



*Social Justice & Community Partnerships
through Quality Education & Pioneering Research*

Fall 2016 Newsletter



**School of Social Work Graduate
Program
Rises in Ranking**

The University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work moved up seven ranks from 10th in 2015 to third in the nation according to a graduateprograms.com ranking announced in July.

The ranking is based on current and former student reviews and feedback. According to the organization's website, the National Center for Education Statistics gathered the data used to calculate the rankings from "tens of thousands of student reviews" in 2015 and 2016.

This list includes the top 50 social work schools and colleges in the United States. UTA was the highest ranked school of social work in Texas.

“We are truly committed to valuing the talents of the individual student while remaining invested in the collective success of all our students,” said Scott Ryan, dean of the School of Social Work. “Our increase in rankings from 10th position last year to third this year reflects the faculty’s commitment to a strong student-centered approach to learning.” [Read more.](#)

Best Online Master's in Social Work

College Choice named UTA's School of Social Work "Best Online Master's in Social Work" in 2016, Yahoo! Finance and other media reported.

College Choice, recently published its 2016 rankings for the Best Online Master's in Social Work. Social work graduates looking for specialized education often go on to get their Master's in Social Work. However, for many of these students, they are also working, hindering their ability to attend school full-time and on-campus. [Read more.](#)



Message from the Dean about 2016 Presidential Election

This year’s presidential election was a significant moment in American history, and regardless of your political beliefs, it has evoked a range of reactions, feelings and emotions.

As we continue to ponder the results and impact of this election, it is important we remember and remain committed to the principles and core values of our social work profession. We must continue to demonstrate our commitment to diversity, and inclusion, and remain sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of others.

Social work is a profession that many feel is a calling to advocate for the disadvantaged and to be a voice for those who are powerless. Our school is a microcosm of the society we serve. Therefore, I encourage everyone to be respectful of the thoughts and feelings of others. Our classrooms must always be a learning environment that supports open dialogue, reflection, personal development and professional growth. [Read more.](#)

Joint MSW/MPH Degree Program

Students looking to earn a future in the social work and public health fields may now have an easier time doing so. The School of Social Work and the UT-Health Science Center Dallas campus offers a [joint degree program.](#)

The program has been in place since 2011, but administrators recently changed the program to make enrollment easier for students, said Diane Mitschke, Master of Social Work program director. Click [here](#) for more information.



Part-Time Ph.D. Program rolls out for Fall 2017



The Jan. 15, 2017 deadline is around the corner for UTA's School of Social Work's extremely-competitive Ph.D. program.

Starting with the Fall 2017 semester the Ph.D. program will also accept students for part-time studies. Initially classes for the part-time program will be offered during the day, but administrators are looking at evening and weekend hours. It will take about seven years to complete the degree as a part-time student. Part-time

students are enrolled in six hours a semester, while full-time Ph.D. students must be enrolled in nine hours per semester. For more information contact Rita Hay, Ph.D. program assistant at ritahay@uta.edu or 817-272-3928.

Expanding Cohort Programs for Fall 2017

Beginning with the Fall 2017 semester, the School of Social Work will expand the cohort program for BSW students wanting to take classes in Dallas, Fort Worth and online and for MSW students wanting to take classes in Dallas.

The Bachelor of Social Work program will offer a cohort program and classes at the UTA Fort Worth Center. In addition, to the Fort Worth Center location, the BSW program will also offer a cohort program in Dallas at a location still to be determined. The BSW cohort programs are designed for students transferring from community colleges, such as Tarrant County College or Dallas County Community College District and who want to take classes closer to home or work.

Although BSW students already have the option to take all classes online, beginning in Fall 2017 the program will offer a fully-online cohort program, similar to the MSW fully-online cohort program.

The Master of Social Work program will offer a cohort program in Dallas for graduate students interested in Direct Practice with Mental Health and Substance Abuse. MSW students will initially take most of their classes at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center campus in Dallas co-located with the School of Social Work's Center for Addiction and Recovery Studies (CARS). MSW students will have the opportunity to do their field placements with CARS. The MSW program has offered a cohort at the UTA Fort Worth Center for several years, but expanding the program to Dallas is an indication of the continued popularity and growth of this top ranked program. For more information about the cohort programs and admissions, go to the School of Social Work's website.



Faculty Notes & Highlights

Social Work Faculty Member Promoted from Associate Professor to Full Professor

The UTA President officially recognized Social Work Professor, Alexa Smith-Osborne and 12 other UTA professors on their advancement from associate professor to full professor in October at the annual Faculty Promotion and Tenure Dinner.

In addition, 17 UTA assistant professors received recognition for advancement to associate professor with tenure, and one received tenure at her current rank. [Read more.](#)



New Adoption Study Co-Sponsored by Dean Scott Ryan Released

A new study by The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work and [The Donaldson Adoption Institute](#) provides groundbreaking research on the experiences of first/birth parents and the need for best practices guidelines in options counseling for first time adoptees and birth parents.

The report, *Understanding Options Counseling Experiences in Adoption: A Quantitative Analysis of First/Birth Parents and Professionals*, was conducted by [Scott Ryan](#), dean and Jenkins Garrett Professor at the UTA School of Social Work; Elissa Madden, assistant professor at the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University; Donna Aguiniga, associate professor at the University of Alaska-Anchorage School of Social Work; and UTA doctoral candidate Marcus Crawford.

The primary objective of this study was to understand the decision-making experiences of women who have relinquished their parental rights to adoption within the past 25 years, as well as the context in which options surrounding crisis pregnancies are discussed with expectant parents by professionals in the adoption community. The current report represents Phase I of the study and includes findings from an online survey of 223 first/birth parents and an online survey of 141 adoption professionals. [Read more.](#)

Shall Ai Compare Thee? UTA Robot Recites Shakespeare for Science Study

This 2-foot-tall robot knows Shakespeare.

NAO doesn't just recite. It performs Sonnet 18 ([Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?](#)) with an actor's flourish. You can't help but get sucked into the performance.

[NAO](#) (pronounced "now") is a fascinating machine. It can tell stories, dance, answer questions and now, thanks to Julienne Greer, assistant professor of theatre arts: social robotics and performance, and the UT Arlington Research Institute, perform sonnets.



“I’m humanizing social robots so people want to interact with them more,” she said.

Greer doesn’t just want to pull a robot out of box and set it in front of a person.

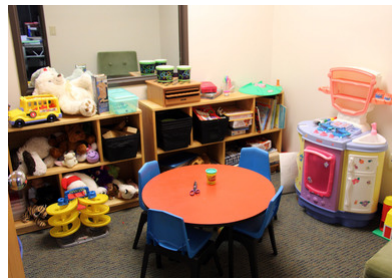
She will work with School of Social Work Assistant Professors Ling Xu and Noelle Fields and three Research Institute members: Kris Doelling, Mike McNair and Jeongsik Shin. [Read more.](#)

UTA School of Social Work Strengthens Commitment to Arlington ISD Students with Mental Health Services

The University of Texas at Arlington is renewing its partnership with the Arlington Independent School District to provide free treatment for students who show signs of disorders or mental health issues.

Guidance counselors who work for the school district refer students to the School of Social Work’s Center for Clinical Social Work director and professor Alexa Smith-Osborne.

Smith-Osborne and her staff of licensed clinical social workers, masters-level interns and externs diagnose, counsel and connect students with prescribers and local community mental health centers via a contract with the Arlington ISD. [Read more.](#)



Dr. Maria Scannapieco, SSW Professor

Assessing the needs of the American Indian Population in North Texas

Professor Maria Scannapieco of UTA's School of Social Work is one of four university professors collaborating with the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas to assess the needs of North Texas's urban American Indian population.

Scannapieco, who is director to the school's Center for Child Welfare, is studying the needs of a community overlooked despite calls for greater attention to what one scholar called an "urban Indian health care crisis," according to the project's assessment proposal.

Scannapieco is teaming up with professors from the colleges of Liberal Arts, Nursing, and UTA Libraries for the project. The interdisciplinary project focuses on creating a needs assessment of the urban-based American Indian population, which could ultimately serve as a national model for other urban American Indian organizations. Scannapieco's research could help further the work of community-based organizations and provide a foundation for ongoing research. This collaboration with the Urban Inter-Tribal Center has

already produced a proposal to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for a three-year grant to meet mental health needs for this community.

Social Work Professor to Serve on National Behavioral Health Curriculum Committee

UTA social work professor Alexa Smith-Osborne, was recently selected to serve on a national task group to better behavioral health curriculum.

Research points to a lag in the dissemination of quality, research-supported psycho-social interventions in the nation's behavioral health workforce, according to an Institute of Medicine report, Psychosocial Interventions for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders: A Framework for Establishing Evidence-Based Standards.

“The new report makes it clear that little has changed in the past decade. Not only are new therapists not trained in the very treatments that have been shown to work, therapists in practice continue to operate as they were taught decades earlier,” according to a blog by Thomas Insel, former director to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Because of this, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration launched a national initiative to eradicate the issue by starting with a focus on diagnoses among our youth, Smith-Osborne said.



Dr. Alexa Smith-Osborne
SSW Professor



Dr. Vijayan Pillai, SSW Professor

Professor Presents Women's Reproductive Rights Research

Professor Vijayan Pillai was recently invited to speak at the Institute of Social Investigations at the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon in Monterrey, Mexico.

Pillai spoke about how ensuring women's reproductive rights in developing countries is fundamental to developing healthcare delivery systems that can improve their health. The talk in Mexico was in connection with the 15th year celebration of the institute on Nov. 25.

Pillai participated in a global lecture in Sri Lanka as a Prof. David Cox International Social Work lecture awardee. The lecture was instituted in recognition of the adjunct professor it was named for who teaches social work at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, La Trobe University, Melbourne. Read more.

Professor Named Pioneer of Social Work

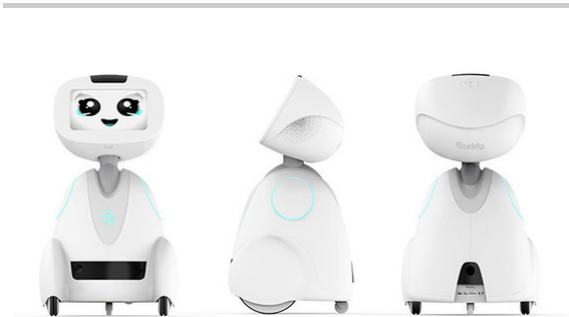
Professor [Catheleen Jordan](#) was named a [Social Work Pioneer](#) by the National Association of Social Workers Foundation. Jordan has taught at UTA since 1985. Her areas of expertise are family social work assessment and intervention.



Dr. Cathleen Jordan, SSW Professor

NASW Pioneers are social workers who have made important contributions to the social work profession and to social policies, according to the foundation's website. Jordan has been a member of NASW for 37 years.

The book she co-authored, *Clinical Assessment with Social Workers: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods*, was recently named one of the [100 Great Books for the Social Worker's Library](#).



School of Social Work Receives Two of Four 2016 UTA Interdisciplinary Research Program Grants for Innovative Ideas that Address High-Priority Issues in Society

UTA awarded four seed grants to interdisciplinary research projects that address growing problems such as loneliness among the elderly, the need for sustainable green education spaces, the health crisis among urban American Indians or the mechanisms behind heart failure among the elderly.

“All these awards represent important research innovations and could create a real impact in society,” said Duane Dimos, UTA vice president for research. “By taking advantage of the multiple perspectives offered by interdisciplinary research, the winning teams have proposed new ways of attacking real world problems, demonstrating yet again the commitment of our faculty to the highest level of scholarship.” [Read more.](#)

Social Work Professor Earns Distinguished Fulbright Scholar Award

[Eusebius Small](#), assistant professor at The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work, was named a prestigious Fulbright Scholar for the Republic of Sierra Leone at the University of Sierra Leone, College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences.



Dr. Eusebius Small, SSW Assistant Professor

The recognition comes with a fellowship grant worth up to \$100,000 over 10 months that will be used to research the social and environmental factors that contribute to HIV incidence, contraceptive use, and prenatal health and decision-making outcomes among women between 17 and 40 years of age in Sierra Leone. [Read more](#)

Two Social Work Professors Appointed to Professorship Endowments



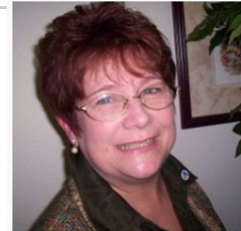
Dr. Beverly
Black, SSW
Professor

Beverly Black, professor and Ph.D. program director at the UTA School of Social Work, has been appointed to the Jillian Michelle Smith Professorship in Family Violence Research. Professor Black's research focuses on sexual assault, adolescent dating violence, prevention programming and domestic violence.

The endowment is named after Arlington, Texas Police Officer Jillian Michelle Smith, who graduated cum laude from UTA in August 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminology and criminal justice and a minor in sociology. She later graduated from the Arlington Police Academy in February 2010 and was responding to a domestic violence call when she was fatally shot in December 2010. Smith was heralded as a hero because she placed herself between the gunman and a child, ultimately saving the 11-year-old girl.

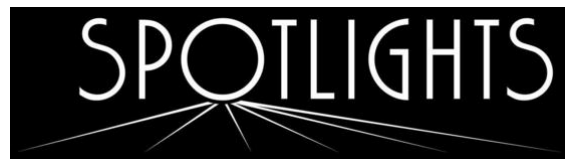
Alexa Smith-Osborne, professor and the director of the UTA School of Social Work's Center for Clinical Social Work, has been appointed to the Cheryl Milkes Moore Professorship in Mental Health Research. Much of Professor Smith-Osborne's research focuses on child and adolescent mental health, as well as military and veteran health care.

The endowment is named after Cheryl Milkes Moore, who was a highly successful attorney and in 2009 decided to obtain a master's degree in social work at UTA. Moore died in April 2010 in the final semester of the master's program. Moore was a strong advocate for people suffering from mental health issues.



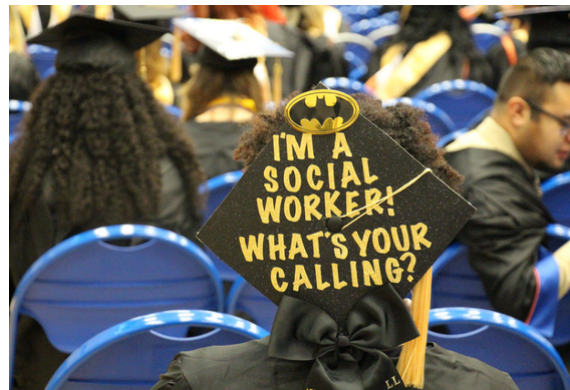
Dr. Alexa Smith-
Osborne, SSW
Professor

Student Notes



Fall 2016 Commencement Photos - Video

The University of Texas at Arlington, School of Social Work students graduated Dec. 16, 2016 at 11 a.m. in the College Park Center. Family, friends and faculty celebrated the accomplishments and new adventures of the Fall 2016 graduates. There were two Ph.D., 144 MSW and 69 BSW social work graduates for the Fall 2016 semester. Congrats!



Click [here](#) to see our commencement photos on Flickr and click [here](#) to see the video for the entire ceremony.

**Phi Alpha Honor Society Collects School
Supplies, Donates to Middle School**



The [Phi Alpha Honor Society](#) held a collection drive for school supplies during the Spring semester and recently donated the items to the Lucyle Collins Middle School. The Phi Alpha Honor Society is one of many Social Work student organizations currently accepting new members. Click [here](#) for SSW student organizations.

Message from the Dean About the Tragic Death of Social Work Student, Eneyda Lisette Sorto

With deepest regrets, I must inform you of the loss of one of our own.

On November 16, a student from our school, Eneyda Lisette Sorto (who went by her middle name), died tragically after being hit by a car while crossing the street.



We are all saddened by this loss and we send our condolences to her family and friends. With tragic accidents like this, some students may find it helpful to speak with a counselor. We are sensitive to this and strongly encourage any student to speak with someone, if needed. [Read more.](#)

Graduate Student Presents Research at Conference

Graduate student Rhadiyah Mosley has experience working with people marginalized by society: Foster children and the homeless.

Mosley is an expert in trauma — at least, she wants to be.

Currently pursuing a master's degree in social work, Mosley presented her research at the National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter conference early October. The theme of this year's conference was "Leading Change and Transforming Lives."



Rhadiyah Mosley (right), MSW student presents her poster with Kiva Harper, SSW assistant professor in practice.

Mosley submitted her work, a poster titled "A Neurobiological Perspective of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," as part of the conference's Student Poster Presentation session, which is designed to give students the opportunity to gain professional research experience. Research may increase the knowledge and awareness social workers need to advocate and provide appropriate treatment, according to Mosley's poster. [Read more.](#)



Rebecca Liles, MSW Student

MSW Student Receives \$5,000 Scholarship for Mental Health Studies

Rebecca Liles, master of social work student, received a \$5,000 scholarship June 1 from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

Liles received one of 14 scholarships given to promising graduate social work students in Texas each year by the Hogg foundation.

The scholarship is named after and was created in 1956 by Houston philanthropist, Ima Hogg. The foundation provides support to students who show an interest in mental health services and plan to work in Texas and in that field as a trained social worker. [Read more.](#)

Doctoral Student Receives National Award for Gerontology Association

Vivian Miller, a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work and a licensed master social worker, received the seventh cohort of the pre-dissertation initiative award from the Association for Gerontology Education in Social Work May 27.

The purpose of the Pre-Dissertation Initiative is to provide support to doctoral students during the dissertation process and to help prepare them for an academic career in gerontological social work research and education. The national award is granted to doctoral students who complete their first year of doctoral studies. Miller competed against other doctoral students across the country for the pre-dissertation award.

"Vivian is a bright student and is well-deserving of this national award. She has a promising career ahead of her in gerontology and social work. Vivian represents UTA School of Social Work and the profession well," said Dr. Noelle Fields, social work assistant professor. [Read more.](#)



Vivian Miller, SSW
Doctoral Student

Ph.D. Student Receives Prestigious Leadership Award in Gerontology, 3rd Year for School of Social Work



Rupal Parekh, SSW
Doctoral Student

The Association of Gerontology Education in Social Work announced in August, Rupal Parekh, a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work, will be the recipient of the Doctoral Student Leadership Award for 2016.

In November, Parekh received the leadership award in New Orleans, La., during the association's 69th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America. Parekh, who is in her third year of doctoral studies, previously received a pre-dissertation cohort initiative award in 2014 from the same association.

“The recognition is very special to me on both a personal and academic level,” said Parekh. “I feel honored that my work in the field of aging is being recognized on a national level and that I am part of an impressive group of scholars in the field of aging and social work.” [Read more.](#)



Alumni Notes

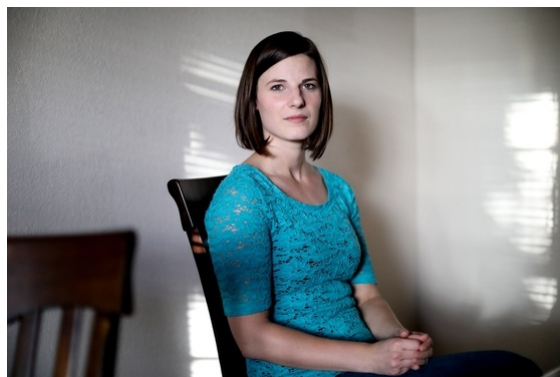
MSW Alumna Educates Foster Youth on Tuition, Education Training Vouchers

Shortly before her ninth birthday, Briana Dovi and her five siblings were placed into foster care in Central Texas. Dovi enrolled in school for the first time, battling speech disorders and dyslexia.

"My siblings and I only interacted with one another, which caused our language skills to be underdeveloped," Dovi said. "When we were placed into [foster] care, we did not speak true English."

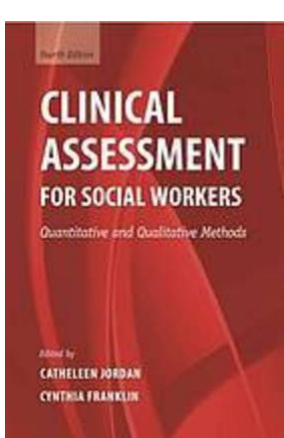
Today, all six siblings have college diplomas — and Dovi has a master's degree — but they didn't spend a penny on tuition, thanks to a 1993 state program.

In Texas, foster youths are eligible for waived college tuition and education training vouchers as long as they enroll before their 25th birthday. But many eligible students do not take advantage of the program. [Read more.](#)



Briana Dovi

UTA School of Social Work Alumna



Alumna gets Inducted into Academy of Social Work

UTA Alumna Cynthia Franklin was recently inducted into the Academy of Social Work and Welfare as a fellow.

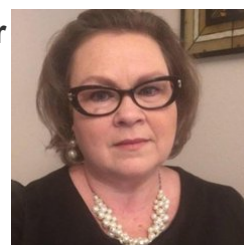
Her induction ceremony will take place at the Society for Social Work and Research's [21st Annual Conference](#) Jan. 11-15 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Franklin is the Associate Dean for Doctoral Education and the [Stiernberg/Spencer Family Professor in Mental Health](#) in the School of Social Work at The University of Texas at Austin.

She received her master's and doctorate degrees from The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work. The book she co-authored with UTA social work professor [Cathleen Jordan](#), "Clinical Assessment with Social Workers: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods," was recently named on the [100 Great Books for the Social Worker's Library](#). The fourth edition published in the winter of 2015.

December Graduate Overcome Obstacles, Pushing Past Partner Violence, Cancer

Constance Siegal survived 22 years of Intimate Partner Violence before she left and enrolled at UTA in 2010.

Siegel "Connie" was diagnosed with cancer while she was pursuing her bachelor's degree in Social Work, and only missed one day of school despite her five surgeries to graduate in 2013. While an undergraduate student and days following major surgery, Siegal took her mid-term exams with a machine attached to her body.



Constance "Connie" Siegal

UTA School of Social Work Alumna

Siegal was diagnosed with cancer again while in the master's program, and again only missed one day of school despite six surgeries this time around. She had her surgeries in the morning so she could make class at night. Her latest surgery left her with a traumatic brain injury, which impacts her short-term memory making it harder for her to learn new material and on top of everything she is also unable to use her vocal chords for three months. Although she is only breathing at 80 percent, Siegal received her master's degree on December 16.

MSW December Graduate, Veteran Keeps Fighting



David Babbs, MSW Student

David Babbs is a disabled veteran who is passionate about social justice. The MSW student was recently appointed to the steering committee for the new National Association of Social Workers Texas sub organization "REAL"— Race, Equality, Accountability and Leadership. Babbs is a first-generation college graduate.

This is the first time his mother will see him graduate when he crosses the stage for commencement December 2016. He is active in a number of organizations within the School of Social Work and UTA.

He is co-host of a new podcast on YouTube called, "The Help Show," which was started by a MSW student and occupational therapist in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Babbs is traveling to Africa via a Health Resources and Services Administration stipend to do volunteer social services with children affected by HIV. He has applied to the school's Ph.D. program at the same time.

Holiday Luncheon



Faculty and staff munch on fajitas and sweets at the UTA School of Social



Dean Ryan presents Amy Lopez (left), field advisor to the master of social

Work's annual faculty and staff holiday luncheon Dec. 8.

work program, with a "Going the Extra Mile" (G.E.M.) award.



Dean Scott Ryan congratulates Social Work Accountant Lisa Wagner (left) with a G.E.M. award at the annual School of Social Work faculty and staff holiday luncheon.



Field Placement: The open registration for summer field placement is January 2 to March 3, 2017. Open registration for fall field placement is May 1 to June 20, 2017.

A Community Conversation with UTA: School of Social Work students, faculty, and staff are welcome to attend an event discussing mental health and substance abuse issues 5:30-7:30 p.m. Feb. 7, 2017 on the 6th floor atrium of the UTA Central Library.

Paper Tigers Movie: The School of Social Work partnered with the Hope Cottage Pregnancy and Adoption Center to bring the "Paper Tigers" documentary to the UTA campus. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to attend this film presentation 6-9 p.m. March 30, 2017 in the Lone Star Auditorium at the Maverick Activities Center. Free to the community.

SSWR Reception: The School of Social Work will host a reception on Jan. 13, 2017 at the Annual Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) conference. The reception will take place 8-9:30 p.m. in Galerie 4 of the New Orleans Marriott Hotel, 555 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70130.

Holiday Giving



Your support for our School of Social Work and the university can make a significant impact on our students this season. Your donation helps support scholarships and other school programs.

Give to the School of Social Work:

<https://www.uta.edu/ssw/giving/giving-to-school.php>

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