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Pitt

Year in Review

»»» 2022



University of
Pittsburgh

School of
Social Work

Transforming our world. Our future. Ourselves.

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Letter from the Dean

Dear Friends,

As I write this, I am looking out my office window at the gorgeous fall foliage in Schenley Park, seeing students gathering in hammocks and various groups, and thinking how delightful it is to feel hopeful! As we emerge from the past few years, I think we underestimated how much of a challenge it would be to return to work, be together, and refocus on the range of issues that we didn't have bandwidth for during the past few years. On many fronts, we all seem to be making up for lost time, and it's a bit exhausting! But, as we look back over the past year, it's invigorating to think about all that we've done and the ways that the past year (and several years) has altered who we are and what we value. This "normal" is certainly new!

This was an exciting year of milestones in our school. The Child Welfare Education and Leadership (CWEL) Program celebrated its 25th anniversary and the Center on Race and Social Problems marked its 20th! We had a wonderful celebration of CWEL and our broader Child Welfare Education and Research Program (CWERP) in the early summer. And CRSP has been doing an extended celebration — beginning with the inaugural Momeyer Endowed Lecture, featuring Haben Girma, in February and continuing with an upcoming celebration of Dean Davis' legacy and excellence among black faculty in November.

It was also a year of continuing and deepening our commitment to anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion. A group of the school's black faculty came together to conduct a study on burnout and ways to better support our black and brown students. We continued our regular Anti-Racism Learning Collaborative and participated in a school-level Racial Equity Consciousness Institute. Our doctoral students published work from their approach to driving curriculum review, and our faculty dug into a critical review of our syllabi and curricula as we continue to deepen our understanding and efforts to critically reframe and critique everything we do to center anti-racism and anti-oppression and to create a welcoming, inclusive, and critically evolving community.



This year was also a year of expanded research! Several of these programs of work are highlighted in what follows — but there are too many to adequately cover in this publication. Work on restorative justice in schools and Parenting While Black continued to gain momentum and expand their reach. Focus on economic equity and the challenges faced by low-wage workers reached new levels of impact and recognition as it was embraced by Pittsburgh's first African American mayor. And, the school launched a new center — the Center for Research on Innovations in Services and Equity in Mental Health (RISE-MH) — committed to mental health services research and the importance of including the full range of voices and perspectives in developing, testing, implementing, and disseminating community-based and community-engaged approaches.

As we move through this semester, it is wonderful to be fully re-connecting with each other and students. We are figuring out ways to re-imagine our roles and ways of being together, a community, and a courageous force to transform our world. I hope that you enjoy the summaries that follow. Please keep in touch via our website, socialwork.pitt.edu, and by reaching out. We look forward to joining with many of you in the year ahead!

In hope, courage, and solidarity,

Betsy Farmer
Dean

Centers

CWEL celebrates 25 years

The Pitt School of Social Work and the [Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center](#) celebrated 25 years of the Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) Program on June 8, 2022.

Following welcoming remarks from Dean [Betsy Farmer](#), Principal Investigator of the Child Welfare Education and Research Programs [Dr. Helen Cahalane](#) opened the program by stressing the importance of the child welfare partnerships that exist across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the commitment to strengthening the public child welfare workforce. She spoke about how the “Child Welfare Education and Research Programs provide a continuum of professional development programs designed to prepare, strengthen, and enhance the child welfare workforce.” Those programs include the Pennsylvania Child Resource Center, the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB), Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL), and the Child Welfare Workforce Excellence Fellows (CWWEF) program.

Dr. Cahalane also acknowledged the other colleges and universities across the state that partner with Pitt and help mentor and develop the next generation of child welfare professionals: Bryn Mawr College, PennWest California, PennWest Edinboro, Kutztown University, Marywood University, Millersville University, Shippensburg University, Temple University, University of Pennsylvania, West Chester University, and Widener University. To date there have been 1,613 CWEL graduates across all programs.

Dr. Cahalane was also honored with the Wilbur I. Newstetter Award in recognition of her distinguished commitment and service to the School of Social Work as leader of the Child Welfare Education and Research Programs for over 16 years. This award is named after Wilbur I. Newstetter, the first dean of the School of Social Work, who served from 1938 until 1962.

Speakers and panelists included Jon Rubin, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families; Sakia Foster, MSS; Mitch Hortert, MSW; Dr. Alicia Johnson, Dr. Liz Winter, Amy Bass, MSW, and Mike Byers, MSW.



Dean Betsy Farmer, Dr. Ed Sites, Ginger Pryor, Dr. Liz Winter, and Jon Rubin

The Raymond Webb keynote lecture was given by [Ginger Pryor](#), MSW the Director of Family and Child Well-Being at Abt Associates. Pryor has more than 30 years of experience leading child welfare and social services policy and system improvement initiatives. Her talk “The Power of Hope: Leading and Serving in Child Welfare” touched on the role of child welfare workers in creating an ecosystem of hope with “community sitting in the center--folks with lived experience, our community leaders, other family members, the church sitting in the center, but working in partnership or codesigning with state government, with federal government, the children’s bureau, national partners, our philanthropic partners, and our local system partners,” said Pryor. “That we work to create a power shift in the way in which we serve communities...as a leader we have to learn how to humble ourselves to go into communities.”

The event also included a tribute to Professor Emeritus Edward Sites who shared his memories of the creation on the CWEL program.

Videos of CWEL graduates were shown throughout the program, and they had the opportunity to express their gratitude for the program. Alumnus Adam Garrity, a 2015 CWEL graduate, shared that he will be “forever grateful for the CWEL program and the opportunity that it provided. It allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the social work profession, while allowing me to learn from some of the greatest minds in the field. The program also created a passion inside of me to grow within the field and promote the most innovative and progressive approaches to child welfare that I would have not been exposed to otherwise.” ///

CRSP celebrates 20 years

For twenty years, Pitt's Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) has been a leader in bringing thought-provoking research and discussions about race and social issues to local, national, and international audiences.

CRSP's work has ranged from rigorous empirical research projects to major national conferences, summer institutes for social work professionals, and a popular speaker series featuring leading race researchers and race scholars from across the United States.



Race &...Conference, Fall 2022

Based in Pitt's School of Social Work, CRSP began its 20th anniversary celebrations with a virtual event featuring esteemed scholar and White House Champion of Change Haben Girma, on February 2nd, 2022. The lecture, "Disability Justice: A Conversation with Haben, the Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law," was also the inaugural Florence Gibbs Momeyer Endowed Lecture ([see more on page 14](#)).

The Center on Race and Social Problems was founded in 2002 by the late School of Social Work Dean Emeritus Larry E. Davis. The Center was founded to help lead America further along the path to social justice by conducting race-related research, mentoring emerging scholars, and disseminating race-related research findings and scholarship. The Center is multidisciplinary in its approach and multiracial in its focus and was the first race-related research center to be housed in a school of social work. It focuses on social problems in eight key areas — economics; education; health; law; mental health; older adults; race relations; and youth development.

Currently led by Interim Director [John Wallace](#), School of Social Work David Epperson Chair and vice provost for faculty diversity and development, CRSP has continued its work funding, initiating, and collaborating to design, implement and evaluate applied research-to-practice interventions nested in communities of color. CRSP faculty develop and conduct research and intervention projects in partnership with communities, young people, parents, schools, congregations, youth serving organizations, and community development agencies. Current projects include: the Just Discipline Project; Pitt-Assisted Communities & Schools (PACS); the Pittsburgh Parenting Project; Research for Equity & Power (REP); and the SPIN Project.

This fall CRSP will host "Dr. Larry Davis Black Excellence in the Academy Awards and Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Center on Race and Social Problems" on November 3, 2022 from 6-9 p.m. at the National Aviary. Registration details are available on the school's website at socialwork.pitt.edu/events. ///

New Center based at Pitt Social Work: RISE-MH

The school's newest center — the [Center for Research on Innovations in Services and Equity in Mental Health \(RISE-MH\)](#) — aims to be an interdisciplinary hub for mental health services research that can immediately “move the needle” on mental health practice and policy.

RISE-MH evolved from a collaboration with Social Work and Psychiatry that identified crucial areas of need and interest, and faculty interested in participating. The idea for RISE-MH center grew out of a previous center within the school — the Center for Interventions to Enhance Community Health (CiTECH) — as researchers focused in on mental health services and the leading role that the University of Pittsburgh has taken in that area over the past few decades.

RISE-MH investigators are currently working on cutting edge projects that will directly affect mental health services including a large multi-site R01 led by [Dr. Nev Jones](#) that aims to understand and improve the work, school and disability-benefit decisions and trajectories of youth and young adults with early psychosis ([see more on page 9](#)).

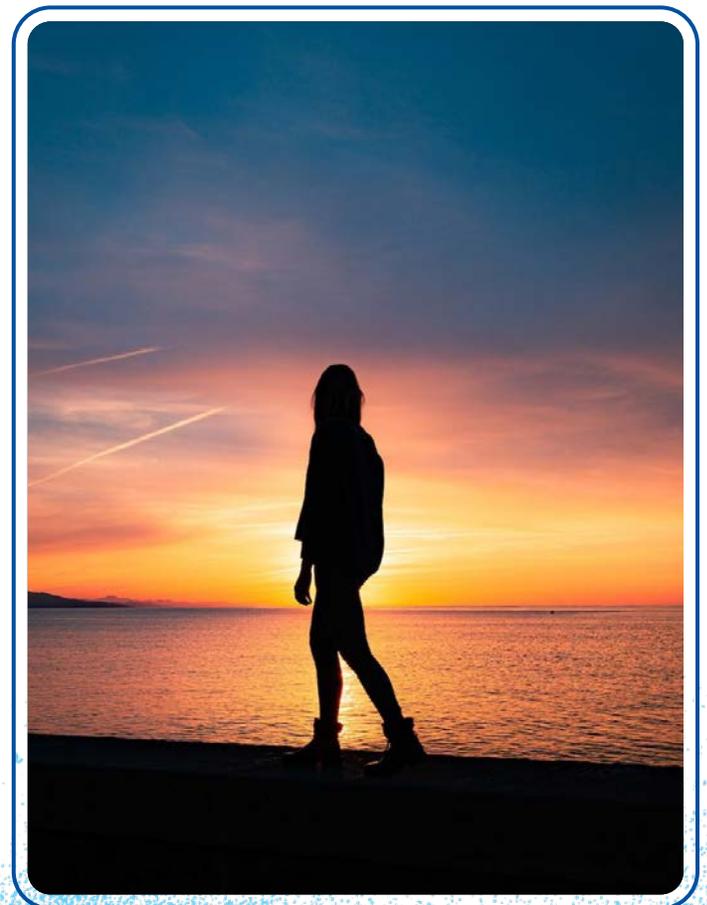
Building from over a decade of work in developing effective non-medication interventions for individuals with psychosis and autism, RISE-MH co-director [Dr. Shaun Eack's](#) project “Comparative Effectiveness of Cognitive Enhancement Therapy versus Social Skills Training in Serious Mental Illness” is conducting a comparative effectiveness study of these two approaches for patients with schizophrenia across New England.

Other affiliated projects include work being done by [Dr. Mary Ohmer](#) around community building and violence prevention. This past year Ohmer brought together a group of adolescents from the Northside of Pittsburgh who participated in a program called, “Pathways to Community Safety, Healing, and Wellness,” and learned about community-based solutions to violence. The program, developed by Ohmer, was implemented in partnership with Fineview and Perry Hilltop Citizens Councils.

In order to better disseminate the work being done by faculty and community partners, RISE-MH hosts regular work group meetings for investigators to share the work they are developing and will sponsor talks with nationally prominent speakers involved in mental health services.

“The University of Pittsburgh is ideally positioned to develop truly impactful interdisciplinary work that can truly impact mental health policy and practice in ways that can improve the well-being of some of our most vulnerable citizens,” said [Dr. Katie Greeno](#) RISE-MH co-director.

Anyone interested in joining the RISE-MH efforts to improve mental health services should contact [Dr. Katie Greeno \(kgreeno@pitt.edu\)](#) learn more about current projects and how to participate in ongoing work group meetings. ///



Selected Grants

Just Discipline Project receives additional \$7 Million in federal funding

Dr. James Huguley's Just Discipline Project (JDP) continues to gain momentum and build its research base and implementation reach. The JDP team received two new grants in 2021.

Huguley and colleagues from the Schools of Social Work, Education, Medicine, and The Pittsburgh Study at Children's Hospital, were awarded a \$3 million dollar grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to support the Just Discipline Project. The IES grant, under the Transformative Research in the Education Sciences Grants program, supports innovative or unconventional research that has the potential to lead to new scientific paradigms, novel and more effective approaches to education practice or policy, or transformative technologies that substantially increase learner outcomes. In addition to Dr. Huguley, the scientific team includes [Dr. Ming-Te Wang](#) (School of Education), [Dr. Deborah Moon](#) (School of Social Work), and [Dr. Kaleab Abebe](#) (School of Medicine and The Pittsburgh Study).

Alternatives to exclusionary discipline, like restorative practices, are sorely needed in education, yet rigorous examinations of restorative practice effects have largely been inconclusive. Scholars and practitioners have noted that restorative practices often falter due to a lack of adequate staffing and training mechanisms, yet fully supported models have not been rigorously tested. In response, the Just Discipline and Effective Restorative Practices study assesses the effectiveness of the program's innovative model that uses a full-time restorative practitioner and youth leaders in the school to lead restorative method programming and to provide in-house training and expertise for teachers.

In addition, Huguley and Wang received a \$4 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for their project "School Just Discipline Project: Reducing Racial Disparities and Promoting Positive School Climate." The project will serve approximately 3,200 public school students of color and historically under-served middle school students.



Dr. James Huguley

The project will implement and evaluate an adaptation of the JDP model that focuses on infusing school-wide restorative practices with socio-emotional learning approaches. The overall aims are to improve students' academic achievement by fostering socioemotional competencies, reducing racial disparities in school disciplinary practices, and creating a fair, inclusive school climate in participating schools. This is a multi-year, multi-phase project that will pilot the program in Greater Pittsburgh (2022-2023), and then include a multi-site cluster randomized trial in years 2 and 3.

"This is a critically important study for under-resourced public schools at this time, which are overextended around the socio-emotional and relational needs of students in the pandemic," notes Dr. Huguley. "We believe successful restorative practice models can more explicitly support socio-emotional life of students and teachers and look forward to collaborating with school practitioners and the communities they serve in this work."

Dr. Huguley is partnering with collaborators Dr. Ming-Te Wang, Pitt School of Education, and [Dr. Liz McGuier](#), Pitt Psychiatry on this project. Pilot school partners include the University of Pittsburgh, the East Allegheny School District, and the Woodland Hills School District. The project evaluation is being led by the American Institutes for Research.

Local efforts in the Greater Pittsburgh region are also supported by The Heinz Endowments and The Pittsburgh Study at Children's Hospital. ///

New research project builds knowledge to better support BIPOC students

A project led by Pitt School of Social Work faculty received a Research Pilot Project Grant to explore burnout among BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) graduate students.

“Taking Off the Cape: Removing the Cloak of Invincibility to Support BIPOC Graduate Students” is led by PI [Dr. Alicia Johnson](#), Child Welfare Education for Leadership (CWEL) Academic Coordinator, and includes faculty members [Dr. Yodit Betru](#), [Dr. Aliya Durham](#), [Dr. Toya Jones](#), and [Deborah Robinson](#), LSW. The purpose of the study is to learn more about BIPOC graduate students’ experiences and develop a framework of support around their needs.

Investigators hypothesize that BIPOC students may be experiencing high levels of burnout and want to know what the contributing/mitigating factors are and how to best support students to a successful completion of their programs and beyond. This is critical work as burnout leads to decreased overall wellness which affects well-being, academic performance, and competency in client care, among other issues.

The study includes student surveys and focus groups to assess levels of burnout and contributing/mitigating factors. Early identification could enable appropriate resources to be recommended and help students feel a greater sense of belonging as their sense of self-efficacy and agency increases. Information and subsequent recommendations gathered through this research will be shared with stakeholders at the University, including the School of Social Work, the Teaching and Learning team, the Center on Race and Social Problems, the CWEL Program, the Counseling Center and faculty advisors, to inform and train staff on how to better work with and support students.

“Most graduate students are stressed at some point during their matriculation. Many may even have experienced or are currently experiencing burnout” explained Dr. Johnson. “Our concern is that BIPOC students may be at increased risk of burnout due to compounding factors which may tax their mental and physical health and ultimately affect their academic performance and success in our programs. Moreover, poor academic performance or failure to complete our programs may perpetuate the ongoing issue of a lack of clinician diversity. An increase in diversity could increase cultural competence and overall care to improve health outcomes for future generations. This research team believes that the university has a responsibility to explore this topic and create tangible, sustainable supports so that students can be mentally and emotionally healthy upon graduation and ready to serve those in need in our communities.” ///

Dr. Alicia Johnson



Dr. Yodit Betru



Deborah Robinson



Dr. Toya Jones



Dr. Aliya Durham

Pitt Black Faculty Development Initiative receives RK Mellon grant

The Richard King Mellon Foundation has awarded the University of Pittsburgh \$250,000 to support the Pitt Black Faculty Development Initiative — a program that seeks to improve the lives of Black Pittsburghers by supporting research focused on equity, health and well-being in the city.

This program is part of the university's larger Race and Social Determinants of Equity and Well-being Cluster Hire and Retention Initiative. Dr. John Wallace, in his role as vice provost for faculty diversity and development, along with the Center on Race and Social Problems in the School of Social Work, will steward the grant.

A portion of the gift will fund three to five seed grants given to Black faculty-led research projects that specifically address health disparities. The grant will also support Black faculty retention efforts.

"The Pittsburgh region is challenged with regard to issues of racial equity, and Pitt's senior leaders are committed to leveraging the intellect and the experiences and expertise of our existing as well as new faculty to explicitly address the challenges of our region," said Dr. Wallace.

It is expected that this grant will have both immediate and far-reaching beneficial effects on the recruitment of students and faculty at Pitt who work in these fields and for whom these issues are important.



Dr. John Wallace

"This grant will support Black faculty at Pitt and advance our work to improve health and well-being in our communities," said Sam Reiman, director of the Richard King Mellon Foundation. "The foundation is committed to addressing health disparities, particularly the higher rates of infant mortality that too often mean tragedy for Black mothers and fathers."

Wallace also noted that the impact of this work will extend beyond the region.

"While Pittsburgh is certainly challenging for African Americans, racism and health disparities are not specific to Pittsburgh," said Wallace. "I'm confident that what we learn will have implications far beyond Western Pennsylvania, and I also am excited by the fact that the institution where I serve is committed to improving conditions in the community in which it is nested." ///

New fellowship builds capacity for intimate partner violence supports

The Pitt School of Social Work is partnering with Arizona State University and 12 other universities across 11 states to implement the Survivor Link + Public Health AmeriCorps program, which will provide training and financial support for 9 Pitt students in their field placements.

The initiative supports paid field placements at local non-profits, specialized training, and nationwide networking with other social work students dedicated to disrupting gender-based violence. Survivor Link + Public Health AmeriCorps builds capacity in public health agencies to respond to domestic violence in their local communities to provide sustained and effective services addressing intimate partner violence, and provides pathways to public health-related careers for social workers as it helps improve services and interventions for survivors and training the next generation of social workers to respond to intimate partner violence.

Nine Pitt students will join a cohort of 99 social work students from across the U.S., working closely with intimate partner violence experts, to build capacity in public health agencies to improve knowledge about intimate partner violence and the use of evidence-based interventions with survivors.



Dr. Sara Goodkind

Dr. Sara Goodkind, who spearheaded Pitt's involvement, explains: "We are thrilled to partner with colleagues at Arizona State University and across the country to facilitate this AmeriCorps program for undergraduate and masters social work students, which will benefit their development as social workers and our broader community's ability to address gender-based violence." ///

NIMH grant on Disability Benefits in First Episode Psychosis

University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Assistant Professor Dr. Nev Jones, along with [Dr. Lisa Dixon](#) (Columbia University & New York State Psychiatric Institute) and [Dr. Howard Goldman](#) (University of Maryland School of Medicine) have received a new \$3.6 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health for “Optimizing Disability Benefit Decisions and Outcomes in First Episode Psychosis.”

Individuals with non-affective psychosis continue to experience among the worst long-term outcomes of any disability group in the US, including un- and under-employment, homelessness, poverty, and premature death. Specialized early intervention in psychosis services, widely referred to as Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) in the United States, were designed to mitigate these negative outcomes. However, in spite of positive effects on many key domains, research from a foundational controlled trial of CSC found no effect of CSC on enrollment in disability-based benefits (SSI/SSDI), ostensibly reflecting no impact on long-term disability. Once enrolled in SSI/SSDI, individuals are rarely able to return to full-time work or school and, because of current SSI/SSDI policies, are often effectively trapped below the poverty line. Further work from the investigator team has also identified racial disparities in SSI/SSDI enrollment and associated work, school and financial outcomes, which raise additional concerns.

The 5-year project will include extensive new data collection, involving both surveys and interviews, to better understand the factors influencing the decisions young people make, and contexts that influence these decisions, including family socioeconomic, structural racism, and the availability, accessibility and quality of vocational supports. In the final phase of the grant, a participatory process will bring together key stakeholders from across the country to map out action steps for policy and practice with the goal of strengthening services and improving outcomes. The project will be advised by a national steering committee including impacted young people, their families and community providers.

This is the first time an NIMH R01 on schizophrenia has involved a PI with personal experience of schizophrenia (and early intervention); and the hiring of project staff and students with personal experience of psychosis will be prioritized throughout. Dr. Jones has made this a cornerstone of her work and has written about the [importance of investing in a research workforce with personal experience of serious mental illness](#).

Dr. Jones reports “I’m deeply grateful to NIMH for funding this important project. A lot of schizophrenia research more narrowly focuses on symptom-related clinical outcomes and fails to grapple with the complexity of factors, including social and structural determinants, that can so profoundly shape service recipients’ lives. With this grant, we have the opportunity to produce the kind of knowledge that could genuinely transform our understanding of underlying issues and generate solutions with realistic potential to shift policy and practice.” ///



Dr. Nev Jones

Research

Understanding and advocating for low-wage hospital workers

The new Pittsburgh Hospital Worker Survey showed that 93% of surveyed hospital workers are thinking of leaving their jobs. The study was conducted by Drs. [Ray Engel](#), [Sara Goodkind](#), [Jeff Shook](#) and other members of the [Pittsburgh Wage Study](#) team.

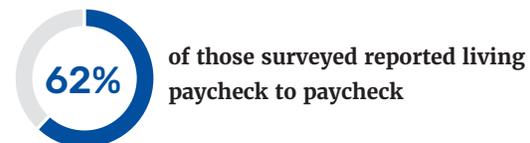
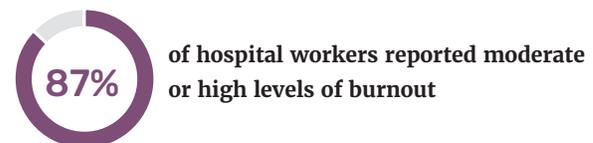
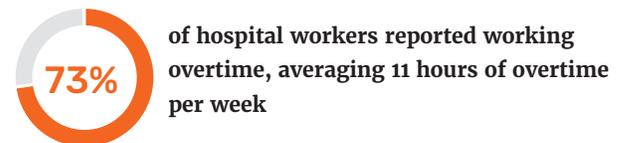
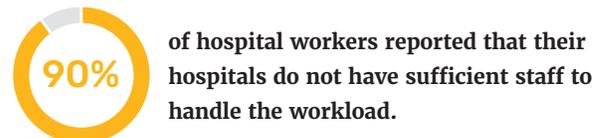
When Pittsburgh elected Mayor Ed Gainey, the city's first African American mayor last year, he reached out to this team to help his administration get a better understanding of the myriad challenges driving hospital workers away from the city's hospitals. Over 2,000 Pittsburghers who worked in hospitals in the last year participated in the survey. The project builds from the long-standing Pittsburgh Wage Study by the same team.



The survey was developed in a partnership between Pittsburgh Wage Study faculty researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, doctoral alumna [Kess Ballentine](#) from Wayne State University, and a Hospital Worker Steering Committee representing nurses and service workers from all city hospitals. The resulting survey investigated how a wide range of working conditions are influencing hospital workers' decisions about their jobs and their overall well-being.



Some results include:



However, despite these challenges, when asked about why they stay in their jobs, 3 of the top 4 reasons reported by hospital workers are related to their commitment to providing high quality patient care — the importance of their work to patient care, relationships with patients, and pride in serving patients during a pandemic. This was true for all types of workers. Additionally, over 90% of workers reported that their job was meaningful and had moderate to high compassion satisfaction, a term that indicates the fulfillment people experience when they help others through their work.

Pittsburgh hospital workers had many suggestions to make positive changes including 90% who said the best way to support workers is to increase their pay, 92% who suggested that hospitals maintain adequate and safe staffing, and 72% who believe that hospital administrators need to trust and implement employee input.

[Read the full report.](#) ///

Academics

New BASW Program's Joint Degree and Honors Distinction

The BASW Program now offers two new options — a Joint Degree, and an Honors Distinction — both in partnership with the University Honors College (UHC). These two options are in addition to the existing Bachelor of Philosophy (BPhil) option.

The Pitt Honors Joint Degree Program offers participating students the opportunity to complete a sequence of UHC-designated courses, and an Honors designation on a student's diploma, jointly awarded from the School of Social Work and UHC. This joint degree in Social Work creates opportunities for Social Work majors to complete the BASW requirements and to engage in scholarly work towards a more rigorous baccalaureate degree traditionally reserved for the graduate level.

The Honors Distinction provides access to UHC courses, but with fewer requirements and more flexibility.

“Both the Honors Joint Degree Program and the Honors Distinction are a collaborative effort between the School of Social Work and the University Honors College (UHC)” said Dr. Toya Jones, Director of the BASW Program. “These opportunities prioritize the Social Work profession as a disciplined, scholarly, and respectable program that centers on race, culture, inclusion, and social justice for marginalized populations, domestically and globally.” ///



Congratulations to Pitt's first 12-month MSW graduates

In August 2021, Pitt School of Social Work launched its 12-month MSW in response to student needs and a growing desire by BSW/BASW graduates who want to transition seamlessly into the MSW and efficiently complete their terminal practice degree.

"The school found that students were informally fashioning this plan and we wanted to formalize it and give them the support to do it in a planned way," explains MSW Program Director Dr. Yodit Betru. "So we sat down and figured out what classes each specialization and certificate needed and crafted a schedule to meet those needs. We also had to figure out how to resource and support the summer classes given the increase in course offerings."

Historically, Advanced Standing students at Pitt have completed the program in 16 months (fall, spring, fall). The 12-month program (fall, spring, summer) allows students to more efficiently complete the degree.

"A 12-month MSW degree plan allows a student to have an immersive educational experience where they can acquire their MSW degree in the most expedient manner. In turn, they are able to enter the workforce at a faster pace and speed up their earning potential which has a cumulative effect of advancing their career and financial advancement," Dr. Betru shared. "Furthermore, completing the MSW in a 12-month sequencing also allows the opportunity to take the licensure exam faster and work towards advanced clinical licensure and practice. If you are a mid-career person returning to school to get the MSW degree, this option allows you to put your current activities and life on hold for the least amount of time and allows you the opportunity to accomplish your goals in a timely manner. Really this is a win-win situation all around."



August 2022 graduates

In August 2022, over 40 students from the inaugural class of the 12-month MSW program graduated at a ceremony at the University Club. Class speaker Jaycee Brown shared their experience in the program and said "This program has given me something irreplaceable- friendships that push me to be better, that hold me when the world is too heavy, and who inspire me to find joy. My professors have served as mentors, allowing me to see what it truly means to be a change agent in this profession. We've gained a deeper understanding of the intersecting ways that white supremacy harms people across this country. We've learned how to advocate for ourselves and those around us. We learned what it means to build community and stay in community." ///

Advancement

Social Work alumni's donation ensures fellowship will continue

University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work alumni Jim (SOC WK '73) and Noel (SOC WK '74) Browne have been supporting the [Browne Leadership Fellows Program](#) since 2011.

Their new gift of \$1 million creates a sustainable endowment that will continue to support students with an interest in social and economic justice for years to come.

The Brownes, who met at the School of Social Work and were married in Heinz Chapel in 1974, have been generous alumni for many years. They have created an endowed chair in the school, currently occupied by Dr. Shaun Eack; have funded the Browne Fellowship on an annual basis for over a decade; and have been engaged and delightful partners throughout the years.

The Browne Leadership Fellows Program is an innovative program that provides a chance for undergraduates who are not social work majors to spend a semester and summer learning about and living social work values and experiences. Participants for this competitive summer fellowship come from across the full range of academic majors — from neuroscience to education to engineering to humanities. This interdisciplinary undergraduate fellowship aims at preparing students to be engaged civic leaders working for economic and social justice, no matter what their academic credentials or career path. Each year's cohort recruits 6-10 fellows in their junior year from all undergraduate majors for the fellowship.



Jim and Noel Browne

Browne fellows participate in an immersive summer of learning and service in one of several Pittsburgh-area neighborhoods. During their fellowship, they work closely with a partner agency to understand community history, identify local assets and challenges, cultivate appreciation for neighborhood culture, and ultimately execute a collaborative community project that supports the positive development of the area and its residents.

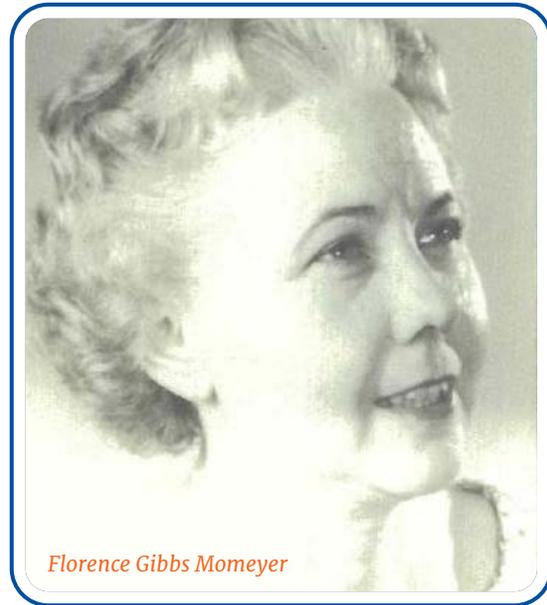
The Brownes were inspired to create the fellowship because of Jim's experience having pursued a career outside of social work in the finance sector, as principal and co-founder of Allegheny Financial Group. His MSW provided him with valuable skills in interpersonal communication, strategic problem-solving and systems-level thinking that he applied to his career in finance. His time as an MSW student also deepened his commitment to social justice and equity. The Brownes wanted fellows from across disciplines to have an opportunity to explore the root causes of social issues and to engage in identifying effective mechanisms that create lasting change. Applied learning, leadership, and service prepare fellows to become the next generation of creative, justice-minded public problem solvers and civic leaders.

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“If the students going through this program are at all impacted and more aware of the issues of poverty and racism in communities and act on that awareness, then we have met our objectives,” says Jim. “These are real issues that need to be addressed.” Noel continued, “We’ve seen the impact this has had on the students because they take what they’ve learned in the classroom and they go into the community to make real change, make real policy, and have an impact on the community.”

The fellowship is described by students as a highly impactful and transformational learning experience; a valuable chance to get outside of the university community and connect more deeply with parts of the city and region that they may not otherwise have had a chance to interact with.

“I am so deeply grateful to the Brownes,” said Dean Betsy Farmer. “Jim and Noel had a vision of how to bring social work values and understandings to students who would not usually benefit from our school’s perspectives and expertise. It has been a brilliant and transformative idea and program! And one that allows us to be national leaders in making sure that students, who will go on to greatness in a range of fields, bring social work values to their work and lives. In addition to my immense gratitude for the Brownes’ generosity, I am also extremely grateful to have the privilege of getting to know them. Jim and Noel will tell you that they never really used their social work degrees in a traditional way. But, in their lives, they exude the true generosity, compassion, humility, and righteous advocacy on social and racial justice that make them the kind of people that I hope our school will always produce!” ///



Florence Gibbs Momeyer

Newly endowed lecture honors Florence Gibbs Momeyer

On February 2, 2022, the School of Social Work and the Center on Race and Social Problems hosted the inaugural Florence Gibbs Momeyer Endowed Lecture, featuring lawyer and human rights activist Haben Girma.

Alumnus Alan Momeyer (MSW 1972) and his brother Richard Momeyer established the annual lecture series in 2021 to recognize the legacy of their mother, Florence Gibbs Momeyer, a pioneering Pennsylvania social worker and advocate for children.

Mrs. Momeyer, as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) in 1971, filed a landmark lawsuit against the state of Pennsylvania that ultimately guaranteed children with disabilities the right to an education in public schools. As the first right-to-education suit in the country, *PARC v. Pennsylvania* played a critical role in the fight for educational access for children with disabilities.

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Newly endowed lecture honors Florence Gibbs Momeyer *(continued)*



Haben Girma

Ms. Girma was selected as the first Momeyer Lecture speaker because of her own pioneering path. She is the first deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law School and a civil rights lawyer focusing on disability rights. She spoke during her virtual lecture on topics ranging from ableism and accessibility to race and language.

Girma described ableism as a persistent problem in American society that affects us all. She explained, “Ableism comes up in our schools, in government policies, in employment. It is so widespread that a lot of people don’t notice it. ... Ableism is so widespread that it’s considered fact rather than a systemic problem.”

According to Ms. Girma, she has faced more obstacles in her life stemming from ableism than from her disability status. These have included being denied employment and educational opportunities, having her contributions marginalized, and being told she would not succeed by people in positions of power. As the child of refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea, she has also faced racial discrimination.

Girma sees many opportunities for people with disabilities to change the world for the better. “The dominant narrative is disability is a burden on society,” Girma said. “I had to learn to define disability for myself. And I found that disability is often an opportunity for innovation. If you can’t do something one way, there are other alternative ways to do those things.”

Girma showed videos of herself engaging in activities that are commonly thought of as unavailable to people with disabilities, including surfing, salsa dancing and traveling. She explained that her experiences are not unusual. “Disabled people have been doing this all over the world,” she said. “These stories have been hidden. We need the public to know about these stories, understand that disabled people are talented.”

She encouraged others to rethink their perceptions of disability status as a weakness or shortcoming and urged institutions to create opportunities to allow people with disabilities to fully participate in public life. As she said, “Disability is the path to innovation.”

Ms. Girma has received numerous recognitions for her work. She was named a White House Champion of Change by President Barack Obama, a Forbes 30 Under 30 awardee, and is a recipient of the Helen Keller Achievement Award. Her memoir, *Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law*, has been featured by the *New York Times*, *Oprah Magazine* and the Today Show.

Approximately 300 attendees from around the country tuned in to hear Girma’s virtual lecture.

The Florence Gibbs Momeyer Endowed Lecture Series will now be an annual lecture program at the School of Social Work and Center on Race and Social Problems, featuring leading speakers on the topics of rights, equity, access and inclusion. The Momeyer Lecture is the third endowed lecture series at the School of Social Work. ///

International

Social Work Explores Expanded Opportunities with Partners in East Africa



In spring of 2022, Pitt School of Social Work program directors — [Dr. Yodit Betru](#), Director of the MSW program; [Dr. Toya Jones](#), Director of the BASW program; and [Dr. Tonya Slawinski](#), Director of Field Education — traveled to Uganda and Kenya to explore possibilities for increasing global offerings to expand the curriculum and to enhance the students' experiences.

Pitt has a standing connection with East Africa through its immersive summer program in Uganda and Western Kenya. This broader university-level program is led by [Dr. Louis Picard](#) of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) with close collaboration with the Center for African Studies (CAS). For this trip [Dr. Macrina LeLei](#) (CAS) helped plan, facilitate, and accompany the Pitt faculty and students for their East Africa trip. CAS and the Hewlett Foundation provided generous funding to make it possible for the Pitt Social Work faculty to participate in the trip.

During their initial time in Uganda, Drs. Lelei and Picard introduced the Pitt SSW team to Victoria Nalongo Namusisi. “Mama Victoria” as she is called by so many, left her career in journalism to adopt two orphaned children and subsequently adopted many more, in the process creating an entire ecosystem of education, medical care, and economic development. Her resulting organization, [Bright Kids Uganda](#) (BKU), in Entebbe, is a 501 C (3) focused on helping “street kids, HIV/Aids orphans, children with various physical and psychological disabilities, children who have been living at Internally Displaced People’s Camps, and those rescued from the rebels in Northern Uganda.” The SSW team was deeply moved by their experiences at BKU — by the level of need, the overwhelming stories and challenges, the depth of caring, the abundance of pride and magnanimousness, and their profoundly moving and joyful interactions with the children and youth.

In Uganda, the Pitt team met with faculty, staff, students, and administrators at two universities. At Kasubi University they learned about the school’s existing undergraduate program and discussed Kasubi’s efforts to develop an MSW program. They also discussed possible student exchange options and ways for Pitt students to potentially live on Kasubi’s campus during their exchange.

Uganda Christian University also has an undergraduate social work program and has enrolled its first cohort of MSW students. Drs. Betru, Jones, and Slawinski visited several of the affiliated social service agencies that serve as field education sites, which could provide Pitt students with assigned field placement arranged prior to arrival in Africa as well as living arrangements and supports in the local community.

After nine days in Uganda, the Pitt team crossed the border to Kenya. In Kenya, meetings were arranged at MOI University and the University of Nairobi. MOI is the oldest and one of the largest universities in Kenya, with a long history of working with Pitt and CAS. Meetings with MOI focused on a range of topics around health care and potential opportunities for students.

The University of Nairobi was the group’s final set of meetings. This prestigious urban institution has the oldest BASW program in the country and has requested support in developing an MSW program. The University of Nairobi has robust exchange programs and could offer Pitt students an urban and more independent experience.

As they reflected on their trip, Drs. Betru, Jones, and Slawinski were struck by the enormous opportunities to build on Pitt’s ongoing relationships and broader international consortia and connections to expand Pitt Social Work’s global offerings and engage in expanded learning on a global scale. In summarizing the trip, Dr. Betru noted that “there is an enormous opportunity here to offer transformational learning experiences in a global context to our students and faculty. It would be a mutually beneficial relationship and an exchange of culture, ideas, techniques of healing and growth — that would enrich at a personal and institutional level.” ///

Doctoral Program

Doctoral students led anti-racism initiative

Driven by their desire to stand in solidarity and their commitment to anti-racist social work, doctoral students at the Pitt School of Social Work formed the Anti-Racist Doctoral Program Student Committee (ARDPSC) in May 2020.

The ARDPSC is “comprised of students who are personally committed to anti-racism in social work academia and who are prepared through their training, scholarship, service, and life experiences for this cultural moment.”

The goals of the committee are to: 1) Advocate for anti-racist pedagogy; 2) Confront Anti-Blackness in academia; 3) commit collectively to social justice; and 4) Engage in doctoral student-led activism.

As a way to ensure an anti-racist curriculum, the ARDPSC collaborated to create a set of guiding questions for the review of syllabi across their programs. The questions, informed primarily from the lived experiences of Black students in social work programs, are just a starting point towards anti-racist reform. Professors at the School of Social Work have used this guide to help center the experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) in both curriculum content and pedagogical approaches.

The group wrote about their experiences in a paper titled, “Using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research to Promote Anti-Racism in Social Work Higher Education,” which is in press in *Advances in Social Work*. Using an implementation science framework and considering both micro and macro levels of social work educational programs and national social work organizations, the paper explores the barriers and facilitators to anti-racist reform in social work education. Recommendations include changes to policy and procedures, culture and climate, networks and communication, and leadership engagement.



Doctoral students present at CSWE APM 2021

In fall 2021, doctoral students Dashawna Fussell-Ware, Lauren Mangum, Serwaa Omowale, and Christopher Thyberg presented this work at the 2021 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Annual Program Meeting to lead a panel discussion.

A complete list of the authors of the CSWE presentation and paper include: Dashawna J. Fussell-Ware, PhD, LSW, Kess L. Ballentine, MA, MSW, PhD, Ana T. Flores, MSW, Lauren Mangum, MPH, LMSW, Serwaa Omowale, MPH, LMSW, PhD, Kristen MacKenzie, MSW, PhD, Adrian J. Ballard, MSW, Christopher Thyberg, MSW, and Laura Ellen Ashcraft, PhD, MSW.

The group encourages other doctoral students to connect and work together through conflict to build solidarity, and advocate for change. ///

By the Numbers



University of
Pittsburgh

School of
Social Work

* Educational Excellence



largest child welfare program in the country



and oldest standing community organizing program in the country

159

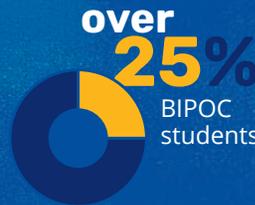
The School provided 159 paid training and pre-doctoral fellowships

totaling more than **\$2 million dollars** in student support for FY 2022

* Diversity & Inclusion



Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP) is the **first and only** interdisciplinary race center in a school of social work in the country



* Scholarship & Research

3 research centers

Center on Race and Social Problems (CRSP)

Child Welfare Resource Center

Center for Research on Innovations in Services and Equity in Mental Health (RISE-MH)

over **\$2.4 million** in external sponsored research and training



Child Welfare Education and Training programs support students and training across the state of PA, totaling

over **\$30 million** in annual expenses

46 active research projects



* Community Engagement

2 community engagement centers embedded in the community and supported by the University

13 funded collaborative research projects with a community partner

1,484

field placement opportunities combining direct practice, generalist and community organizing opportunities.

Students collectively provide

over **180,120**

field placement hours to service agencies and organizations worth over **\$5.4 million annually**

* Alumni & Career Networks

over **11,000** alumni

here in Pittsburgh

across the country

around the world



VanKirk Career Center offers **one-on-one** career counseling

9,814

Continuing Education program attendees

over **250** sponsored or co-sponsored programs



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