

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

University of St. Francis



BSW Information Session

Over the Fall 2021 term, the BSW program has connected with many prospective students seeking a bachelor's in social work degree. Several information sessions were held, and there are more scheduled for the Spring 2022 term! If you or any interested party is interested in attending, please contact Dr. Dan Knapp dknapp@stfrancis.edu.

MSW Information Session

The MSW virtual information sessions were held on Wednesdays, September 29, 2021 and December 1, 2021 via Zoom. We shared interests, career goals, expectations, needs, etc. with prospective students seeking an advanced generalist concentration or a school social work concentration. We had a lot of positive and supportive interactions with students and shared helpful information about our unique MSW program, admissions, and financial aid.

School Social Work Program

The school social work program concentration officially began this semester. Four students are enrolled in the program. Students are interning in Westmont, Evergreen Park, Joliet School District 86 and the south suburbs.



ONLINE MSW PROGRAM



The MSW program at the University of St. Francis has a traditional program option as well as an online option. The online MSW program at the University of St. Francis officially began in the Fall 2021 semester. Students have the flexibility of switching between either program option during their studies. The online MSW program option is synchronous curriculum, asynchronous

curriculum, or a combination of synchronous and asynchronous curriculum, enabling courses that better lend themselves to having synchronous components to do so, while affording additional flexibility for students by holding some online courses asynchronously. Students in the online MSW program option may enroll in either the full-time format or the part-time format. The online MSW program is available nationwide and provides graduates with the advanced social work knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of diverse individuals, families, and communities. Online MSW students take classes with faculty members who have rich and varied clinical and policy expertise, and students obtain real world experience by interning within their local community. Come find your passion within our online MSW program!

Challenge Course

On September 14, 2021, the Department of Social Work-along with the Department of Education hosted a challenge course for social work students. Twenty students from varying classes attended. Together, students learned the value of teamwork and leadership when problem solving. Historically, these experiences have carried over into current and future classes in which students are required to engage in teamwork when completing learning opportunities.

NEW FACULTY & STAFF

Dr. Althia Gayle, Ed.D., LCSW, PEL.

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers



Althia Gayle, Ed.D., LCSW, PEL. joined our Social Work Department as an Assistant Professor in Fall 2021. We welcome Dr. Gayle with warm heart. Before joining the department, Dr. Gayle worked at the University of Chicago as an Instructor for a Quarter and, also, worked as a School Social Worker for 9 years in the Joliet Public School District. Outside of the University, Dr. Gayle is also a clinician working part time with a Private Practice.

Dr. Gayle earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership from USF in 2018 with a published dissertation titled the “Impact of Individualized Interventions on Academic and Behavioral Success of At-risk African-American and Hispanic boys”. She also earned a Master of Arts in Social Service Administration (equivalent to an MSW) from the University of Chicago in 2012. Additionally, she earned a Bachelor's in Sociology with a concentration in African American Studies from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2010.

Professionally, she has over 10 years of experience working with at-risk youth. Dr. Gayle has worked with youth within the public school system, non-profit sector/social service programs, and within community engagement events in the city of Chicago and in neighboring Suburbs. Overall, she is passionate about being an effective servant leader, advocating for youth within urban, educational settings, and influencing other compassionate leaders in social/emotional well-being, social justice efforts, and restorative justice efforts.

Mx. Joy Dertinger, Administrative Assistant

Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs



Joy Dertinger is the new administrative assistant for the Social Work Department. Joy has their BA in Linguistics and Biblical Languages, and has worked in education since 2004. In 2017, Joy pivoted into social services after their positive experiences receiving support from a social worker who is an alumna of USF. They worked in the Jumpstart Parenting Program as a home visitor for three years before deciding to return to school. Joy was recently accepted as a pre-nursing student at USF and will begin classes in Fall '22. They are currently enrolled in prerequisite courses at JJC. Joy and their spouse have four children aged 11, 9, 7, and 5. Joy loves coffee, swimming, training in

MMA, and carving. Joy's hope for their career is to combine their experiences and knowledge of social services with nursing in order to bring about more equity in healthcare. They are particularly interested in emergency medicine, focusing on respect and dignity in healthcare for women and members of the disabled, LGBTQIA2S+, BIPOC, and AAPI communities. Joy believes that social workers should be an integral part of the healthcare system and is passionate about advocating for education regarding social determinants of health, bias identification and recognition, relational skills, and self-reflection. Joy is currently reading *Bodies & Barriers: Queer Activists on Health* (Shanker), *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses* (Ehrenreich & English), *Medical Apartheid* (Washington), and *Beyond the Gender Binary* (Vaid-Menon), as well as their course textbooks.

New & Returning Student Fall Kick-Off

The Department of Social Work hosted its annual New & Returning Student Fall Kick-Off on Thursday, August 26th via Zoom. The event was packed with important information for new students to social work, as well as those continuing in both the BSW and MSW programs. Mini-sessions on university security, APA formatting, social work competencies and library resources were offered in addition to separate program-specific break-out sessions highlighting an overview of each program, field education, and important policies. More than 66 students participated.

Field Supervisor Orientation

The virtual Field Supervisor Orientation was held on August 27, 2021. Field supervisors from new and current field placements became more familiar with applying social work competencies and improving learning practice of students amid COVID-19 pandemic. We build supportive system with field supervisors and shared valuable and helpful information working with students at this challenging time.

Summer Macro Projects

Summer Virtual Macro Projects were presented on August 6, 2021. Seven BSW/MSW students shared and discussed their macro projects with faculty and agency supervisors. The Macro Project is designed to benefit the agency at which the student is interning, another organization or institution, or the community their agency is serving – with a goal of enhancing the functioning and wellbeing of the staff, clients, and organization or the community; allowing the agency to better meet its mission with regard to the target system of its intervention.

Graduation Celebration

On December 17, 2021, the Social Work Department jubilantly celebrated their BSW & MSW graduates with a virtual Graduation Celebration via Zoom. There were two BSW graduates, **Hannah Schilling** and **Katherine Fierro** and two MSW graduates, **Jenna Lanoue** and **Devisha Pulley**. To add a personal touch to the virtual event, students were asked to answer a few questions about the time they spent in the BSW/MSW Program, provide a meme that represents their experience in the Social Work Program, and add a picture of themselves in their cap. The Social Work Faculty was able to incorporate the students' responses to the questions as each graduate was introduced and celebrated.

Social Work Club

The Social Work Club, advised by Dr. Laura Honegger, Dr. Audrey Davis, Prof. Joyce Kraus, and Dr. Althia Gayle, was not slowed down by the pandemic and held a number of important events during the Fall 2021 semester. Specifically, the Club was involved in the following:

- Social Work Club hosted an UNO tournament as a social event, giving away 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes on September 28, 2021.
- We hosted a virtual screening of the Emmy-nominated documentary, "Stateville Calling," which explores parole reform and the struggle of aging inmates in Illinois. There was a panel from the Illinois Prison Project, including one individual who was within the documentary, to speak about their work on October 12, 2021. The event was sponsored by the Social Work Club, Criminal Justice & Pre-Law Society, and the Office of Institutional Diversity.
- We hosted "Relationship Empowerment: An Interactive Presentation Equipping us for Healthy Relationships and Dating Violence Awareness" on October 26, 2022. The guest speakers are Brandi Schori, Partner Relations Specialist at Avenue Women's Center and Neil Schori, Pastor at The Edge Church. The event was sponsored by the Social Work Club, Office of Institutional Diversity, and the Coordinated Community Response Team.
- We showed "Time: The Kalief Browder Story" on December 2, 2022. *Background Info about Kalief Browder:* In 2010, Kalief Browder, a Black 16-year-old from the Bronx, was arrested for allegedly stealing a backpack. He spent the next 3 years in Rikers Island Jail, nearly 14 of those months in solitary confinement, despite never having been convicted of a crime. He developed depression and attempted suicide four times while in Rikers. In 2013, all charges against Kalief were dropped and he was released. However, the traumatic experiences he endured within Rikers had a long-lasting impact, and tragically on June 16th, 2015, he died by suicide. The event was sponsored by the Social Work Club and the Interdisciplinary Research on Justice Initiative. For the event we watched two episodes from the docuseries. Following the showing, attendees Dr. Laura Honegger and Dr. Althia Gayle presented an overview of the current state of U.S. solitary confinement laws and practices and how we can advocate for ending solitary confinement of youth.



BSW Salute – Hannah Schilling

... I know I can speak on behalf of my fellow graduates here tonight when I say that these have been the most challenging, but yet rewarding years of our lives. This statement also holds true as we start our new careers as social workers.



Let that resonate with you just a little more - you are officially a social worker. Your hard work, compassion, along with willingness to always help others has helped symbolize why you are here today. Throughout my college experience here at the University of St. Francis, I have taken away some key advice from many of my professors that I am confident us graduates will utilize throughout our careers that I would like to share with all of you this evening. Some of those include “There will always be diversity within diversity” - Dr. Davis. “Remember that it is okay to ask questions” - Dr. Dan Knapp. And some key phrases that have helped signify my experience here at The University of St. Francis include “You’ve got this girl!” -Dr. Gayle, “I’m here if you need anything” -Dr. Laura Honegger, and I’ll forever hang on to the only positive comment I ever got back on a policy paper from Dr. Ogbuagu that simply stated “Excellent job”, which I practically fell out of my chair after reading.

I would like to congratulate my fellow classmates who have worked so hard throughout their time here at The University of St. Francis. I know that this process has been both mentally and physically exhausting, but it is with great pleasure that I can say you all put in so much time and effort, and you have earned this degree. I would like to thank our families and friends who have helped support us throughout this journey. For being that shoulder to cry on, for always being there with listening ears to hear about the good, the bad, and offer advice to help keep us going, and most importantly, thank you for making sure we were fed and caffeinated. We appreciate the home cooked meals, care packages filled with snacks, and also any and all caffeine. We could have not gotten through this journey without the love and support all of you have given to us.

Finally, I would like to thank The University of St. Francis and each and every individual that helps the social work department function so smoothly. You’ve given up time with your own families to answer our frantic emails late at night or go outside of your typical office hours to make sure our questions were answered, you have congratulated us in our successes and corrected us in our wrongs, and most importantly, you all are the biggest reason we are here today. We would not be adding the title BSW to our name if it was not for all of you. With that being said, I’d like to close with the following statement by Helen Keller, which reads, “The best and the most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart”, and that is one of the key components of a social worker themselves. Congratulations graduates!

MSW Salute – Jenna Lanoue



First I would like to congratulate everyone. We have all devoted much time and hard work to the program. We all deserve acknowledgement for our work. I would also like to thank our professors. Our professors have devoted their time to educating us. They have also shown us patience, grace, and have been a model of who and what social work embodies.

I cannot speak for everyone, but I know it is common for graduates to feel both fear and excitement for our next chapter in our lives. Going out in the field is exciting, yet there is fear of the unknown, fear of making mistakes, being new, feeling clueless, or not knowing our first step.

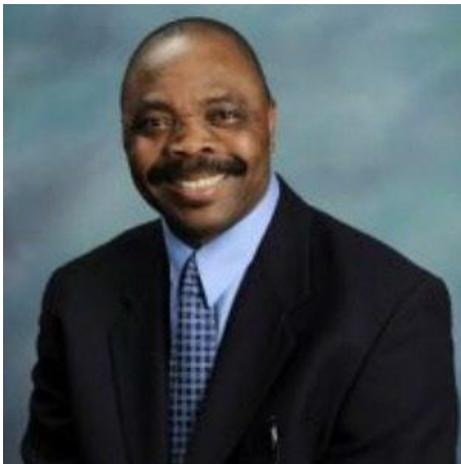
However, we know much more than we think we do. We will inevitably make mistakes, not always know what to do, and there is still so much to learn. But as long as we keep our willingness to learn, our empathy, our care for others, passion for change, and have kindness for ourselves we will inevitably be okay. We will be great social workers as long as we keep our drive. Maintaining faith and belief in ourselves is what will take us far. From this point forward we will continue to grow if we allow ourselves to dive into this new chapter of change.

Angel Tree

The Social Work Department at USF once again sponsored an Angel Tree in support of the Salvation Army of Joliet. The Salvation Army Angel Tree program allows donors to purchase gifts and clothes for families in need, making their holidays brighter. This Christmas season we sponsored 75 children. The Angel Tree campaign ran from November 2nd through December 3rd. Approximately 60 USF faculty, staff and students participated by shopping online and having their gifts shipped or by dropping off gifts at the SW Office. The Salvation Army Angel Tree at USF was very successful due to the giving spirit of all involved!



Nominee for the Excellence in Teaching Award



Dr. Buster Ogbuagu has been nominated for the Excellence in Teaching Award on November 9, 2021. Congratulations on his award!

Publication

Dr. Kyung-Mee Choi along with Dr. Brady Jones of Psychology Department and Dr. Caleb Kim have published the article “Korean Immigrant Fathers’ Perceptions and Attitudes toward their Parenting Involvement” in Journal of Family Issues on November 29, 2021. The article is available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/ZEDVCTAKRX4PA2DD9HMS/full>



Presentations

In October 2021, Dr. McLaughlin presented the topics entitled “Defining Healthy Relationships” and “War, Peace, and Love: The True Cost of the Gender War between Men & Women” at the All Black National Convention, Orlando, FL. Dr. McLaughlin moderated the panel discussion entitled "Relationships and Family" at The All Black National Convention.

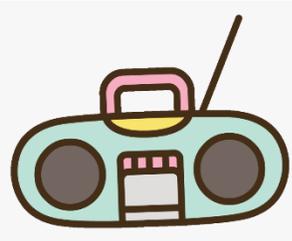
On November 11, 2021, Dr. Kyung-Mee Choi presented research entitled “Social Work Graduate Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes toward Aging, Death, and Dying across Cultures” in the 54th annual New York State Social Work Education Association (NYSSWEA) Conference.



On November 12, 2021, Dr. Kyung-Mee Choi and Dr. Dan Knapp presented research entitled “Coping Strategies and Psychological Distress of Social Work Students amid COVID-19” in the 54th annual New York State Social Work Education Association (NYSSWEA) Conference.

Professor Joyce Kraus, Dr. Kyung-Mee, and Dr. Laura Honegger provided a 2-hour CEU training on November 12, 2021 about our findings from their research study of international social work students in internships, entitled “International Social Work Students in Field Education: A Cross-Cultural Exploration to Inform Best Practices”.

On November 18, 2021, Dr. Laura Honegger presented at the American Society on Criminology annual conference, along with Dr. Stacy Dewald of the Criminal & Social Justice Department and two undergraduate social work students. They presented as part of a roundtable discussion, and their presentation was entitled *Incentives, Sanctions, and Therapeutic Adjustments in Four Problem-Solving Courts*. Dr. Honegger also presented on another research project via a poster presentation entitled, *Barriers to Implementing the Essential Elements of Mental Health Courts within a Suburban Jurisdiction*.



Dr. Honegger was a guest on Allison's Pause for Justice radio show speaking about the importance of using a trauma-focused lens within social work and within the criminal justice system, as well as about implicit bias.

Upcoming Events

The BSW and MSW Programs will host information sessions for Spring 2022 via Zoom:

BSW Information Session

March 5, 9 am - 10 am

April 23, 9 am - 10 am

June 11, 9 am - 10 am

These meetings are virtual; however, in-person meetings can also be coordinated. Anyone who is interested in learning more about our program, please email BSW program director Dr. Dan Knapp at DKnapp@stfrancis.edu!

MSW Information Session

February 16, 6 pm - 7 pm

April 27, 6 pm - 7 pm

Anyone who is interested in learning more about our program, please email MSW program director Dr. Kyung-Mee Choi at kchoi@stfrancis.edu!

Virtual Social Work Advocacy Day will be held on Monday, March 21, 2022, 9 am - 12 pm.

Phi Alpha Induction Ceremony will be held on March 23, 2022, 6 pm - 7 pm.

Spring Graduation Celebration will be held on May 6, 2022, 6 pm - 7 pm.