UTA

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

School of Social Work

THRIVE HERE
THRIVE FOREVER!

THE YEAR OF THE HORSE

Blazing The Trail Through Research!

Greetings!

At the University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work, we take pride in being part of a world-class institution recognized for its academic excellence, research innovation, and community impact.

As one of the largest and most diverse universities in the state, with over 42,000 students and a Carnegie R-1 "Very High Research Activity" designation, UTA continues to expand knowledge and serve the public good through discovery, collaboration, and leadership.

Each year, our students provide nearly 600,000 hours through practicum internships at over 400 community agencies and organizations in Texas, across the country, and on U.S. military bases worldwide.

Today, our School is ranked in the top 13% of social work graduate programs nationwide by U.S. News & World Report, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to excellence in research, teaching, and service. Our faculty publish more than 200 scholarly articles each year, making us one of the most research-productive social work programs in the country.

Together, our students, alumni, and faculty are shaping a just and socially responsible future, leading with compassion, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to our communities.

Kirk A. Foster, PhD, MSW, MDiv
Dean and Professor
School of Social Work
The University of Texas at Arlington

Driving Impact

Top-Ranked Excellence Fueling Change

With nearly **60 years of top rankings** in academic achievement and research, the SSW offers affordability, flexibility, and military-friendly support, working with hundreds of agencies, organizations, and partners to provide a well-rounded education for our students.

16%

Job Growth!
Social work is a fast-growing profession that offers a versatile degree, preparing graduates for careers in law, medicine, education, health, business, mental health, children and families, and more.

Top 13% of 319 Social Work Graduate Programs

The School of Social Work ranks among the top 13% of 319 social work graduate programs, as recognized by U.S. News & World Report, for maintaining the highest standards of integrity and excellence in research, teaching, and service.

Six Research Centers & Labs:

- Center for Addiction and Recovery Studies (CARS)
- The Center for Child Welfare Research (CCWR)
- The Studying Alcohol and Related Risks Lab (STARR)
- The Emotional Robotics Living Lab (ERLL)
- The Social Networks for Social Good Lab (SNSGL)
- Prevention & Intervention of Violence Over Time Lab (PIVOT)

Tailored Program!

MSW students can choose between Direct Practice or Community & Administrative Practice. Our extensive curricular offerings across social work practice domains give students the opportunity to tailor their program to what interests them and their career goals in a variety of areas.

Aging & Gerontology

Mental Health

Substance Use Treatment

Community & Administrative Practice

Military & Veteran Care Social Work

Public Health

& More!

Children & Families

MAVERICKS
UT ARLINGTON

Schools & Education
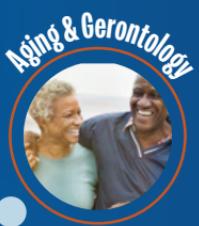
No. 1 Most popular
Social Work School in Texas

NIH-Funded Research Leaders

Meet Some of the Minds Behind Our NIH-Funded Research

Noelle Fields and Ling Xu

Drs. Fields and Xu are leading gerontology scholars in the UTA School of Social Work. Their collaborative, NIH-funded research develops and tests innovative, technology-enhanced interventions to support family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Their work explores how robotic companions and intergenerational digital storytelling can reduce loneliness, anxiety, and depression among older adults, advancing scalable solutions that promote healthy aging and caregiver well-being.

Genevieve Graaf

Dr. Graaf's research focuses on children's mental health policy and systems of care. Her NIMH-funded, multi-state longitudinal study examines the impact of Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services waivers for children with severe emotional disturbance, analyzing service use, child and family characteristics, and systemic barriers affecting children with physical, developmental, and behavioral health needs.

Saltanat Childress

Dr. Childress specializes in immigrant and refugee families, parenting and well-being, preventing family violence globally, and economic empowerment. Her NICHD funded research *Integrating Evidence-based Approaches to Prevent Child Maltreatment in Kyrgyzstan*, employs mixed methods and hybrid effectiveness implementation designs both domestically and internationally to adapt interventions for culturally responsive service.

Melissa Lewis

Dr. Lewis leads research to understand why adolescents and young adults engage in health-risk behaviors and develops interventions to reduce substance use and related harms. Her NIAA funded research, *Examining Motivations for and Quality of Alcohol and Marijuana Protective Behavior Strategy Use: Improving Prevention of Hazardous Young Adult Substance Use*, investigates when and why young adults use protective behavioral strategies around alcohol and marijuana.

Micki Washburn

Dr. Washburn's research addresses mental health and substance misuse disparities through technology enhanced and mindfulness-based interventions, including virtual reality. Her work focuses on developing telehealth and VR-informed clinical interventions for child-welfare–involved youth and families. She also leads an NIH-funded systematic review and meta-analysis on the effectiveness of home visiting programs in reducing postpartum depression, strengthening maternal mental health prevention and early intervention strategies.

SCHOLARLY HIGHLIGHTS

Bold Ideas. Real Impact. Transforming Practice!

Highest Citations
Philip Baiden

UTA School of Social Work professor, Dr. Philip Biaden has earned over 3,000 citations for his influential research on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), adolescent substance use, suicide prevention, social determinants of health, and international social work. One notable study found that adolescents who perceive themselves as overweight face a significantly higher risk of suicidal thoughts, regardless of actual weight, underscoring the powerful role of self-perception in mental health outcomes.

Community Engaged Scholar
Danielle R. Harrell

Dr. Harrell's research centers on racial equity, school climate and connectedness, and culturally responsive mental health services in K–12 settings. Her highly cited article, *Connectedness to Family, School, and Neighborhood and Adolescents' Internalizing Symptoms*, demonstrates that stronger bonds across these environments significantly reduce adolescents' internalizing symptoms, including anxiety and depression.

Advances in Mental Health
Christine Spadola

Dr. Spadola's scholarship focuses on sleep health promotion and mental health and substance-use prevention in underserved populations. Her work examines how mind–body interventions and sleep-education strategies support behavioral health and reduce disparities. She also led the development of an online sleep-education module for social work students, demonstrating how workforce training can connect behavioral-health and social-work curriculum.

Innovations in Technology
Donna Schuman

Dr. Schuman's research explores military social work, trauma among veterans and first responders, digital health interventions, and heart rate variability biofeedback for stress regulation. Her current work includes leading an innovative virtual-reality training program For rural healthcare providers aimed at improving suicide prevention responses for veterans living in underserved areas.

Child Welfare Leadership
Catherine LaBrenz & Hui Huang

Dr. LaBrenz and Dr. Huang hold leadership roles at the Child Welfare Research Center, serving as Director and Research Director, respectively. LaBrenz focuses on strengthening family and community resilience to prevent maltreatment and support permanency, while Huang develops and evaluates macro-level interventions across child welfare, juvenile justice, and substance-use systems, together advancing evidence-informed policy and practice for vulnerable children and families.

Shaping
What's Next
Our Latest Highlights!

Expanding Education

UTA Expands Interprofessional Education Program to Prepare Mandated Reporters for Child Maltreatment Response

UTA's School of Social Work is expanding its interprofessional education (IPE) program to train students and working professionals across disciplines to better identify, report, and respond to child maltreatment. Funded by the Department of Justice, the program emphasizes confidence-building, up-to-date mandated reporting practices, and realistic, strength-based simulations, with new modules launching in spring 2026.

Interprofessional Education

Interprofessional Education (IPE) gives our students real-world experience working with other professionals like nurses, doctors, and educators.

Emotional Robotics Living Lab

At the Emotional Robotics Living Lab (ERLL), we advance compassionate, human-centered technologies, using socially assistive robots to support well-being across the lifespan in therapeutic, caregiving, and research settings. Co-led by nationally recognized dementia care researchers Dr. Xu and Dr. Fields, ERLL develops ethical, community engaged applications in areas such as dementia care, caregiver respite, and social learning, grounded in inclusivity and real-world impact.

The Focus Areas

Focus areas include dementia support, caregiver respite, and intergenerational storytelling.

Emotionally Expressive

ERLL maintains a human-centered, emotionally expressive design approach rooted in its theatrical origins.

Advancing Community Health

Building a Healthier Mind: UTA Researchers Unite to Strengthen Brain Health in Arlington

UTA researchers from social work, psychology, and kinesiology have launched the Arlington Healthy Brain Collaboratory, a community-focused initiative to strengthen brain health research, education, and outreach in Arlington, especially around Alzheimer's and related dementias. Backed by a planning grant, the Collaboratory aims to unite researchers, community members, and health partners to identify needs, build resources, and promote brain health across the lifespan.

Researchers Uncover Surprising Link to Stroke Risk
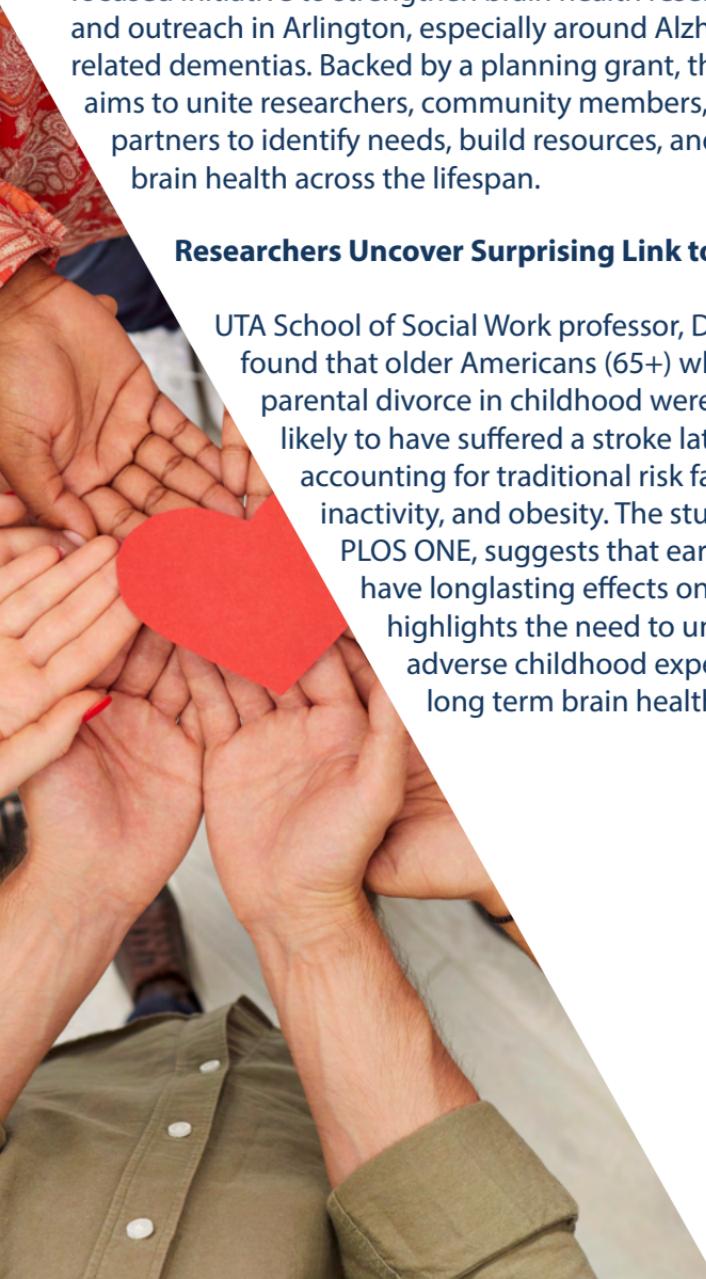
UTA School of Social Work professor, Dr. Philip Biaden found that older Americans (65+) who experienced parental divorce in childhood were significantly more likely to have suffered a stroke later in life, even after accounting for traditional risk factors smoking, inactivity, and obesity. The study, published in PLOS ONE, suggests that early life stress may have longlasting effects on health and highlights the need to understand how adverse childhood experiences influence long term brain health.

Supporting Our Youth

UTA Revitalizes Child Welfare Research Center to Strengthen Community Partnerships

UTA's School of Social Work has relaunched its Child Welfare Research Center (CWRC) to deepen partnerships between researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and the community in improving child welfare practices, policy, and outcomes. The revitalized center supports collaborative projects such as the Mandated Reporting Project, provides opportunities for student and faculty engagement, and serves as a resource hub for translating knowledge into lasting change.

Smartphone-Based Interventions from UTA Aim to Reduce Alcohol and Cannabis Use in Young Adults

UTA School of Social Work researchers Dr. Melissa Lewis and Dr. Dana Litt are leading innovative smartphone-based research to help young adults reduce alcohol and cannabis use. The study delivers personalized messages, feedback, and brief daily surveys in real time, offering a flexible, accessible alternative to traditional interventions. The team is currently piloting the approach, with plans to expand through NIH funding and broaden access in the future.
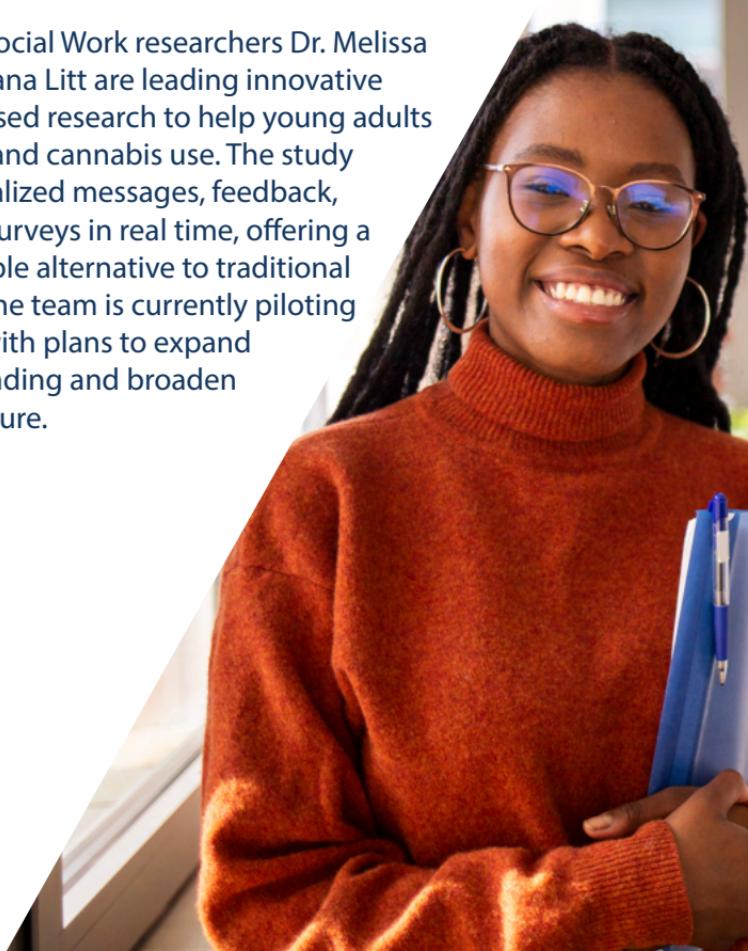
Doctor of Social Work

New Opportunities. Deeper Impact.

The growing demand for advanced social work leaders has made the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) an increasingly popular path for professionals seeking career advancement. This part-time, online,

Impactful Teaching

Equip students with strategies to effectively educate and mentor future social workers in academic and professional settings.

Practitioner-Scholar

Foster the ability to apply advanced research and evidence-based practices to address social issues.

The School of Social Work is ranked among the top 13% of 319 social work graduate programs by U.S. News & World Report and upholds the highest standards of integrity and excellence in research, teaching, and service.

With more than 2,300 students enrolled across BSW, MSW, and PhD programs, the School partners with 400+ agencies, through which students contribute 540,000+ hours of community service annually. The launch of the DSW program in 2026 will further expand our impact in communities and classrooms worldwide.

Faculty publish 200+ articles annually in leading academic and scientific journals, placing the School in the top 6% nationally for research productivity. This work is supported by multiple research centers and labs, with additional centers planned for 2026, and a state-of-the-art facility opened in Spring 2023.

Recap of Our Students & Community Involvement:

2,300 Students   **400** Agency partners for student internships with research & Community impact.

540K Hours of community service annually   **$17M** Yearly economic Impact

Our professors:

200+ Academic and Scientific articles published in journals annually

63 Full-Time Faculty   **TOP 6%** **Percentile** for Social Work research production.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

Located in the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, The University of Texas at Arlington is a comprehensive teaching, research, and public service institution dedicated to advancing knowledge through scholarship and creative work. With an enrollment of approximately 41,000 students, UT Arlington is the second-largest institution in the UT System.

LEARN MORE ABOUT US