COMMUNITAS

Florida State University College of Social Work

2024–2025

2023–2024 COMMUNITAS

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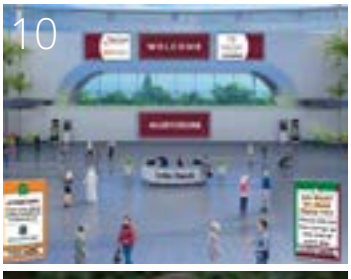

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

As I reflect on my first year as dean of the College of Social Work, I am profoundly inspired by the passionate work, creativity, and dedication of our community. While we are experiencing a time of major change that challenges us to grow in new and exciting ways, it is our collective commitment to making real impact in our profession – both in and outside of the classroom – that drives all that we do.

My vision for the coming year includes an intentional and thoughtful focus on the importance of well-being, professional growth, and relationships. I am also committed to promoting a Civil Society grounded in our values to create a culture of belonging for us all – faculty, staff, students, alumni, supporters and friends. We will continue to pioneer innovative practices and policies that promote human rights and well-being and accelerate community-engaged translational science that generates transformative and sustainable solutions to society's most complex social issues and human challenges.

I am eager to share with you many of the future trends and innovations happening at the College of Social Work and at Florida State University that unify us under shared goals and aspirations. In this issue, you'll see how Florida State is refreshing its brand and taking a more unified approach to health research and community partnerships through FSU Health.

The College of Social Work and our centers and institutes share new resources and opportunities for professional development towards becoming trauma-aware as a community. This shared vision of the College is very much like a constellation made up of numerous stars, which includes you and the innumerable and invaluable members of our social work community.

We are brighter when we share our light. I hope you'll enjoy exploring this issue of Communitas and all of the ways we continue to expand our impact within our university and across our local and global communities, social work research and practice, and beyond.

David

David W. Springer

Dean
Guy & Delores Spearman Professor
of Social Work

FSU REBRAND:
LAUNCHING A NEW ACADEMIC LOGO

Florida State University launched a rebrand in 2024 with a new academic logo boldly displaying the recognizable "FSU" taking the forefront of the university's brand.

"Previously, FSU was one of the only public universities in the country without three identifying marks," said FSU Chief Marketing Officer Susannah Wesley-Ahlschwede, who was appointed FSU's inaugural chief marketing officer in January 2024 following a national search.

Through the rebranding process, there is a reduced emphasis on the FSU seal. The Seminole head and all athletic trademarks will be reserved exclusively for FSU Athletics, while the FSU seal — the university's trademarked emblem with the "Vires, Artes, Mores" — will be saved for more sacred occasions, including commencement.

Alongside changes to the FSU logos, Wesley-Ahlschwede shared that FSU's rebranding had some other key focuses:

- **ENHANCING FSU RECOGNITION FOR THE WORK BEING DONE ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY.**
- **STANDING OUT TO ATTRACT THE BEST STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND RESEARCHERS AND TO BUILD STRONGER CONNECTIONS WITH FSU ALUMNI.**
- **MODERNIZING FSU'S IMAGE AND CREATING A PRIMARY INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY THAT IS READABLE AND ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL PEOPLE ACROSS ALL FORMATS (INCLUDING THOSE WITH LOW VISION, DYSLEXIA, DYSGRAPHIA AND NEURODIVERGENCE).**

The university's rebranding project was managed in-house — meaning that an outside firm was not hired for assistance — as the FSU Marketing team spent nearly 16 months conducting research, focus groups, benchmarking, accessibility testing, internal development, and socializing among leaders.

FSU

We invite you to further explore branding materials at **brand.fsu.edu**

EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF FSU HEALTH:
CONNECTING RESEARCH, PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY

FSU Health came about from an award to Florida State University in 2022 from the Florida Legislature and Governor Ron DeSantis to build an academic health center. The health initiative elevated previous partnerships between Florida State and Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare (TMH), a primary healthcare facility in Tallahassee, Florida to a new level.

The partnership combines the strengths of both entities, including Tallahassee Memorial's patient care and FSU's medical/health education programs and research capabilities, to synergize their resources and impact on healthcare and the local community.

The College of Social Work facilitated a dialogue over the summer to discuss FSU Health, its growth, and its impact. The discussion included reflections from:

Dr. David Springer, College of Social Work, Dean, Guy and Delores Spearman Professor of Social Work

Dr. Michael Killian, College of Social Work, Associate Professor Co-Director, Initiative for the Advancement of Pediatric Transplant Health Research, Stoops Center for Communities, Families and Children

Dr. Emily Pritchard, Assistant Provost and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Health Innovations and Strategic Alliances

David Springer: If we were at a party and just met, how would you each describe your role and how it relates to FSU Health?

Michael Killian: I'll first point out that FSU Health is a significant investment for FSU and on the state level in health research and health services. My part is as a health researcher, to connect research with and to enhance those health services in my area, children and families.

Emily Pritchard: I would describe myself as a connector and facilitator. I'm often behind the scenes, looking at how to make connections that enhance the work people are trying to do. I also help connect FSU with external clinical partners like Mayo Clinic, Andrews Institute, Tallahassee Orthopedic Clinic, and other physician practices.

Springer: Emily, tell us a little about FSU Health and its creation and significance. How can it serve as an academic health center?

Pritchard: We were building on the concepts behind FSU Health before this existed. President McCullough came in with a vision to expand health research. The project got kick-started with $125 million from the Legislature in a practical sense. Now, we have a building and a place to gather on the TMH campus. But FSU Health has been something FSU has been working towards and it is much greater than a single building. It is a vibrant ecosystem of different researchers across campus. We have learners, industry partners, and clinical partners like Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, the Mayo Clinic, Andrews Institute, and new initiatives in Panama City. It is a pretty big concept that is just beginning to take shape.

Groundbreaking on Academic Health Center, September 2024

Springer: Part of my vision for the College of Social Work is for us to become an integral piece of FSU Health to advance that multidisciplinary mission and vision. In many ways, this is tangibly realized through the work of FSU faculty, such as Dr. Michael Killian. Mike, tell us more about how your work and research fits into FSU Health?

Killian: FSU Health gives us a foothold for research within the healthcare environment in Tallahassee and the broader region. Having local research partners like this is so important. My area is broadly children's health, pediatric chronic illness, family aspects, and social determinants of health-related to quality of life for children and their families. FSU Health provides the space and outlet to do work like this. As an example, I'm very interested in collaborations to address family support for people with children in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit] at TMH. That would be a dream project to partner with a great hospital system. FSU Health is a partnership that can expand into other area health systems in Florida.

Pritchard: You're hitting on some essential themes. This initiative increases our ability to impact our North Florida community in new ways. We haven't been able to do it before. In response to your comment, Dean Springer, about how multidisciplinary this is, the many different colleges are leaning in to this part of FSU Health, that helps us create more insightful research and connect teams to tackle problems in new, innovative ways. We have faculty doing great things,

but FSU Health helps add some structure to strengthen interactions and get the research out into the community.

Killian: I was at a research meeting the other day discussing cluster faculty hires as opportunities for growth at FSU in areas like substance abuse, mental health, rural health, and many others. Somebody from every college in the meeting discussed these strategic hires to build diverse faculty centered around FSU Health and address siloed ventures across campus.

Springer: Speaking of that, opportunities that FSU Health creates allow us to engage in more collaborative research. How is FSU Health already accelerating collaborative research?

Pritchard: It's a team-based approach to tackling complex health problems through FSU Health as an academic health center, unlike your prototypical teaching hospital. We have some great strengths, such as addressing minority and rural health disparities. We are national leaders and are now able to combine strengths across disciplines. We can go after larger, competitive grants from the National Institutes of Health or National Science Foundation, bringing opportunities and resources into the North Florida region that we wouldn't have otherwise.

Springer: I like how you're framing it, Emily, a team-based approach and engaging in a meaningful way with our community. To what extent are FSU centers and institutes, like our Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Consulting Center in the College of Social Work, already working as a part of FSU Health?

Killian: The Multidisciplinary Center has worked on behavioral and educational support, various forms of psychological testing, and supporting families for 40-plus years. It will benefit from its involvement at FSU Health, allowing it to expand services to local children and families needing evaluation testing and services. Hopefully, with FSU Health, there can be a more focused, synergistic approach to services.

Pritchard: It's exciting to see FSU entities growing and changing and working together to identify gaps in services and support in our region. It impacts our community and makes us more effective with what we do internally.

Springer: FSU Health is going to have an impact on the region, right? One of the unique contributions that the College of Social Work can make is around an important element of healthcare, which is mental health and behavioral health. What do you both envision or already see happening through FSU Health to advance the region's mental and behavioral health?

Killian: Within the college, we are moving towards hiring specialists in substance abuse and mental health, especially. Professor John Moore is already involved in this area. Mental health and substance abuse are of interest and are being researched across multiple colleges, including areas like neuroscience.

Pritchard: We have many hires in these areas across the university in mental health. We also have the Appalachee Center. It's great to see the College of Social Work and other parts of FSU realize we have a lot of expertise to build on because the need is so great. It matters how people are supported in this community. We don't have enough providers.

And knowing the different ways that we can contribute is important. Social work contributions are not only in the research piece but also in the practitioner piece, such as training a workforce to meet a need, not just in Florida. It's great to have various opportunities for our students to see firsthand while at FSU.

Killian: I would say in any healthcare area, there is a need for disciplines like social work that can bring in the social and

environmental aspects and then work to translate research and innovations like digital health and personalized medicine back into communities, translating that work back into the areas in which families live.

Springer: This speaks to the common thread of social workers' ability to look at the person within their environment, to look at individuals, communities, and systems holistically, and to think about how all of these interact with each other and how we can integrate research and practice so that they're informing one another to make both of those avenues more robust. Let's dive deeper into the holistic piece. FSU Health is driving the importance of working with and understanding the entire person holistically. It seems to be a guiding principle.

Pritchard: That patient-centered mindset is what makes the difference. We have folks looking at caregiver research and work done at the Claude Pepper Center and Pepper Institute of Aging and Public Policy. The College of Criminology and Criminal Justice is looking at elder abuse and financial fraud because that's often tied to a health event.

You can also see music therapy, art therapy, and all these different pieces that still need to be knit together in a way that maximizes the impact they could have. We need the research to show us evidence-based practices for how to do this. And Mike, when you think about digital health, we have to look at which patient group we are talking to. Lisa Hightow-Weidman's work with HIV and AIDs in young populations is a good example. How we communicate with them digitally is very different from how we might communicate with older adults. Being able to share that expertise back and forth.

We need to keep talking about human-centered design and not limit what we think of traditionally for health. I want to be sure that that's clear within FSU Health. And I would also point to our health and humanities program. We're telling the stories of these patients because we're going to learn better ways to do our work if we can do it in a more integrated fashion.

Killian: Social work's role among all these collaborations is to act as a bridge between disciplines. To maintain family- and patient-centered care and help extend care outside the health or hospital system. That's the central role of social work, whether it is research or practice.

Springer: We've touched on covering the entire developmental lifespan through FSU Health, from birth to end of life. That's a critical highlight, too. Emily, I'm glad you lifted up all the different disciplines and programs involved in FSU Health because it expands how we think about it. When thinking about the future direction of FSU Health, what other ways can the College of Social Work collaborate and add value? It could be something we're already doing. Perhaps it's something that is in your mind as part of the future of FSU Health. Social work provides that link to connect with clients.

Killian: There will be many more opportunities for students to get involved in health and medical social work through internships and other ways, like undergraduate research opportunities for those with health research interests. It's going to affect interdisciplinary classes across campus. We've got a health focus among some of our doctoral students, and the opportunities to engage in research and data access will also make patient populations more accessible.

Pritchard: The College of Social Work has led innovation sprints at the Innovation Hub to address questions like, 'What does human-centered design look like? How do we tackle some of these complex problems?' There's a lot of new coursework available in design and systems thinking. Students take these frameworks and are tackling complex problems, a lot of them health problems. There's more crosstalk between the classroom and research, as there should be when we approach clinical services. Social work also provides a framework for the patient perspective, helping us find ways to address their needs and how research can serve them. We want to be sure that the expert insights are disseminated in practical ways into our community.

Killian: I know that social work research emphasizes a positive impact on practice, and we can champion that as a central focus and value. That could be a key contribution.

Pritchard: And we want to meet patients where they are and where they need to be. So they don't need to drive 3 or 4 hours to get top-quality care. We're going to build it together through FSU Health.

Springer: You may already know that this is one of the mantras of social work. Meeting the patient where they are aligns closely with the longstanding tradition of practice and client care in social work.

Pritchard: That's where digital health comes in. In personalized medicine, we can use technology to meet you where you are. We can even bring certain things into the home.

Killian: We've started exploring that. We're discussing health outcomes and homelessness with the Kearney Center and using cell phones as a support tool. Ten years ago, that would have sounded like an absurd idea, but now we're doing that.

Springer: There's much to be excited about at FSU Health and the opportunities moving forward.

Killian: The infrastructure and research opportunities are such an area of growth; it's exciting for the health sciences.

Pritchard: My final thought would be the idea that the door is open, and many people might be interested in becoming involved, and they can.

INSTITUTE FOR TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE STUDIES

LAUNCH OF ONLINE PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT COURSES

The Institute for Trauma and Resilience Studies launched its professional development portfolio on the new FSU Learn virtual platform in the summer of 2024.

The institute offers five research-based professional certifications available entirely online with an array of supporting interactive and multimedia materials. These courses are continuing education opportunities for professionals across a variety of disciplines.

9,770+

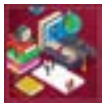
LEARNERS ENROLLED IN COURSES

Professional Certification in Trauma and Resilience: LEVEL ONE

Did you know that two out of every three people experience trauma that can impact them personally and professionally? In this course, professionals develop the knowledge and skills to better understand the impact of adult and child trauma, along with the keys to resilience.

Professional Certification in Trauma and Resilience: LEVEL TWO

This course builds on the training of the Level One certification course on trauma and resilience and teaches the impact of specific types of individual and community trauma, along with practical skills for building resilience.



Professional Certification in College Student Wellbeing, Trauma, and Resilience

This course helps transform colleges and universities into trauma-informed environments in which students, faculty, and staff can thrive.

Professional Certification in the Fundamentals of Neurodiversity

If you interact with the public, this training is for you! This course is a comprehensive introduction to the concept of neurodiversity and offers practical approaches to supporting neurodivergent people of all ages.

Professional Certification in Human Trafficking Prevention and Intervention

This course describes the dynamics of human trafficking and the basics of a trauma-informed approach to helping victims.

EARN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION BADGES.

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FSU LEARN

BECOMING A TRAUMA-AWARE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

A new initiative launched by **Dr. Jim Clark**, FSU's provost and executive vice president of Academic Affairs, aims to create a trauma-aware community at Florida State University. The initiative is launching within the College of Social Work and will expand through academic and administrative units.

Heading up this initiative is **Dr. Angi Yoder Maina**, the FSU Resilience Institute for Strength and Empowerment (RISE) director. "Trauma awareness helps institutions better support students and staff who may have experienced trauma, fostering a more resilient educational environment," Dr. Yoder Maina explained.

The training, titled "Strength through Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) Certified Organization," available via FSU's Human Resources platform. Organizations who complete the training receive the Organizational Certification for Trauma and Resilience.

The certification was developed through the Trauma and Resilience Collaborative as an initiative of Provost Clark to harness and promote the interdisciplinary expertise on trauma and resilience at Florida State in 2022. The program came to life thanks to the efforts of **Dr. Mimi Graham**, director of the FSU Center for Prevention and Early Intervention Policy, and **Karen Oehme**, director of the FSU Institute for Trauma and Resilience Studies.

"The College of Social Work is a great place to lead by example to become trauma aware as an academic unit. Our profession and curriculum emphasize being trauma aware to best serve clients and communities as well as to work towards breaking cycles of trauma. I'm energized for this shared goal at the college." - Dean David Springer

Dr. Yoder Maina noted that the essential nature of the training for the college will be to:

- **Increase the college's awareness and understanding of trauma and its impact on students, staff, and the educational environment.**
- **Equip faculty and staff with basic communication skills to better support individuals who have experienced trauma.**
- **Foster a more resilient and inclusive educational environment within the college.**
- **Become the first college in the state of Florida to achieve this organizational certification, demonstrating the college's commitment to trauma awareness and resilience.**
- **Under Dr. Yoder Maina's guidance, the Trauma and Resilience Collaborative has developed into RISE with a strength-based approach towards transforming organizational culture by providing effective and measurable strategies to address collective trauma and stress.**

"RISE's framework focuses on promoting trauma awareness, cultivating resilience in individuals and organizations, implementing trauma-responsive and healing-centered practices, fostering collaboration and continuous learning, and certifying organizations as empathetic and thriving workplaces," said Dr. Yoder Maina.

(Left to right) Karen Oheme and Dr. Mimi Graham.

To learn about RISE or how to become a STAR Certified Organization, contact Dr. Yoder Maina at **ay23g@fsu.edu** or **learningforlife.fsu.edu**.

Dr. Angi Yoder Maina
Director of RISE

STOOPS CENTER FOR COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES, AND CHILDREN

IMMERSIVE VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM DISPLAYS LATEST RESEARCH IN OPIOID RESPONSE EFFORTS

The **Southeast Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Regional Center** (SE ROTA-RC), housed in the Stoops Center for Communities, Families, and Children, hosted the virtual symposium "Catalyzing Change and Strengthening Community Capacity for Opioid Response" from April 11-12, 2024.

The event was sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and covered a wide range of topics, including prevention strategies, harm reduction approaches, healthcare interventions, justice frameworks, and treatment modalities.

More than 195 attendees from across the nation shared knowledge of substance use disorders and their multifaceted impact across various contexts. The virtual symposium was hosted on the Vfairs event platform, fully immersing participants in an interactive design to simulate an in-person symposium setting.

The platform allowed participants to visit a virtual auditorium for presentations, interact with other participants via a chat component and virtual lounge feature, as well as visit exhibit booths and collect virtual "swag" resources. Participants could also participate in a scavenger hunt to encourage exploration of the virtual space and its functions, entering them a chance at a prize drawing.

Experts from diverse backgrounds nationwide shared innovative research findings, programs, and initiatives. Two experts included FSU College of Social Work alumnae **Savannah Collier** (MSW, 2019) and **Dr. Machelle Madsen Thompson** (PhD, 2010), who is a researcher and adjunct faculty member with the college. The pair co-presented on building protective factors through practical strategies and proven approaches, detailing their research efforts on resilience and protective factors.

Participants were left with several resources, including year-round technical assistance from SE ROTA-RC at serotarcnetwork.org. SE ROTA-RC also provides free resources on its website including self-paced courses, trainings, flyers, infographics and interactive maps detailing where to find opioid treatment facilities and harm-reduction supplies in the southeast region.

If you or someone you know need technical assistance from SE ROTA-RC, submit the "Contact Us" form on their website found at **serotarcnetwork.org/communication** or email **Carli Lucius at clucius@fsu.edu.**

MULTIDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION AND CONSULTING CENTER

40+ YEARS SERVING LOCAL FAMILIES AND GROWING

(Left to right) Dr. Kate Dickinson, Dr. Delaney Boss, Dr. Amber Farrington, Dr. Anne Selvey, Dr. Shannon Bennett, Dr. Lauren Hutto, Clare Brown, LCSW, and Joann Milford.

The Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Consulting Center, also known as the Multidisciplinary Center or MDC, celebrated 40 years of serving children and families of North Florida in 2023. Since its doors opened in 1983, the center's interdisciplinary team has offered a range of diagnostic evaluation and consultation services for children with complex medical, educational, emotional, and behavioral challenges.

These services have grown to include consultation and training for parents, teachers, school personnel, and related provider/professional support.

Dr. Beverly Atkeson led the center from 1996 until 2014, which included seeing the center become an accredited internship site by the American Psychological Association for psychology doctoral students.

Right to left: MDC Directors Dr. Shannon Bennett, Dr. Anne Selvey, Dr. Beverly Atkeson

Over the years, the center's growth has allowed its team to see a larger number of clients to meet the ever-increasing need for services alongside an increase in complex referrals.

Dr. Ann Selvey stepped in to lead as the center's director from 2014 until 2024 with an eye on increasing the accessibility of services. With that in mind, the center partnered with Capital Health Plan, a major North Florida health are provider, in 2017.

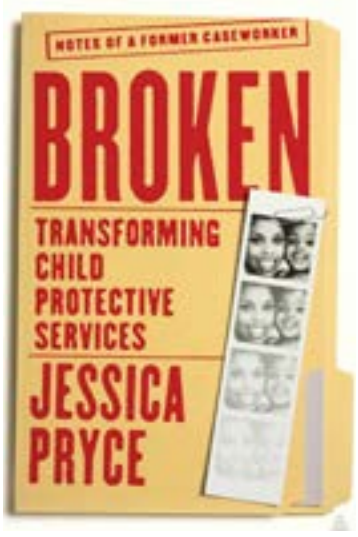
Like Dr. Atkeson, Dr. Selvey worked in various at the center and reflected, "I always loved the mission of serving underserved children and families in a small, rural district. This brilliant group will continue to expand MDC's services and take the center to new places."

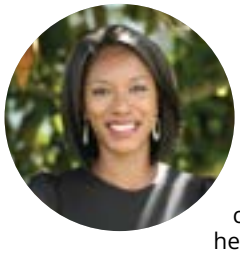
Dr. Shannon Bennett, Dr. Selvey's successor starting July 1, 2024, is excited to continue the center's legacy. "I am most excited to continue our mission to serve and train, while also expanding our treatment services and collaborating with other disciplines in order to have a larger impact," she shared. "My immediate priority is to support my staff as they transition into new roles and provide the MDC with a sense of stability during our upcoming building renovation.

The Multidisciplinary Center is undergoing renovations to accommodate the expansion of its group counseling services under the guidance of **Dr. Chrystal McDowell**, the new director of Group Mental Health Services.

Long-time Assistant Director **Joann Milford,** who has worked with the center's three most recent directors, will also retire in 2024, knowing with assurance that, "the new team at MDC is in wonderful hands to continue this vital work that began in 1983."

FACULTY BOOK RELEASES



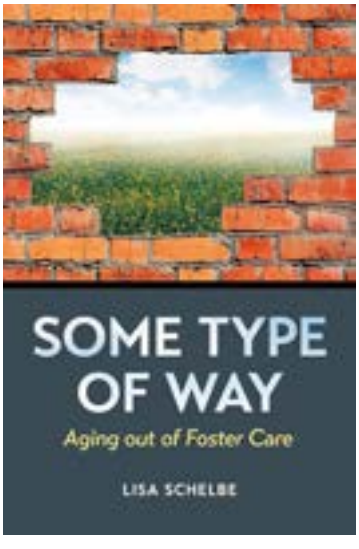


BROKEN: Transforming Child Protective Services - Notes of a Former Caseworker

Jessica Pryce, Research Faculty

Released by Harper Collins Publishers, Dr. Pryce shares her professional journey and perspectives from caseworkers and Black women impacted by the child welfare system in the United States. Dr. Pryce uses her expertise as a social worker and former child welfare caseworker to explore the systemic issues found within the child welfare system.

The book follows Dr. Pryce's career journey from her social work internship in child welfare through her shared experiences of close family and friends who experienced the system first-hand. Through an activist lens, her book invites the child welfare workforce to embark on a journey of radical growth and self-reflection aiming at strengthening families involved in the child welfare system.

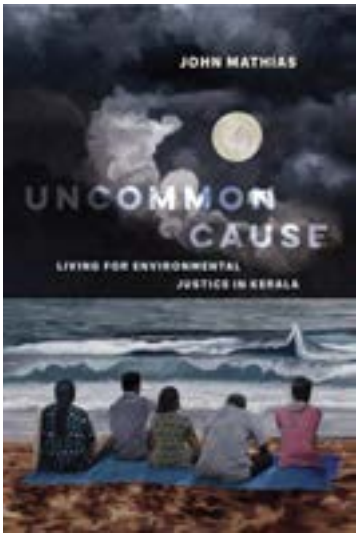


Some Type of Way: Aging out of Foster Care

Lisa Schelbe, Professor & Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

From Oxford University Press, Dr. Schelbe's most recent book seeks to answer important questions for child welfare practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. The book examines how youth in the foster care system transition out of the system and into adulthood while also exploring how agencies and service providers are assisting this population.

Included in her book is ethnographic data on this population including five youths involved in foster care, sharing the complex challenges they face, including system barriers in society and the creative strategies they utilize to survive in the adult world. The book also incorporates both real stories alongside relevant research and theories to understand foster care youths aging out.



Uncommon Cause: Living for Environmental Justice in Kerala

John Mathias, Associate Professor

Published by University of California Press, Dr. Mathias uses his dual expertise in anthropology and social work in the areas of environmental justice and social action to offer a fresh perspective on environmental ethics. The book follows environmental justice activists in Kerala, India as they seek out, avoid, or strive to overcome conflicts between their causes and their community.

Dr. Mathias finds two distinct approaches to fighting for environmental justice, each demonstrating different possibilities for an activist life. For one set of activists, environmental justice becomes a way of transcending and disconnecting from local identities or affiliations. Other activities attempt to ground their activism in community affiliation and belonging, a means to fight for their own people. The book explores the dilemmas of each activist approach and offers insights into the ethical tensions people face between taking a stand and taking a stand for others.

CELEBRATING FSU CSW INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS' LEADERS

Under the passionate leadership of faculty member **Patricia (Pat) Brazil Lager**, the College of Social Work, then a School of Social Work, began offering international study abroad and field educational experiences for social work students in the 1990s.

"Pat created our International Program from scratch to increase cross-cultural understanding for students. She also recognized the importance of collaboration," explained current International Programs Director and Professor Dr. Neil Abell. "She used her experience as a child welfare practitioner to collaborate with partners abroad for study abroad experiences, and to construct and strengthen their services."

Ms. Lager expanded the international experiences to include field placements, study abroad, Alternative Spring Break, exchange programs for students, and even continuing education opportunities for social work professionals.

In 2011, she retired and passed on her role of Director of International Programs to **Dr. Neil Abell**, who shared her passion for international social work. As part of his preparation for this role, Dr. Abell spent many years studying the impact of HIV/AIDs and its stigma on populations across the world and expanding those efforts to support colleagues in Northern Ireland addressing the challenges of sectarian conflict in the promotion of social welfare. The research and relationships fostered by both Ms. Lager and Dr. Abell have perpetuated an ever-evolving range of international experiences across four continents. The college currently offers study abroad, spring break, exchange, and field placement opportunities in Canada, Great Britain (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland), Grenada and Norway.

Rebounding from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Programs are going strong and continue to change the lives of all involved. "Going abroad is a stimulus for the best kind of culture shock," said Dr. Abell, "where encounters with the unfamiliar prompt us to see what we might otherwise have taken for granted about our own privilege or expectations with new eyes."

Remembering Pat Lager

Read more about the legacy of the founder of FSU CSW International Programs.

The college continues to seek opportunities to engage faculty in pursuing their educational and academic interests abroad. All of our efforts could not succeed without the expert support of Tan Edgerton, the program's academic specialist, and numerous College staff.

At the end of 2024, Dr. Abell will pass the torch of the International Programs Director role to Teaching Professor **Jane Dwyer Lee** who has accompanied him on and facilitated many of the College's international experiences.

Taking on this role is full circle for Ms. Dwyer Lee who was first asked to join the college's International Programs committee by Pat Lager because of her passion for international travel. "We often spoke about the importance of exposing students to diverse cultures in order to broaden their perspectives by experiencing social work practice in international settings," she recalled.

Ms. Dwyer Lee shares Ms. Lager and Dr. Abell's belief that immersion in different cultures fosters personal growth and self-awareness, which are vital for the development of traits for social workers, including adaptability, tolerance and resilience.

"I could not ask for a more ideal successor," enthused Dr. Abell, noting with certainty her ability to, "inspire students, impress colleagues with her high ethical and professional standards, and continue to grow collaborations abroad with her humor and talent for problem solving."

Ms. Dwyer Lee will step into the role at the beginning of 2025. "As a member of our global family, I desire to contribute to positive change in any way possible as a humanitarian and an advocate for social justice," she shared. "My hope is that while at these chosen sites, our students can observe and participate in how other countries approach and address social, economic, and environmental issues and how they have come to identify and implement effective interventions."

POET-IN-RESIDENCE:
NICHOLAS MAZZA

The College of Social Work introduces a new role: poet-in-residence, assigned to Dr. Nicholas Mazza, emeritus dean and professor. In this voluntary role, Dr. Mazza will facilitate opportunities for the College of Social Work community to benefit from the arts, particularly poetry, to enhance social work education and practice.

This new position provides a unique opportunity for current students and other university community members to engage with Dr. Mazza, an accomplished poet and writer. He will facilitate various events to explore creative expression and the written word.

"In literature, you study the human condition. In social work, you do something about it," Dr. Mazza shared in a 2017 article celebrating his Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Poetry Therapy.

As poet-in-residence, Dr. Mazza will expand on his rich legacy at the College of Social Work, encouraging the arts as a therapeutic modality and tool. The arts were foundational to the Arts & Athletics Program he helped found in 2012 to foster positive youth development in local middle school-aged youths.

Arts & Athletics and Hope at Hand

Spring 2024 began of an exciting collaboration for the Arts & Athletics Program, facilitated by Dr. Mazza and the program's director and social work faculty member, **Dr. Shalay Jackson.**

Through the National Association of Poetry Therapy, Dr. Mazza trained **Steffani Fletcher**, an FSU alumna and executive director of Hope at Hand, Inc., a Jacksonville-based nonprofit.

Hope at Hand brought to the program 8-weeks of workshop sessions for middle school students to explore concepts such as self-worth, resilience, courage, stress management, and effective communication through a variety of poetry and creative therapeutic approaches.

Hope is the belief that one hand reaching to another can eventually touch the moon, allowing the light to guide us through the night.

Mazza, Nicholas, Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 36, 257, 1998.

Sharing Poetry Therapy with People Experiencing Homelessness

This year, Dr. Mazza also hosted a poetry therapy workshop in April at The Kearney Center in Tallahassee, Florida, for people experiencing homelessness to foster healing and growth.

The workshop emerged from a group called the "First 12," established by **Sue Semrau** (pictured above left), former FSU women's basketball coach (1997-2022) to inform and educate Tallahassee on homelessness.

Dr. Mazza and other members of the FSU College of Social Work faculty and staff, including Dean **David Springer**, Field Education Director **Katrina Boone**, **Dr. Shalay Jackson**, and Development Director **Paige McKay Kubik** have worked with Sue Semrau to develop the "First 12."

The "First 12" is an initiative to enhance service delivery to North Florida homeless populations and to foster communication between organizations supporting this population.

MACRO SOCIAL WORK **IN ACTION**

Legislative Education and Advocacy Days

The College of Social Work co-hosted the National Association of Social Workers, Florida Chapter's (NASW-FL) annual Legislative, Education, and Advocacy event February 5-6, 2024.

More than 600 social workers and students from across the state gathered on Florida State's campus February 5, to learn about NASW's legislative priorities and training. NASW-FL's Executive Director Dawn Brown, NASW-FL President Dr. Sharon Gandarilla-Javier, and the college's Dean David Springer shared words of inspiration.

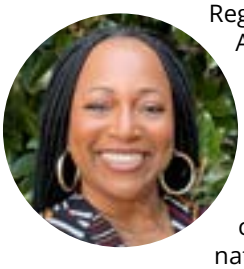
During the training FSU Chapter of the Macro Social Work Student Network members and College of Social Work Student Ambassadors shared strategies for discussing legislative bills with representatives, and served as guides in navigating the Florida Capitol.

Attendees reconvened on February 6, in Kleman Plaza in downtown Tallahassee adjacent to the Florida Capitol for a pep rally and encouraging words.

"Today, as you enter the Florida Capitol," Dr. Carol Campbell Edwards, FSU faculty member and administrator, said to the gathering, "I encourage you to remember your collective power, the ethical standards that define our beloved profession, and the opportunity each of us has to lend our voice to something greater! We are called to lead!"

"For us to stay true to our story, we have to stay true to our values and our character. And our values are our North Star. So, you have a critical role to play, and we have a critical role to play together in cultivating a civil society, alleviating critical social problems, and enhancing human well-being for everyone."
- Dean David Springer

Faculty Member's Work with NASW



Faculty member **Dr. Carol Campbell Edwards**, serves as the NASW Board Director for Region VII, serving Florida, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

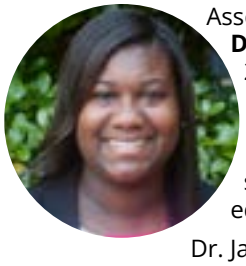
Dr. Edwards was appointed chair of the NASW's Governance Review Task Force. The task force represents a continuation of efforts at NASW's national office to restructure and streamline the organization to ensure efficiency and optimal support for social workers and the profession.

Dr. Edwards presented the task force's preliminary report in Washington, DC, in June 2024, and the final report will be presented to the Board of Directors in December 2024.

FSU's Macro Social Work Student Network Chapter Receives Award

The FSU MSWSN chapter was awarded an Outstanding Student Group Award in October 2023 from the Association for Community Organization and Social Action at the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Associate Teaching Professor Dr. Shalay Jackson, the student group's faculty advisor accepted the award on their behalf.

Faculty Member Educator of the Year for NASW-FL Big Bend Unit for Contribution to Macro Social Work Organizations



Associate Teaching Professor **Dr. Shalay Jackson** was named 2024 Educator of the Year for the Big Bend Unit of the NASW, Florida Chapter for efforts to support and promote macro social work in social work education.

Dr. Jackson was recognized for her contributions to the Special Commission to Advance Macro Social Work, the Association for Community Organization and Social Action, and the Macro Social Work Student Network Advisory Board.

Macro Social Work Student Network, FSU Chapter Leaders, 2023

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

CLAIRE SCIANDRA, BSW STUDENT

Championing Philanthropy and Service

"As an out-of-state student, I was determined to make Florida State University feel less overwhelming and more like home," expressed BSW student Claire Sciandra.

Growing up in North Carolina, Claire knew she wanted to study out of state. She was drawn to Florida State "because of the beautiful campus, the diversity, and the excellent balance FSU offers between Greek life, social life, academics, athletics, and the beautiful weather."

Discussions with a family friend earning their MSW degree helped her realize that social work was the best major for a career with broad job opportunities and was people-oriented.

Claire threw herself into campus life and the Tallahassee community. Joining Alpha Chi Omega gave her an instant feeling of community among what she described as an "environment of strong and involved women." Her initial involvement on the philanthropy committee of her sorority led to her leadership position as director of philanthropy, overseeing events and fundraisers and community service awareness efforts, particularly relating to intimate partner/domestic violence.

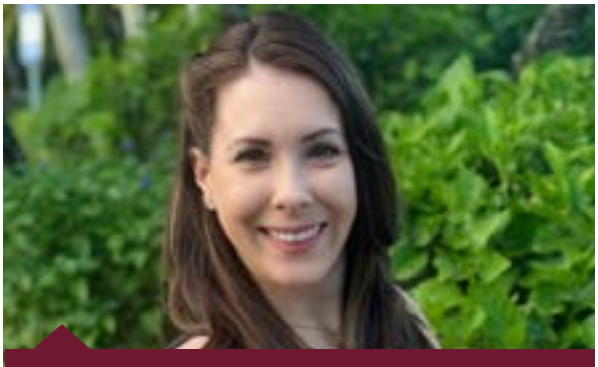
In Spring 2024, Claire surpassed previous fundraising records for her sorority's annual philanthropy event, "Pizza Pie and Puppies with Alpha Chi," raising more than $19,600. "I love being a positive role model and leader for the other women in my chapter," she conveyed.

Her love for FSU extends into her service work with the FSU Student Government Association (SGA), her attendance at SGA's Diversity and Inclusion Institute as a sophomore and her particpation in the Mental Health Council. As a part of the council's Outreach Committee, she helps to champion mental health awareness, support, and resources at events across camus. She is also the assistant director of the Nineteen Ten Women's Honorary.

Claire also found an invaluable community among her social work peers. "I have cherished the close connections I've been able to forge with professors and fellow students in my program," she shared.

Several campus entities have recognized her efforts at FSU, as a member of Garnet and Gold Key, the Order of Omega for Greek Life leaders, a 2024 Torchbearer for outstanding student service and leadership, and a "21 Under 21" philanthropy award from the FSU Student Foundation.

Above all, Claire has set her sights on becoming a therapist and establishing a nonprofit to support vulnerable women and girls.



RICKI GOLDSMITH, MSW STUDENT

Advocating for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

"I had a Deaf friend growing up who taught me American Sign Language (ASL)," recalled Ricki Goldsmith, while a student in the Online MSW Program. "In high school, I took ASL as a foreign language and learned about Deaf history, culture, and the community. I volunteered, attended events, and most of all enjoyed being involved in the community."

Ricki moved to Miami to work in marketing after graduating from the University of Tampa in 2011 but her passion for working with the Deaf community motivated her to return to school. She earned a degree in American Sign Language Interpreting from Miami Dade College.

Immersing herself again in volunteer opportunities within the Deaf community allowed Ricki to learn more about being an interpreter. Ricki's experience as a part-time interpreter eventually motivated her to pursue a full-time career in the field.

The loss of a parent further shaped Ricki's professional journey. Through grief counseling led by a social worker, she learned about the importance of access to mental health resources. She then began learning about Deaf mental health.

"Imagine wanting to see a therapist and always needing an interpreter in the room, or every therapy appointment having a different interpreter each time. Is that interpreter qualified? All of those variables impact the client's care," she explained. "Therapy is personal and intimate. Wouldn't you prefer to see a therapist one-on-

one who can understand you, your culture, and communicate directly with you in your primary language?"

Through her research, Ricki realized there was no Deaf Mental Health Services Department in Florida. Online, she found the South Carolina Department of Mental Health Deaf Services, whose staff are all Deaf, Hard of Hearing or ASL fluent. They offer direct clinician-to-client access to the Deaf community.

Caring deeply about mental health accessibility for the Deaf community and knowing she wanted to work in this field, Ricki began volunteering remotely with the South Carolina department and pursuing her MSW degree.

She also completed her internship with the South Carolina Department of Mental Health - Deaf Services, further developing her clinical skills. "As a clinical intern, I enjoyed developing a rapport with clients, learning from them, and working with them on their goals and problem-solving," she shared. "I love to see clients grow, overcome their fears, and create their own solutions."

As her experience in the mental health field grew, Ricki noticed some challenges unique to the Deaf community when the main point of access to mental health support is virtual:

- A three-dimensional language like ASL becomes two-dimensional on a virtual platform.
- Technology challenges like internet freezes and environmental distractions are unique obstacles to communication..
- The experience of audism, or negative stigma towards Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, is another frequent challenge.

After her recent graduation in the summer of 2024, Ricki continues to advocate for the Deaf community and is working towards her clinical social work licensure.

SONNIE MAYEWSKI, PhD STUDENT

Supporting Pediatric Healthcare Through Research and Technology

After working several years in hospital social work as a licensed clinical social worker, Sonnie returned to the FSU College of Social Work, where she earned her MSW (2017) to research the intersectionality of pediatric healthcare and technology with a focus on the healthy siblings of children with special healthcare needs.

As a research assistant with the Initiative for the Advancement of Pediatric Transplant Health Research and Dr. Michael Killian, her doctoral advisor, within the college's Stoops Center for Communities, Families, and Children, Sonnie has honed her experience in examining and enhancing medication adherence in pediatric organ transplantation.

From her experiences with the initiative, Sonnie and Dr. Killian worked closely with Scene Health on the app to improve medication adherence in pediatric organ recipients. This experience increased her interest in a new opportunity offered by the FSU College of Medicine and Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship: the Biomedical Entrepreneurship Graduate Certificate.

As part of the inaugural group of students, Sonnie and other participants developed entrepreneurial skills to develop and launch healthcare innovations that aligned well with her goal of developing mobile health interventions for siblings of children with special healthcare needs.

"Learning to identify and navigate in the commercial aspect of healthcare innovation will equip me to bring my research into practical application, potentially having a wider reach to healthcare providers and users," she explained.

The certificate program concluded with an internship with Scene Health, working on enhancing a Directly Observed Therapy app designed to support medication adherence, specifically in adolescent heart transplant recipients.

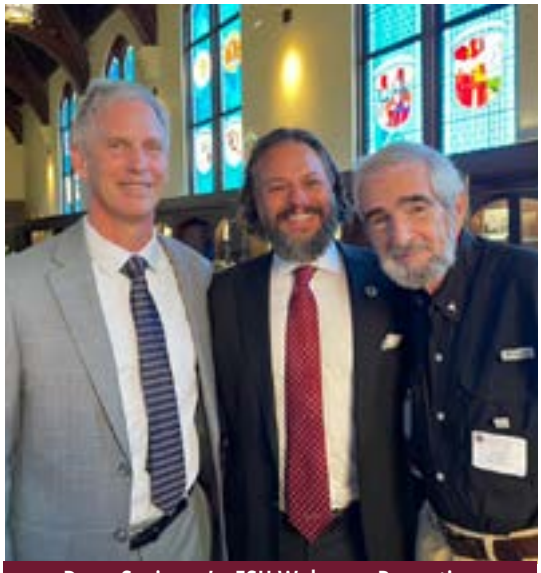
Her experience in medical technology led to further interdisciplinary collaborations with the Institute for Digital Health at the FSU College of Nursing. "I used data from their previous randomized control trial that explored the efficacy and effectiveness of an app-based HIV serostatus [detecting antibodies] disclosure decision-making intervention," she shared, of the continued collaboration on further research and publications.

Sonnie has already presented and published widely through her many research collaborations across Florida State, and she is eager to begin her dissertation research.

Her plan for her dissertation research is to develop and pilot a trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy mobile app for the siblings of children with special healthcare needs. She has already begun learning to code apps to prepare for this next step.

"Working alongside experts pediatric healthcare, digital health and social work has enriched my understanding and fueled my passion for developing tech-based interventions that can truly make a difference in people's lives," said Sonnie.

PHOTO TIMELINE



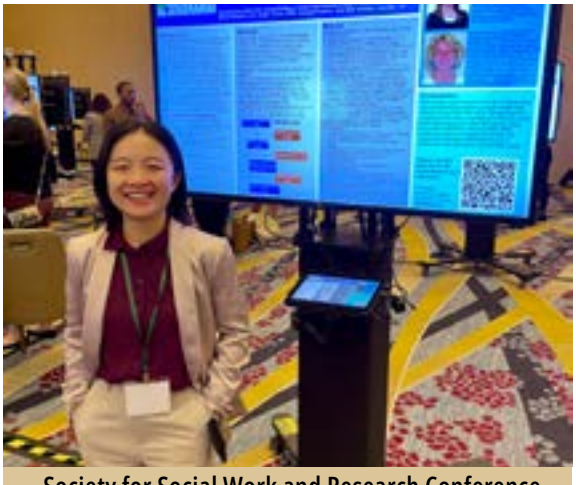
Dean Springer's FSU Welcome Reception (October 2023)

Scholarship and Awards Dinner (October 2023)

Council on Social Work Education Conference Reception Atlanta, Georgia (October 2024)

Stoops Center for Communities, Families and Children Ribbon Cutting and Open House (October 2023)

Black Alumni Networking Event (February 2024)



Society for Social Work and Research Conference Washington, DC (January 2024)

THM Pet Therapy Finals Week Event (April 2024)

Spring MSW Graduates Last Day of Class (April 2024)

Spring Graduation Event (May 2024)

Solar Eclipse (May 2024)

NASW-FL Conference
Alumni Lunch (June 2024)

Field Expo & Annual Planning Meetings (September 2024)

Faculty/Staff Retreat with Redemptive Love Farms
(August 2024)

#FSUCSW BY THE NUMBERS

2023–2024

TOTAL STUDENTS **ENROLLED 1,137**

BSW **133** MSW **967** PhD **20**

JOINT DEGREE STUDENTS **MSW &**

MPA **11** MBA **1** Crim **5**

941 STUDENTS **IN THE FIELD**

437 AFFILIATED **FIELD AGENCIES**

40 **FACULTY**

68* **STAFF**

TENURE-TRACK **17**
SPECIALIZED **23**

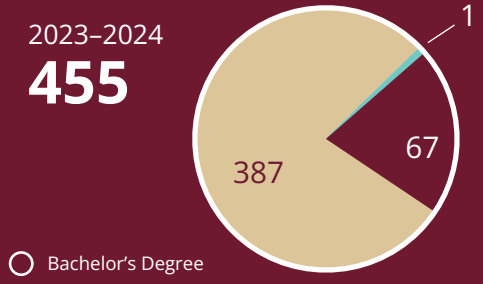
**Including university, college, center and institute staff who all contribute to the College of Social Work.*

#36 **NATIONAL** RANKINGS
U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

TOP 25 Social Work Program
Florida State University College of Social Work
BY US NEWS & WORLD REPORT AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY
Change a life. Start with yours.

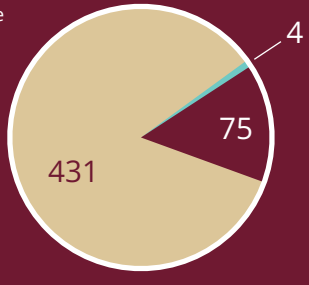
NUMBER OF **DEGREES AWARDED**

2023–2024
455



Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctoral Degree

2022–2023
510



CURRENT **#FSUCSW** ALUMNI
14,700+

130 STUDENT **SCHOLARSHIPS**

112 Students

$160,438 total from **428** Unique Donors

#1 SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM **IN FLORIDA**

ALUMNI UPDATES
2023–2024

2020s

Lyndi Bradley (PhD 2024, MSW 2018) graduated with her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Her dissertation is titled "The Relationship Between Faculty Knowledge about Mental Health Concerns and Their Willingness to Support Students: An Exploratory Study." She is a program director at the College of Social Work's Institute for Trauma and Resilience Studies.

Carol Campbell Edwards (PhD 2024, MSW 1985, BSW 1984) graduated with her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Administration. Her dissertation is titled, "Exploring the Experiences of MSW Students: From an HBCU to a PWI."

Makenna Woods (PhD 2023, MSW 2014, BSW 2013) joined the faculty of the Department of Social Work at the University of West Florida as an assistant professor.

2010s

Kenisha Anthony (BSW 2015) is a child welfare professional who aims to inspire, education and advocate for children and families. She published her memoirs *LABELED: Ward of the State* to share her experiences and insights from her time in the child welfare system.

Alexis Fraites (MSW 2019) is the assistant director for Experiential Learning at the FSU Career Center. She supports students and alumni as the liaison for both the College of Social Work and College of Arts and Sciences (focus: biology, neuroscience, and psychology) with major and career goals. She can be reached at a.fraites@fsu.edu or (850) 645-0440.

Michael Killian (PhD 2012, MSW 2005, BSW 2003) was inducted into the 2024 Society for Social Work and Research fellows class, honoring those who advance the society's mission to advance, disseminate and translate research that address social work practice and policy issues, and promote a diverse, equitable and just society.

2000s

Kelly Daugherty (MSW 2002) continues to make strides in the field of grief support as the lead author of the newly released "] *The Grief Experience: Tools for Acceptance, Resilience, and Connection*. She is the founder of Greater Life Grief Counseling, LCSW, and the Center for Informed Grief, LLC.

Ryan Hawkins (MSW/MPA, 2005) was selected by the Board of Directors of Jessie Trice Community Health System to be their new president and chief executive officer, a federally qualified community health care center in Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Susan Osborne (MSW 2000) retired from her faculty position at the College of Social Work in December 2023. She served as a field practice liaison with the Florida Department of Children and Families for child welfare field experiences and supervision for FSU students since 2014.

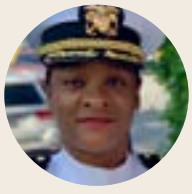
Brandy Van Pelt-Ramirez (BSW 2002, MSW 2005) was named chief executive officer of La Familia Health. She served as interim CEO

ALUMNI AWARDS

Distinguished Emeritus Alumni Award:
Virginia (Ginny) Kennedy Palys
(MSW 1974, BSW 1973)

Distinguished Young Alumni Award:
Gabriela Holton
(MSW 2021, BSW 2015)

Distinguished Social Work Educator Award:
Kia Bentley
(PhD 1987)



Distinguished Alumni in Social Work Practice Award:
Indira Harris
(MSW 2001, BS 1999)

Distinguished Alumni in Social Policy and Administration Award:
Kimberly Boswell
(MSW 1984)

since October 2023. She is also working towards her doctoral degree in healthcare administration at Capella University. She is a licensed social worker in New Mexico and has more than 25 years in nonprofit management in New Mexico and Florida.

1990s

Emily Spence (MSW 1995, BSW 1992) is the Associate Dean for Community Engagement and Health Equity and Associate Professor with the School of Public Health University of North Texas Health Science Center and is certified community health worker instructor. She is currently President of the Board of the Healthy Tarrant County Collaborative, a site reviewer for the Council on Education for Public Health, and the Incoming Chair for the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health Practice Section.

B. Craig Stanley (MSW 1997) became the director of Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects at FSU's Office of Faculty Development and Advancement in October 2023.

1980s

Michael Dowd (BSW 1983) was inducted into the Clearwater Central Catholic High School Hall of Fame in 2023 for his impact on the basketball team. He played college basketball at Saint Leo University before completing his MSW at FSU. He worked for the Pinellas County School Board for 37 years before retiring in 2020 as the longest-tenured social worker on staff.

Betty Proctor (MSW 1989, BSW 1988) and her daughter Nijah's nonprofit Motivating People Through Arts and Crafts recently became a provider with Vocational Rehabilitation with the hope to provide more neurodiverse people with services in their Tallahassee community.

1960s

Dr. Sudarshan Kapoor (MS 1964, PhD 1968) was selected by his peers as a Social Work Pioneer, recognized by the National Association of Social workers and chosen for contributions to exploring new territories and outposts of human services. He is a professor emeritus of Fresno State University and renowned for his peace advocacy and community development.

Naomi Molina
Associate Director of Alumni & Student Engagement

Naomi supports alumni and general events and initiatives at the College of Social Work.

Contact her at **naomi.molina@fsu.edu.**

IN MEMORIAM

Jennie F. Cornelius (BS, 1960) (1938-2023) passed away October 28, 2023. She devoted much of her life to serving underprivileged populations and volunteered for the Red Cross for more than two decades.

David W. Briggs (MS, 1968) (1943-2024) passed away May 23, 2024. He spent the majority of his career as a CEO for mental health clinics. He also enjoyed work as a couples and marriage counselor.

Brian D. Drew (MSW 1979) (1952-2023) passed away October 26, 2023. He worked as a social worker at the Dayton VA Medical Center for 35 years and retired in 2014.

Sarah Vause Knuth (BS 1970) (1948-2024) passed away April 8, 2024. She served in public education for more than 25 years, serving in special education and then as a lead school counselor.

Brian R. Macauley (MSW 1973) (1947-2024) passed away January 24, 2024. He earned a BS from Fairfield University and his MSW from FSU.

Richard G. Shepard (MS, 1967) (1939-2023) passed away October 23, 2023, in Mequon, Wisconsin. He worked in social work administration for 30 years in the state of Wisconsin until his retirement in 1996.

Geneva (Gigi) Gee Shaum (1965-2024) was a student in the Online MSW Program working towards her Master of Social Work Degree when she passed away June 24, 2024, after a battle with cancer.

Rose Nanette (Nan) Weeks (BS 1971) (1947-2023) passed away May 23, 2023, after a prolonged battle with cancer. She worked for the Department of Juvenile Justice in multiple roles and retired after 25 years of service.

Carol Warden (BS 1960) (1938-2024) passed away after a battle with Alzheimer's.

Ouida Annette Folmar Wiles (BS 1951) (1929-2024) passed away May 17, 2024, in St. Augustine, Florida. She worked for the State Welfare Department, at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind and as one of the first Guardians ad Litem in St. Johns County, Florida,.

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