

APRIL - MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER



KAREN MAGRUDER, LCSW-S
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE

Professor Karen Magruder

Watch the April 2024 Monthly News Video Update and read the stories below.

Video edited and produced by Doughlas Gutierrez

[**CLICK TO WATCH APRIL 2024 NEWS VIDEO UPDATE**](#)





End of Semester video from the dean of the School of Social Work.

Video: Dean Foster's End of Spring 2024 Message

The SSW Office of Communications and Marketing released the Dean's end of semester video for Spring 2024.

In this video, Dean Kirk Foster, Ph.D. gives words of encouragement and reflects on a semester of growth and understanding.

[CLICK TO VIEW DEAN'S MESSAGE](#)



Master of Social Work graduate waving to the crowd.

SSW graduates 216

By Jaelon Jackson

The University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work held its Spring Commencement Ceremony Friday, May 10, celebrating the achievements of one Ph.D., 129 master's, and 86 bachelor's students.

The ceremony, held at Globe Life Field in Arlington, highlighted the dedication and hard work of these students.

The graduates stepped into the next chapter of their lives equipped with the knowledge and skills gained from the Bachelor of Science in Substance Use and Treatment, Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work, and Ph.D. in Social Work programs.

[CLICK TO READ FULL STORY ABOUT GRADUATES](#)

[CLICK FOR SPRING 2024 COMMENCEMENT PHOTOS](#)

[CLICK FOR VIDEO OF SPRING 2024 COMMENCEMENT](#)



Social Work Ph.D. Graduate, Dr. Christine Highfill.

Highfill defends dissertation on military domestic abuse policies

By Jaelon Jackson

In her remarkable academic journey, Christine Highfill was supported by a dedicated team of mentors and collaborators.

Her dissertation committee, chaired by Dr. Rachel Voth Schrag and Dr. Donna Schuman, provided invaluable guidance and expertise throughout her research process. Other esteemed members of her committee included Dr. Rebecca Mauldin, Dr. Ling Xu, and Dr. Beth Anne Shelton.

Highfill's dissertation, under the guidance of her committee, examines the historical changes in laws regarding domestic violence, particularly within the military context. She investigates the current policies within the military and their real-world impact on individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

Drawing from her own experiences surviving domestic abuse within the military, Highfill's research is deeply personal and driven by a passion to make a difference in the lives of others facing similar challenges.



BSW Student and Deaf Student Mentor, Lei-Sea Sky.

Maverick becomes first UTA deaf student mentor

By Neph Rivera

The University of Texas at Arlington, which is launching a new minor in American Sign Language and Deaf Studies, has appointed the University's first student mentor who is deaf.

Lei-Sea Sky, who is pursuing majors in both social work and political science, is supporting students looking to achieve their higher education goals.

"As a deaf individual, I've faced unique challenges, and that's given me a profound understanding of the barriers deaf and hard-of-hearing students encounter in higher education," Sky said. "It's not just about mentorship. I want to advocate for the accessibility that the Deaf community rightfully deserves."

[ABOUT — CLICK HERE TO READ MORE ABOUT LEI-SEA SKY](#)



Smiling social worker at networking event.

Blog Post: What is Social Work?

By Jaelon Jackson

As we celebrate Social Work Month, it is an ideal moment to contemplate the indispensable role social workers play in our communities.

This year, the National Association of Social Workers has chosen Empowering Social Workers as the theme of this month, shedding light on the pivotal contributions of social workers across various facets of our society.

Let us take a deeper dive into the essence of social work, its critical importance for communities, and the escalating demand for professional social workers amidst challenges like the opioid epidemic, mental health issues, counseling services, and the influence of government policy.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS DO](#)



Dr. Noelle Fields, UTA social work associate professor (right) with an attendee at the SSW Gerontology-Aging Luncheon March 1.

Blog Post: What do Gerontology Social Workers do?

By Jaelon Jackson

As we journey through the stages of life, eventually arriving at the challenges and opportunities that come with aging, Gerontological Social Workers emerge as essential guides.

Their role extends far beyond mere service provision; they become compassionate allies, standing by older individuals and their families during times of need. Gerontological Social Workers fulfill many responsibilities, including practical assistance, emotional support, and advocacy.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORKERS](#)



Social Work's new *Blaze the Mic* Podcast - Episode 2 featuring MSW student Pauline Sias.

New Social Work *Blaze the Mic* Podcast now available

The SSW Office of Communications and Marketing released the second episode of our student focused podcast -- *Blaze the Mic*.

This episode features MSW student Pauline Sias - "A Journey from Bachelors to Masters".

In this episode, Pauline shares with us how the power of family, friends, and determination helped her stay on track from her Bachelor of Social Work degree to pursuing her Masters today.

Our new podcast is available on Spotify, Amazon Music, iHeart Radio, PlayerFM, Podbean App, and soon on Apple.

[LISTEN TO SSW BLAZE THE MIC - EPISODE 2](#)

April SSW Spotlights

This section highlights the remarkable achievements and contributions of individuals within the social work community.

From esteemed faculty members to dedicated alumni, their accomplishments reflect a commitment to excellence and a passion for making a positive impact in society. Whether through groundbreaking research, innovative teaching methods, advocacy efforts, or community engagement, these individuals embody the values of social work and inspire others to strive for greatness.

Join us in celebrating their successes and acknowledging the profound influence they have on the field of social work and the lives they touch.

Awards & Recognitions

Dr. Joyce White - Received Experiential Learning Faculty Fellowship Grant and UTA CARES OER Modification Grant and showcased a presentation April 17, in Trinity Hall. Dr. White was also recognized by UTA President Jennifer Cowley on April 18.

Dr. De'An Roper - Elected onto the Board of Directors for [NALGAP](#) (The National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Addiction Professionals)

Karen Magruder - Awarded UTA Libraries' Open Initiative Grant

Dr. Christine Highfill - PhD Candidate - successfully defended her dissertation, "United States Policies Related to Military-Connected Domestic Abuse: A Review and Analysis"

Tracy Orwig - Awarded UTA CARES Grant for application titled Direct Practice in Health Care.

Dr. Allison Tomlinson and **Dr. Jandel Crutchfield** - their office has received an award from Jobs with Justice for the project entitled, "Jobs with Justice - UTA Site"

Dr. Saltanat Childress - Received a travel award to attend the 32nd Society for Prevention Research's Annual Meeting

Dr. Morgan Pettyjohn - Elected to serve on the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program Advisory Board at UTA starting in the Fall

Dr. Catherine LaBrenz - Published an article in Journal of Public Child Welfare called "[Siblings must stick together](#)"

Dr. Candace Harrell - Earned her DSW from the University of Kentucky. Dr. Harrell is SSW's Field Community Coordinator.

Congrats Dr. Jandel Crutchfield - Elected as [Mansfield ISD School Board Place 2](#)

In The Media

Kiva Harper - featured on Episode 52 of The Critical Social Worker: A Revolutionary Storytelling Podcast. The episode being title [Unveiling Resilience: Trauma and Recovery](#)

Upcoming SSW Events:

- May 13 - Summer 14 Weeks - First Day of Classes
- May 13 & 14 - Summer 14 Weeks - Late Registration
- June 3 - Summer 14 Weeks - Census date
- June 3 - Summer 11 Weeks - First Day of Classes
- June 3 & 4 - Summer 11 Weeks - Late Registration
- June 24 - Summer 11 Weeks - Census date

Other SSW News Products:

- [News Stories and News Releases](#)
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- [Monthly News Video Updates](#)
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