

Newsletter
Spring 2021



SOCIAL WORK THE LEADER





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OVERVIEW

The Department of Social Work continues to experience growth in terms of students, faculty, and programs. Continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1978, the BSW program is a thriving program with over 300 students on the Bowling Green, Elizabethtown and Owensboro campuses. The MSW program enrolls approximately 120 graduate students and received initial accreditation from the CSWE in 2006. Our MSW program offers a unique concentration: advanced direct practice in rural settings. Currently, the MSW program can be completed in Bowling Green as well as an online cohort. Both programs reaffirmed their CSWE accreditations in February, 2018.

The department includes 16 full-time faculty, two faculty members on transitional retirement, two professional staff, four office associates, and four graduate assistants. Significant departmental projects include the WKU Training Resource Center (TRC), the Public Child Welfare Certification Program (PCWCP), the Credit for Learning Project (CFL), the MSW Cohort Studies Initiative, and the Center for Child Welfare Education and Research (CCWEAR).

about
110,000

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, social work is one of the fastest-growing professions in the United States, with about **110,000 more social workers** expected to enter the profession in just seven years.

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DEPARTMENT HEAD REFLECTIONS

Dear WKU Social Work Community,

I love field! It was one of my favorite classes to take as an MSW student, and it is one of my favorite classes to teach as an educator. In Field, students strive to integrate concepts learned and skills practiced in class into their current and future social work practice. Social work knowledge, skills, and cognitive & affective processes are practiced in real world experiential learning activities under the supervision of expert social work practitioners. Students are given time to reflect and process those experiences with their field instructors, field liaisons, and other professors in safe environments where their self-awareness regarding areas of strength and growth can be explored with support. Field is where the rubber hits the road.

This newsletter is a celebration of the WKU Social Work Field Program. It is in honor of the field instructors, task supervisors, faculty liaisons, staff, and especially the students who persevered make field happen no matter what is going on. Even double pandemics of COVID-19 and racism cannot stop the powerful people participating in our field program from creating more social workers! This is fortunate for all of us because social workers are needed now as much as ever.

Thank you for your interest in the WKU Social Work Department. While I know we cannot do justice to the invaluable work of this impressive group in the few pages available here, I hope our departmental pride in the field program comes through loud and clear! We appreciate all of you that contribute to this success.

Take Care,

Dr. Patricia Desrosiers, LCSW
Department Head, Social Work



Dean Patricia "Trish" Desrosiers, Ph.D., LCSW
Department Head, WKU Department of Social Work

"With the energy and vigor of the new administration group, we are sure to experience new ways of conceptualizing our work and doing business."

MEET OUR TEAM

- Department Head
Dr. Patricia Desrosiers
- Acting MSW Online Program Director
Dr. April L. Murphy
- MSW Program Director
Dr. Saundra Starks
- BSW Program Director
Dr. Simon Funge
- BSW & MSW Field Director
Kelly McIntyre, MSW

The Center for Child Welfare Education and Research (CCWEAR) has been busy in the past few months, developing strategic partnerships, facilitating applied research, and producing scholarship. Highlights include the addition of our first three CCWEAR Scholars, Drs. Kim Link, Brian Weiler, and Matthew Woodward. Their interdisciplinary backgrounds will be important in helping us build a collaborative team to actively address social problems that must be examined comprehensively. Additionally, the CCWEAR is excited to announce its first extramural grant funding in support of the Kentucky Child Welfare Workforce Wellness Initiative, a multidisciplinary partnership designed to improve the health and wellness of public child welfare workers in Kentucky. This two year federally funded project is in partnership between the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Lifeskills, and Western Kentucky University. More details on this project will emerge soon. Our team was able to present at the CHHS Research Showcase on October 16th, 2020, providing updates about our efforts, advocacy, and opportunities for involvement. Make sure to check out the recording, located on the CHHS website. Despite these challenging times, one thing remains clear...we are committed to improving the lives of Kentucky's families and children - together!

Dr. Austin Griffiths
Director, CCWEAR

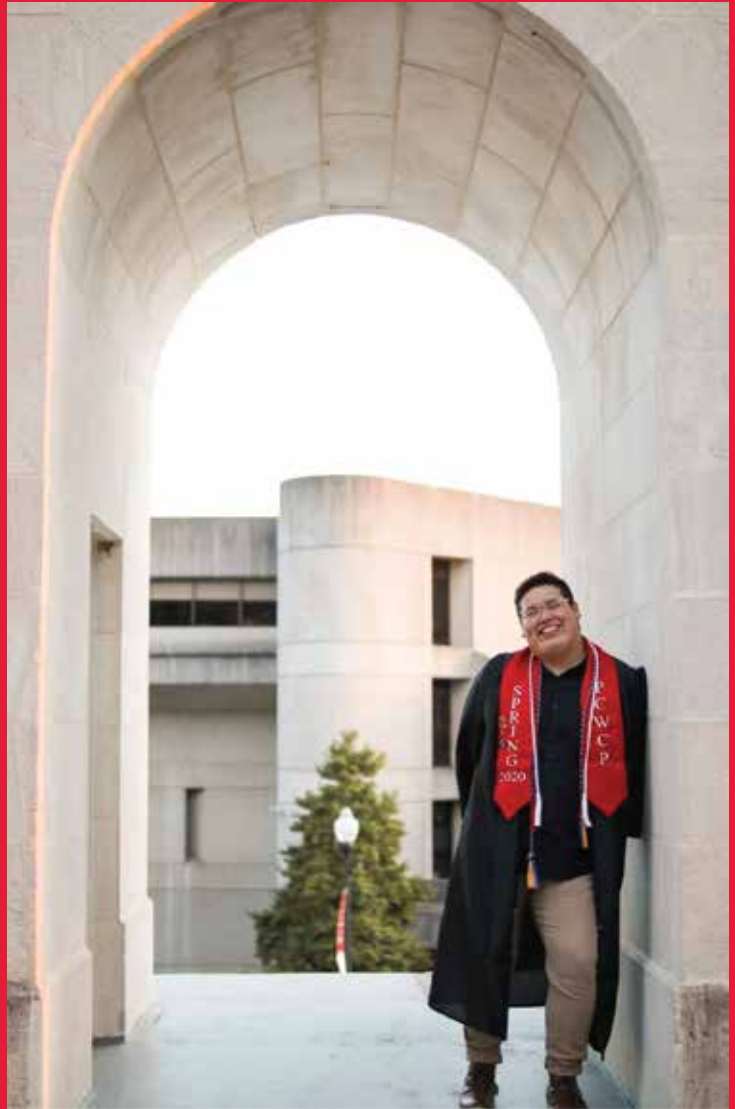


CREDIT FOR LEARNING

Featuring JONNY SILVA, BSW PCWCP

What is Credit for Learning (CFL): The CFL program is a collaborative relationship between WKU Department of Social Work, University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work, University of Kentucky's College of Social Work, ECU's Training Consortium and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. The purpose of this program is to improve the professionalization of the workforce of Kentucky by providing graduate level education. The program aims to increase recruitment and retention. DCBS Staff and Employees have the opportunity to earn graduate level credit as non-degree seeking graduate students through participation in graduate courses offered through the University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, and Western Kentucky University.

"I am thankful for the Credit for Learning Program as I transitioned from Western Kentucky University into the front-line workforce at Warren County Protection & Permanency. I am grateful for every instructor, professor, and staff member who successfully transitioned much of the content to an online version that was concise, engaging, and informative. This year, many of us have faced challenges, but learning best practices to serve the community as a social worker has equipped me to bring hope and everlasting change to the lives I work with. In the coming years, I look forward to using my CFL credits towards my master's degree in social work. As Dr. Griffiths says, "Let's rock and roll- we'll get through this together!" Jonny Silva is a Public Child Welfare Certification Program (PCWCP) and BSW graduate. Jonny is now employed in child welfare with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.





FEEDING AMERICA

BSW and MSW students volunteered to package and distribute food to approximately 800 families today with Feeding America in October. Students were led by MSW Instructor Erin Warfel.



The Feeding America network is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization. Together with individuals, charities, businesses, and government they seek to end hunger. In Kentucky, Feeding America has partnered in many local communities to serve families in need. Both BSW and MSW social work students in Bowling Green participated with Mount Zion Baptist Church and other community agencies and volunteers for a food distribution event at Lampkin Park. Hundreds of families were provided meals while social work students practiced the social work value of service.



FACULTY FOCUS

featuring DR. DANA SULLIVAN

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Dana Sullivan on her most recent publication with the Social Work Education Assessment Project (SWEAP)! The SWEAP team is a diverse group of Social Work educators from different schools around the country. SWEAP is committed to providing the highest quality assessment instruments that are designed to aid undergraduate and graduate social work programs in evaluation necessary for program development and improvement. SWEAP instruments are specifically designed to be responsive to the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) related to both initial accreditation and reaffirmation. The article is designed to help all involved in the program assessment process to better understand "competency benchmarks", and how to apply them to the accreditation and reaffirmation processes. Dr. Sullivan has been a member of the SWEAP team since 2016. Congratulations, Dr. Sullivan!

Dana J. Sullivan, Kathryn Kruse, Tobi DeLong Hamilton, Tameca Harris-Jackson, Brian Christenson, Kristin Danhoff & Ruth Gerritsen-McKane (2020) Setting appropriate competency benchmarks to support successful social work program assessment, *Social Work Education*, DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2020.1845644

FIELD INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHTS

Dr. Martha Sales

Dr. Martha Sales a native from Franklin, Kentucky. She overcame the barrier of being a low-income and first generation student herself, in which has become her career long passion. Dr. Sales credits her faith in Christ, her wise parents, supportive family and friends as well as the Western Kentucky University's Educational Leadership with reasons for her continued success. Upon completing and obtaining her doctorate, Dr. Sales continued her responsibilities with the WKU TRIO programs and was promoted to Executive Director of the University's Inter-cultural Student Engagement Center. Dr. Martha Sales is both diligent and committed to the success of students. Her passion is evident in the programs that she directs, first being the TRIO programs, that are federally funded through the Department of Education and are designed to assist low-income and first generation individuals with entering in, succeeding, and graduating from postsecondary education. The Inter-cultural Student Engagement Center promotes a culturally inclusive campus environment, cultural awareness and competence. Aside from her administrative roles, Martha also teaches and facilitates courses and trains students and her colleagues in her various areas of expertise.



Christina Dalton

My current position is District Social Worker for Daviess County Public Schools. I am in my third year in this position. Previously I was a Family Resource Center Coordinator for Burns and Tamarack Elementary Schools for 18 years. In my current position I get to work closely with the Family Resource Youth Services

Centers. I provide more intensive counseling and follow up with students and families that are referred to me. I am the Trauma coordinator for the school district and I am a Train the Trainer through University of Kentucky Center for Children and Trauma in Trauma Informed Practices. I am the co-chair for the state of Kentucky on the Trauma Peer Network. I am also the facilitator for a large grant that we have with Owensboro Health that has a focus on mindfulness in schools, providing safe spaces and teaching tools for resiliency. I am also an adjunct professor at Brescia University in the Social Work department.

This is my first time serving as a Field Instructor so I do feel that I am learning alongside my interns. I think that one of my favorite parts of being a field instructor is seeing

my job through the eyes of my interns. Sometimes they can point out and see things that I have missed or have not had the time to reflect on. The perspectives that they share are so fresh, creative and new. I truly enjoy being able to take real life situations and show them how the tools they are learning in school can be applied to help the clients that they are serving.

My advice for upcoming students about to go into placement would be to really narrow down their field of focus to what they are interested in long term. you are in a placement for a year and that is a long time. A really good field placement can give you that foundation to develop those social work skills that you have been learning. I think it is important that your time is spend in an area of placement that you see a future in.

Jennifer Withrow

I am the manager of the Policy, Program, and Support Branch within the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. I develop policy and procedures, and oversee staff who manage a wide variety of duties including federal grants, Governor appointed boards, and overall program and system support to the entire agency. One of the many reasons I enjoy working with students is that they bring fresh ideas and solutions to agency needs. I challenge students to think not about why they are doing something, but consider if the action could - or should - be completed in a different way. I encourage my students to fully understand the implications of the process, as well as to consider if the current process is based in best practice or federal regulations. I really enjoy helping students make connections between what they are learning in their classes and how that reflects in practice settings. I would advise incoming students to ask questions and take advantage the knowledge of their instructors. Use your time as a student to explore new areas of practice, further your understanding through trainings and get involved in community events. Be proactive in your learning. Always approach a situation with a learning mindset. Never turn down an opportunity. Even if it is not something that your are interested in, you never know where the opportunity could lead.



Lee Fowlkes

I currently serve as the Minister of Family Services at Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries. In this role I supervise the direct care staff for both our Foster Care and our Single Parent programs and provide therapy for children in the foster care program. I have been at Potter for almost seven years. I have been a field instructor for WKU since 2015, and I have supervised 10 students from both BSW and MSW programs. I love being a field instructor because I am able to be an integral part of the development of my students. I love being able to help

soon-to-be social workers identify and build on their strengths as well as provide them with experiences to grow in areas of weakness. I especially love seeing my former interns actively serving in the community and becoming my colleagues. My advice for current or upcoming field placement students would be to take advantage of the opportunity to work in the field and use that time to learn who you are and where you best can serve. I would encourage you to be yourself from the first interview to the final evaluation and always ask for feedback.

FIELD INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHTS

(continued)

Abby Ledbford

I'm currently working as a therapist for Necco's foster care and behavioral health programs. I also teach social work courses for both ECTC and WKU. I enjoy getting to hear student's accounts of some of their first experiences in-field and see them learn how to put their social work education in practice. It's neat to see them connect the dots and become even more passionate about who they are becoming as a social worker! My best advice for current or incoming field placement students would be to have a self-care plan and stick with it!



Nickie Jones

I have been at FEC for 18 years where I first started as the Parent Educator who facilitated parenting classes, but also assumed supervisory responsibilities of other program staff. I really enjoyed working with families in groups as they worked to gain knowledge of nurturing parenting practices and become the best parent they could be for their children. In addition, I was responsible for writing program grants and overseeing compliance to them. After 3 years, I was promoted to Executive Director. My role is strictly administrative where I work to build relationships and collaborations in our local community and even on a state level. I also am an agency advocate both on a mezzo and macro level making sure since we are a grassroots organization with no ties to federal/state funding, that we are on top of issues on federal, state, local levels. I am also responsible to my Board of Directors and long range strategic planning.

I love seeing proactive, new, energetic, "I want to change the world" social work students who will one day make a positive impact on my community and beyond. I advise students not to worry if you're unsure of what you want to do. Social Work is so versatile. you can be anything: a law writer, a politician, a therapist, a case manager, an Executive Director of a nonprofit! Use your time in field placements to figure out some of the things you do not prefer to do (grant writing, fundraising, individual work, group work) and who you would prefer to work with (children, elderly, addicts, families, etc.) It will help direct your path! Social workers do change the world and make it a better place.



Questions? Call 270.745.5312,
Email swrk@wku.edu or Visit
www.wku.edu/socialwork

