



YEAR IN REVIEW 2024-25

Transforming our world. Our future. Ourselves.

DEAN'S MESSAGE

It has been quite a year! As a school with a strong commitment to anti-racism, anti-oppression, and a collective drive to support each other, our communities, and our broader society, it has been a year of pivots, emergent approaches and initiatives, and a strong focus on our values: service, human dignity, social justice, connections, competence, and integrity. Through it all, we have centered our vision of "Transforming: Our world, Our future, Ourselves" as we focus on our mission to prepare courageous leaders, develop and advance innovative approaches, and build collaborative partnerships.

This year, as we've come together to navigate the broader world, we have also advanced significant expansions and initiatives within our school. I hope you enjoy the ones that we highlight in the following pieces. We have increased access and equity by launching our MSW online. We have come together to build synergies and momentum around healthy aging, public social work, human flourishing, and care work. We have expanded our number of endowed professors, continued to build our strong research portfolio, and enhanced efforts to expand community-partnered research, collaborations, and impact.

Social Work focuses on complex social issues, creative real-time problems solving, connections and collaboration, and finding effective ways to promote a more just and equitable world. This year, it has been a true privilege to be part of this school, discipline, community, and movement!

Onward in solidarity and community,



Betsy Farmer, Dean



Numbers

#12

▲ Ranked #12 in the nation by *US News and World Report*

44 → \$33.5

PROJECTS MILLION

▲ More than 44 externally funded research and training projects totaling \$33.5 million in annual funding

▲ Offer more than 290 scholarships and provide more than \$3.7 million in student financial support

290 → \$3.7

SCHOLARSHIPS MILLION

11K

▲ 11,000 alumni around the world

New People and Promotions:



Dr. Alexis Brown joined the Center on Race and Social Problems as Senior Social Scientist.



Kim Jacoby joined our team as the new Research Manager.



Dr. Catherine (Katie) Greeno was promoted to Professor.



Dr. Stevara Haley Clark hired as Director of Online Programs and Distance Education and Associate Professor.



Dr. Suzanne Pritzker hired as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor.



Dr. Deborah Moon was promoted to Associate Professor.



Dr. Michele Gordon hired as Director of Career Services and Continuing Education.



Dr. Yodit Betru was promoted to Clinical Associate Professor.



Amanda Paul is the new Development Associate for the School of Social Work.



Dr. Sara Goodkind was named Philip Hallen Endowed Chair in Community Health.

School of Social Work Endowed Chairs: Highlights and Reflections from the Year

Dr. Kyaïen Conner – Donald M. Henderson Endowed Chair

Dr. Kyaïen Conner holds the Donald M. Henderson Endowed Chair, honoring Pitt's first Black Provost and his legacy. Her scholarship focuses on improving mental health outcomes for communities of color through culturally responsive, community-engaged interventions. Over the past year, she funded the CRSP RISE Mental Health Pilot Grant program in partnership with Dr. Shaun Eack, supported doctoral and early-career faculty research, and amplified the Center on Race and Social Problems internationally. Conner strengthened the Journal on Race and Social Problems through multi-disciplinary collaborations and is developing a podcast to translate research into accessible insights for communities. She also mentors emerging scholars, advancing equity-focused solutions across the field.

Dr. Shaun Eack – James and Noel Browne Endowed Chair

Dr. Shaun Eack, the James and Noel Browne Endowed Chair, has an extensive program of research focused on making cognitive enhancement therapies tested in schizophrenia and autism more accessible

in community settings. Over the past year, he streamlined cognitive enhancement therapy into a self-contained workbook and shorter sessions, enabling community providers to implement it more easily. Eack also launched the first statewide implementation of these approaches, bridging the gap between research and real-world practice. His work advances innovative, strengths-based care tailored to community needs to ensure research is relevant and useful for practice.

Dr. Sara Goodkind – Philip Hallen Endowed Chair in Community Health

Dr. Sara Goodkind stepped into the Philip Hallen Endowed Chair in Community Health and Social Justice in June, becoming the first woman to hold the position. Early in her role, she met with Philip Hallen and learned about his involvement in Freedom House Ambulance Service, a groundbreaking chapter of Pittsburgh's history. This chair alternates between public health and social work, aligning closely with Goodkind's nearly decade-long work with the Black Girls Equity Alliance. Building on this experience, she is advancing the chair's mission with a strong focus on equity and community impact.



Dr. John Wallace – David E. Epperson Chair

In his role as the David E. Epperson Chair, Dr. John Wallace has continued to advance the School's tradition of community-engaged scholarship. This year, he built on the momentum of the CHURCH (Congregations as Healers Uniting to Restore Community Health) Project, a pioneering initiative focused on strengthening mental health support within Black faith communities. He also provided mentorship to junior colleagues and supported collaborative presentations and publications. His work this year reflects the heart of the Epperson Chair, linking research, service, and community well-being.

Pitt's MSW Program Expands with New Online Option

The University of Pittsburgh's Master of Social Work (MSW) program has been top-ranked for over 20 years, traditionally serving only face-to-face students. This fall, that legacy expanded as the inaugural class of part-time online MSW students began their coursework.

Designed with working professionals' needs and scheduling complexities in mind, Pitt's new online MSW option offers flexible learning, career-relevant practicum experiences, and builds on over a century of educational excellence. Students will gain the skills and knowledge needed to address complex social issues in their communities—through coursework that fits their schedule.

Key Features of the Online MSW Program:

- In-state tuition for all online students, regardless of residency
- Specialization in Direct Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups
- Certificate options in:
 - Children, Youth, and Families
 - Integrated Healthcare
 - Gerontology
 - Mental Health
- Anti-racist, anti-oppressive curriculum with a school-wide commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Experiential learning with a focus on critical thinking and real-world application
- Supportive practicum placement process, including opportunities for employment-based hours
- Career Center access for immediate and long-term professional development



Leadership Rooted in Innovation

The new MSW option is led by Dr. Stevara Haley Clark, Director of Online Programs and Distance Education and Associate Professor. With more than a decade of experience in higher education—including online learning—Dr. Clark brings deep expertise in academic administration, program development, and organizational culture change. Her leadership is grounded in trust, transparency, and compassionate communication, fostering collaborative and empowering learning environments for both students and faculty.

"I came to Pitt because it's a place where social work's mission and innovation really intersect," said Dr. Clark. "Pitt has this incredible legacy of research and community impact, and I wanted to be part of that—but also help expand it into the online space. For me, it's about making sure that a parent balancing kids' soccer practice, a full-time professional, or someone living across the country can still get a Pitt Social Work education. That felt like a challenge worth jumping into."

Applications for Fall 2026 are now open. Visit msw.pitt.edu for more information.

New Social Work Research Collaboratives: Driving Change, Knowledge, and Community

Public Social Work Research Collaborative

Dr. Leah Jacobs and the Public Social Work Research Collaborative launched the Executive Actions Study, responding to the rapid wave of federal executive actions affecting social welfare. The team designed focus groups with social work students to explore how these policies shape practicum experiences, service delivery, and service users. Through seven focus groups involving 59 students, the collaborative identified six preliminary themes: concerns about funding, changes to client services, emotional impacts, organizational shifts, need for faculty support, and calls for advocacy. Now in analysis, the project offers insight into emerging policy impacts and also models research methods for students in real time.



Healthy Aging Research Collaborative

Professor Beth Mulvaney and the Ties That Bind Collaborative provided gerontology students with immersive, community-engaged research experiences. With Dr. Quinton Cotton supporting the focus on centering research alongside community partners, students participated in a study at Pitt's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and documented coalition health improvement efforts. Students developed a variety of strengths and skills in study planning, evidence synthesis, transcript cleaning, qualitative data coding, and manuscript writing, while collaborating with faculty and community partners. These experiences gave students practical insight into the delivery of services for older adults, the challenges of dementia care, and how research can directly support community health and well-being.



Human Flourishing Research Collaborative

Dr. Deborah Moon and the Human Flourishing Collaborative engaged master's and doctoral students in community-engaged research using concept mapping. The project sought the perspectives of families and youth involved in the child welfare system as well as the leaders in child welfare practice, research, and policy on defining and measuring "family flourishing." The work seeks to shift child and family welfare service and policy goals to flourishing beyond fixing problems and deficits. Students collaborated with community leaders, child welfare professionals, and policymakers, gaining hands-on experience in research design, facilitation, and community engagement while advancing innovative approaches to support family thriving. Additionally, the collaborative hosted a Human Flourishing Symposium, connecting students, staff, faculty across departments and institutions, and community organizations to learn together and discuss flourishing as a concept and outcome across a range of settings and populations.



Care Work Research Collaborative

Dr. Mary Rauktis and the Care Work Research Collaborative advanced projects spanning foster care, residential care, and child welfare workforce well-being. Doctoral student Sitao Chen and Dr. Marlo Perry examined Florida child welfare data on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and retention. Rauktis, supported by Pitt's European Studies Center, partnered with Dr. Sigrid James at the University of Kassel to compare residential care worker training in Germany and the U.S. The collaborative provided an open space for students and faculty to explore their research interests. Doctoral students Amanda Cruce, Hyun Jin Lee, and Ruijie Ma engaged lived expertise leaders across the United States to co-design solutions for youth transitioning from foster care.



The Racial Equity Collaboratory: Connecting Research and Community

The Racial Equity Collaboratory at the University of Pittsburgh was launched this past year through a Pitt Momentum Funds Teaming Grant awarded to Dr. Kyaïen Conner, Director of the Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) and Associate Dean for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the School of Social Work. The project, "Creating Synergies and Collaborations to Advance Race-Based Research at the University of Pittsburgh," laid the foundation for a new hub to connect and amplify race-related scholarship across the University and in partnership with the community.

"The Racial Equity Collaboratory represents a bold and necessary shift in how we approach race-based scholarship, not as isolated efforts, but as a unified, interdisciplinary synergistic movement. By building infrastructure that connects researchers, centers, and communities, we are creating a space where equity work can thrive, evolve, and drive real

change. We hope the Racial Equity Collaboratory can serve as a catalyst for transformation, where knowledge meets action, voices are amplified, collaboration is fostered, and equity and justice can be realized" said Dr. Conner.

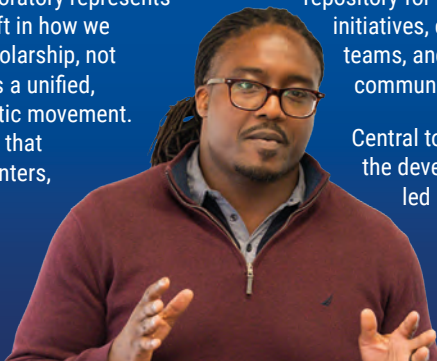
Six University of Pittsburgh centers and departments with a racial equity lens (the Center for Health Equity, Center for Racial Justice and Civil Rights, Center for Urban Education, Center for African Studies, Center for Ethnic Studies, and Department of Africana Studies) partnered with CRSP on this Collaboratory. Together, they are developing a localized repository for race-related research and initiatives, cultivating interdisciplinary teams, and creating new pathways for community-engaged scholarship.

Central to the Collaboratory's launch was the development of its digital platform, led by Oluwafemi Adesanmi. His leadership and guidance were key as he partnered with web developers to thoughtfully



design the front and back-end components of the online platform. "We designed the Racial Equity Collaboratory to transform research into connection, and connection into change, because true equity lives where knowledge and community meet" states Adesanmi. The Collaboratory was unveiled this spring with an in-person launch event that invited Pitt faculty, staff, students, and community members to network, register for the platform, and attend an engaging panel discussion on race-focused research.

CRSP co-director Ron Idoko said, "We're excited for the opportunity to further elevate the impactful equity work being done in our communities by people of all backgrounds, recognizing that we are all contributors in the work of building beloved community. Together, through shared engagement and insight, we look forward to continuing this important work."



A Year for Advocacy and Activism

Advocacy and activism have always been central to the mission of social work—and they remain a defining part of the Pitt School of Social Work. Home to the nation's oldest community organizing program, the school is proud of its history and legacy, which includes trailblazing leaders such as Jim Cunningham, Moe Coleman, and Tracy Soska.

Building on this tradition, the school recently welcomed Suzanne Pritzker, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor, whose scholarly expertise lies at the intersection of policy, politics, and social work. Pritzker is nationally recognized as a leader in political social work and macro-level change. Her co-authored book *Political Social Work: Using Power to Create Social Change* helped establish the field of political social work scholarship. Soon after joining the Pitt School of Social Work faculty, she participated in the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP)'s Social Work Day on the Hill on March 26, joining the panel "Reaffirming the Need for Social Workers in Political Arenas." "I am thrilled to join Pitt's deep legacy of community-engaged, justice-focused national social work leadership," said Dr. Pritzker. "I have long admired the school's

commitment to education and research that helps advance meaningful social change. I am excited to continue strengthening social workers' political voices and working to eliminate structural barriers that limit inclusion of diverse voices in policymaking with my new Pitt community."

Students, too, have always been at the forefront of social change, a role that is especially vital in today's complex and volatile environment. In the spring, Dr. Jeff Shook, along with alumni Julie Platt and Andrew Perrow—both COSA graduates working in policy and politically oriented positions—helped organize a series of "Advocacy in Social Work" trainings. These workshops equipped students across all programs with practical advocacy skills, reinforcing the idea that social workers' unique perspectives can strengthen political campaigns, policy initiatives, and community movements.

The impact of this training quickly became clear. Just a few months later, students hosted over 60 people and 12 candidates from local judicial races. In conjunction with the forum, they developed the May 2025 Judicial Forum and Candidate Guide to help community



Attendees at the Social Justice in Action: Get to Know Your Judicial Candidates for the May Primary.



Suzanne Pritzker and Alicia Melnick and MSW student Miguel Salvador representing in Washington DC for Social Work Day on the Hill.

members better understand the local judicial candidates running in the 2025 primary election. The guide connected candidates' platforms to core social work values, emphasizing dignity, equity, and respect.

As societal issues continue to affect those social workers are meant to serve, the school remains committed to its mission "of preparing courageous leaders to transform social work practice, policy, research, and education in a community-engaged and inclusive environment. We build and develop collaborative partnerships to understand, prevent, and ameliorate complex social problems with innovative approaches that promote social justice."

Renewed Gerontology Focus Brings School's Work to Forefront

Aging Initiatives and programs have always been a part of the fabric of the School. These include the long-standing Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education and the new part-time online MSW option which includes our gerontology certificate.

The School's work in the community has been especially evident this year as faculty and school leaders work closely with Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh (AFGP), an initiative by Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnership for Aging (SWPPA) and the School, that brings generations together to make the Pittsburgh region more inclusive and welcoming of all ages. In May, in recognition of the hard work by this partnership, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro announced that the Commonwealth has become the 13th officially designated Age-Friendly State. "Involvement in this program has been a true privilege and opportunity. Drs. Engel and Lee have worked closely with community participants and AFGP leadership to help capture and understand the effects of community-based and community-led efforts to improve livability and cross-generational relationships in a range of Allegheny County communities. And seeing how these local efforts helped to drive state-wide expansion has been really exciting," said Dean Farmer.

Faculty research, engagement, and recognition in gerontology in in a resurgence at Pitt.

- Recently retired faculty member Dr. Rafael Engel was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from SWPPA.
- Dr. Kyaie Conner's work with Pitt's Alzheimer's Disease Research is supported by a National Institutes of Health grant. Dr. Conner is also co-investigator on several critical projects in aging funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, the National Institute of Mental Health, and others. Her "Brain CHEC-AC (Brain and Cognitive Health Equity Campaign for Allegheny County)" project pulls together leaders from Nursing, Medicine, Public Health, and Social Work to create counter-narratives using narrative storytelling to reduce stigma and encourage early evaluation and intervention in communities of color and also explores the use of blood-based biomarker testing for Alzheimer's diagnosis.

- Dr. Quinton Cotton, the school's most recent addition to its tenure-track faculty, is a gerontologist whose work aims to increase the adoption of effective policy and programmatic interventions for persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) and their caregivers, especially among populations experiencing vulnerability and marginalization.
- Dr. Shaun Eack has recently branched out from his groundbreaking National Institute of Mental Health-funded research in schizophrenia to more closely study "Neural Mechanisms of Anticholinergic Burden in Mid-to Late-Life Schizophrenia Spectrum Illness."
- Professor Beth Mulvaney is leading the School's interprofessional education efforts as an Associate Director of the University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Program in Interprofessional Education. Mulvaney is working colleagues from Dental Medicine, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Public Health to help create opportunities for, and curriculum to, promote interprofessional teams of students learning about, from, and with each other to create effective team collaboration and improve outcomes for the people and communities they serve.
- Dr. Fengyan Tang is PI of several funded projects examining the intersection of aging and immigration, including her National Institutes of Health grant "Preventing Cognitive Decline and Dementia Among Older Chinese Immigrants: The Role of Activity, Engagement, Immigration Experience, and Neighborhood Environments."



Select Awards and Recognition



Dr. Nev Jones received the Chancellor's Research Award.

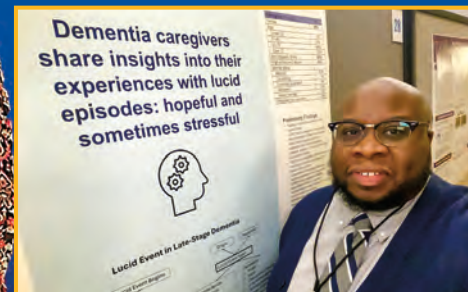


Drs. Betru, Booth (not pictured), and Jones received the 2024 Provost's Award for Diversity in the Curriculum.

Dr. Mary Beth Rauktis received the Chancellor's Public Service Award.



Dr. Sara Goodkind and her community partner, MSW alumna Dr. Kathi Elliott, Chief Executive Officer of Gwen's Girls, were the inaugural recipients of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) Community-Research Partnership Award.



Dr. Quinton Cotton received the National Alzheimer's Coordinating Center (NACC) Rising Star Award.



University of
Pittsburgh

School of
Social Work

4200 Fifth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

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