

LEADING FOR MACRO SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
From a young age, Lauren Henderson enjoyed working with others and volunteering while growing up in Tallahassee, Florida. As a Girl Scout for ten years, she earned a Gold Award collaborating with the Kearney Center to make therapy spaces more welcome and calming for community members experiencing homelessness.

Through a volunteer opportunity her freshman year as a tax preparer for SaveFirst, an Impact America Program, she began to see the world from a broader perspective. “These individuals are targeted by overpriced, negligent, and fraudulent preparers,” Lauren stated. “I began to see how cycles of poverty and injustice turn and pull people in.”

Majoring in social work started her down a path toward a career in service and social justice. Working with law enforcement and training with the Civil Citation Program, which diverts youth from the criminal justice system, as a BSW intern with DISC Village sparked Lauren’s passion for working with justice-involved populations. She graduated with her BSW with honors, with a Global Citizenship Certificate, and participated for four years in the Service Scholars Program.

Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, she and other social work students launched the Macro Social Work Student Network at FSU (MSWSN), an organization designed to connect students interested in social leadership and policy. Lauren served as the inaugural secretary and was recognized in 2021 by the Torchbearer 100, for her significant impact on student life through service and leadership.

Currently, Lauren serves as a research technician with the FSU Institute for Justice Research and Development interviewing incarcerated individuals participating in research. “I’m proud to be doing work which will improve reentry support,” said Lauren. “This role has allowed me to learn the importance of accurately recording client’s experiences and using data to advocate for expanding services and securing resources for those reentering our communities.”

As an MSW student, Lauren has also served as the MSWSN president for more than a year. “Macro social work is rarely discussed compared to micro social work,” she stressed.

Like many peers and colleagues, Lauren sees advocacy as an integral part of social work. “We must aid our clients not only through clinical work but also through advocating for social change. This includes supporting policies and laws which benefit them, and speaking out against those which harm them,” she elaborated. “This also means awareness of current laws and policies, how they affect clients and sharing this. It is essential to identify the ways clients are disadvantaged by the macro system they live within and advocate for what they need.”

She and her fellow MSWSN leaders are a notable presence at the College of Social Work, collaborating with the National Association of Social Workers, Florida Chapter on increasing student involvement with Legislative Education and Advocacy Day and other advocacy initiatives. The network has continued to hold monthly virtual or hybrid events. Lauren was even able to speak with College of Social Work alumni, faculty and supporters at the College’s 2021 Homecoming Breakfast sharing her experiences as a student and insights into the important role social workers have in creating social change.

“The most important thing I have learned during my time at FSU is to listen more than you speak. By listening, we learn what our community members need.”

She will graduate at the end of 2022 and plans to continue working with justice-involved populations. “I believe every person deserves mercy and hope, especially those who have endured trauma,” she said. “Our current system is punishing people that need support and love. I hope to be a part of transforming this system into one of healing instead of punishment.”
In 2011, Chris moved to Tallahassee to complete his bachelor’s degree. He knew that a social work degree was right for him, as it would allow him to improve the lives of people in need, who had experiences similar to his own. From the start, he was active in the field outside of the classroom.

He started volunteering with 2-1-1 Big Bend as a hotline crisis counselor, completing more than 200 hours of community service answering calls for local and statewide crisis hotlines. “I was hired as a trainer after I completed my volunteer hotline hours and took on the role of mentoring new volunteers. I was later promoted to Coordinator of Volunteers, working to ensure the hotlines had adequate coverage, as volunteers are the lifeblood of 2-1-1 Big Bend,” he emphasized. He remained with the hotline through both his BSW and MSW degrees, sharing his ability to connect with both the clients in need and the volunteers trying to come to their aid.

After graduating with his master’s degree in 2014, he accepted a therapist position with Capital City Youth Services, a Tallahassee nonprofit working with homeless, runaway and at-risk youths working to strengthen families. For two years, he provided individual therapy to youth in their residential crisis shelter and family counseling to the families of those youth. During this time, Chris was working to earn his clinical licensure. Once he obtained his LCSW, he transitioned over to the Apalachee Center as a program supervisor, overseeing a large staff and being on-call 24/7. “In many ways, our team was the last stop before some of the youth and families we worked with would be separated from their families, either through the child welfare or criminal legal systems,” he recalled. “It was a hard job. After a year, I needed a change.”

Chris returned to providing direct therapy for Tallahassee Primary Care Associates, while also completing his yoga teacher certification. It was during this time, in 2018, that the shooting at the Tallahassee yoga studio occurred, killing FSU student Maura Binkley and faculty member Nancy Van Vessem. The tragic event was one that deeply impacted Chris. His empathetic nature and keen mind formulated a plan of action in response to the tragedy.

“I began to immediately reconsider my path forward,” he explained. “The attack touched close to home for me as a yoga teacher and avid yogi.” He began talking to Dr. Stephen Tripodi, an associate professor and director of the doctoral program at the College of Social Work, about the doctoral program and working on research and problem-solving related to violence against women.

Meeting with then-Dean Jim Clark, he asked to work in some capacity on the research being conducted through the Maura’s Voice Research Fund. The fund was established in 2019 by her parent’s, Jeff and Margaret Binkley, to honor their daughter’s legacy and promote change related to gun violence against women and girls through targeted research and influencing policy.

“So much of the ‘why’ for coming back to get my PhD is linked to the tragic events that prompted the founding of Maura’s Voice,” Chris stressed. “It was really critically important for me to get it right to honor Maura and Nancy, as well as the survivors of the tragedy.”

His first publication in his doctoral program would stem directly from the research fund, a collaborative piece with Dr. Clark, now provost of FSU. The case study, published in the Journal of Threat Assessment and Management, would garner quite a bit of media attention and in the field. The research delved into the case of the sole perpetrator of the Incel-related incident at the yoga studio using a threat assessment tool, the Terrorist Radicalization Assessment Protocol (TRAP-18), designed to identify warning behaviors and long-term distal characteristics like personal grievances, ideological framing and mental disorder.

The study called attention to using threat assessment and management strategies in an attempt to identify and thwart violent actions by extremists before they happen. Chris also sees it as a call to action for other researchers to create and validate tools to prevent mass violence.

Now in the fourth year of his doctoral program, with the help of Dr. Tripodi as his major professor, Chris is working on his dissertation, entitled “A Randomized Control Trial of the Engaging in Lethal Means Safety Curriculum for the Prevention of Firearms-Related Injury and Death.” He is working to develop a curriculum to educate and hone the skills of mental health first responders engaged with suicidal people who own or...
ALUMNI AWARDS

Five exemplary FSU College of Social Work alumni were acknowledged for their notable contributions to the social work education and profession.

**PAMELA GRAHAM MACDILL**

Distinguished Social Work Educator Alumni Award

Pamela Graham MacDill (MSW, 1977) served the College of Social Work for more than 25 years in various positions including director of the Bachelor of Social Work program and Office of Professional Development before retiring in 2020. She elevated the BSW Program to a limited access program, developed a Minor in Social Welfare and created and chaired the Child Welfare Practice Certificate and Leadership in Executive and Administrative Development (LEAD) Certificate.

**PAMELA BROOKS**

Distinguished Social Work Practice Alumni Award

Pamela Brooks (MSW, 1994) is a licensed clinical social worker and was the Orlando area coordinator for field education for the College of Social Work from 2003 until 2019, working with students interning in 11 counties in Central Florida. Through her extensive social work career, she also worked in child welfare, victim advocacy, counseling for sexual trauma survivors and law enforcement, and was an adjunct professor.

**JESSICA ANNE HARBOUR**

Distinguished Young Alumni Award

Jessica Anne Harbour (BSW, 2017; MSW, 2020) is a Peace Corps volunteer from Jacksonville, Florida. She intends to continue her studies in social work after completing her Peace Corps mission. Harbour is currently residing in a town in southeastern Morocco and serves as the call coordinator for the Peace Corps initiatives.

**Joy Jinks**

Distinguished Emeritus Alumni Award

Joy Jinks (MSW, 1975) is a native of Colquitt, Georgia who served the State of Georgia as a child protective services worker and community mental health services supervisor. She co-founded Swamp Gravy: Georgia’s Official Folk Life Play, telling local stories that helped Colquitt create an alternative economy based on cultural tourism that has become a national model for community revitalization.

**Jessica Anne Harbour**

Distinguished Young Alumni Award

Jessica Anne Harbour (BSW, 2017; MSW, 2020) is a Peace Corps volunteer from Jacksonville, Florida. She intends to continue her studies in social work after completing her Peace Corps mission. Harbour is currently residing in a town in southeastern Morocco and serves as the call coordinator for the Peace Corps initiatives.

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**SHEVAUN HARRIS**

Distinguished Social Policy & Administration Alumni Award

Shevaun Harris (BA, 2002; MSW, 2004) was appointed in February 2021 to serve as the Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families. Previously, she served in several roles at the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), including acting secretary, where she was responsible for administering the Florida Medicaid program and regulating over 40,000 licensed health care facilities.

**ALUMNI UPDATES**

Send your updates to alumni@csw.fsu.edu.

**2020s**

Haley Crabb (MSW, 2021) is a mental health therapist with Pasadena Villa Outpatient Treatment Center in Virginia.

Chella Sykes (MSW, 2021) is a therapist with the Reach Program at the PACE Center for Girls providing social, emotional, behavioral and mental health counseling for girls ages 11–17 and their families. She is a registered clinical social work intern working toward her licensure.

Brianna Tebben (MSW, 2020) is a counselor with the Leon County Sheriff’s Office in Tallahassee, Florida, part of a new Mental Health Unit launched in 2022. Paired with Deputy Paxton Rogers, they ride out together daily providing services to adults, children and people struggling with homelessness. She is a two-time FSU graduate with a bachelor’s degree in family and child sciences.

**2010s**

Kristel Avilus (MSW, 2018) is the social service member at Pace Center for Girls in Tallahassee, Florida. Starting as a Pace girl, she returned as a social work intern and then as a staff member. She has won several awards for her dedication to youth advocacy and was named in 2021 as one of the 25 Women You Need to Know by the Tallahassee Democrat.

Jaclyn Swearington (MSW, 2017, BS, 2015) is a certified master social worker who joined the clinical staff at Carthage Area Hospital in Carthage, New York.

Danielle Hardley (MSW, 2016; BSW, 2015) is an emergency and trauma center social worker at Tampa General Hospital in Tampa, Florida.

Alexa Sobeck (BSW, 2015) is one of six FSU graduates to receive the Reubin O’D. Askew Young Alumni Award from the FSU Alumni Association. She earned her MSW from Catholic University and is the director of clinical services at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington.

Alumni Updates continued on next page
Chris Hayton (PhD, 2014; MSW, 2005) retired at the end of the spring 2021 semester as an FSU CSW adjunct faculty member. Dr. Hayton spent 14 years serving the college in various roles, utilizing his background in education to teach and mentor for the Online MSW program in the program’s early years.

Sara LaTorre Newhouse (BSW 2010, MSW 2011) was appointed in 2022 as Florida’s Disaster Recovery Mental Health Coordinator. In this role she focuses on helping communities obtain mental health services following a disaster.

Sand Richter (MSW, 2013) joined the staff of Dakota Family Services, an outpatient behavioral facility in North Dakota. She is an LCSW providing therapy to children and adolescents.

Kellie O’Dare (PhD, 2011; MSW/MPA, 2002; BSW, 1998) is a principal investigator and co-director for the 2nd Alarm Project. She is also an assistant professor of health policy and management with the Institute of Public Health at Florida A&M University.

Rachel Blumberg (BSW, 1998) became the executive director of the Toby and Leon Cooperman Sinai Residence of Boca Raton retirement community. She graduated with her BSW with a focus in gerontology and earned her master’s in health care administration from Florida International University.

Erica Sirrine (BSW, 1999) was named director of social work at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in 2021. For fourteen years she also worked in higher education, most recently as dean and faculty of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at Southeastern University and faculty of Warner University. She also holds a master’s degree from the University of Central Florida and doctoral degree in social work from the University of South Florida.

Aggie Stoops (MSW, 1982; BSW, 1981) and her husband Jeff Stoops, a fellow FSU graduate, were featured in Boca Raton Magazine for their efforts to expand their support of girls who have suffered severe emotional and physical trauma. In 2021 they founded the residential wing off the HomeSafe Sylvester Family Foundation West Campus that provides a safe space for girls to recover. They have now launched the $15 million Healing the Hurt campaign to improve and expand other facilities in Palm Beach County. The Stoops Family Foundation is also in the process of helping to develop a new adult center they funded for the ELS Foundation, a nonprofit focused on serving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Stoops have supported pivotal projects at the College of Social Work.

Barbara Boone is a vice president for The Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce and serves the chamber as the executive director of the Leadership Tallahassee program. She was named one of the 25 Women You Need to Know in 2021 by the Tallahassee Democrat for her dedication to leadership development.

Megan Dardis-Kunz (MSW, 2013) was promoted to the rank of clinical assistant professor at the Boise State University School of Social Work in 2021. She is also coordinator for the MSW Advanced Standing Program in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.

Gregory Dawson (MSW, 2009) is a licensed clinical social worker and case manager for the Post-9/11 Military V2A Case Management Program for the US Department of Veterans Affairs in Dallas, Texas.

Anna Rupani (MSW, 2009) is the executive director for Fund Texas Choice and is an advocate for reproductive justice, leading a team to provide Texas citizens with access to reproductive health services.

Kara Ahearn (MSW, 2006; BSW, 2002) was named Teacher of the Year at Northern Arizona University, Yuma campus where she is an assistant clinical professor in the social work department.

Steve Lewis (PhD, 2003) retired in 2021 from a 30-year career with the US Army as a uniformed social worker at the rank of Colonel. In his final years of service he managed three priority programs including the Army’s Exceptional Family Member Program, Community Services Program and Family Advocacy Program. Lewis also served as a clinical social worker in various settings including Iraq and Afghanistan, and led a team of mental health providers at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. He is now working as a business development manager for a whole health service provider.

1990s

1980s

1970s

CONNECT WITH US
Send your updates to alumni@csw.fsu.edu.

#fsucsw
Leslie Jean Allen (1943–2021) was dedicated to child mental health services. She also served as the Jacksonville Area Coordinator for the College of Social Work and helped develop many of the College’s Online MSW Program courses.

Katherine “Kitty” Wade Ball (1939–2021) earned her bachelor’s degree in education from FSU (1961). She was married to her husband, James “Jim” Ball, III for 60 years. The Balls were avid FSU and College of Social Work supporters. They were close friends of the College’s first dean and his wife, Coyle and Mable Moore, and established the Coyle and Mable Moore Scholarship in their honor.

Gerald “Jerry” Joseph Buchert (1939–2021) served in the Air Force before attending FSU, earning two social work degrees (MA, 1967; BA, 1964). Jerry began his career as bureau chief of Adult Services with the State of Florida, served as director of the St. Petersburg Office on Aging and ended his career as vice president of programs and services at Advent Christian Village in Live Oak, Florida.


Donald (Don) J. Hevey (1943–2021) was a two-time FSU graduate (BA, 1965; MSW, 1968). Don helped establish community mental health (CMHC) clinics for the Florida Office of Mental Health and in 1975 served as CEO of Manatee Glens Mental Health Clinic. In 1981, he was appointed program director of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Program. He later served as president and CEO of Mental Health Corporations of America for 28 years and then served as community development director for Genoa Healthcare until his retirement in 2018. The Donald J. Hevey Memorial Scholarship was endowed in 2022 in his honor to support MSWs interested in community behavioral health.

Christiane Forsthoevel (1965–2022) was born in Germany, earned her MSW at FSU (2007) and became a US citizen in 2008. She worked with the VA in St. Petersburg, Florida and as a licensed clinical social worker in Las Vegas for veterans.

Shimon S. Gottschalk (1929–2022) was born in Germany and came to the US before World War II. He was an activist for peace, civil rights and social justice and involved in Israel’s kibbutz movement. He became a professor at the College of Social Work in 1972 focusing on community building and organizing.

David Brower Hobbs (1930–2021) earned his MSW degree from FSU (1954). He served as a social work officer with the US Army Medical Corps for three years during the Korean War. He worked with Volunteers for America and finally with California Youth Authority, retiring in 1991 after 26 years as a supervising parole agent.

James (Jim) J. Hutchins (1955–2021) was the pastor of the Church of Christian Israel and served as a US Army chaplain. He earned his bachelor’s degree in social work (1978) and attended the Southwestern Theological Seminary.

Thomas Powell Holland (1942–2021) was a nationally and internationally known scholar in the study of nonprofit management and leadership. He earned his MSW from FSU (1996). He served on the University of Georgia School of Social Work faculty since 1986, serving as founding director of social work doctoral program and cofounder of the Institute for Nonprofit Organizations.

Charles A. Hutchins (1931–2022) served in the Korean War, earning a Bronze Star for Heroic Service and a Purple Heart. He became a preacher in 1956. He earned his master’s in social work from FSU (1959). He served with the Holston Home for Children from 1968-1973, established the Nolachucky-Holston Areas Mental Health Treatment Center still in operation today, and for 22 years worked with the Epworth United Methodist Children’s Home in Columbia, South Carolina.

Judith Ann Johnson Bailey (1943–2022) received her master’s degree in social work from FSU (1965) and worked a number of years in child welfare and adoption. She also had a private practice in social work consulting, and as presenter and mental health therapist, and was administrative secretary for the Alabama Conference of Social Work for 16 years.

Ann Hamlin Kirksey (1943–2021) passed away December 3, 2021 in her hometown of Preston, Georgia. She earned a bachelor’s degree in social work at Florida State in 1965.

Kimberly Michelle Little (1990–2021) passed away June 23, 2021. She was a two-time FSU graduate. She earned her bachelor’s degree in criminology in 2012 and her MSW in 2021. She lived in Tallahassee, Florida.

Suzanne Mann Lomas (1937–2022) attended Wesleyan College for her undergraduate degree and earned her master’s degree in social work from FSU in 1962. She enjoyed a long career in social services retiring from Crawford Long (Emory Midtown) as director of Social Services in 1996.

Neil D. Michaud (1927–2022) served in the Navy for two years, earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Maine-Orono (1951), his master’s degree in social work from FSU (1954) and a doctoral degree in social work from Brandeis University. He worked with Catholic Charities throughout his career including founding director of Catholic Charities Maine for 22 years. He even served as interim director, the first layperson in the position, for the national Catholic Charities USA in Washington, DC.

Ronald John McGuire (1943–2021) studied at Trinity University in Texas and St. Cloud State University (Minnesota) for his bachelor’s degree and earned his master’s degree in social work from FSU (1969). He worked first in marriage and family counseling and taught part-time at Winona State University before opening his own practice in 1985, Ron McGuire Family Therapy Center.

Raymond Glen Spears (1932–2020) earned his bachelor’s degree in social work from FSU in 1955 where he met his wife Betty Hill. He earned his master’s from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (1958) and served as a Baptist minister for 25 years followed by a career as a real estate broker and general contractor. He spent the majority of his life in Winter Garden, Florida and served as mayor for three terms.

Amelia Kelly Wofford (1950–2021) earned her bachelor’s in social work from FSU in 1973 followed by a master’s from Jackson State University. She settled in Alabama and had a fruitful four-decade career in healthcare, including 37 years at Quality Life Health Services. She served as vice president for the East Central Alabama Area Health Education Center, raising millions to fund accessible healthcare for the people of Alabama.
DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

In recent years, Florida State University and the CSW have seen tremendous change. We welcomed President Richard McCullough and proudly witnessed our own, dean Jim Clark, become FSU’s newest Provost. The Jim Clark Leadership Fund was recently established in honor of his continued legacy of commitment and leadership at Florida State University to support critical initiatives at the College of Social Work.

I am also pleased to share that I have seen my role at FSU evolve this year as well. After more than ten years with the College of Social Work, I have accepted the role of Director of Development for Principal Gifts with the Office of Academic Affairs. I will continue to work closely with the College of Social Work, all of its wonderful supporters and our university community. As always, I welcome a chance to connect with every one of you to find ways to perpetuate the tradition of excellence at the College and University.

Enjoy these development updates that show the continued commitment of our graduates, donors and partners to support the College of Social Work, social work education and the profession.

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

» Delia Sanchez Social Work Scholarship
» Katherine Kole MSW Scholarship
» Donald J. Hevey Memorial MSW Scholarship

Student Highlights, cont.

have access to firearms or other lethal means. “I’m excited to pilot the curriculum this year at a few mental health hospitals throughout Florida because most professionals never receive any sort of formal education or training on this topic,” he expressed.

He is still working with Maura’s Voice Research Fund with social work and criminology faculty, as well as on several other projects with College of Social Work faculty. Currently, he is also examining training practices and procedures related to extreme risk protection orders in Florida Sheriff departments. With Dr. Lisa Schelbe, he is examining the screening practices of mental health workers, with a primary focus on training they may have received on screening for access to firearms. And, he is working with fellow doctoral candidate Melissa Murphy and Provost Jim Clark on a novel root cause analysis of four violent incels in an attempt to determine causal factors and root causes of their violent acts.

“The most important thing I’ve learned from my PhD Program, and my time at FSU in general, is that you have to be the driver of your experience,” Chris concluded. “I think it’s also really important to build a coalition early and to continue to expand upon it. I haven’t been afraid to build meaningful relationships with people inside and outside the College of Social Work.”

A hallmark of Chris’s journey has been his persistence and dedication in making the most of what assets and opportunities he has on hand and paying that forward. He has supervised three MSW interns through his work with Maura’s Voice and is currently providing valuable research experience to an undergraduate student in criminology. He has been nominated for a university teaching award and for the college’s Instructor of the Year award. He also received the college’s 2018 Young Alumni of the Year award. After completing his program, Chris plans to continue to expand his research and teaching as a social work professor.
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