The mission of the School of Social Work is to advance knowledge and to apply that knowledge for the fulfillment of human potential through the prevention and amelioration of social problems. The school is committed to promoting the values of social and economic justice. Recognizing the complexities of contemporary society, the school dedicates itself through its educational, research, and public service activities to advocating for a society that respects the dignity and achievement of all individuals, families, and communities.
A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

As dean of the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh, I am proud of our long-established commitment to engaging and forward-thinking research.

Since its founding in 1918, the School of Social Work has produced research that changes lives. We have consistently ranked among the top schools for faculty scholarship and research productivity. However, this year we are ranked in the top 10—a major achievement for a school our size. Now, more than ever, our graduates go on to lead institutions around the globe.

Our faculty members are actively exploring areas such as community-based participatory research, mental health, substance abuse, and school-based interventions. In order for this work to have the most positive impact, the school endeavors to make research available to community stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers across academic disciplines.

Our child welfare training program is the second largest in the country, we were the first program of community organizing in the country, and we have taken a leading role in race-related research with the Center on Race and Social Problems. The center is one of few research centers with a direct focus on resolving race-related social problems, and it engages in research implementation, information dissemination, and education based on multidisciplinary collaboration.

We are activists and organizers, scholars and thinkers, dreamers and doers, and national and international thought leaders.

The men and women of the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh offer a rich, diverse, and rigorous approach to addressing old problems and facing new challenges that confront today’s society and the world. It is clear that, given the state of the world, the skills and talents our students and the faculty members that them are needed now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Larry E. Davis
Donald M. Henderson Professor
Dean, University of Pittsburgh
School of Social Work
Director, Center on Race and Social Problems
Few social work researchers have had the opportunity to pursue cutting-edge work so early in their career, but David E. Epperson Associate Professor Shaun Eack is focusing on the development of new social work interventions in the areas of schizophrenia and autism, with an interest in how fundamental brain mechanisms in those disorders can be enhanced through social work interventions.

Eack’s primary interests include the development, implementation, and evaluation of psychosocial treatment methodologies to improve the care of people with schizophrenia and related disorders. He also is interested in the biopsychosocial factors that contribute to recovery and psychosocial outcomes among people with schizophrenia and related disorders and how the elucidation of these factors can serve to aid novel treatment development efforts.

With a recently awarded $3.2 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, Eack’s Perspectives Program aims to develop the first evidence-based nondrug treatments for adults with autism spectrum disorder. It will be the largest study ever conducted to assess whether cognitive enhancement therapy and enriched supportive therapy can help adults with a complex disorder that influences how a person behaves, learns, communicates, and interacts with others.

Ultimately, Eack hopes the study will establish an evidence base for both cognitive enhancement therapy and enriched supportive therapy and also will tell researchers about the comparative benefits of both interventions in adults, about which very little is known.

Eack anticipates that the therapies will eventually be made available to children who have autism spectrum disorder and who will continue to need help as they grow into adulthood. His earlier work revealed that cognitive enhancement therapy was very successful in patients with schizophrenia.

**FUNDERS**
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- National Institute of Mental Health
- U.S. Department of Defense
- Autism Research Institute
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
- Duke University
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

“The interdisciplinary focus at the school has helped me to partner with physicians, neuroscientists, and community leaders to develop truly biopsychosocial interventions and bring new treatment advances to those most in need.”
Perhaps more than any other field, social work provides the best opportunities to be connected to people and communities in ways that keep my research very close to practice, very focused on addressing life challenges, and deeply grounded in the realities of our most vulnerable groups.

JAMES HUGULEY

In his work as a school teacher, program director, researcher, and university instructor, James Huguley has always focused on helping young people from difficult contexts to reach their full potential academically, socially, and economically. To those ends, Huguley leverages his personal and professional experiences to engage in research that both targets historically disadvantaged groups, like youths of color and low-income families, and seeks practical solutions to help ameliorate difficult problems in individuals’ lives.

Huguley, a scholar with an education and psychology background, has a central focus on school-based interventions that support high achievement in challenging contexts. Currently, Huguley’s primary projects include a Spencer Foundation-funded development of a best practices model of parents’ educational engagement specifically for the African American family context and a Richard King Mellon Foundation-funded effort to develop the Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools initiative, a place-based holistic support effort that connects the University of Pittsburgh with the Homewood community here in the city.

Through it all, Huguley notes that the School of Social Work has greatly facilitated the potential of these projects.

FUNDERS
- Spencer Foundation
- Learning Research and Development Center
- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- Center on Race and Social Problems
- The Heinz Endowments
RESEARCH THAT CHANGES LIVES: FACULTY

VALIRE CARR COPELAND

Associate Dean of Academic Affairs Valire Carr Copeland has spent the majority of her professional life working to assuage health and mental health disparities for women and children at risk for poor health outcomes, as well as training the next generation of scholars to address these critical issues.

As the associate director of the Leadership in Public Health Social Work Education program and prior codirector of the Center for Health Equity’s Cultural Competency, Health Literacy, and Participatory Research Core, Copeland has brought diversity and inequality matters to the forefront through her research.

Her numerous publications include research focused on improving access to mental health services for African American women and adolescents, facilitating communications between doctors and their female African American patients, creating a more inclusive and diverse curriculum in schools of social work, and advocating for more cultural sensitivity between social workers and their African American clients.

Copeland’s latest projects have focused on preparing social work students for leadership positions in public health and social work in order to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. At present, Copeland is overseeing both the Cannon Fellowship in Integrated Healthcare and Juanita C. Evans fellowship programs, both of which address the need for cohesive care models in which behavioral health and primary care providers work together to create integrated interprofessional care teams to reach out to youths and their families to identify and treat their behavioral health needs.

The dual focus between social work and health reflects Copeland’s belief that many health problems are systemically linked to both social and environmental factors and the lifestyle behaviors that lead to illness and disease.

FUNDERS

- Health Resources and Services Administration
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

“The political, economic, and social environment is constantly changing in our society. The results from our research investigations can build the foundation and provide a much-needed opportunity for practitioners to develop relevant evidenced-based interventions to help resolve the potential challenges resulting from the changing environment.”
GERALD COCHRAN

Assistant Professor Gerald Cochran's research agenda is centered on formulating and testing evidence-based approaches for marginalized individuals in the health care system to obtain the care that they need—with particular emphasis on individuals who misuse drugs and alcohol.

One of the most important contributions his work has made in this area is being a strong voice for social work among the variety of health disciplines caring for patients with substance use disorders.

Cochran's agenda includes two important areas: interventions for prescription opioid misuse and opioid medication misuse epidemiology. One recent project convened a panel of experts from social work and the health sciences from the United States and United Kingdom to develop a model for pharmacy-based intervention to help patients who misuse prescription opioids. This project was especially important, as it provided Cochran with a model to use in future intervention studies to address prescription opioid misuse.

His Opioid Painkiller Pilot Investigation project screened a sample of adult noncancer patients filling opioid pain medications in five community pharmacies. Results of the study confirmed that prescription opioid medication misuse occurs regularly. Next on the horizon is a project that will test his interventions compared to standard care and will bring together partners from across disciplines in the health sciences.

In addition to researching opioid medication misuse, Cochran also is currently working with a team of investigators from Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, and Pitt’s School of Pharmacy to address opioid addiction among pregnant women in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

“The Pitt School of Social Work is positioned within a rich community of health sciences, which provides access to collaborators and research opportunities across the field.”
JOHN WALLACE

Maybe it’s because John Wallace enjoyed a stable childhood grounded in a community of faith and family that he is now so devoted to helping others find the same experience he had.

Wallace, the Philip Hallen Chair in Community Health and Social Justice in the School of Social Work, helped to establish the Homewood Children’s Village (HCV), modeled on the Harlem Children’s Zone in New York, N.Y., as a comprehensive community initiative aimed at improving the educational, health, and social well-being of Homewood’s youngsters and reweaving the fabric of their community. Through HCV, Wallace has fostered collaboration among numerous Pitt departments, a host of local civic organizations, and the Homewood community.

Wallace’s drive also has made him the principal investigator on the University of Pittsburgh Center on Race and Social Problems’ Comm-Univer-City of Pittsburgh Project. The project is an integration of research, teaching, and service designed to investigate and ameliorate social problems that disproportionately impact economically disadvantaged children, families, and communities.

Most recently, Wallace has partnered with faculty members from the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business to oversee a one-of-a-kind project that has brought a micro farm with outdoor and indoor growing capacity to Homewood—a food desert. The building operates solely on direct current and is the perfect fit for Wallace’s entrepreneurial youth development program.

FUNDERS

- Richard King Mellon Foundation
- National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, National Institutes of Health
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- United Way of Allegheny County
- University of Pittsburgh Office of Research

“The school’s excellent reputation in the city and the nation; its rich history of community-engaged scholarship; and the supportive leadership of the dean, the provost, and the chancellor have made the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work the ideal home for social work research that attempts to change lives.”

RESEARCH THAT CHANGES LIVES: FACULTY
LEWIS LEE

Under the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work’s strong research environment and scholarship program, doctoral student Lewis Lee has been devoted to examining factors contributing to ex-offenders’ reentry and exploring how social work can better shape social policy for addressing this issue. Through the mentorship of various faculty members, Lee has learned to develop targeted research questions and rigorous methodologies by more adeptly shifting his focus between abstract and concrete thinking. Mentorship also has helped him to train to become a more effective educator—not merely to deliver knowledge but also to encourage students to think critically about social work issues. As a recipient of the Joseph W. and Helen F. Eaton Emerging Scholars Award, Lee proudly pursues his academic career as a social work researcher and instructor, seeking to help clients through his research and teaching.

JESSICA WOJTALIK

Jessica Wojtalik’s research training and experiences have focused on cognitive remediation interventions for individuals with severe mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, and how such treatments can optimize daily and community living. Wojtalik has a particular interest in examining how cognitive remediation treatment can change the brain for the better and how those brain changes can then be translated into better functioning. Under the mentorship of Shaun Eack, she has had the unique opportunity to examine how the brain’s emotion regulation system was positively impacted by cognitive remediation treatment in individuals with schizophrenia who also were misusing substances. For Wojtalik, faculty mentorship has been a key player in guiding her to think about how treatments can be improved for individuals with schizophrenia by allowing her to focus on connections between the brain and daily living.
MARCUS POINDEXTER

As a joint PhD/MPH student, Marcus Poindexter is interested in understanding the implications that social factors have on the day-to-day self-management behaviors of African American adults with chronic health conditions in the city of Pittsburgh. His current work aims to explore the lived experiences of African American adults with type 2 diabetes and the role perceived racism and discrimination may have on diabetes.

Poindexter is currently supported by the School of Social Work and is guided by John M. Wallace Jr.’s Healthy Living, Healthy Learning, Healthy Lives Project, which engages community and academic partners in an effort to investigate and eliminate disparities that affect African Americans in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Homewood.

KAI WEI

Doctoral student Kai Wei uses the methods of data science to address social justice issues. She is currently using text mining and temporal analysis to understand negative portrayals of immigrants in the news media and their effects on immigrant emotional well-being. Her work on the evolution of “Latino threat narrative” is being conducted in collaboration with researchers in the Pittsburgh Computational Social Science Lab.

Wei also serves on the steering and program committees of the Society for Prevention Research Early Career Preventionist Network. She is dedicated to promoting interdisciplinary research and to establishing links between social work research and other disciplines.
THOMAS YLIOJA

After a decade of experience working in health care, Thomas Ylioja came to the School of Social Work doctoral program to understand why socially vulnerable groups of people have disparities in health outcomes. Understanding the root cause of health problems from both a social justice and a behavioral risk perspective inspires him to research the best interventions to treat underlying problems, such as addiction to tobacco for at-risk groups. For the past three years, Ylioja has served as the data manager for an inpatient tobacco treatment service to evaluate treatment using electronic health record data. His research is funded in part by the School of Social Work and with support from the UPMC Tobacco Treatment Service.

COURTNEY QUEEN

Doctoral candidate Courtney Queen spent her fourth year in the doctoral program in the East African country of Tanzania collecting her dissertation data on the mental health outcomes of female genital cutting/mutilation. Queen interviewed women from the Maasai tribe about their experiences with the cultural practice and how the practice has impacted their lives. Queen hopes that this research will help to inform not only women’s experiences in Tanzania but also the experiences of women who have relocated to the United States from countries where this is practiced. Queen was able to fund her year abroad conducting research by being the recipient of a National Security Education Program Boren Fellowship. This fellowship is funded by the U.S. Department of Defense and administered by the Institute of International Education. Her research experience in Tanzania has allowed her to understand what female genital cutting/mutilation means to women in communities that practice it, how it has impacted women and their families, and the strength of culture and tradition.
DARRELL WHEELER

Darrell Wheeler (PhD ’92) is vice provost for public engagement and dean of the School of Social Welfare at the University at Albany, State University of New York. Prior to his current position, Wheeler held academic positions as dean of Loyola University Chicago’s School of Social Work, associate dean for research and community partnerships at Hunter College’s Silberman School of Social Work, and at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

As a researcher, Wheeler is one of the leading social work experts on HIV prevention and intervention in the African American gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. He is the author or coauthor of many articles, book chapters, and monographs on AIDS. His work has been funded by key health organizations, including the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and American International Health Alliance. His work has demonstrated a deep understanding of social work practice methods and the social work community.

He was appointed by the U.S. secretary of health and human services to and currently serves on the Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council. Wheeler has been a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Primary Health Care Policy fellow, a Henry and Lucy Moses fellow at Hunter College, and a Martin Luther King Jr. Service Award winner at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In 2015, he was named among the 30 most influential social workers alive today.

Wheeler also is president of the National Association of Social Workers.

“The University of Pittsburgh significantly shaped my understanding of what it meant and still means to be a social work educator committed to excellence in professional practice, scholarship, and teaching. My academic experience prepared me to work in academic and professional settings with confidence and a solid commitment to issues of social, political, and economic justice.”
The Pitt School of Social Work’s doctoral program gave me the methodological and conceptual foundations I needed to pursue my research questions. I also was inspired to value teaching and learning. As a doctoral student, I had access to and was encouraged to use the audio booth in the faculty instructional development lab. Because of this support during the doctoral program, I was able to start the Social Work Podcast, which will most likely be my one enduring contribution to the field.”
Antoinette Farmer (BS ’82, PhD ’91) is an assistant professor and associate dean for academic affairs at the School of Social Work at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Her research focuses on examining the social and interpersonal factors that affect parenting as well as how parenting practices influence adolescent high-risk behaviors, such as delinquency and substance use.

Her work in the area of parenting has led her to develop and test models to determine what variables may mediate the relationship between parenting and adolescent outcomes. She also examines the effects of fathers’ parenting practices and of religion/spirituality on adolescent high-risk behaviors. In order to carry out her research agenda, she conducts quantitative data analysis using large national data sets.

Farmer’s research has been published in Social Work, the Journal of Social Service Research, and Children and Youth Services Review. She coedited a special issue of the Journal of Social Service Research that was devoted to informing researchers of the methodological issues confronting them when conducting research with underrepresented and oppressed populations.

Her most recent publication is Research with Diverse Groups: Research Designs and Multivariate Latent Modeling for Equivalence, which was published by Oxford University Press.

She was recently inducted into the 2016 class of fellows of the Society for Social Work and Research.

“Obtaining my PhD in social work from the University of Pittsburgh prepared me to think critically about the research methods used to study social issues affecting diverse groups. When I graduated from the doctoral program, I had the skills and knowledge to write about the methodological issues confronting researchers conducting research with diverse groups.”
The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work established the Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) in 2002 to help lead America further along the path to social justice. CRSP conducts applied social science research on race, ethnicity, and color and their influence on the quality of life for all Americans.

The goals of the center are to foster high-quality multidisciplinary research on racial issues, mentor scholars who focus on race-related research, and disseminate race-related knowledge and information.

The center focuses on race-related social problems in the following seven areas:

- Criminal justice
- Economic disparities
- Educational disparities
- Health
- Interracial group relations
- Mental health
- Youth, families, and the elderly

To continually fortify its high-quality multidisciplinary applied research programs, CRSP:

- provides students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and other scholars with guidance and support for their race-related research;
- funds pilot studies that support race-related research;
- aids University researchers in developing and obtaining external funding for their projects;
- publicizes race-related research by providing talks, forums, conferences, lectures, summer institutes, and courses; and
- publishes the quarterly journal *Race and Social Problems*.

In addition, the center is a national resource for race-related social science information for both academics and the general public. The CRSP Web site, crsp.pitt.edu, also is a searchable database that connects users instantly to 14 years’ worth of videos, publications, and other center information that can be used for research, grant preparation, and education.

“The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line.”

*W.E.B. DuBois, author, 1903*
The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, as fully explained in Policy 07-01-03, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. The University also prohibits and will not engage in retaliation against any person who makes a claim of discrimination or harassment or who provides information in such an investigation. Further, the University will continue to take affirmative steps to support and advance these values consistent with the University’s mission. This policy applies to admissions, employment, and access to and treatment in University programs and activities. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and/or local laws and regulations.

For information on University equal opportunity and affirmative action programs, please contact: University of Pittsburgh; Office of Diversity and Inclusion; Katie Pope, Title IX Coordinator, and Cheryl Ruffin, 504 and ADA Coordinator; 500 Craig Hall; 200 South Craig Street; Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412-648-7860.

For complete details on the University’s Nondiscrimination Policy, please refer to Policy 07-01-03. For information on how to file a complaint under this policy, please refer to Procedure 07-01-03.

*Except where exempt by federal or state laws.