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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL WORK:

In Our Own Words

USC College of Social Work Faculty
2025 – 2026



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



Teri Browne
PhD, MSW
Dean / Professor
brownetm@mailbox.sc.edu

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The faculty at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work bring outstanding scholarship, community engagement and a wealth of experience to share with the students they teach.

Each member of our faculty lends a unique voice to a cohesive curriculum that allows our students opportunities for individual exploration into the realms of social work that influence our world and benefit our community.

I have the privilege of working with these remarkable individuals and I want to give you the opportunity to hear from them, in their own words, as they share their impact on the field of social work and its impact on them. Whether it is through research, teaching or administration, we all have something to share.

For example, the research that I do explores psychosocial barriers to health outcomes and the role of social workers in leading interventions that promote well-being and health. Grounded in my social work clinical experience, much of my research and service is in kidney disease and focuses on addressing barriers to kidney transplant parity in the Southeastern United States.

I encourage you to take a few minutes and get to know the USC College of Social Work faculty, use this book to contact us and maybe even lend your voice to our chorus to advance the field of social work.

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University of South Carolina College of Social Work Faculty



Brandi Anderson

PhD, LICSW, SSW, CFSW, RYT

**Director of the I. DeQuincey Newman
Institute and Director of Innovative
ACCESS (Access, Culture, Community
Engagement, and Student Success)**

bbrisker@email.sc.edu

I make a difference by being unforgettable. Unforgettably grateful for where I am in life, humbled to have the opportunity to impart wisdom upon the next generation of scholars, and thankful to be among the amazing faculty, students, and staff at USC. I make a difference by encouraging each of my students to be unforgettably, unapologetically, who they are... flaws and all.

Serving SC Proudly

We're assisting South Carolina residents with a world-class education as 79% of our students hail from SC.



Nathaniel Bell

PhD

**Director of Research and Evaluation,
Institute for Child and Family Studies**

nathaniel@email.sc.edu

My work incorporates geographic information systems as well as linked administrative and medical claims databases. These resources are beneficial for community needs assessments, analyzing service provision catchments, as well as showing where services are having the greatest impact.

The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



Jennifer Bosio-McArdle

MSW

Lecturer

bosio@mailbox.sc.edu

I make an impact by facilitating the integration of classroom-based and practicum learning. By leveraging my practical experience and expertise in practicum-based learning I implement experiential learning experiences that cultivate students' critical thinking skills, reflective capacity, and ability to synthesize knowledge and core competencies, empowering them to confidently navigate the diverse and complex landscape of social work practice.



Lana Hart Elkins

LMSW

Senior Lecturer / Director of Assessment & Compliance

lhelkins@sc.edu

I make an impact through leading competency-based education and assessment activities and ensuring the college's compliance with accreditation standards as defined by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Our accrediting body emphasizes the importance of a program's learning environment, and because of this I prioritize establishing and nurturing collaborative, safe, and meaningful relationships with all members of our college community.

Big School, Small Classes

Small class sizes allow the feel of a private school while students have the opportunities of a large flagship university.

University of South Carolina College of Social Work Faculty



Rhonda DiNovo

MSW, LISW-CP, ADC, MSW Program Director, Coordinator of Graduate Drug and Addiction Studies, Clinical Assistant Professor
dinovo@mailbox.sc.edu

I make an impact through teaching social work principles and evidence based practices in the interdisciplinary areas of mental and behavioral health. Other work I love to do involves supervising students in advanced practicum at the West Columbia Outreach Program, a police social work outreach service offered through the West Columbia Police Department that provides brief screening, assessment and referral to treatment services and community resources to those in mental health and substance use crisis.

Community Outreach

Last year fully trained MSW students partnered with the West Columbia Police Department to assist on 156 emergency calls and engage with 1,325 clients.



John Doering-White
PhD, MSW
Associate Professor, College of Social Work, Department of Anthropology
doeringj@mailbox.sc.edu

My research primarily focuses on Central American migration to the United States, with a particular focus on humanitarian organizations that provide humanitarian aid to people migrating through Mexico. I am an ethnographer who works in collaboration with organizations to understand and help address the complex needs of vulnerable immigrant communities.

The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words

Significant Community Contribution

Students contribute approximately 125,000 volunteer hours annually, valued at about \$1 million to South Carolina's economy.



Scott Fairweather
MSW, LISW-CP, LCSW, MAC
Lecturer
fairweat@mailbox.sc.edu

“ The work that I do focuses on the implementation of evidence based practices to treat conditions including: suicide and self harm behaviors, PTSD, OCD, and substance use disorders. I hope my years of experience in clinical practice will be a resource to the students in the College of Social Work. ”



E. Ann Gowdy
PhD, LISW-CP, MSW
Lecturer
egowdy@mailbox.sc.edu

“ Through my focus on cross-sector collaboration I work to create seamless systems to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness through advocacy, education, and policy (or policy, program development, and systems processes). I work to educate future social work trail blazers who will break down barriers and lead system wide change. ”

Autism Assistance

Over 406 parents/caregivers in SC and NC have received support for their child with Autism Spectrum Disorder in professor Rob Hock's research studies.



Breanne (Bre) Grace

PhD

Associate Professor /

Faculty Principal

breanneg@mailbox.sc.edu

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I make an impact through my research on forced migration and refugee rights. I have presented my research findings at the United Nations, to the government of Tanzania, and to US congressional staffers. My research analyzes current migration policies and refugees' experiences of these policies. I also make an impact through my role as Faculty Principal at Maxcy and Thornwell Colleges as I connect students with interests in global affairs with campus, community, and global resources to facilitate global learning.

”



Robert Hock

PhD, LMSW

Associate Professor

roberth@mailbox.sc.edu

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My work helps families of young children find healing and growth. I teach social work students that awareness and knowledge of themselves are critical to helping others heal. In partnership with communities, I create family interventions that impact parenting skills and confidence, family relationships, and access to services for young children with autism spectrum disorder.

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The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



Stephanie Hunter

DSW, LMSW

Clinical Assistant Professor,

Undergraduate Program Director

shunter@mailbox.sc.edu

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I see learning as a shared journey shaped by the diverse experiences each of us carries. Our lived experiences are powerful sources of wisdom, and when we come together in a space that honors that, every voice becomes essential. Regardless of our backgrounds, appearances, or beliefs, we each bring something unique and necessary to the conversation. In my teaching, I strive to create a space where roles of teacher and learner are fluid, where students and educators learn from one another through open dialogue, reflection, and connection. This teaching philosophy is rooted in mutual respect, empathy, and a commitment to growth. Beyond the classroom, my work has focused on forensic social work for over two decades, particularly in the context of criminal indigent defense. My academic and professional interests lie at the intersection of neuroscience, the criminal legal system, and the social forces that shape human behavior.

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First-Gen Impact

A strong first-generation presence — more than 35% — drives our commitment to opening new doors in social work.



Aidyn Iachini

PhD, MSW, LSW

Professor / Associate Dean for

Research and Faculty

iachini@mailbox.sc.edu

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Through my research and teaching, I hope to make an impact in how social workers are trained and prepared 1) to provide mental and behavioral health services to youth in school and community-based settings and 2) to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. And, ultimately, as a result, I hope that my work makes a difference in the lives of children and families who receive these services.

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University of South Carolina College of Social Work Faculty



Sue Levkoff
ScD, MSW, SM
Professor / SmartHOME
Endowed Chair
slevkoff@mailbox.sc.edu

“ I am a social gerontologist, making an impact through my research, which focuses on the development and evaluation of behavioral and technology-enabled interventions to improve the ability of older adults to age in place in their homes and communities. I also would like to think that I make an impact through the mentoring of COSW doctoral students and junior faculty. I am passionate about providing research education in aging to HBCU undergraduates, with the goal of developing a research workforce that will effectively address the challenges facing our increasingly diverse aging society. ”

A Positive Choice

Field placement choices number over 250, meaning students have an abundance of opportunities to follow their chosen path to serving others.



Parthenia Luke
PhD
Lecturer / Bridge to Faculty Fellow
lukep@email.sc.edu

“ I prioritize the human right to be and to belong in my research, in my teaching, and in my practice. I believe that people have a right to not only exist in space, place, and time, but to also have their presence valued. I have high expectations for the future of social work and look for opportunities to be on the vanguard of social change. ”

The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words

Real World Implications

Partnering with over 250 agencies across South Carolina, we provide students with practical career experience.



Candice Morgan

PhD, MSW, LMSW

**Assistant Professor / Site Coordinator,
Greenville MSW Program**

morganancr@email.sc.edu



I try to make an impact through classroom teaching, community training, and student mentoring. In the classroom and as a field educator, I hope to prepare students to work as competent social workers who treat every client with dignity and respect. In collaboration with other faculty, I prepare and deliver trainings to address behavioral health issues in rural and medically underserved parts of SC. As the site coordinator for our Greenville Extended Time MSW program, I mentor and support students as they move through the program.



Michael Ottone

LISW-CP/S, LCSW/S, CPM

**Clinical Senior Instructor / Coordinator
of Continuing Education and
Combination Degrees**

ottone@mailbox.sc.edu



As a professional/clinical faculty, I primarily impact our students in the classroom by helping them to develop their 'social worker' perspectives and practices. Helping them integrate their learning into their practicum and prepare to transition to the professional world is a fulfilling and collaborative experience!



University of South Carolina College of Social Work Faculty



Shaun Owens

PhD, MPH

Associate Professor, Associate Director for Strategy and Innovation, SmartHOME Center for Economic Excellence

owenso@mailbox.sc.edu

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I develop innovative technology-based interventions for cancer decision making and aging in place for people with a variety of health conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. For example, my latest research seeks to refine and evaluate a technology-based remote monitoring system for rural dwelling African-American adults who are suffering from Alzheimer's or related dementias. We hope that one day we can identify digital biomarkers that can signal us when a person is experiencing cognitive decline and how fast that person's cognition is declining. Similar technology might also allow a person living with dementia to be able to age in their homes safely by alerting someone like a caregiver or a clinician when a person is experiencing some type of critical health or safety concern. My work is important because it will help improve the quality of life for the 125,000+ people who are living with this deadly disease.

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Top 20%

We're ranked in the top 20% of social work programs nationally by *U.S. News & World Report*.



Patrice Penney

MSW, LISW-CP-S

Assistant Professor, Coordinator,

Trauma Informed Practice Certificate

patricep@mailbox.sc.edu

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We live in a world impacted by trauma. As an experienced practitioner, I make an impact through engaging, teaching, and training students, organizations, and systems of care in trauma-informed and responsive practice, in the College, community, and internationally. I'm passionate about supporting healing for youth and their families, including youth orphaned, displaced, and in foster care.

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The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



Melania Popa-Mabe

PhD

Associate Professor

melania@mailbox.sc.edu

My work focuses on macro social work, teaching social theory and social policy courses, developing electives that help connect macro issues to personal experience. I serve as the faculty sponsor of our student's association, SPAM - Students Promoting Advocacy through Macro Social Work. In my teaching and course development I am striving to promote experiential learning, by centering students' experience and interests and help connecting them to our local and global community. I support students' engagement in international social work via collaborations with Romanian social work universities, creating opportunities for travel abroad courses and global classroom experiences.

Supporting the Educational Journey

Over \$150,000 in annual scholarships empower our students to become the next generation of social workers.



Ben Roth

PhD, MSW

Associate Dean for Curriculum

Associate Professor

rothbj@mailbox.sc.edu

My research examines the intersection of immigration and social stratification, with a focus on youth and the institutional barriers to mobility they face. I collaborate with schools and human service organizations both in the U.S. and abroad to generate knowledge that informs equitable policy and practice. My goal is to advance social mobility and inclusion for immigrant youth and families navigating systemic disadvantage.

Professional Footprint

Graduates work in diverse settings, including major medical centers, corporations and even professional sports franchises, showcasing the versatility of a social work degree.



Kristen Seay

PhD, MSW

PhD Program Director

Associate Professor

kdseay@mailbox.sc.edu

“

My research examines the intersection of immigration and social stratification, with a focus on youth and the institutional barriers to mobility they face. I collaborate with schools and human service organizations both in the U.S. and abroad to generate knowledge that informs equitable policy and practice. My goal is to advance social mobility and inclusion for immigrant youth and families navigating systemic disadvantage.

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Cheri Shapiro

PhD

Associate Professor / Director,

Institute for Families in Society

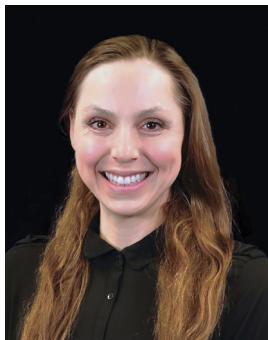
cshapiro@mailbox.sc.edu

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My work focuses on implementing evidence-based parenting and mental health interventions in real life settings to improve child, youth and family well-being. The defining feature of my research and scholarship is that it must have practical implications for families, providers and/or policy-makers. Leading the Institute for Families in Society, a research unit affiliated with COSW, has allowed me to reach and further my translational research goals.

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The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



Margaret Janse van Rensburg

PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor

jansevam@mailbox.sc.edu

I believe that creating and sustaining healthy communities and contributing positively to the public good is the purpose of social work and social work education. My program of research focuses on enhancing the wellbeing of individuals and communities, with a specific focus on autism, neurodivergence, and disability. Through research, teaching, and practice, I am committed to integrating the lived experiences of individuals and communities so that social work is grounded in the realities and priorities of our clients. I am excited to support students across the College of Social Work in developing practices that help individuals and communities address their unique needs and challenges.

Grads Stay in-State

Our programs produce the largest number of social workers in SC and include classroom sites in Charleston, Columbia and Greenville.



Betty Wilson

PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor

wilso479@email.sc.edu

I make an impact through my research on structural police violence and psychological trauma in historically marginalized communities. As an activist scholar, I focus on justice-informed efforts to address policing disparities as well as the development and implementation of culturally-specific interventions to mitigate adverse health outcomes associated with police violence exposure.

University of South Carolina College of Social Work Faculty



Terry Wolfer

PhD, MSW

Professor

terry.wolfer@sc.edu

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I promote the case method of teaching among social work educators through faculty development workshops, case writing, and research. My current case writing projects — on interprofessional collaboration to address interpersonal violence, religion and spirituality in social work practice, international social work with refugees, and diversity in social work practice — will provide resources for classroom use. I'm consulting with and providing training about use of decision cases for a statewide child welfare project in Florida. I'm also writing about the use of case method to navigate contentious issues, build constructive conflict skills, and foster critical thinking for professional practice.

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Bongki Woo

PhD

Associate Professor

woob@mailbox.sc.edu

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I focus on the health and mental health of racial, ethnic and immigrant minority populations. My work examines social sources of stress and cultural contexts that determine the health and well-being of people of color.

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Wellness at the Top

A prayer and meditation room, lactation room, lending library and a student lounge are just a few aspects of the student wellness experience at Hamilton.

The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



Nikki Wooten

PhD, LISW-CP

**Coordinator, Graduate Certificate
in Social and Behavioral Health
with Military Members, Veterans,
and Military Families**

Associate Professor

nwooten@sc.edu

“

Using US Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs data, I make an impact by conducting research on mental health, substance use, and service utilization among military service members, veterans, and military families. The work that I do has implications for military and veteran health policy, and military social work education and practice. With over three decades of military service, my research, teaching, and service are an extension of my personal commitment to military service members and veterans.

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Legacy and Leadership

Since its establishment in 1969, our college has been dedicated to enhancing the well-being of individuals, families and communities.



Margriet de Zeeuw Wright

PhD, MSW

Associate Professor

**MSW Online Program Coordinator, Site
Coordinator, Charleston MSW program**

margriet@mailbox.sc.edu

“

I make an impact by cultivating a love for lifelong learning in our students. My goals in teaching are to help our students find their strengths, be curious about why things are the way they are, and gain skills for creating change.

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One and Only Ph.D.

While we're the only social work PhD program in the state, our graduates have a proven track record of great scholarship and classroom teaching experience.



Yanfeng Xu

PhD, MSW

Associate Professor

yanfeng@mailbox.sc.edu



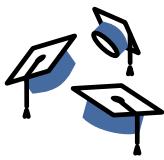
I make an impact through conducting intervention and observational research to improve kinship caregivers' capacity and kinship children's well-being. My research also increases foster children's access to mental health services in South Carolina and beyond.



Helping SC's High School Students

Improving the mental health of high school students in Midlands schools is the focus of a BlueCross million dollar grant through faculty research.

The Impact of Social Work: In Our Own Words



6,129
In-state graduates



252

Field placements per
academic year



30%
First generation students



\$1,870,000
Saved in service
hours to SC



\$144,000
Of scholarships awarded



110,000
Hours of service
in the community



ONLY
PhD social work program in SC



**Scan to learn more about the
USC College of Social Work faculty**

sc.edu/socialwork