

**MAY 2026**

# **EVENING OF RECOGNITION**

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**Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall**

**Sunday, May 3rd 2026 | 7:00 PM**



University of  
**Pittsburgh**

School of Social Work



# EVENING OF RECOGNITION



■ **Processional**

■ **Opening Welcome**

Aliya D. Durham

■ **Message from the Dean**

Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer

■ **Student Reflection**

James Karas  
*BASW, Class of 2026*

■ **Keynote Speaker**

Aerion Abney, MSW  
*Chairman, PA House Democratic Delegation  
Commonwealth Trustee, University of  
Pittsburgh Board of Trustees*

■ **Student Reflection**

Lorin Harris  
*MSW, Class of 2026*

Leanna Mae Totten  
*MSW, Class of 2026*

■ **Presentation of Graduates**

Deans and Program Directors  
Names read by Alicia Melnick

■ **Ceremony Closing**

Aliya D. Durham



## PLATFORM PARTY

**Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, PhD**

*Dean*

**Suzanne Pritzker, PhD**

*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*

**Yodit Betru, DSW**

*Director, MSW Program*

**Toya Jones, EdD**

*Director, BASW Program*

**Sara Goodkind, PhD**

*Director, PhD Program*

**Jaime Booth, PhD**

*Associate Dean for Research*

**Kyaien Conner, PhD**

*Associate Dean for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*

*Director, Center on Race and Social Problems*

**Aerion Abney, MSW**

*Chairman, PA House Democratic Delegation*

*Commonwealth Trustee, University of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees*

**Alicia Melnick, DSW**

*Practicum Assistant Professor*

**Aliya Durham, PhD**

*Assistant Professor and Director of Community Engagement,*

# CLASS OF 2026

## PHD IN SOCIAL WORK

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### Summer 2025 Graduates

Emil K. Smith, hooded by Dr. Daniel Rosen

### May 2026 Graduates

Sommer Cagle Blair, hooded by Dr. James Huguley

Amanda Cruce, hooded by Dr. Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer

Alex Fixler, hooded by Dr. Leah Jacobs

Tess Schleitwiler, hooded by Dr. Sara Goodkind

## MSW | MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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### May 2026 Graduates

Afsheen Ahmed

Christopher Alexander

Amber Bahler

Angelo Joseph Barberio

Emily Ann Besselman

Rorie Boulware

Emily Branch

Naomi Kyra Brotman

Skylar Brown

Morgan Bryson

Ashley Buckley

Jaxon David Bunting

Amee Chaudry

Sara McMahon Clark

Hope Cochran

Michael Cooley

Lucy Claire V.F. Curran

Matthew Ross Darwin

Jordan Elizabeth Dawson

Gina Marie Del Monte

Jenea T. Edwards

Veronica Emigh

Xio Tyler Fane

Kayla Fields

Gabrielle Floro

Brienna Gable

Matthew Gallagher

Felicita Garner

Emily Jean Geller

Michael George

Katherine Gibson

Emma Cohen Gordon

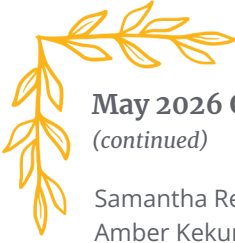
Sandra Goya Herrera

Yuchen Han

Giavonna Harris

Lorin Harris





## May 2026 Graduates

(continued)

Samantha Renee Hartman  
Amber Kekumula'au 'O Ike Ame Pono Hee  
Ariana Henderson  
Kaylee Hine  
Jillian Hinkle  
Shamara Hopkins  
Sarah Indyk  
Ashleigh Irvine  
Isabella Jameson  
Liz Johnson  
Brayden Kent  
Dylan Knox  
Maymouna Konte  
Martin D. Kovalik Haas  
Hayley Maher Krebs  
Chelsea Irene Kurtzman  
Ryleigh Erin Long  
Carly Lopez  
Matthew John Loughran  
Sydney Mahmood  
Esteban David Maldonado  
Dick McCandless  
Claire McKeating  
Adam Milling  
Brendan Joseph Moss  
Nicki Myers

Ruby Natelson  
Isabel Paolini-Holzman  
Sydney M. Patrus  
Jenna Peters  
Ryan Pilcher  
Sydney Pollock  
Olivia Victoria Rose  
Rodgers  
Cait Sanders  
Sophie Schardt  
Ziggy Sheynin  
Mallory Claire Simon  
Katelyn Sitar  
Rachel Starr  
Amy Sturtz  
Abbey Taylor  
Leanna Mae Totten  
Kayla Tupper  
Victoria Vassilenko  
Sarah Elizabeth Voltin  
Amna Walda  
Nicole Weiss  
Kari Yang

## December 2025 Graduates

Julia Aumiller  
Erin Bauer  
Nicole Berry  
Alyssa Carpenter  
Jordan Renee Costley  
Christine Denne  
Benjamin DiNardo  
Mackenzie Christine Donahue  
Molly Elizabeth Graham  
Nathan Humes  
Colleen Elizabeth Ocampo  
Shannon Rae Pagdon  
Margaret Mozelle Savolskis  
Zhuoqi Shi  
Ellen Stewart  
Emily Weinstein  
Myia Ashlea Weisend

## Summer 2026 Graduates

Ariana Berger  
Sophia Botak  
Aniah Brewer  
Subhashini Pavitra Charyulu  
Lydia Elizabeth Davis  
Kathryn Joyce Dickey  
Mackenzie Evans  
Grace Anne Gallagher  
Brooke Holley  
Kayla Kenna  
Inessa Kiefer  
Kyle A. Lissner  
Beth Montgomery  
Danaesia Nashae Moore-Terrell  
Charlotte Sandra Panzeri  
Anna Pelleti  
Allison Podlogar  
Kella Rice  
Ayala Rosenthal  
Rebecca A. Ruehling Smith  
Thelda Afua Sarpong  
Brooke Stearns  
Lily Anna Taylor  
Zoe Tublin  
Samantha Paige Walker  
Andrew George Watts  
Laura A. Zeilo





## BASW | BACHELOR OF ARTS IN SOCIAL WORK

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### December 2025 Graduates

Kimberly Lynn Jenkins

### May 2026 Graduates

Kamryn Duri Abrial  
Anithra Ajith  
Rebecca Arbeiter  
Katie Bell  
Annie Berg  
Erin Brodsky  
Xander Brown  
Samantha Bruckner  
Olivia Y. Burkhart  
Thomas Joseph Cahill V  
CJ Cambridge  
Zoe Correale  
Kailyn Dussell  
Dylan Fearing  
Madison Ford  
Briael Frey  
Brendan W. Gola  
Madeline Gonzalez  
Morgan Haught  
LaShesia Narae Holliday  
Anastasia Hott  
James Karas  
Layla Kaufman  
Rebecca Kaye  
Paris Keegan  
Camille LaRock  
Xavier Littlejohn  
Ashley Markle  
Ryan McGinley  
Emily Charleen Mitchell

Madalyn Morelli  
Ruba Nashbat  
Camryn Marie Palikaras  
Emma L. Parker  
Briseyda Pena-Eguia  
Caitlyn Raehse  
Ernest H. Schaefer IV  
Quinn Scholtes  
Arti Shastry  
Madeline Smith  
Christian Toglea  
Evelyn Torres  
Kaitlyn E. Turner  
Cassandra Vega  
Chloe M. Wellons  
Mya Rae Willard-Miller

### Summer 2026 Graduates

Catherine Murrin Cieszynski

*BASW students wearing gold and blue cords have graduated with honors. Those who earned 3.75GPA or higher are recognized as graduating Summa Cum Laude; 3.5-3.74 GPA are Magna Cum Laude; and 3.25-3.49 GPA are graduating Cum Laude.*

# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK FACULTY

## FULL-TIME FACULTY | 2025-2026

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Yodit Betru, MSW, DSW  
Jaime Booth, MSW, PhD  
Laura Borish, MSW  
Helen Cahalane, MSW, PhD  
Melvin C. Cherry, Jr, MSW, EdD  
Stevara Haley Clark, MSW, EdD  
Kyaien Conner, MSW, MPH, PhD  
Quinton Cotton, MSW, PhD  
John Dalessandro, MSW  
Amy DeGurian, MSW  
Aliya Durham, MSW, PhD  
Shaun M. Eack, MSW, PhD  
Stephanie Eckstrom, MSW  
Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, PhD  
Victor Figuereo, MSW, PhD  
Sara Goodkind, MSW, PhD  
Catherine Greeno, PhD  
James Huguley, EdD  
Ron Idoko, MSW  
Leah Jacobs, MSW, PhD

Alicia Johnson, MSW, PhD  
Nev Jones, PhD  
Toya Jones, MSW, EdD  
Travis Labrum, MSW, PhD  
Hung-Peng Lin, MSW, PhD  
Alicia Melnick, MSW, DSW  
Deborah Moon, MSW, PhD  
Elizabeth Mulvaney, MSW  
Mary L. Ohmer, MSW, PhD  
Marlo Perry, PhD  
Helen E. Petracchi, MSW, PhD  
Suzanne Pritzker, MSW, PhD  
Mary Elizabeth Rautkis, PhD  
Brooke Rawls, MSW, PhD  
Deborah Robinson, MSW  
Daniel Rosen, MSW, PhD  
Jeffrey Shook, MSW, JD, PhD  
Fengyan Tang, MSW, PhD  
John Wallace, PhD  
Misha Zorich, MSW, MDiv





SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK FACULTY  
(continued)

**PART-TIME FACULTY | 2025-2026**

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Daniel Abusuampek, MSW  
Khalif Ali, MSW  
Rainna Bernesser, MSW, MPA  
Sommer Blair, MSW, PhD  
Jonathan Braeger, MSW  
Keith Caldwell, MSW, Ed.D  
Jennifer A. Caruso, MEd  
Matthew Cotter, MSW  
Amanda Cruce, MSW, PhD  
Cecily Davis, MSW  
Traci Day, MSW  
Jose Diaz, MSW  
Julie C. Evans, MSW  
Marissa Floro, MSW, PhD  
Mark Harshberger, MSW  
Guoping Jin, MSW  
Steven Joyce, MSW  
Jessica Gurley, MSW  
Barbara Ivanko, MSW  
Roberta Lawrence, MSW  
Yvette Madison, MSW  
Sharon Mannella, PsyD

Alexandra Mattinna, MSW  
Laura McCarthy, MSW, PCD  
James McGowan, MSW  
James H. Mercuri, MSW  
Elyse Ann Milliron, MSW  
Loleda Irene Moman, MSW, MA, PhD  
Stacey Munsie, MSW  
Jessica Murray, MSW  
Susan Obarsky, MSW  
Stephanie Pasquarelli, MSW  
Darrell Payne, PhD  
Vickie Piontowski, MSW, JD  
Miryah Rasheed, MSW  
Paige Sable, MSW  
Tess Schleitwiler, MSW, PhD  
Latrice Shannon, MSSW  
Tara Sherry-Torres, MSW  
Tonya Slawinski, MSW, PhD  
Emil Smith, MSW, PhD  
Max Vicente, MSW  
Shellie Vincent, MSW, PhD





# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## **Rep. Aerion Andrew Abney, MSW**

*19th Legislative District, Pennsylvania  
House of Representatives*

Aerion Abney was elected to the House in 2022 to represent the 19th Legislative District.

A Philadelphia native, Abney moved to Pittsburgh at the age of 18 to attend the University of Pittsburgh, where he earned a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's degree in social work. As a former program officer with the POISE Foundation, a grantmaking institution aimed at empowering Black people across the Pittsburgh region, Abney is well-versed in recognizing community needs and securing funds to address them. He approved more than \$1.7 million in grants to local nonprofit organizations in this role.

Prior to his election, he served as the Pennsylvania director of special projects for All Voting Is Local, a national organization fighting to remove discriminatory barriers at the ballot box. In this position, he was a fierce advocate for the expansion of voting rights, especially for incarcerated Pennsylvanians.

Abney has been heavily involved in the local community, previously serving as a committeeman for the 21st Ward, 4th District, and currently sitting on the boards of the Hill District Federal Credit Union, the Human Services Center Corp., and the advisory board of the African American Achievement Trust Collective Focus. He is also a member of the My Brother's Keeper taskforce in the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc.

He currently resides in Manchester with his wife Tamara and two sons, Aerius and Amari.

**CONGRATULATIONS & WELCOME TO  
PITT SOCIAL WORK'S  
ALUMNI COMMUNITY!**

**Scan below to learn how you can stay in  
touch and connect with fellow alumni:**



## CONGRATULATIONS!

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As you graduate and go forth in the world to live a life of impact, Pitt Social Work wants to keep in touch! It is important for us to know about our graduates taking on new challenges, whether here in western Pennsylvania, across the country, or around the world.

Please visit [socialwork.pitt.edu/alumni](https://socialwork.pitt.edu/alumni) to keep us updated of your contact information—address, phone, email, employer, job title and more—so we can reach out. We want to keep you in the loop on the great things happening at your alma mater and celebrate your achievements along the way. We wish you the very best in your meaningful work. Congratulations!



Pictures from today's event can be viewed and downloaded from the following link:  
[flickr.com/photos/pittsocialwork](https://www.flickr.com/photos/pittsocialwork)



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