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## Happy fall semester!

Center Director | Dr. Jennifer Cullen

It is hard to believe that we are in December already. Here on the Main Campus in Chester, the leaves have turned and most have fallen. While we are beginning to see more jackets and sweaters, occasionally we had the 70-degree day and we quickly needed to find our tee-shirts again. That need to adapt to the unpredictable and swiftly adjust to accommodate the unexpected, are the talents of social workers. This is the fourth fall semester message I have written and I find myself once again calling us to action to continue our efforts to promote change and fight injustice. The recent events of antisemitism must not go unaddressed. It occurs to me that the work of social workers will never be complete, but do not despair. I hope for a day when the injustices of the world come to an end and we can relish in a world of peace, tolerance and acceptance. The reality is that even in such a paradise, there will



be a way that we as social workers can strive to make the world even better. Our skills will always be in demand and the world will always need champions to guide the way. I know you are all working in your own communities and lives to make the world better. We would love to know what you are doing! Please use [this link](#) to upload your media letting us know what you are doing so we can share it with our social work community via social media. And join us for our CEU events, Ngoma Conversations and Current Conversations.

This summer 2022 the Council on Social Work Education put forward the new competencies and we are working over the next year or so to integrate them into our classes. Please see the Ongoing Work section to the right.

## MSW Program Updates

On-Campus MSW Program Director | Dr. Patricia Fletcher

The Campus MSW program welcomes our newest class of MSW students this fall! We have a mix of full time, part-time, advanced standing, and dual degree students who come to us with a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and we are excited to have them join our Widener social work community. We are slowly building back (better, to borrow a phrase) after the upheaval we experienced due to Covid. There are many ways, formal and informal, for our Campus MSW students to get involved in our Campus MSW students to get



## Ongoing Work

- Continue to emphasize and enhance a culture of Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) through our events, CEUs and speakers.
- Prioritize the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, administrators, and staff.
- Work with Center DEI and Curriculum committees to review and update social work curriculum to address the new competencies while also incorporating the voices of marginalized and historically disenfranchised groups.
- Create more opportunities for discussion to support challenging conversations
- Maintain a communication plan for transparency in the process to inform students, faculty, staff, field instructors, and community members to include more events, town halls and listening/learning opportunities.

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involved in our social work community including the MSW Student Organization, the NABSW, a variety of student led service projects, or projects or events driven by conversations in the classroom or informally in the lounge. We encourage students to engage and invest in issues that they are passionate about and support them in these endeavors. We have also held several social events this fall semester including a meet and greet with water ice and pretzels and a fall social at the Fire Pit with cider and donuts. These events are a great way for students to meet each other and our faculty and staff outside of class.

This effort to re-engage with our campus students after Covid also extends to our Social Work Alumni Organization. All Center

for Social Work Education graduates are automatically members of this group and Michelle Brandt and Regina Rothe have been working diligently to re-boot this important organization. Please consider participating and let one of us know if you would like more information.

Our graduate students also continue to utilize the opportunity to concentrate on specific areas of practice while they are in the MSW program. Specialized areas of learning include Trauma, Working with Older Adults, and Working with People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. We are in the process of getting approval to provide students the required coursework in order to earn the newly approved School Social Work Certification in Pennsylvania

We continue to work with many local BSW programs to develop incentives for their students to choose Widener Social Work for their graduate studies. Our partnership with the Department of Human Services in Philadelphia and in Delaware County continues to provide incentives for employees to come to Widener to earn a MSW. We have also developed similar opportunities with the City of Chester and several human service agencies in the area and are working on developing more to assist potential MSWs in the transition to graduate school. If your agency is interested in discussing these incentives, please reach out to me. As always, our alumni are our best ambassadors for our MSW program!



## Field Education Updates

Director of Field Education | Michelle Brandt

During this season of gratitude, I would like to take a moment to thank some of our key constituents. I will begin with our hard-working Field Education team at the Center for Social Work Education Lisa Allen, Tangela Harden, Tina Radin and Regina Rothe work with close to 400 students across the country each year. They strike a delicate balance of supporting our students' logistical and scheduling needs while maintaining the integrity of our well-respected field education program. They are fortunate to pass the baton once students are placed to our phenomenal faculty liaisons who support our students and agencies throughout the field placements.

We are also grateful for our agency partners who continue to thrive throughout significant workforce shortages and we appreciate those who continue to host and support our students as well. We remain committed to supporting you through free trainings and referring students who, through field education, can fulfill your need for new workers post-graduation.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we are grateful for our students. Approximately 400 Widener students engage in social work field education each academic year. Our students manage many demands and competing priorities as they gain valuable experiences through their agency-based internships. They do this by leaning on their community of peers, faculty and personal support systems. We are ever-impressed to hear

about the amazing work they are doing as they prepare for careers in social work where they will make change in their communities. We hope all of our students are able to take advantage of this semester break in ways that bring peace and calm.

The state of social work field education is ever changing with continued challenges around equity and social justice. We remain steadfast in our commitment to developing and supporting pathways for our students to successfully complete the field components of our program, fully prepared for the profession!

Whether you are an alum, community partner or student, we invite you to reach out to our office at [SWfieldeducation@widener.edu](mailto:SWfieldeducation@widener.edu) to share thoughts or ideas on how we can continue to support our students in this endeavor.



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## Spotlight: SWCS

Widener University President James Harris' legacy is the service-learning initiatives in the university that allowed Widener to get more involved with its home city and support the efforts by local leaders in Chester to foster community growth and prosperity. There was a strong focus on creating more collaboration between the university, its students, and the community of Chester. One of the organizations that really thrived in this collaborative model was Widener Social Work Counseling Services (SWCS), the brainchild of Dr. John Poulin, the Associate Dean at the time and one of the initial team members integral in leading the founding of the MSW program.

In 2012 SWCS moved to an on-campus location and worked to shift back to more of the collaborative model working with organizations like the Widener Partnership Charter School. It was around this time that Beth Barol PhD, LSW, BCB, NADD-CC, coordinated efforts to support the struggles the Charter School was having with their kindergarten program. She helped to lead an initiative to bring more social workers in to work with teachers and be in the classroom to model positive reinforcement and trauma informed classroom practices. While Widener is no longer affiliated with the Charter School, it is still a significant part of SWCS history.

One of the special things about SWCS is the lasting connection that the program has built with students over the years that has more than once led students who have graduated to come back to serve in leadership roles at SWCS later in their careers. The newest director of SWCS, Julie Heydeman, MSW, LSW, is also a Widener alumnus from both the BSW and MSW programs who fell in love with SWCS during her time there as a student. Julie has overseen the transition from SWCS former structure, consisting of two separate departments, to their current structure of one single department that services the community, bringing the center back to its grassroots foundations from when it was founded. Throughout its entire life Widener SWCS has been an incredible asset not just for the clients they serve in the community but also for the students in the Widener social work program.

## BSW Program Updates

BSW Program Director | Dr. Richard Cooper

We are off and running to a great start and mid-term of the Fall 2022 Semester. The semester began with the beginning tenure of incoming University President Stacey Robertson and culminated with our own Dr. Marina Barnett providing the riveting keynote address to the Widener University freshman to begin the 2022-23 school year.



*Pictured above: Dr. Marina Barnett*

If my recollection is correct, it has been quite some time since we have been able to begin the Fall semester here on campus with lessened state, county and university wide mask wearing mandates since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic a few years ago.

I want everyone to continue to practice established safety precautions, however it feels like there has really been more hopeful and energized sentiments of optimism spread throughout the greater campus community regarding rebuilding our village once again. As part of this rebuilding and reconnecting across the campus communities, we at the Center and at the University are working hard to support and encourage the type of engagement and social interactions that were once the bedrock of the Widener Experience.

A hearty welcome to this year's newly incoming freshman and transfer students and welcome back to returning sophomores, juniors and seniors. Kudos to the BSW Club elected officers: President: Sandra B. Good-Gonzalez, Vice President: Mykirah Russell-Hopson, SAG Representative: Shaneka Atkins, Treasurer: Abigail Bustraan, MSW Liaison: Sarah Coupland, Representative to Center for Social Work Education DEI Committee: Adriana Moreta and faculty advisor Dr. Linda Benavides (pictured in the next column). It was a pleasure having dinner with the e-board and talking about their goals for the club.



*Pictured above: Dr. Richard Cooper, BSW officers, & Dr. Linda Benavides*

We had a really joyful 2022 homecoming this year.



*Pictured above: Faculty, staff, & BSW student Mykirah Russell-Hopson*



*Pictured above: Standing Center Pride pack dance team members senior BSW Jasmine Thomas & BSW sophomore Sienna Miller*

As we embark upon your learning journeys this 2022-23 schools year, I encourage you to continue to seek ways to rebuild and enhance our community. Although we were not able to take the group BSW photo this semester, I am hopeful to find a myriad of ways with all of you help to reestablish and regrow our BSW social work community.

Soon we all shall celebrate another successfully completed semester in the Spring culminating with "Take Back the Night", Senior Research Day, and the BSW Class of 2023 Graduation returning back on the main campus.

It will take all of our combined support and efforts this school year to rebuild and regrow our University community with the Pride that continues to makes us strong.

Go Pride!

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## Ph.D. Program Updates

Ph.D. Program Director | Dr. Margo Campbell

Happy Fall 2022! It is such a privilege and joy to share some recent activities and accomplishments of our Ph.D. students and graduates:

### Graduates

In Summer and Fall 2022, two students successfully defended their dissertations, including:

#### Sheronda-Rae Ball

Dissertation Title: Becoming the Pancreas: Exploring Emotional Distress in Caregivers of Adolescents with Type 1 Diabetes

#### Mariscilla (Marcie) Cole

Dissertation Title: Exploring Former Self-Injury Behavior as a Coping Strategy in Young Adult Romantic Relationships of Young Adult Women with a Past History of Non-Suicidal Self-Injurious Behavior: Qualitative Study

### Current Students News

Belkys Sanchez, Ph.D. candidate, presented at the National Latino Behavioral Health Association Conference on September 15th on Association Between Language Environment, Therapist's Cultural Humility, and Treatment Effectiveness and Outcomes for Latinx Adults That Have Received Mental Health Services.

Alison Leslie, Ph.D. student, presented at the NASW-PA conference on October 25th on Clinician Experiences of Telehealth When Navigating COVID-19: Future Implications for Telehealth.

### Alumni News

Donalee Unal (Ph.D., '22) will have her chapter Indigenizing the Social Work Curriculum: Why it Matters and How to Start as part of the upcoming book Indigenization Discourse in Social Work: International Perspectives. In July, Donalee also accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences at the Penn State College of Medicine, teaching in Behavioral Health Intervention Strategies.

Mimi Sullivan (Ph.D., '21) presented at the Bessel van der Kolk's Trauma Research Foundation's (TRF) Play-Based Healing Summit on October 29th on Trauma Drama: How Do We Demonstrate the Impact of Drama on Healing?

Josh Ellow (PhD, '22) presented at Widener's Continuing Education event on November 9th on Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies: What Social Workers Should Know.

We are tremendously grateful and proud of our Widener University students and graduates!

Lastly, as evidenced in the work of the students and graduates above, our goal in the Ph.D. program is to develop academic leaders with skill and expertise in scholarly research, teaching, and social work practice and theory. We look for students whose professional goals include actively contributing to the advancement of knowledge for social work practice and the provision of social services.

If this sounds like you, please reach out to me for more information ([mmcampbell@widener.edu](mailto:mmcampbell@widener.edu)) or visit our website.



## Updates from the MSWSO

The MSW Student Organization (MSWSO) will be holding nominations and elections for the Executive Coordinator and the Administrative Coordinator in the Spring 2023. Please stay tuned to your e-mail for more details. If interested or if you have any questions, please reach out to:

Sam (Samantha) Banks (they/them)  
Interim Executive Coordinator  
(MSWSO)

[sbanks@widener.edu](mailto:sbanks@widener.edu)

or

Matthew Myrick, PhD (he/him)  
Faculty Advisor for MSWSO  
[mamyrick@widener.edu](mailto:mamyrick@widener.edu)

The MSW Student Organization (MSWSO) is organizing a virtual Licensure Prep Panel and Discussion for the Spring semester. This will be a time to discuss the licensure process and for students to hear the personal experience of recently licensed professionals. Save the date details will be announced in the Spring semester. Please stay tuned to your e-mail for more details.

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## Spotlight: New Faculty

This fall, the Center for Social Work Education welcomes our newest full-time faculty member, Caroline Campbell! Caroline has been teaching since 2007, first as an adjunct and then as a full-time faculty member since 2014 and has ample experience across both clinical and macro work. Initially after earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and women's studies, Caroline worked as a day hospital therapist, facilitating individual and group therapy for some time before moving on to work with adjudicated youth in an experiential therapy setting in Florida. Continuing her education, Caroline earned her MSW at Temple University in 2003. She was drawn to Temple for the community-based focus, which continues to be her practice interest.

Caroline has long held a special passion for working with the Latino community and has sought out opportunities to develop such relationships. She spent time in Ecuador, teaching English to Fullbright scholars who would go on to work in international settings and has spent most of her practice career at Congreso de Latinos for ten years, a local Philly organization that strives to support the Latino community in North Philadelphia to achieve financial and overall well-being. During this time, Caroline began work in academia as an adjunct professor around the Philly area at institutions such as Temple University, and Chestnut Hill University, eventually moving into a full-time role at Eastern University for eight years, and then our own Widener University in August. Her repertoire of classes includes interviewing skills, working with families and children,

trauma, and field seminars. Caroline was inspired to enroll in the part-time Ph.D. program at Widener in 2018 after connecting with Dr. Linda Houser and began teaching as an adjunct in the Widener MSW Online program at the same time. Her current dissertation research explores the role that professional peer relationships play in how social workers experience stress and well-being. An interesting fact about Caroline is that after several years of working in the social work field, Caroline took a year off to pursue a personal dream that included hiking the entire Appalachian Trail for six months and volunteering with four non-government organizations throughout Central America. It is with great enthusiasm and pride that we welcome Professor Campbell to join as a full-time faculty member at Widener's Center for Social Work Education!



## MSW Program Updates

Director of Online MSW Program | Carly King

The Online MSW Program is busy as usual and has excitedly welcomed 73 new incoming MSW students and one new Assistant Director this fall! We are also getting ready to see 60+ students graduate this fall (December) 2022 and join the ranks officially as social workers and colleagues!

Jill Butler, MS, MSW joined us in Oct'22 as the Assistant Director for the Online MSW Program and we are ecstatic about her energy and expertise. Jill is a Widener alumna, a Philadelphian, born and raised, and obtained her M.S. in Criminal Justice from West Chester University and her MSW from Widener University. Jill holds post graduate certificates in ABA from Arcadia University and in Trauma from Bryn Mawr College. She has 20+ years of experience in social work working with adults, children and families, ranging from foster care, education, medical and residential treatment to inpatient hospitalization and at the intersections of

mental health, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and addictions.

Jill's career in academia began in the early 2000's at Cabrini College. She has since developed a consulting business around training K-12 educators about mental and behavioral health in the classroom, environmental triggers, understanding trauma, and more. Jill also taught as an adjunct here at her alma mater, Widener, and most recently served at Virginia Commonwealth University as an Assistant Professor and Online MSW Field Coordinator. Jill shares that "My experience includes teaching courses in the areas of social research, treating trauma as it relates to both children and adults, as well as addictions. I have also been afforded the opportunity to design my first course, centered on systemic racism and trauma."

This fall '22, Jill and I have had an opportunity to bring together many of our adjunct and full-time faculty for a meet and greet virtually, sharing experiences, and looking towards exciting work together in the Online Campus. We've also been meeting with students individually,

in small groups through open Zoom events such as "Talk Time with Jill" and chatting with members of faculty committees, students and alumni groups about events and initiatives on the horizon. We also are looking forward to some curricular changes as we anticipate some courses expanding this Spring 2023 from 7-weeks to 14-weeks-long structurally. We have been working through these changes with the lead faculty, the Instructional Designer, students, and Student Service Coordinators. Thank you to all who have been working hard on these course structure changes! It's been a busy summer and fall in the Online MSW Program!

We hope as students, you continue to reach out for support as needed and look to engage with your peers and student organizations (e.g., MSWSO and NABSW). As faculty, adjuncts, and Field and agency partners, we thank you so much for your continued support of MSW students. As alumni, we hope to see you in upcoming Alumni Org meetings and events! Please do stay connected. We thank you for your #WidenerPride and Social Work Excellence in all that you do!