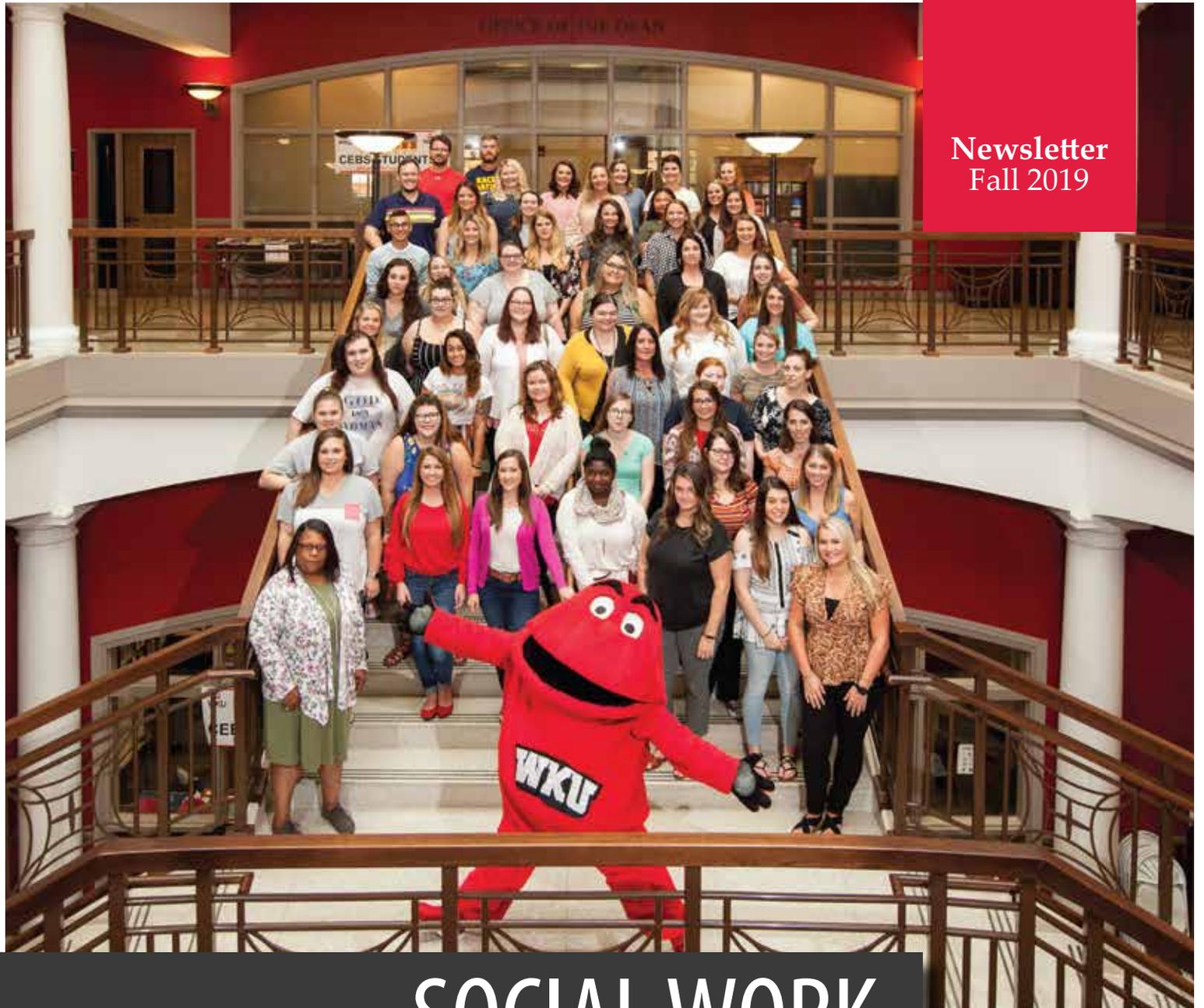


Newsletter
Fall 2019



SOCIAL WORK THE LEADER



College of Health & Human Services

Department of Social Work | 270.745.5312 | swrk@wku.edu | College of Health & Human Services



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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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NEW SPACE!

Greetings from the new Department of Social Work main office! In case you haven't heard, the entire Social Work Department now resides on the first floor of Academic Complex. The main office suite is AC 110, and our new updated space serves our needs well with a new student area (AC 117) and a new meeting room space. Please come visit!

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

Following our successful Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) reaffirmations of the BSW and MSW programs last year, we continue to stay focused on enhancing our current programs as well as considering new possibilities. We are in process of exploring additional programming including a child welfare education and research center, a Doctorate of Social Work (DSW), and additional inter-professional education opportunities within WKU and with other universities. These projects will enhance student opportunities and provide focus to our departmental mission: to provide quality programs that prepare competent and responsible professionals to work successfully in a global society. Additional departmental priorities this year include increasing faculty diversity, increasing the number of online courses/electives offered, increasing major donors and scholarships available to students, and strengthening existing partnerships and establishing additional ones. If you are interested in partnering, please contact me!

In addition to educating the newest members of the workforce, the Social Work Department currently adds value to both WKU and local communities through a variety of activities. These include providing field placement students to regional agencies; providing CEUs to practicing social workers; and partnering with local agencies on research, education, and service projects. Any alumni or community members that would like to get involved with these activities may contact me for further information on how to make a difference with our department. Your ideas and energy are vital to helping us accomplish our mission!

MEET OUR TEAM

■ Department Head
Dr. Patricia Desrosiers

■ Acting MSW Online Program Director
Dr. April L. Murphy

■ MSW Program Director
Dr. Sandra Starks

■ BSW Program Director
Dr. Simon Funge

■ BSW & MSW Field Director
Kelly McIntyre, MSW



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."

MSW ONLINE COHORT

Programs of social work education aim to prepare students to continue the fight – to have grit in the face of adversity and structural inequities that are persistent in today’s society.



The profession of social work traces its roots back to the late 19th century, with individuals like Jane Addams and Mary Richmond leading the charge. While somewhat focused on separate ends of the social work practice continuum, with Addams being more macro-focused and Richmond being more micro-focused, they epitomized what it meant to be a professional social worker. They got in the trenches and fought the hard fights when those fights were not popular. They fought for things like equity and social justice – things that continue to be important to social workers today.

Programs of social work education aim to prepare students to continue the fight – to have grit in the face of adversity and structural inequities that are persistent in today’s society. This is why social work education is so critical – those who graduate from Master of Social Work (MSW) programs must be adequately prepared to work on multiple levels, including helping vulnerable populations one-on-one in therapeutic settings as well as advocating for systemic change in communities, organizations, and globally.

The mission of the MSW Program at WKU is “to prepare students for advanced professional social work practice to meet the needs of increasingly diverse rural populations in the community, in Kentucky, and in a global society.” One way the MSW program has sought to meet the needs of our community is by offering a completely online MSW program. In some cases, this is the only way that students can earn their MSW degree. Some students cannot attend a brick and mortar institution because of family and/or work obligations or transportation challenges that often arise in predominantly rural areas. We are humbled that, with the



ever-increasing number of online MSW program options, they choose to earn their MSW degree from WKU. The Online MSW Program admitted its first online cohort of Part-Time Advanced Standing students in the Fall of 2016. Since then, we have admitted two more Part-Time Advanced Standing cohorts and one Part-Time Traditional cohort. There are currently 33 online MSW students, with 11 new Part-Time Advanced Standing students being admitted this August. Students in this most recent cohort come from a variety of counties within Kentucky, stretching from Graves County in Western Kentucky to Franklin County in Northeastern Kentucky. We also admitted one student who is currently residing in the state of Illinois. We are excited to welcome these students and provide them with the training and education to become professional social workers in the communities from which they come.

For me, as the Acting Online Cohort Coordinator, offering a completely online MSW program is an ethical obligation. I believe that, as a social worker, I have the responsibility to provide equitable access to quality education so students can be prepared to face the number of social issues present in today’s world. Some of the social issues the newly admitted cohort are passionate about include child welfare, human trafficking, and access to clinical services in rural areas. I am honored to be able to be part of their social work journey and excited about the possibilities their future’s hold.

ALUMNI FOCUS

Written By **ASHLEY BARNES**



I became interested in the field of social work when one of my best friends at WKU talked me into taking an intro to Social Work class. Honestly, I didn't even know what a social worker was or what their career consisted of. After my first class, I was hooked. I learned how a person's environment directly affects who they are, and how social workers can help alleviate barriers in other's lives by working hand in hand with that individual. I learned about the wide variety of career options in social work, and that I could help support families in whatever situation they were in.

After declaring SWRK as a major I then moved forward with the PCWCP program (Public Child Welfare Certification Program). The goal of this program is to fill the ranks of child welfare workers with the most competent and well-trained individuals who can provide high quality services immediately following graduation/employment. After being accepted into the PCWCP program and graduating in 2005, I accepted a position on the Intake/Investigation team in Warren County. I spent several years investigating abuse/neglect, going to court, and assisting families in becoming the best they could be while also making sure their children were safe. I then transitioned to the role of Recruitment and Certification Worker for DCBS where I helped to train foster and adoptive parents. I spent a total of ten years at DCBS, but really it feels like a lifetime worth of knowledge and experience. I would always suggest that someone who wants to work in the field of social work start their career at DCBS. The first-hand experience and the relationships built are something that can not be taught by a textbook. I also received my MSW and CSW while at DCBS.

After DCBS I went to work for a local mental health counseling center, Wilson Counseling. While there I received my LCSW and valuable knowledge regarding the vast field of mental health. I learned about all local and statewide resources for those with mental health needs. I grew professionally through trainings and the first-hand experience with my clients.

After two years in private practice, I realized my desire was to be in the school setting and work with children and families within the school system. In 2017, I accepted a position with the Warren County Public School system as a District Mental Health Counselor. In this position, I am able to provide mental health services within the school setting. I am able to see children in one of their safest environments--school. Kids come to school daily and carry the weight of abuse, neglect, trauma, grief, loss, educational struggles, abandonment, and mental health needs. WCPS is able to provide services to all children who experience things that affect their normal day to day functioning in the classroom. We all know that education is key to success in the future. If I can help a child by spending a few extra minutes with them when they are struggling it is worth it.

I encourage each of you to follow your heart and find the area of social work that sparks a passion in your life. There are so many vulnerable children and families out there who could use a caring adult to walk beside them on this journey.

BSW UPDATE

WKU's BSW program team continues to work hard to develop and produce competent social work professionals for our region.

In fact, by year-end, 67 students will graduate from the program, and we are confident that these new colleagues will make significant contributions to our profession in the region. In fact, four out of 10 of these graduates hail from our campuses in Elizabethtown and Owensboro.



*Dr. Simon Funge
BSW Program Coordinator*

Our recent and soon-to-be BSW graduates are selected for a series of awards each May for outstanding accomplishments while in the BSW program. This year's deserving recipients were:

- Outstanding BSW Student: Emma Robbins (WKU Bowling Green), Alisha Blais (WKU Elizabethtown), and Lauren Berry (WKU Owensboro)
- BSW Research Award: Kazandra Trejo (WKU Bowling Green)
- Outstanding BSW Field Award: Cassie Puckett (WKU Owensboro)

We will be showcasing these graduates as well as close to 70 prior BSW award recipients with a series of perpetual plaques to be displayed at each of our campuses. The earliest named award recipient from our archives was Cynthia Jo Calvert who was awarded the Social Work Service Award in 1988 when the BSW program was housed in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work! Our hope is that Ms. Calvert and those named on these plaques from the past 30 years will inspire the next generation of students to work hard to add their name to the list of our distinguished Social Work alumni.

Some of the names will certainly come from the 85 students who were admitted to the Major this fall. This group are the first to begin the new four-semester curriculum sequence. To better prepare them for today's practice environment, the program has consolidated its two human behavior courses into one, added a social work practice for diversity, equity, and inclusion course, a case management class, and an additional social work elective. In addition, these students will take their research methods, community practice, and social welfare policy classes while in their field practicum. In this way, they will be able to more directly and concretely apply their classroom learning to their practice experience at their internships. We are excited to discover how these changes will better prepare these students for practice.

In addition to this program change, Jan Peeler, a long-time instructor and BSW faculty member, and Vivian Hurt, also an instructor and our former Field Director, are completing their transitional retirement in the Spring. While they will be missed, we are indebted to them for their numerous contributions to the BSW program. We wish them well in the next chapter of their lives!

While Jan and Vivian will be transitioning out, the BSW program is excited to report that we have added a dynamic new faculty member to the BSW program team. Originally from Ghana, Mr. Daniel Boamah, LCSW, ABD brings his clinical experience, passion for social justice, and his commitment to community practice to his teaching and research agenda. As a part of the group, we look forward to Daniel's unique perspective and contributions to the BSW program.

In addition, David Parra, a Traditional MSW student and Distinguished Minority Fellow, is working as a Graduate Assistant with the BSW Program on its recruitment and retention efforts. We look forward to the energy and ideas he will bring to this endeavor.

We are enthusiastic for what the future holds for the BSW program at WKU and are grateful to our support staff and student workers, our adjunct faculty, and our field Instructors and task supervisors (some of whom are our graduates!) for their indispensable contributions to our program. Without them, the BSW program would not be as successful and vibrant as it is today!



Current BSW students from the Owensboro regional campus.

WKU REACH WEEK 2019



REACH (Research Experiences and Creative Heights) Week is dedicated to students who have engaged in research, creative endeavors, and other scholarly activities at WKU.

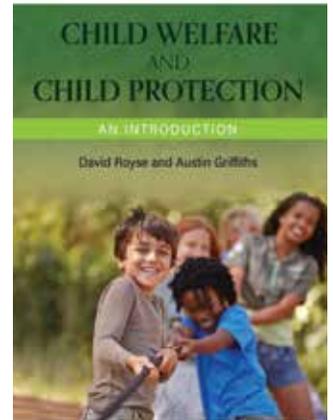
The March 17-22 event includes a keynote speaker, showcases of scholarly activity by colleges and other campus programs and a student conference.

Four social work students from the Owensboro BSW Program conducted a policy analysis on Felon's Rights. They created a policy brief and proposed a bill that would remove the existing barriers that felons face when trying to restore their rights. This proposal was presented to Rep. Matthew Castlen and he is going to sponsor this bill.

Harry Pedigo, Jennifer Gregory, Riyonna Coker, and Serenity Miller presented this brief in a research poster at the 2019 REACH conference titled "Removing Barriers for the Restoration of Felons' Rights." They were the session winners of the conference, as well.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Drs. Austin Griffiths and David Royse have released the first edition of their new textbook, *Child Welfare and Child Protection: An Introduction*, available through Cognella Academic Publishing. Practice-informed and drawing on current research, the text helps to prepare future practitioners by featuring cases that simulate those that child welfare professionals are likely to encounter in the field.



INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR, VENERABLE PHUNTSOK

As part of the Social Work Month activities in March 2019, the Social Work department received a \$1,000 Global Encounters Support Grant from the WKU Office of International Programs. With this funding, the department was able to partially cover travel expenses for an international scholar, the Venerable Tsering Phuntsok, who also happens to be a Buddhist monk. Over the week, the Venerable Phuntsok, reached over two hundred people at events which included students, staff, faculty, and the community. He traveled to classes and public events at WKU-Owensboro and WKU-Elizabethtown, the main WKU campus in Bowling Green, and community sites including Strawberry Fields meditation and yoga studio, Be Happy Yoga studio, and the local Buddhist community.

During these events, the Venerable Phuntsok shared Buddhist religious practices, Tibetan family life and culture, and the reality of political refugees in Dharamsala, Nepal. He also shared eastern daily practices that are considered to be alternative healing methods in western culture including yoga, meditation, mantras & chanting, Tibetan sound bowls, breathwork, and the mind-body connection that are often used in social work practice. The department hopes to welcome the Venerable Tsering Phuntsok back to WKU in the future.



N.A.M.E. CONFERENCE

Drs. Saundra Starks and Jay Gabbard presented research on effectively teaching cultural competency at the 1st annual conference of the Tennessee Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) Conference. The conference, held in July 2019 at Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, TN, brought together educators, researchers, community members, students, and activists committed to working to build more equitable and diverse communities. Drs. Starks and Gabbard presented an empirically tested model of effectively teaching diversity predicated on cultural immersion, intensive self-analysis, and cultural relativism.



Ashley with her husband Rick and their 1-year-old daughter, Kentley Sloan. Ashley and Rick are expecting their second daughter, Sawyer Anne in January 2020.

ALUMNI FOCUS

Written By ASHLEY FELTS BOZE

For me, I always knew I wanted to be a Social Worker. Initially it was for generic reasons that served as motivation to get into the field. As I have grown personally in the profession, I understand so much more about the values of a true Social Worker that set us apart from any other profession as well as the values that define us as Social Workers as individuals as well.

I began working in the field at the Pennyroyal Center, a not-for-profit community mental health center, as a Crisis Case Manager upon my completion of college at Western Kentucky University (WKU) in 2006. I achieved my Masters in Social Work from WKU in May 2010. I immediately began working under clinical supervision to obtain my Licensed Clinical Social Work (LCSW). At the time, I did not have a clue

regarding the opportunities this advancement in my education would provide to me. I worked as a Substance Use Therapist for the organization for four years. I primarily worked with individuals involved in Muhlenberg County Drug Court during this time, but also worked with individuals experiencing mental health difficulties as well. In 2014, I made the toughest decision in my life to leave the organization that I had grown up in. It was a tough decision but it was 100 percent based upon my values as a Social Worker. After a very short separation from the organization, I returned nine months later under new leadership and with a new mindset.

During the transition, I figured out what true empowerment and advocacy meant, which was two things that I had not done prior to temporarily leaving the organization. In returning, I made the decision that my primary focus would not only be the clients that we served but also advocating for and empowering others around me. It was during this time that I was able to see what a true impact advocating can make. Three short months after I returned, I was placed in the Interim Director of Substance Use Services position within the organization. This opportunity allowed me to advocate for change, empower others around me, and create treatment services that met the needs of those suffering from the disease of addiction. I was appointed in the Director's position permanently in January 2016.

Over the last three and a half years, we have done a lot of work. I have watched several staff achieve a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and go on to complete a Masters Degree, and now working to achieve a LCSW. I have worked with other Social Workers to advocate for necessary policy changes, to educate our communities to break the stigma of addiction and mental illness, worked with community partners to establish necessary services to address co-occurring disorders, teach from experiences, and so much more. I have been blessed to provide supervision to some amazing Peer Support Specialists within Substance Use Services. For the last three years, I have also provided clinical supervision for several Certified Social Workers within the agency, assisting in the development of future Therapist. I have watched what I believe is the organization's next generation grow and begin to mold into leaders and true advocates to continue our work for the future. The journey has been long and hard, and there is so much more to do but it is 100 percent worth it. I am incredibly thankful for the Social Workers that laid the foundation for me and continue to encourage me on a daily basis. Excited to see what the future will hold.

FIELD HAPPENINGS

As graduates of BSW and MSW programs know, the social work student's entire practicum experience revolves around their agency field instructor! The impact the agency field instructor has on the practicum student is incalculable!

We are constantly looking for new field agencies and/or social workers to supervise a BSW or MSW field practicum student. Our students could be placed in social work agencies around the state of Kentucky or anywhere in the world as we grow our online programs. If you have a BSW or MSW, are 2 years post your degree (and licensed, unless your agency is exempt), and are interested in serving as an agency field instructor for a student placement, please let us know! We also love having our WKU BSW and MSW alum serve as field instructors at practicum sites for our current students!

For more information on serving as an agency field instructor, please reach out to Field Director Kellye McIntyre at kellye.mcintyre@wku.edu. The Field Office has also worked to create online resources through our Field Instructor Toolbox found on the WKU Department of Social Work Field website: <https://www.wku.edu/socialwork>

QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS?

Our goal is to continue to develop and improve this resource for field instructors.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for the toolbox, please feel free to contact Field Director Kellye McIntyre at kellye.mcintyre@wku.edu.



Field Director, Kellye McIntyre



SOCIAL WORK STUDENT UNION

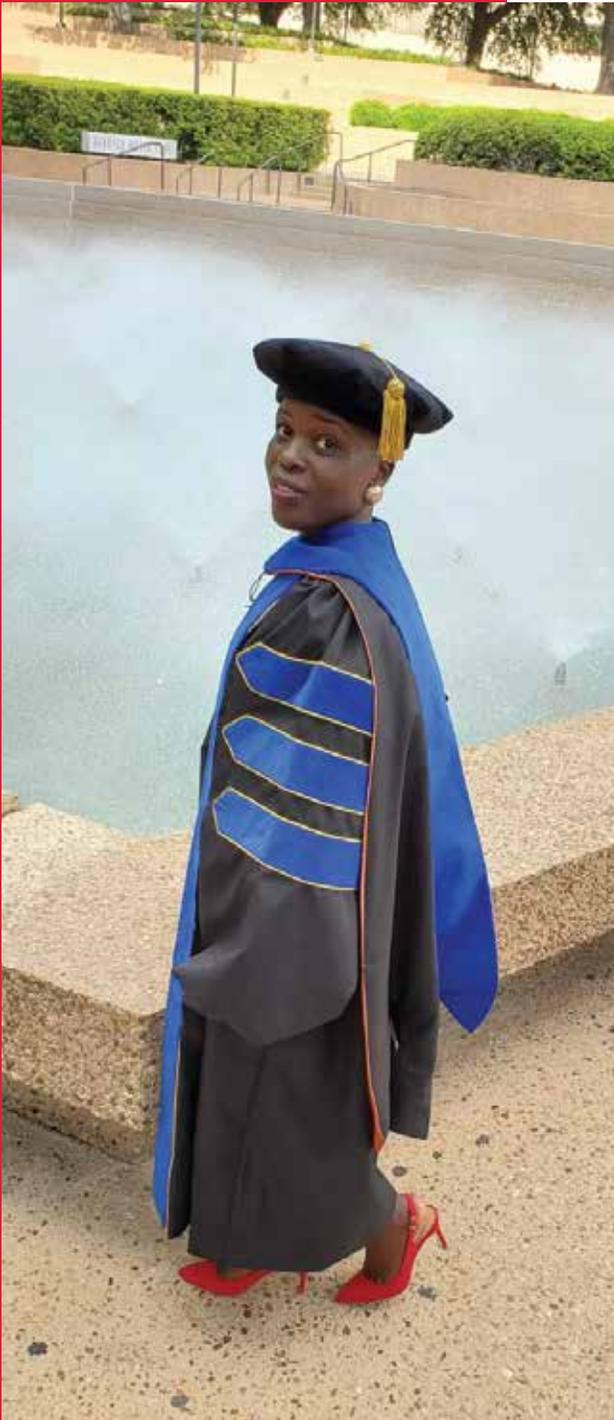
As the 2019 academic year began, representatives from the WKU Social Work Student Union (SWSU) were some of the first people to welcome both incoming freshmen and recently accepted BSW students. The department is thankful to have student leaders who represent WKU and the field of social work incredibly well outside the four walls of the classroom. The SWSU is primarily led by carefully selected leaders who are eager to facilitate new ideas and projects. If you are a student and you excel in the area of leadership, brainstorming, planning, or organization, consider applying to be a SWSU Ambassador! For more information, visit the SWSU website or reach out to Dr. May at the Bowling Green Campus (Dean.May@wku.edu), Dr. Harper at Owensboro (Whitney.Harper@wku.edu) or Dr. Owens at Elizabethtown (Larry.Owens@wku.edu).

 @SocialWorkStudentUnion  @WKUSWSU

Follow us for information on meeting times and upcoming events!

ALUMNI FOCUS

Written By BERNADETTE OMBAYO



When I started my Fulbright Fellowship in 2011, I did not know that it was the beginning of my journey to a social work career. I have an undergraduate degree in Education Arts-English and Literature from Kenyatta University and my intention was to continue teaching after the Fulbright program. In the course of my one-year period of teaching Swahili at WKU, I had the opportunity to audit a social work class which was eye-opening. I realized that I needed to pursue social work in order to heighten my impact on my students in the classroom. I knew that as a social work educator, I would understand more nuances within the classroom environment that I was missing with my education degree. I remembered my encounters with my students who had academic difficulty despite being excellent students and my realization of how intimate partner violence played a significant negative role in their academics, and just how I was limited in ways to intervene.

I started my MSW at WKU in 2012 and had a wonderful time. As a member of GSSW, I engaged in advocacy, community events, and conferences which grew in me the passion for service. I was inducted into Phi Alpha and participated in a Homeless Simulation – which was quite intriguing and the experience that year was unique (a long stormy story). Working as a graduate research assistant gave me an opportunity to work closely with amazing faculty and staff in research work and other office duties, as well as engage in volunteer work at the food pantry. My field practice at Little Scholars Head-start Center with children and families, and at BG Medical Center with psychiatric and geriatric care enriched my social work experience. My MSW program was enlightening especially under mentors who instilled within me the desire to pursue research and academia. I remember in my research class, our professor asked us what our plans were after MSW and my response was, “I am going to pursue my PhD in social work”. She wanted a clear trajectory, including my plan for the one year before I joined the PhD program. It is at this point that I realized that I was not stopping at anything less than what I wanted. I joined the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) in 2015 where I had an opportunity to further my research agenda that aims at understanding the mediating role of health-related behaviors in the relationship between teen dating violence victimization and academic achievement. Also, at UTA, I had opportunities to collect data, publish several peer-reviewed publications, present at national conferences, and teach various classes.

Early this year I accepted a job offer from LSU and was excited about joining them this Fall but I did not join. I am proud to say that WKU provided a pedestal for me to be where I am now, and I am forever grateful for the experiences, and for the faculty and friends I met while at WKU. Always a Hilltopper.

Title IV-E Conference

At the 2019 National Title IV-E Roundtable in Atlantic City, NJ, Drs. Patricia Desrosiers, Dean May, and Austin Griffiths presented results from their statewide study examining the impact of job stress on the child welfare workforce.

In May of 2020, the WKU Department of Social Work and the Center for Child Welfare Education and Research (CCWEAR) will host the National Title IV-E Roundtable. This annual conference is a gathering of representatives from public and tribal child welfare agencies and their university partners, sharing resources to build a strong child welfare workforce through training and education. We're excited to bring this meeting to Kentucky!



Barren River Area Safe Space (BRASS)

DR. PATRICIA DESROSIERS

Since December 2016, Dr. Desrosiers has worked with Tori Henninger at Barren River Area Safe Space on research about knowledge of domestic violence services. This project was initially developed with Christopher Joffrion, a WKU graduate research assistant, and funded with a CHHS Quick Turnaround Grant (QTAG 17-005) of close to \$3,000, and over the past few years has led to presentations and publications at the regional, state, and national levels as various findings have been disseminated to the public. Over the course of the research, three students were included in the project. Dr. Desrosiers states, "I would like to see every graduate student participate in research that is useful. This research project included BRASS staff, one of our community partners, as collaborators in order to ensure that the data would be useful. BRASS has used this data to assist with getting additional grant funding, and that is the best outcome I could hope for in this project."



CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Angelique Horace, WKU MSW student, presented "Top-down Perspectives on Workforce Retention by Child Welfare Administrators" with Dr. Austin Griffiths at the 2019 Child Welfare League of America National Conference in Washington, DC in April.

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY



CENTER FOR CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The Center for Child Welfare Education and Research (CCWEAR) has been approved in the WKU College of Health and Human Services. Under the exceptional leadership of Dr. Austin Griffiths, CCWEAR will flourish and make a difference in the lives of Kentucky's children and families. For well over 20 years, the Department of Social Work has been a partner with the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services through our "educational" grants and projects, including: Training Resource Center & MSW Support Grant, Public Child Welfare Certification Program (PCWCP) Grant, and the Credit for Learning (CFL) – Division of Extended Learning Outreach Project.

For the last several years, research productivity in child welfare within the department has grown to the point that an applied research center, in combination with our historical commitment to child welfare education, became our next goal. Our department firmly believes that we have the vision, expertise, and passion for our Center to grow into a nationally recognized child welfare center within the next few years. Our thanks to Dr. Griffiths for bringing the 2020 National Title IV-E Roundtable for Child Welfare Training and Education to WKU during the inaugural year of CCWEAR.

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



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