

PARTNERING *for* CHANGE

A PUBLICATION FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



TOWARD **A**MORE **J**UST FUTURE

RUTGERS

School of Social Work

“It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have.”

JAMES BALDWIN

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Friends,

As last year drew to a close, many of us looked to 2021 with optimism. Then, on January 6, violent insurrectionists invaded the U.S. Capitol, sowing continued discord in our country and worry about the state of our democracy. A common thread in conversations among friends and colleagues was our disgust with the ways the rioters were treated as compared to the ways Black Lives Matter and other social justice protesters were treated in the exact same spaces. Had it been a largely diverse crowd protesting for social justice, I personally believe the response would have been greatly different and would have included greater loss of life. Our profession's commitment to social justice remains a guiding principle for our profession and, we hope, for our country.

Despite everything we've endured in the past year, I remain hopeful for the future. During these challenging times, I remember that after the plague came the Renaissance. I am reminded that as old unjust systems begin to fail, we will see those who support them lash out, but we will also see the beginning of something new. I am thankful that our democracy held, though not without significant damage. We did not witness the fall of democracy in America, but rather the long, messy process of rejuvenating it, though only through our efforts toward a more just future. This theme, toward a more just future, is the guiding principle of our five-year strategic plan.

It is also the focus of this edition of our alumni magazine. In it, you will learn the goals we have set forth at Rutgers School of Social Work and the work already being done to achieve them. I hope you will take some time to consider how you might engage with us, and to think innovatively about the ways we can expand our collective reach.

There has been sustained trauma to our country, and for us individually, during the COVID pandemic and our reckoning with racial justice imperatives. I urge you to take care of yourselves and your family. Let's talk with each other as we make sense of these events. Let's teach our children about democracy and the potential threats to it, and about building communities for the future. Let's mourn the people and illusions we have lost. Let's commit to the work ahead.

We live in historic times! As a *Hamilton* fan, even as I have been feeling shock and sadness, I've been humming "how lucky we are to be alive right now." WE will build the new America. WE have historic opportunities to fight for justice. WE are the future. WE are ready for this work. Rutgers School of Social Work stands united in support of democracy and in support of our diverse community. We continue to keep you and your loved ones in our thoughts, and we thank you for your continued support.

In solidarity,



Cathryn C. Potter, M.S.W., Ph.D.
DEAN AND DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
RUTGERS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



RUTGERS PRESIDENT JONATHAN HOLLOWAY SHARES E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION WITH RUTGERS SSW COMMUNITY

Jonathan Holloway, President of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, presented "The Contributions of E. Franklin Frazier to Social Work Education" to an eager audience of more than 200 Rutgers School of Social Work students, alumni, faculty, and staff on Wednesday, February 3. President Holloway is the author of *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919-1941* (2002).

"By presenting Frazier's contributions to social work, I hoped to shed a light on the depth of his impact on the trajectory of social work education," said President Holloway. "Frazier's resolve to work towards racial equality made a lasting mark on the field of social work, reminding us that this vital profession has always been rooted in the longstanding fight for social justice."

An American sociologist and author, E. Franklin Frazier is noted for influence on institutions and practices to accept the demands by African Americans for economic, political, and social equality in American life. His publication, *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), analyzed the historical forces that shaped the development of the African American family from slavery to the mid-1930s. In 1940, the book was awarded the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for the most significant work in the field of race relations.

"We are grateful to President Holloway for bringing our attention to this important figure whose impact has historically been forgotten," said Rutgers School of Social Work Dean and Distinguished Professor Cathryn C. Potter. "Frazier's significance as a pioneer in social work education cannot be overstated, especially as we continue to grapple with our country's history rooted in racism and injustice."

LaVerne E. Austin, a 1992 graduate of Rutgers School of Social Work's MSW program who attended the event, explained, "It was the best of three online presentations on race relations that I've attended with the School of Social Work. I appreciated learning about Frazier's impact on

the field and the historical context of his biography. As a systematic thinker, context is supremely important to me and how I deliver services. I may be biased, but I still hold that context must be included with an assessment of any subject."

President Holloway, a U.S. historian, took office as the 21st president of Rutgers on July 1, 2020. He also serves as a University Professor and Distinguished Professor. Prior to accepting the presidency of Rutgers, Dr. Holloway was provost of Northwestern University from 2017 to 2020 and a member of the faculty of Yale University from 1999 to 2017. At Yale, he served as Dean of Yale College and the Edmund S. Morgan Professor of African American Studies, History, and American Studies.

He is also the author of *The Cause of Freedom: A Concise History of African Americans* and *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America Since 1940*. He edited Ralph Bunche's *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership* and coedited *Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in the Twentieth Century*. He wrote the introduction for the 2015 edition of W.E.B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, and is working on a new book, *A History of Absence: Race and the Making of the Modern World*.

President Holloway serves on boards of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Academic Leadership Institute. He previously served on the Executive Committee of the Organization of American Historians and the boards of the Chicago Botanic Garden, Illinois Humanities, the National Humanities Alliance, and the Society for United States Intellectual History. In April 2020, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy appointed him to the Governor's Restart and Recovery Commission, and in May 2020, New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin appointed him to his Economic Advisory Council. ■



STUDENTS FORM BLACK LIVES MATTER SOCIAL WORK STUDENT CAUCUS TO COLLABORATE ON ANTI-RACIST EFFORTS

The recent and senseless killings of Black lives serve as a painful reminder of the systemic and institutionalized racism that has plagued the United States for centuries. They are also a reminder that social workers have much more to do in the fight against injustice.

Heeding this call to action, last fall, Rutgers School of Social Work students organized the Black Lives Matter Social Work Student Caucus (BLMSWSC), a group that strives towards racial justice for the Black community through anti-racism efforts.

The BLMSWSC does not have formal positions, so all members have an equal voice in the organization's decisions. During their weekly meetings, members share their opinions on the myriad issues the Black community faces and propose solutions to those problems. Students are supported in their efforts by faculty advisors DuWayne Battle, Associate Professor of Teaching, Director of the Baccalaureate Program and Coordinator of the Camden Program, and Associate Professor Lenna Nepomnyaschy.

"It is impressive to see that we newer, passionate students are able to work towards a goal that would be expected of more experienced people in the field," explains Sarah Kim, a BLMSWSC member and MSW student based in Camden.

"Some of the BLMSWSC's goals are to end the senseless killing of Black people, encourage more people to be actively anti-racist, and challenge the anti-Black thinking that has plagued this country for centuries, as well as create a school of social work BLM consortium because we want to merge our efforts with other schools of social work in the state and nation to achieve even greater things," she adds.

One of the group's most recent efforts was drafting a petition to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The petition calls for NASW to explicitly support the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement via reconstruction of their ethical principles.

Despite being a single mother and holding a full-time job, Simone Jarvis — who is earning her MSW through Rutgers School of Social Work's Intensive Weekend program — is an active member of the BLMSWSC.

"The field of social work has a responsibility to recognize the racist policies that are so deeply ingrained in our society," says Jarvis. "I want people to understand that the Black Lives Matter movement does not have any political affiliations. It is a statement of humanity that needs to be respected."

Jarvis is actively involved with the group and takes on extra responsibility, even with her plate already full, by running the caucus' Twitter and Instagram accounts.

The Rutgers School of Social Work community can support the BLMSWSC's efforts by attending their weekly meetings on Fridays, spreading awareness about their work, and learning about the discriminatory nature of anti-Black policies.

"Social workers can voice their opinions on the changes that need to be made to the current system and suggest ways in which to improve it. Everyone involved in the field has the ability to make revolutionary strides, and we should use it to create a more equal, just community," says Kim.

Connect with the BLMSWSC on Twitter and Instagram at @BLMSWSC_rutgers and contact Associate Professor Lenna Nepomnyaschy at lennan@ssw.rutgers.edu to attend a BLMSWSC meeting. ■



FACULTY VOICES IN THE NEWS



“I’ve wondered over the years why there isn’t more outrage about a lot of things that go on in nursing homes. People think of it as their own personal problem, not as something that a civilized society provides to people.”

39% of Covid-19 deaths have occurred in nursing homes — many could have been prevented: report
Distinguished Research Professor Stephen Crystal in NBC News



“Forty-six percent of those who played video games also bought loot boxes, and among the loot box players, they were significantly more likely to also have gambling problems and-or problems with video gaming.”

Video Game Loot Boxes Should Be Regulated Like Casinos, Politicians Say
Lia Nower Professor and Director of the Center for Gambling Studies in Newsweek



“Reliance on reports that are made to formal sources is not giving us the full picture.”

The ‘Dirty Little Secret’ Keeping Domestic Violence Hidden in a Pandemic
Associate Professor and Director, Center on Violence Against Women and Children Sarah McMahon in NBC10 Philadelphia



“But in the case of childbirth and postpartum pain, I think the pendulum has swung too far, making opioids too hard to get, and without enough measures to ease pain otherwise (Tylenol, really?). The narrative that suffering during childbirth is normal, even something to aspire to, doesn’t help. The field of abdominal surgery, for example, has responded to the opioid crisis by instituting methods to hasten recovery and post-operative complications, like having patients drink a carbohydrate-rich beverage prior to surgery to avoid post-anesthesia nausea. These precautions in turn reduce pain and the need for opioids. In contrast, few advances have addressed postpartum pain for pesky patients who have complicated births and need more than the ‘standard of care.’ And yet hospitals still seem to be trying to reduce opioids.”

It Should Not Have Been This Hard for Me to Get Opioids After I Gave Birth
Assistant Teaching Professor and Assistant Director of the DSW Program Erica Goldblatt Hyatt in Slate



“[Christine] Morales and [Mariann] Bischoff talk about the importance of environmental justice at social work conferences and are looking into expanding environmental justice courses. ‘Any opportunity we have to educate anybody, we take it,’ Morales said.”

Seventy percent of Superfund sites are within a mile of public housing, report finds
Assistant Director of Recruitment and Admission and Assistant Professor of Teaching Christine Morales in The Philadelphia Inquirer



“To be protected under the CDC’s moratorium, tenants need to proactively notify the landlord with a signed affidavit saying that they can’t afford their rent, so not everyone knows they need to file that paperwork. Landlords can still take tenants to court even if they do file that affidavit, if the landlord wants to challenge the truthfulness of the tenant’s declaration.”

Housing advocates brace for eviction crisis
Assistant Professor Emmy Tiderington in National Journal



“Let us go beyond simply expressing appreciation for the Black leaders of yesterday, today and tomorrow. We, including our government at all levels, must invest in supporting the efforts of Black civic leaders for social change that will help our society achieve democratic values and eliminate racial inequities. Doing so will help ensure that today’s historic moment becomes a sustainable effort to end white supremacy and the archaic foundations that uphold it.”

To end racial inequities, fund community organizations with public money
Ph.D. Candidate and Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Research Scholar Laurent Reyes, Associate Professor Emily A. Greenfield, and Assistant Professor Adrian Gale in NJ.com



“The unprecedented death of Black clergy of COVID-19 is of no real surprise given the devastating and disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on the Black community. Federal and state governments must do a much better job collecting and reporting data relevant to race, ethnicity, poverty, and geographical region. But from what we know, Black Americans are dying at 2.5 times the rate of white Americans, according to the COVID Tracking Project.”

COVID-19 and the death of Black clergy
Associate Professor of Teaching, Director of the Baccalaureate Program and Coordinator of the Camden Program V. DuWayne Battle in NJ.com



“This is a wonderful opportunity to bring social work skills to an important business setting.”

Students at Rutgers’ School of Social Work to Work With Families Affected By COVID-19
Dean and Distinguished Professor Cathryn C. Potter in TAPinto New Brunswick



“It has been a long personal journey for me to get to this point and also a long and challenging campaign season that has revealed much about our country. I hope that once we, the Electoral College, have voted, we can finally come together and do what President-elect Biden has said throughout his campaign which is to restore the soul of this nation.”

‘It is momentous!’ Electors ready to cast official votes
Assistant Professor of Professional Practice Marla Blunt-Carter in Delaware State News





Associate Professor **Ayse Akinigil** and Distinguished Research Professor **Stephen Crystal** published



“Effectiveness of mandatory peer review to reduce antipsychotic prescriptions for Medicaid-insured children” in *Health Services Research*.



Victoria Banyard, Professor, Associate Dean for Faculty Development, and Associate Director of the Center on Violence Against Women and Children, authored “Improving Social Norms and Actions to Prevent Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence: A Pilot Study of the Impact of Green Dot Community on Youth” in *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion* and

“Using photovoice to understand and amplify youth voices to prevent sexual and relationship violence” in *Journal of Community Psychology*.



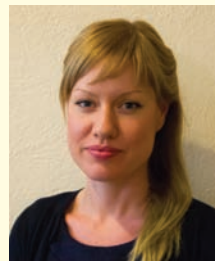
Rutgers School of Social Work and Rutgers School of Public Health Assistant Professor **Qiana L. Brown’s** study “Trends in Marijuana Use Among Pregnant and Nonpregnant Reproductive-Aged Women, 2002-2014” has been in the top 5 percent of all research outputs ever, according to Altmetric. The article, which was published in *JAMA* in 2017, has been viewed over 34,000 times, downloaded over 4,400 times, and has been cited over 160 times. Brown was also awarded a two-year NIH/NIDA Health Disparities Loan Repayment Program (LRP) Award and was elected to the Board of Directors for the Association for Women In Science, Central NJ Chapter.



Rebecca T. Davis, Associate Professor of Professional Practice and Director of the Office of Global Social Work Programs, was named a Social Work Pioneer from the National Association of Social Workers Foundation. As noted by the NASW Foundation, NASW Pioneers are social workers who have explored new territories and built outposts for human services on many frontiers. Some are well known, while others are less famous outside their immediate colleagues, and the region where they live and work. But each one has made an important contribution to the social work profession, and to social policies through service, teaching, writing, research, program development, administration, or legislation.



Assistant Professor **Adrian Gale** authored “Examining Black adolescents’ perceptions of in-school racial discrimination: The role of teacher support on academic outcomes” in *Children and Youth Services Review*.



Ph.D. student Jordan Goodwin and Assistant Professor **Emmy Tiderington** published “Building trauma-informed research competencies in social work education” in *Social Work Education, The International Journal*.



Associate Professors **Jeounghee Kim** and **Myungkook Joo** published “The effects of direct certification in the U.S. National School Lunch Program on program participation” in *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research*. Kim also authored “Informal employment and earnings of home-based home care



School of Social Work’s Office of Field Education, has been selected to mentor a 2020-2021 Network for Social Work Management (NSWM) Policy Fellow. Lamar, who first served as a Policy Fellow Mentor last year, will assist a policy fellow to further their change strategy and thoughtfully develop their work in preparation for presenting at NSWM’s 31st Annual Management Conference in June 2021. Professor Lamar’s mentee this year is Haley Ingersoll, MSW, who serves as an independent consultant with the Center for Patient Partnerships in Pittsburgh, PA, where she works on patient advocacy, management, and legislative issues.



Assistant Professor **Jamey Lister** will lead a \$500,000 award from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to evaluate the “Minority AIDS Initiative for High Risk Men of New Jersey” led by Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine (\$2.5 million overall



Mark Lamar, Associate Professor of Professional Practice and Executive Director of the

workers in the United States” in *Industrial Relations Journal*, “Gender and educational variations in earnings premiums of occupational credentials” in *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy*, and “The cost of a dollars and cents rationale for Adult Basic Education policy” in *2020 Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*. In addition, Kim and Joo received a \$77,800 research grant from the NJ Division of Family Development, NJ Department of Human Services to evaluate the impacts of state Covid-19 initiatives on the lives of working families with children and the local child care markets across the state.



award). The five-year evaluation includes Professor and Associate Dean for Research **Andrew Peterson** and Assistant Research Professor **Kristen Gilmore Powell**



from the Center for Prevention Science on the investigator team. The Minority AIDS Initiative seeks to improve coordinated treatment for infectious diseases, mental health, and recovery support for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx men in residential treatment for addiction. Lister also authored “Shortages of Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder in Underserved Michigan Counties: Examining the Influence of Urbanicity and Income Level” in *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*.



Former post-doctoral student Devin Mills, Assistant Professor **Vivien (Wen Li) Anthony**, and Professor **Lia Nower** co-authored “General motivations, basic psychological needs, and problem gambling: applying the framework of Self-Determination Theory” in *Addiction Research & Theory*. They also co-authored two book chapters on gambling and Internet gaming in the newly-released book *Routledge Handbook of Social Work and Addictive Behaviors*.



Associate Professor **Lenna Nepomnyaschy** published “The Role of Fathers in Reducing Socioeconomic Inequalities in Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes” in *Social Service Review*. She also co-authored “Using a Narrative Approach to Analyze Longitudinal Mixed Methods Data” in *Journal of Mixed*

Methods Research and “Father Involvement and Socioeconomic Disparities in Child Academic Outcomes” in *Journal of Marriage and Family* as well as “The Minimum Wage and Fathers’ Residence with Children” in *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* and “Providing After Prison: Nonresident Fathers’ Formal and Informal Contributions to Children” in *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* with Ph.D. student **Alexandra Haralampoudis**.



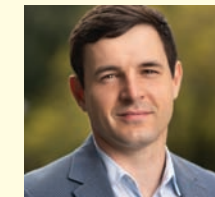
Assistant Director of the BASW Program and Assistant Professor of Teaching **Sara Plummer** has been appointed as a three-year member of the CSWE Council on Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Diversity (CRECD) as of July 1, 2020. She was also invited to work on the CSWE Faculty and Student Racial/Ethnic Equity Work Group, which is part of the CSWE Task Force to Advance Anti-Racism.



Gabriel Robles Alberto, Assistant Professor and Chancellor’s Scholar for Inclusive Excellence in Sexual and Gender Minority Health, authored “PrEP Demonstration Project Showed Superior Adherence with Tenofovir Alafenamide/Emtricitabine Compared to Tenofovir Disoproxil Fumarate/Emtricitabine in a Sample of Partnered Sexual Minority Men” and “Healthy Choices Intervention is Associated with Reductions in Stigma Among Youth Living with HIV in the United States” in *AIDS and Behavior*, “Testing the drug use and condomless anal sex link among sexual minority men: The predictive utility of marijuana and interactions with relationship status” in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, and “Relationship Power and Intimate Partner Violence in Sexual Minority Male Couples” in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. He was also awarded a one-year NIAID subcontract to conduct secondary analysis examining minority stress and stigma among Spanish and English-speaking sexual minority men in the U.S. using the UNITE Cohort Study in the amount of \$158,153.



Associate Professor and Director of the MSW Certificate in Promoting Child and Adolescent Well-Being (CHAP) **Cassandra Simmel** guest edited a special issue of *Child Welfare* entitled “Twenty years after the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (“Chafee”): What we know now about meeting the needs of teens and young adults.”



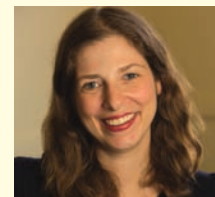
Assistant Professor **Mark van der Mass** and Professor and Director **Lia Nower**, of the Center for Gambling Studies, co-authored two publications: “Contradictions of Responsible Gambling Policies and Gambling Provision in the Context of Rapid Market Expansion” in *Gaming Law Review* and “Gambling and military Service: Characteristics, comorbidity, and problem severity in an epidemiological sample” in *Addictive Behaviors*. Nower was also named Regional Assistant Editor (North America) for the journal *International Gambling Studies*.



Assistant Professor **Abigail Williams-Butler** authored and co-authored several publications, including “Intersectionality and child welfare policy: Implications for Black women, children and families” in *Child Welfare* and “Relational permanence and delinquency among African American adolescents in foster care” in *Children and Youth Services* with



Assistant Professor **Jacquelynn Duron**. She also co-authored “Frontline staff characteristics and capacity for trauma-informed care: Implications for the child welfare workforce” in *Child Abuse & Neglect* with



Assistant Professor **Emily Bosk** and “Mentors’ experiences of mentoring justice-involved adolescents: A narrative of developing cultural consciousness through connection” in *Journal of Community Psychology* with Assistant Professor Jacquelynn Duron.

MARLA BLUNT-CARTER, ELECTORAL COLLEGE MEMBER FOR DELAWARE, CASTS HER VOTE IN HISTORIC 2020 ELECTION

BY ROBIN LALLY, ORIGINALLY POSTED IN *RUTGERS TODAY*

Marla Blunt-Carter has been involved in politics her entire life. She volunteered on campaigns during her childhood including her father's campaign for city council, helped her sister who won a historic election to the U.S. House of Representatives and worked for President Obama's 2008 campaign.

But until now, Blunt-Carter – an assistant professor of professional practice at Rutgers School of Social Work – didn't know anyone who was part of the Electoral College, which gets to directly cast ballots for the president of the United States. But on December 14 she was part of that elite group when she cast one of three Delaware Electoral College votes for President-Elect Joe Biden, who she used to work for when he was a U.S. Senator.

"I'm the only elector I ever met," Blunt-Carter said. "The electors to me were like the people with the Nielsen boxes who help provide television ratings. You hear about them but don't have any idea who they are."

Blunt-Carter was among 538 electors who cast their ballots based on the popular vote. While a majority of 270 electoral votes are required to win, Biden garnered more – 306 compared to President Donald Trump's 232.

Her vote that was cast from Delaware State University, a historically black college in Dover, DE, was added to the list of important political moments that have punctuated Blunt-Carter's life. These accomplishments include helping her sister, Lisa Blunt Rochester, in 2017 to become the first woman and the first person of color to represent Delaware in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"I have been involved in pretty historic experiences and political campaigns," said Blunt-Carter. "My father, sister, Biden and President Barack Obama. But this seems different because this vote affects the whole country and is significant to everyone."

Blunt-Carter, who was a Biden delegate at the virtual Democratic convention in August, was asked by the chairman of the Delaware Democratic Party to be an elector a few days after Biden was nominated.

"As someone who has worked on campaigns since the age of 9 when I started helping my father who was on the city council for 25 years, served on staff for elected officials, and believes in the ideals of American democracy, the significance of this role I did not take lightly," Blunt-Carter said. "I was humbled by the selection and grateful for the opportunity to represent Delaware."

Blunt-Carter received her MSW degree in 2003 from Rutgers School of Social Work and teaches graduate courses on macro social work practice, management and policy at Rutgers University-



Camden. The School of Social Work named her Professor of the Year three times.

Before coming to Rutgers in 2014, teaching courses on issues ranging from diversity and social welfare policy to human resources and strategic planning, Blunt-Carter held a variety of communications and public policy jobs in higher education and federal and state government, including working in the Obama White House as the senior liaison for professional correspondence in the Office of the President.

In 2005, she worked for then-Senator Biden as his director of constituent services. She followed Biden to Iowa in 2007 when he entered the Democratic primary for president. After Biden dropped out of the race, Blunt-Carter became the Delaware director for the Obama presidential campaign.

"To be a part of that, involved in a campaign of the first African-American man selected to be president was unbelievable," Blunt-Carter said. "I felt we had come such a long way. The diversity was so inspiring and gave me hope."

Now, as a Delaware resident since the age of three, raised in Wilmington, Blunt-Carter is excited about her former boss taking over the presidency with not only the first Black and Asian-American vice president, but also the first woman. She hopes their election ushers in change in a country grappling with a racial reckoning.

"The death of George Floyd brought the whole country to its knees," Blunt-Carter said. "I am very hopeful and excited that the Biden/Harris administration will work to address issues related to social, racial, economic and environmental justice as well as getting the nation to the other side of COVID pandemic."

To cast her vote as part of the Electoral College, Blunt-Carter, the mother of a teenage daughter and college age son, placed her signature nine times in a series of documents. The moment took on special meaning for Blunt-Carter, who suffered a stroke in July 2019 that had left her temporarily unable to move her left side, including the use of her hand. She has been practicing signing her name to prepare for the day.

"When I got the phone call about becoming an elector I spoke with my middle sister, who is the family genealogist, and talked about the document she found where our great-great-great-grandfather, a slave, had signed his name with an X to register to vote," said Blunt-Carter who spent months after her stroke in physical therapy. "I want whoever comes after me to know that someone who came from slaves, who survived a stroke, signed her name and voted in this historic election." ■



ASSISTANT PROFESSOR FELIX MUCHOMBA AWARDED ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION GRANT TO SUPPORT MATERNAL HEALTH RESEARCH

Rutgers School of Social Work Assistant Professor Felix Muchomba has been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to support his study examining policy levers that have the potential to improve and reduce disparities in maternal health in New Jersey. The two-year grant is the largest RWJF grant received by the School of Social Work in the School's history.

"This award is an investment in research that seeks to understand an urgent and growing problem in our state and the United States," Muchomba said. "I welcome this opportunity to collaborate with a prestigious network of scholars to advance research with the potential to improve and to reduce disparities in maternal health."

Maternal mortality and morbidity are pressing issues in New Jersey despite the state having one of the lowest poverty rates and highest median incomes in the nation. In fact, the state has the fourth highest maternal mortality rate in America, one of the highest maternal morbidity rates, and the rates continue to rise. Further, there are large maternal health disparities within New Jersey by race, ethnicity, and county. Yet few studies have investigated the extent or underlying causes of these disparities.

Muchomba's study will seek to explain why some areas in New Jersey have better or worse maternal health outcomes, overall or among only some racial and ethnic groups, by studying differences in local laws and regulations. In this project, the research team will use 10 years of New Jersey birth records and other data to:

1. Identify high-incidence and low-incidence localities –

municipalities and areas in New Jersey that have worse or better maternal health outcomes than state-level rates – overall and by race and ethnicity, and;

2. Identify high-risk and low-risk localities – municipalities and areas in New Jersey that have worse or better maternal health outcomes than expected, given the socioeconomic status and healthcare resources of the community – overall and by race and ethnicity.

Additionally, the team will seek out local policy solutions that help ensure safe, healthy motherhood by examining the differences in local laws and regulations in the domains of land use (zoning), transportation, housing, buildings, public safety, social and health services, parks and recreation, smoking, alcohol, drug-free zones, and pollution.

The grant also includes a mentorship component. Muchomba's research mentor on this project is Nancy Reichman, Professor of Pediatrics at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and his career mentor is Joel Cantor, Distinguished Professor of Public Policy at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.

The award is part of RWJF's Policies for Action (P4A) signature research program to support early-career researchers to better understand and find solutions that will promote health equity and foster action on policies and laws that ensure all people can attain and preserve good health and well-being. Since 2015, P4A has awarded over \$15 million for research identifying policies, laws, and other system and community levers in the public and private sectors that can support RWJF's vision, working with others, to build a Culture of Health. ■

FIVE THINGS THAT MATTER

NEW FACULTY: **FIVE** OBJECTS THAT MATTER

Rutgers School of Social Work is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Cory Morton. Dr. Morton joined the faculty of the Center for Prevention Science and the School of Social Work as an assistant research professor in January 2021.

Dr. Morton has more than ten years of experience conducting research in the field of prevention science, substance misuse, and child maltreatment. His research focuses on how to structure communities to support individual and family well-being through an investigation of how various features of the built environment are associated with substance-related harms. His recent work has focused on documenting rising alcohol sales during the COVID-19 pandemic and using questions posed to substance use experts to develop youth-focused prevention curricula.

We asked him to identify five meaningful objects in his home and office.

01/ HALLOWEEN POLAROID

My wife and partner, Kelly, and I have been together for around 15 years. For most of those years we have documented our Halloween costumes with a Polaroid. Here, we were Dale Cooper and Audrey Horne from *Twin Peaks*. It is always fun to go back and look at these pictures that represent a couple of the things I love most about her — a playful spirit and, of course, a willingness to nerd out.



04/ TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS

These images represent two generations of transitional objects: cookie monster (mine), beary, and elephant blanket. I have two daughters, aged 10 and three, and both put so much love into their respective transitional objects. If anything has been good about last year, the time spent with my kids has been that silver lining for me.



02/ RECORDS

I love collecting records, and a big part of that love is bound to the hunt. While record stores are great, it is the ones I find in thrift stores or estate sales amongst the many copies of Herb Albert & The Tijuana Brass that are the most special. Whether the find is a regional R&B act from Canada or Neil Young's "Time Fades Away" (out of print for over 40 years until 2014!), I am always curious of the Bill Keane-like journey these objects have taken as they are brought back to life on my turntable.



CORY MORTON

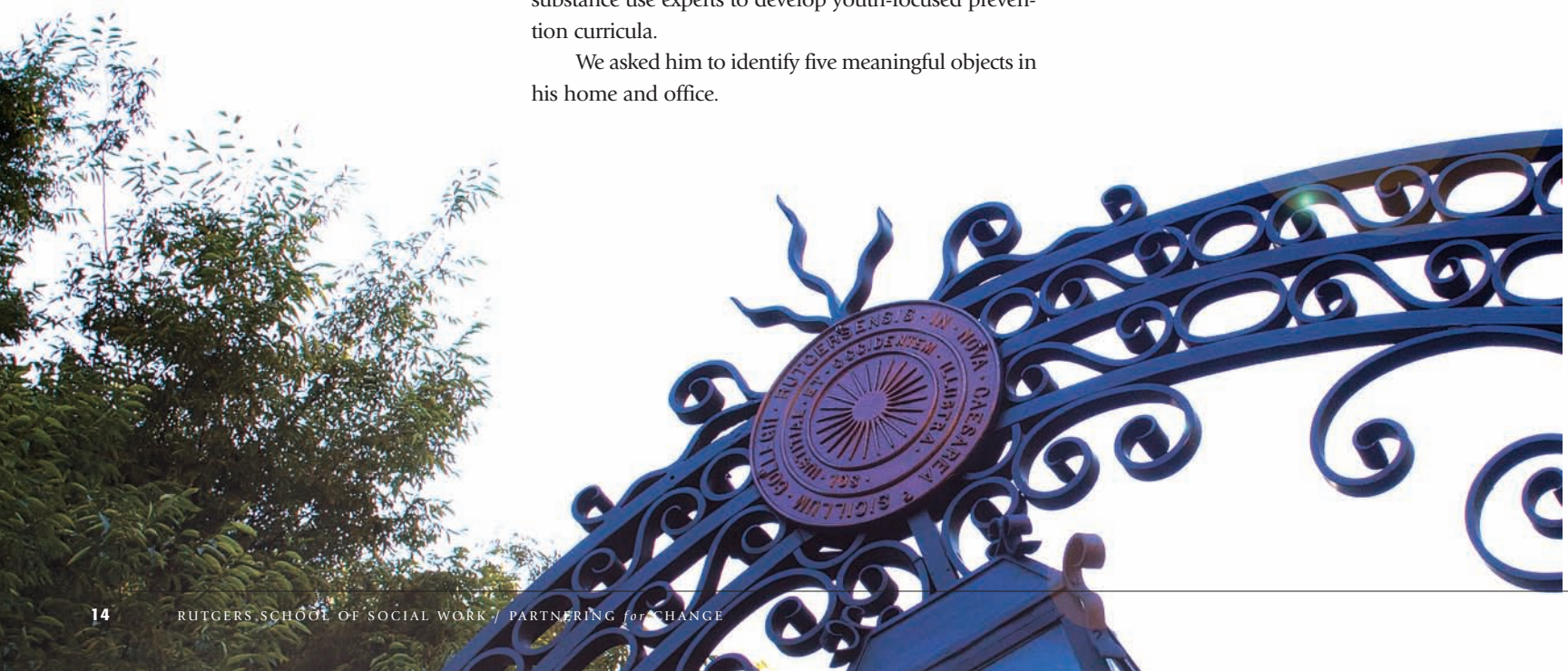
03/ CERAMIC OWL

I was fortunate to have my great-grandparents around during my early years in Memphis, Tennessee. My paternal great-grandparents owned and resided on the grounds of a nursery, and exploring those grounds is one of my most treasured early memories. On their property, they kept turkeys, cows, and peacocks along with a large ceramic shop and kiln that my great-grandmother operated. She made this owl for me when I was a toddler, and I have kept it as a talisman since.



05/ PILE OF NEWSPAPERS

I am a big fan of print media. The pile of newspapers helps me keep an archive at home to revisit articles until I tie them up for recycling. Reading the newspaper is a practice for me that requires time and space, and the ceremonial aspects help buffer against the endless doom scroll that often happens when I view digital newsfeeds of late.



MSW CERTIFICATE PROGRAM/
PROGRAMA DE CERTIFICADO DE MSW

LISTA

LATINA/O INITIATIVES FOR SERVICE,
TRAINING AND ASSESMENT

MSW CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS HELP NEXT GENERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS

For years, Rutgers School of Social Work has offered students the chance to earn a certificate by focusing their education on a particular area of social work. But now, more than ever, these specialized training opportunities are proving to be critical in addressing some of the most pressing needs within our communities.

Our newest certificate program, Latina/o Initiatives for Service, Training, and Assessment (LISTA), is addressing one such need. Although approximately 20% of both New Jersey and New York's individual state populations are Hispanic – and as these communities continue to grow – there is a lack of culturally-competent social practitioners to work effectively with these populations. The LISTA Certificate Program, with funding from the New York Community Trust, was developed to fill this gap.

LISTA aims to increase the number of social workers who are culturally competent to provide services to Hispanic populations through education on evidence-based culturally sensitive practices, internships in Hispanic serving agencies, and experiential learning through study abroad in Hispanic countries.

"Currently, there is a dearth of culturally-sensitive social workers prepared to meet the needs of Hispanic individuals, families, and communities," says Raymond Sanchez Mayers, Associate Professor and Director of LISTA. "LISTA was started because of the need for more bilingual/bicultural social workers to work with Hispanic communities. Our goal is to increase the number of MSWs who can provide the kinds of supports and resources to improve the lives of people who are often traumatized by their immigration experience, the loss of loved ones, and the

uncertainty of life in a new place often characterized by bias and discrimination. That Hispanics can survive, and even thrive, in an often hostile environment is a testament to their resilience."

Claire Brown, a 2018 graduate of Rutgers School of Social Work's MSW program and LISTA student, puts her education to use every day in her role as a Spanish-speaking clinician at Jewish Family and Children's Services. "I use the cultural competency that I learned in LISTA with the children and parents that I work with – everything I learned in LISTA has been very helpful," she says.

Brown's training through LISTA helps her recognize the myriad difficulties many Hispanic people face on a daily basis. "One Latinx student that I worked with who attended a local college during the week was having trouble at school," she explains. "On the weekends, he was expected to come home, be involved in whatever family activities

were going on, and help his siblings with their homework. It was really hard for him. He didn't know how to say 'no.' Therefore, how was he expected to complete his own classwork and be ready for school the following week? The papers that I wrote for Dr. Sanchez Mayers really opened my eyes to the great need for first-generation student programming in universities."

In addition to LISTA, Rutgers School of Social Work MSW students can choose to focus their social work training by earning a certificate in addiction counselor training, aging and health, promoting child and adolescent well-being, or violence against women and children. With the COVID-19 pandemic bringing to light many of the challenges our most vulnerable populations face, these specialized training opportunities are helping future generations of social workers tackle some of the most critical needs of our society. ■



NEW ASSOCIATE DEAN FOCUSES EFFORTS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AT RUTGERS SSW



ast fall, Professor Antoinette Y. Farmer was appointed inaugural Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, stepping into a new position at Rutgers School of Social Work. In this new role, Farmer is responsible

for providing overall strategic leadership to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, chairing and facilitating the new School-wide Inclusion, Intersectionality, Diversity, Equity and Advancement (IIDEA) Committee, and working collaboratively with the School's senior leadership to set priorities and policies.

Dr. Farmer became a faculty member in 1996 and is the first African American female to be tenured in the history of the School. Prior to this new role, Farmer served for thirteen years as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the School. She also holds many national social work positions, including her long-serving role on the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Commission on Accreditation. "We are incredibly fortunate to have someone of Dr. Farmer's standing in our School, and even more fortunate to have her leadership in this position," says Dean Cathryn C. Potter.

"At this time in the history of Rutgers School of Social Work, the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position was created to underscore the School's continued commitment to having diverse and inclusive educational and work environments that allow diversity to thrive in its various forms," Farmer explains. "The creation of this position goes beyond merely noting the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our mission statement; it brings it to the forefront of our collective consciousness. I have been empowered, on behalf of Dean Potter, to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan, and I will be supported by an infrastructure that will ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is of paramount importance and is embedded within the School's culture."



Farmer describes the focus of her first year in this role in four parts:

1. Engage with an external consultant to complete a diversity, equity, and inclusion review of the SSW;
2. Develop a diversity strategic plan based on the recommendations from the assessment of the School's diversity, equity, and inclusion dynamics;
3. Begin revision of curriculum for each of the School's academic programs; and
4. Develop and initiate programming for faculty, staff, and students related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

"Attending to the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion is an ongoing process and requires us to reflect on the work we do both inside and outside of the School," Farmer says.

More specifically, Farmer is clear in sharing that the diversity of the IIDEA Committee and leadership should reflect the diversity of the SSW's student body as students should be able to visualize themselves in those that are instructing and leading them, making policies affecting them, and socializing them into the profession. Faculty, staff, and students from the School are on the IIDEA Committee.

"Students across the nation are asking university administrators to be more attentive to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. They are asking that curriculum be revised to include content from scholars from diverse backgrounds, for the hiring for faculty who reflect the population of the student body, and for more supports (financial, counseling, academic, etc.) for students from diverse backgrounds," Farmer says.

Ultimately, Associate Dean and Professor Farmer remarks, "Courage paves the pathway toward change. You must have courage to speak up when things are not what they should be. Courage to partner with others to take action. And courage to implement the programs and policies that make the necessary change." ■

TOWARD A MORE JUST FUTURE: A FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Toward a More Just Future envisions a world grounded in justice. Rutgers School of Social Work commits to leading for this cause through a focus on innovation, excellence, collaboration, and community. Deeply grounded in inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, equity, and advancement, our plan focuses on core elements of our mission as a leading school of social work.

In 2020, celebrating our 65th year and ranking as one of the top twenty schools of social work in the nation, we were poised to launch our strategic plan during March – Social Work Month – at a gathering to mark our accomplishments and show off our new school spaces in downtown New Brunswick. Then COVID-19 sent us into uncharted territory.

We moved to remote work and education, reimagined many aspects of our work and community, and responded daily to the demands of COVID-19 and our grappling with the longstanding plague of systemic racism. It might have been that our strategic planning work became irrelevant, but



that was not the case. Our goals rang truer than ever in our new environment. As we worked together over the last year, the strategic plan framework began guiding our community and our actions.

The result of more than two years of planning, our strategic plan started with a rigorous method — an environmental scan process that engaged many constituencies, including our students and alumni, field instructors and community leaders, faculty, and staff, along with consideration of national trends and comparisons to top schools of social work. The environmental scan was comprehensive and provided rich data for our Strategic Planning Committee (the Dean's Advisory Committee and key staff leaders), Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and faculty and staff to consider.

By last fall, we had identified a set of strategic initiatives that would guide the work of the School over the next five years:

- Inclusion, Intersectionality, Diversity, Equity and Advancement (IIDEA)
- A Curriculum for the Future of Social Work
- Supporting the 21st-Century Student
- Research for a Just Future
- Innovative Community Engagement
- Organizational Foundations for Success

These initiatives shape our vision of a future for our country and our world that is grounded in justice. We commit to leading for justice through a focus on innovation, excellence, collaboration, and community. We will prepare and support the nation's best students for leadership in diverse communities and for innovative social work practice that addresses our most pressing social problems. We will expand our research and research partnerships to focus on indispensable social issues. We will build a reputation for innovation in community engagement, and the organizational culture and supports to sustain our work.

Leaders within the School share their goals and how these initiatives are beginning to be put into action.

INCLUSION, INTERSECTIONALITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ADVANCEMENT (IIDEA)

Rutgers School of Social Work embraces inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, equity and advancement as core principles for our curriculum, our community engagement, our research portfolios and our faculty, student and staff community.

- Goal 1: Develop a shared definition of IIDEA.
- Goal 2: Create mechanisms to infuse strong IIDEA practices across the curriculum and our community life.
- Goal 3: Ensure recruitment and retention of faculty and staff that advance IIDEA goals.

Antoinette Farmer, Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Since the School of Social Work's strategic plan was formalized, I have chaired and facilitated the work of the IIDEA Committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students who represent the various programs at the School. This committee has been charged with:

- (1) Working in partnership with the Office of Academic Affairs to advance a conceptual/theoretical framework that undergirds the initiatives that further inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, equity, and advancement (IIDEA) for social justice for the School, and for agencies that partner with the School, in order to carry out the core mission of the SSW;
- (2) Working in partnership with multiple School of Social Work entities, including the curriculum faculty and the staff council, to lead development and implementation oversight of a comprehensive, evolving, multi-year plan that advances IIDEA within the School and agencies that partner with the School; and

(3) Identifying areas where inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, equity, and advancement need to be addressed and make recommendations to the dean, administration, and faculty to address the identified areas.

To address the first goal and charge, separate subcommittees have been formed. In addition, the IIDEA Committee also partnered with Social Workers Advocating for GLBTQA and Gender-Nonconforming Equal Rights (SWAGGER), a student-run organization funded by Rutgers School of Social Work's Graduate Student Association, to host the School's first Transgender Day of Remembrance event. The IIDEA Committee has made recommendations to the dean that will ensure that faculty, staff, students, and others affiliated with the School are better equipped to work with transgender individuals. Moreover, the IIDEA Committee will host a diversity, equity, and inclusion event in partnership with student advisors from the Office of Student Affairs this semester. Members of the committee believe that transparency is important in advancing inclusion, intersectionality, diversity, equity, and advancement efforts. Therefore, plans are underway to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion website and publish an IIDEA progress report, which will be posted on socialwork.rutgers.edu.

In addition to the School of Social Work's IIDEA efforts, the IIDEA Committee will lead the University's diversity planning process within the School. On January 28, Rutgers launched its University-wide diversity strategic planning process. Building on the University Equity Audit, Rutgers will assess and align its efforts across the Chancellor-led units and the central administration recognizing that diversity, equity, and inclusion lead us to excellence. A first step in the process is surveying students, faculty, staff, and other internal partners to reflect on where the University currently is and where it needs to be.

A CURRICULUM FOR THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK

The BASW, MSW, Ph.D., and DSW curricula will prepare graduates for leadership and innovation in community organizations to redress social, racial, economic, and environmental disparities.

- Goal 1: Prepare students for exemplary work with diverse populations and to lead in diverse and inclusive settings.
- Goal 2: Prepare students to lead and drive innovation in the non-profit, public, private and academic sectors.
- Goal 3: Prepare students to lead and practice in a technology-driven environment.
- Goal 4: Prepare students to work in complex health care environments.
- Goal 5: Enhance innovative methods of curriculum delivery.

Laura Curran, Associate Professor and Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

In response to the School of Social Work's strategic plan initiative to develop a curriculum for the future of social work, our faculty is working to review and integrate technology content into the curriculum as it relates to social work practice, administration, and the social environment. We have already made significant strides in this area of our work. Faculty members have started to update course content, and we have developed a new mini-course on e-social work practice designed by Associate Professor Patricia Findley, Director of our Master of Social Work Program and Special Assistant to the Dean for Interprofessional Health Initiatives. We have also launched a new field education lab that teaches our students about telehealth management and provides them the skills they need to administer services in virtual settings.

While our plan pre-dated COVID-19, the pandemic accelerated our actions. A significant percentage of our students have been working in virtual field placements since the pandemic began, and we expect these arrangements to continue into the future. As a result of the changing needs of our students brought

on by the pandemic, our faculty are integrating enhanced leadership content into the curriculum, including leading through crises and leading organizations in a virtual context. Finally, our curriculum committees are working in conjunction with the IIDEA Committee to ensure our curriculum reflects the School's deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and grounding in anti-racist practices.

SUPPORTING THE 21ST-CENTURY STUDENT

RU-SSW will maximize success for 21st-century students by providing access to necessary tools and support to prospective and current students, and to alumni.

- Goal 1: Develop a framework and multi-year plan for responding to the needs of 21st-century students in the BASW, MSW, Ph.D., and DSW program options.
- Goal 2: Continue the strong focus on raising dollars for student scholarships and additional student supports.
- Goal 3: Partner more effectively with Rutgers Career Services.
- Goal 4: Build stronger community among students and the School.

Arlene Hunter, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs

One of the main reasons students have difficulty beginning or continuing their MSW education is lack of funding. We all know how expensive higher education has become. Even attending Rutgers School of Social Work, which is a New Jersey resident's best academic choice at a reasonable tuition rate, is daunting to many. More than 89% of MSW students take out federal loans, and other students work full time and attend school part time to pay for their education.

At the same time, the entire scope of financial aid is confusing and complicated, and many students do not fully understand the loans and the consequences of withdrawing from courses if one has a loan. Many students do not have a feasible plan to re-pay loans once they graduate or grasp how much they will be required to pay on a monthly or yearly basis.

In order to ensure students understand the serious issues of financial aid and financial planning, the Office of Student Affairs is committed to developing a comprehensive financial wellness program for MSW students. As part of this ambitious strategic plan, the following steps will be taken:

- Review and strengthen current new student financial aid webinars, which are currently facilitated by professional staff from the University Office of Financial Aid.
- Develop a downloadable guide to financial aid for MSW students based on information from the University Office of Financial Aid.
- Develop a list of possible funding sources for MSW students, including those outside the University.
- Develop a financial planning document for continuing MSW students. This document will focus on students' post-degree financial issues and will provide the tools and resources for new graduates to navigate their financial futures.

The Office of Student Affairs will continue to provide initial programs in the Spring and Summer 2021 semesters and implement the comprehensive program for the 2021-2022 academic year.

RESEARCH FOR A JUST FUTURE

RU-SSW will serve as an exemplary, top 20-ranked program, by identifying emerging social work research priorities, building research clusters/centers, and by enhancing support for our current research initiatives.

- Goal 1: Continue current focus on increasing tenure-track and non-tenure-track research faculty size to better approximate ratios with key competitor programs (R1, Big Ten, NYC-specific) and to better align faculty representation with student diversity.
- Goal 2: Increase faculty research productivity.

N. Andrew Peterson, Professor and Associate Dean for Research

In order to address some of the key components of the School of Social Work's strategic plan (Research for a Just Future; IIDEA; and Innovative Community Engagement), the Research Advisory Committee, in collaboration with the IIDEA Committee, has developed two Research Recognition Awards for:

- 1) Rutgers School of Social Work researchers who have made outstanding contributions to IIDEA research;
- 2) Rutgers School of Social Work Emerging Scholars who have made outstanding contributions to IIDEA research

These awards will recognize Rutgers School of Social Work faculty, staff, and students who have made outstanding and innovative contributions to IIDEA research initiatives. The individuals recognized with these awards will serve as a model for how IIDEA perspectives can permeate our research portfolio.

All Rutgers School of Social Work faculty, staff, and students will be eligible for nomination. The Research Advisory and IIDEA Committees will review applications based on the individual's commitment and contributions to advancing IIDEA research efforts.

INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RU-SSW will actively support New Jersey social work practice communities through its research and community engagement efforts.

- Goal 1: Identify, develop, and leverage new and existing strategic partnerships between the School and communities.
- Goal 2: Increase faculty, staff and student engagement in social policy advocacy.
- Goal 3: Create faculty promotion supports for community engagement activities.
- Goal 4: Develop a robust community engagement communication plan.

Mark Lamar, Associate Professor of Professional Practice and Executive Director, Office of Field Education

The Office of Field Education will continue to connect with our



community partners – including the more than 1,500 field placements at organizations across the country – through many of our usual means and methods. However, we are also looking for additional ways we can support these agencies in a more focused way.

For example, we are interested in helping agencies make improvements by engaging with Rutgers School of Social Work faculty expertise. Agencies may need help or information about conducting research or improving their policies and procedures, and our faculty can provide the assistance they need. We view this as an expansion of our existing partnerships because many organizations have their own deep traditions of practice and expertise.

In addition, some of our field trainings offer CEUs, which our social work partners need for ongoing licensure. This includes training agency staff in our Seminar on Field Instruction, which covers how to teach and train students but also has implications for improving supervisory practice overall.

ORGANIZATIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

RU-SSW will invest to ensure strength in organizational foundations that support the development of faculty, staff, and students to achieve the mission of the School. Organizational foundations elements will ensure achievability of goals, objectives, and measures for the other five initiatives and also will include goals, objectives and measures of its own.

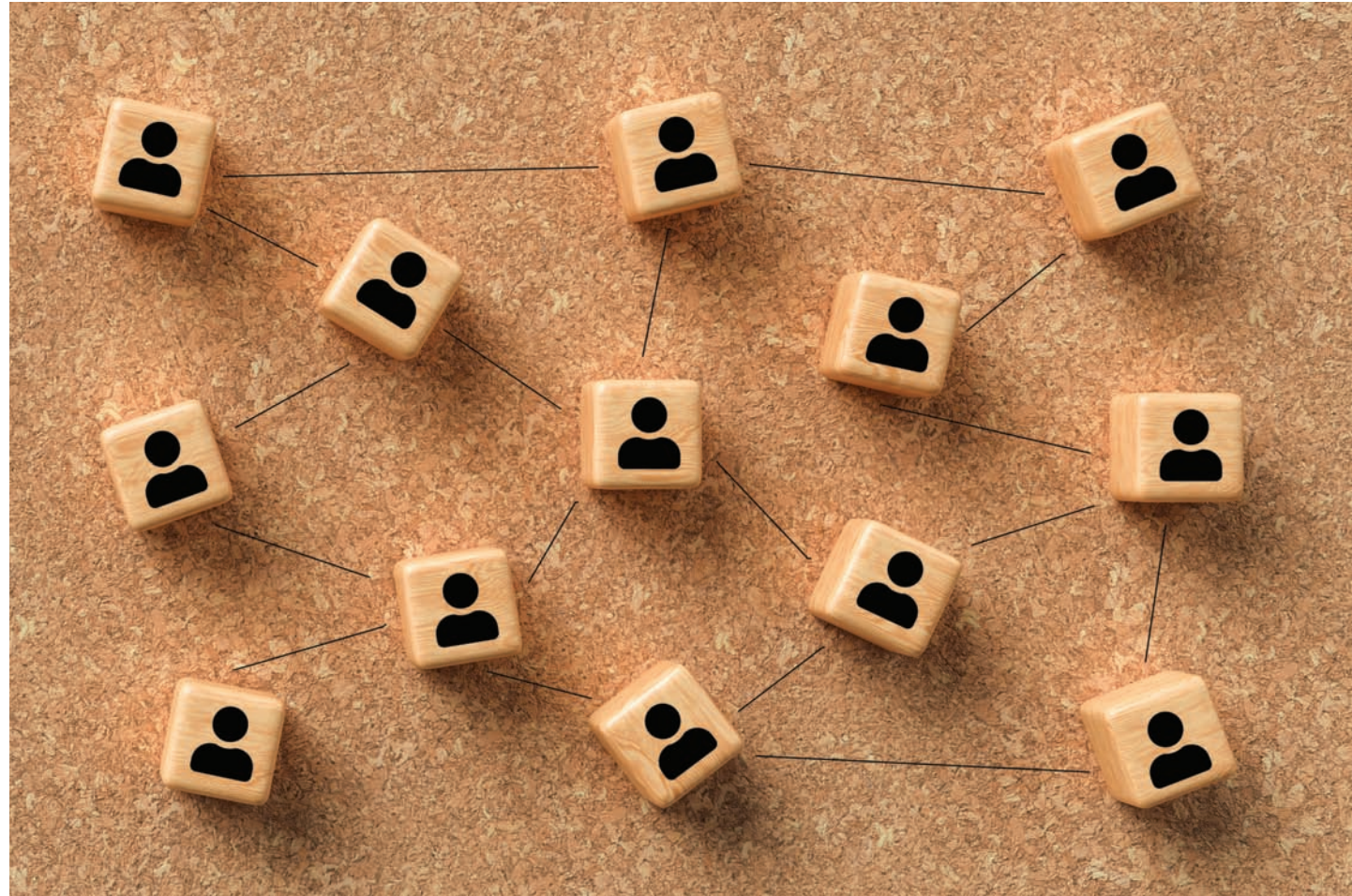
- Goal 1: Creating a cohesive culture and climate.
- Goal 2: Investments in infrastructure and other operational instruments.
- Goal 3: Improving branding and communication.
- Goal 4: External development and fundraising.

Sharon Fortin, Associate Dean for Finance and Administration

With the convening of the inaugural School of Social Work Staff Council during the fall of 2020, we are off to a critical start to further implement elements of the Organizational Foundations for Success initiative. Through its representation of staff across the School, the Council will work to build action plans that contribute directly to the goals established in this initiative as well as elements of the five other initiatives.

The School has achieved implementation of other action items that include the beginnings of more robust staff recognition, the expansion of the communications team, the formation of the School of Social Work Website Redesign Steering Committee, and action planning to effect administrative and technological improvements that will prove to be of great benefit to our faculty, staff, and students. These efforts don't rest on any one person but on the strong team of staff here at the School of Social Work. I look forward to further collaboration so that we may implement the strategic plan across the School, and to ensure the School has the appropriate organizational foundations for success.

We invite you to join with us as we build our leadership in key strategic areas, to educate the next generation of social workers for our world, and to build the knowledge that supports social change. Read through our entire plan, which outlines critical goals and objectives for our community at go.rutgers.edu/sswstrategicplan. ■



MSW STUDENTS SERVE AS CONTACT TRACERS FOR COVID-19

Rutgers School of Social Work's Office of Field Education placed 21 MSW students with the New Jersey Department of Health and Rutgers School of Public Health's New Jersey Community Contact Tracing Corps to serve as social support coordinators, and even more as contact tracers, conducting interviews and documenting the path of COVID-19 throughout the state.

As COVID-19 presented new opportunities and calls for action in the field of social work, last summer, students began working as social support coordinators in each of New Jersey's 21 counties. They served as case managers, assisting individuals referred to them by contact tracers or local health department staff.

Jose A. Cruz, MSW, MBA, LCSW, Senior Program Coordinator for the School of Social Work's New Brunswick field team, said, "We want students to immerse themselves in the county they're working with and understand and interact with the social, racial, economic, and geographic diversity that makes up New Jersey. This is a unique

experience and provides opportunity for historical reflection — to understand how similar events were handled previously and how they can be made better in the present."

The social support coordinators bridged the fields of public health and social work as they provided appropriate referrals and linkages, conducted follow up to ensure adequacy of services, and maintained communication with the contract tracers to best serve their counties.

When asked about the intersection of social work and contact tracing, Mark Lamar, Executive Director of Field Education and Associate Professor of Professional Practice at the School of Social Work, explained, "Social work responds to emergencies both local and national. It is this commitment to service and importance of embedding our work in other professions, like public health, that best helps the individuals and communities we serve." ■

Thank you to all of our alumni who have sent us their news and updates. We encourage you to keep us posted with any updates about your job, your life, or your family. Email your news to mmolner@ssw.rutgers.edu.



After 13 years at Carrier Clinic, **Pamela Feig, MSW'07** left to further focus on private practice. She also works part time at Centurion, the first organization in the world dedicated to the vindication of the wrongly convicted, where she leads national efforts to coordinate post-release support services for those exonerated individuals.



Caitlin M. Krenn, LCSW, BASW'15 is the clinical supervisor of a mental health and substance use support team, or thrive team, in a transitional family shelter in Brooklyn. She is also a policy fellow with the Network for Social Work Management (NSWM),

where she is studying the intersection between the housing insecure population and civic engagement. Within the professional organization, she has partnered with the research and policy team to connect with clients and learn from their insight into the houseless experience and the larger systemic issues that cause homelessness. As a secondary component to the research, she is conducting interviews with community stakeholders to research and better understand the view of the housing insecure population from their perspective, and how it impacts their decision making, advocacy, orientation to the population, and overall functioning. This group includes elected officials, traditional voter engagement and education groups, community boards, and more.

When schools in Red Bank, NJ were shut down last spring, **Maura Lehmann Connor, MSW'05**, a school social worker for 16 years, collected \$2,000 worth of educational supplies to be distributed to families to supplement virtual instruction. Many families in her district do not have basic supplies at home like construction paper, crayons, Legos, puzzles, and Play-Doh. Items were distributed at the free meal pickups or given to certain families in need.

Dr. Sharon C. Lyter, PhD, LCSW serves as professor and director of Kutztown University's DSW program. She also serves as the PI for its Institute on Justice. Chaired by Dr. Ed Hanna, the institute along with faculty, students, and staff, created an initiative to promote and institutionalize training on "Racism, Discrimination, and Forms of Bias" for Pennsylvania state employees. It has been translated into the form of proposed bills that are now in the Senate and House.

Robert (Bob) Mahon, MSW'74 is a retired LSW and was a consultant to NASW-NJ for many years. Prior to consulting for NASW-NJ, he was a speechwriter for three New Jersey governors and also had a long career with DHS and DYFS. Since (almost) full retirement, he created a website, agingsmart.net, that offers information and resources to those who are aging (50+) and those who care or plan for those who are aging. The website provides information and resources on COVID-19, among other topics, and also features a blog. Bob has worked closely with Lauren Snedeker, Assistant Professor of Teaching and Coordinator for the Aging and Health Certificate Program, on the agingsmart.net website.



Andreica Maldonado-Arroyo, MSW'14 lives in her native Puerto Rico where she leads the research grants program at the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust in San Juan. The organization's mission is to invest, facilitate and build capacity to continually advance Puerto Rico's economy and its citizens' well-being through innovation-driven enterprises, science, and technology, and its industrial base. In response to COVID-19, the program provided support and \$600,000 in funding across six promising research and development projects and clinical research projects designed for immediate action and response to the pandemic. In addition, the University of Puerto Rico partnered with her team to evaluate COVID-19 research and development proposals in response to an \$1,714,000 appropriation from the Puerto Rico government.

Ken Palmisano, MSW'18 earned NJ credentials as an LSW and an LCADC. He passed the LCSW exam and needs approximately 350 more clinical hours to complete his credentials as an LCSW and will soon also be a certified clinical supervisor. For the past three years, he has been working as a substance abuse counselor at the Morris County jail in New Jersey. He works with attorneys, judges, probation officers, and families to assist incarcerated men and women in their release to a treatment program. If the court does not agree to release, he works with them in house, providing individual and group counseling. He is also the jail liaison to the Morris and Sussex County drug court teams and attends their team meetings, offering clinical advice to those who are struggling with their addiction. He also earned a credential as a disaster response crisis counselor and currently volunteers once a week at the Sussex County COVID-19 vaccination site.

In March 2020, **Susan Van Vleet, MSW'76**, who owns her own management consulting company specializing in diversity and change management, moved all but three of her company's programs to Zoom. Most of the company's efforts shifted to giving women the support they need to deal with their increased workload as well as supporting them in "pushing back" on their companies and spouses. They have also been meeting with corporate leadership teams to make the changes they need to make to keep women working.



Katie Winner, MSW'19 has been working as a social worker at Inspira, helping with discharge planning and making sure community members are getting the care they need when home. At nights, she counsels teenagers and young adults, helping them with the stress, anxieties, and unknowns this past year has brought.

Anthony Williams, CCAS'97, currently works as a health science specialist and crisis line responder for the Veterans and Military Crisis Line. He staffs the lines in one of three call centers, supporting suicidal veterans, active duty members, and their families. He provides crisis response for callers 24/7 and connects them to services such as housing, jobs, welfare, rescues, or just a conversation for the lonely callers, widows, and those that suffer from PTSD, military sexual trauma, and much more. If you or someone you know needs help or assistance, please call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 for veterans, military, and family members. If you are not a veteran, military member, or connected, remain on the line for your local crisis line. There is also a confidential chat at militarycrisisline.net or text to 838255.

IN MEMORIAM

We extend our deepest sympathy to the loved ones of the deceased alumni and friends listed below whose passing has been shared with the School between July 2020 and January 2021.

- Lucretia Agostarola CCAS'81, SSW'85, GSN'91
- Marita Barnes Mattei SSW'91
- Harriet E. Bogdonoff SSW'82
- Keith J. Carter SSW'89
- Dr. Wynetta Devore SSW'64, GSED'80
- Miriam Dickman SSW'76
- Joseph T. Farina SSW'71
- John Golden, Jr. SSW'75
- Charlotte T. Hanley CCAS'83, SSW'84
- Thomas Johnson, Jr. SSW'75
- Andrew Laursen, Jr. SSW'67
- Rosa Lee Johnson SSW'73
- Mary Lodge Wells, LCSW SSW'67
- Belle Meisler UCNB'70, GSED'73, SSW'81
- Judith Miller SSW'77
- Myrna Murdock SSW'75
- Dorothy C. Owens SSW'90
- Deborah L. Pedrick SSW'13
- Patricia Reynolds, MSW SSW'63
- Elizabeth B. Roswell SSW'77
- Melvin A. Slawik SSW'61
- Grace E. Thompson SSW'83
- Ronald Bruce Trautz, LCSW, LCADC SSW'86
- Margo C. Wenzel SSW'95
- Booker T. Wilkins SSW'74
- Ann Marie Williams, LCSW SSW'87
- Donna L. Woody GSED'89, SSW'05
- Diane Wright Crosby, MSW SSW'75

e n d p a g e



“True peace is not merely the absence of war, it is the presence of justice.”

JANE ADDAMS



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