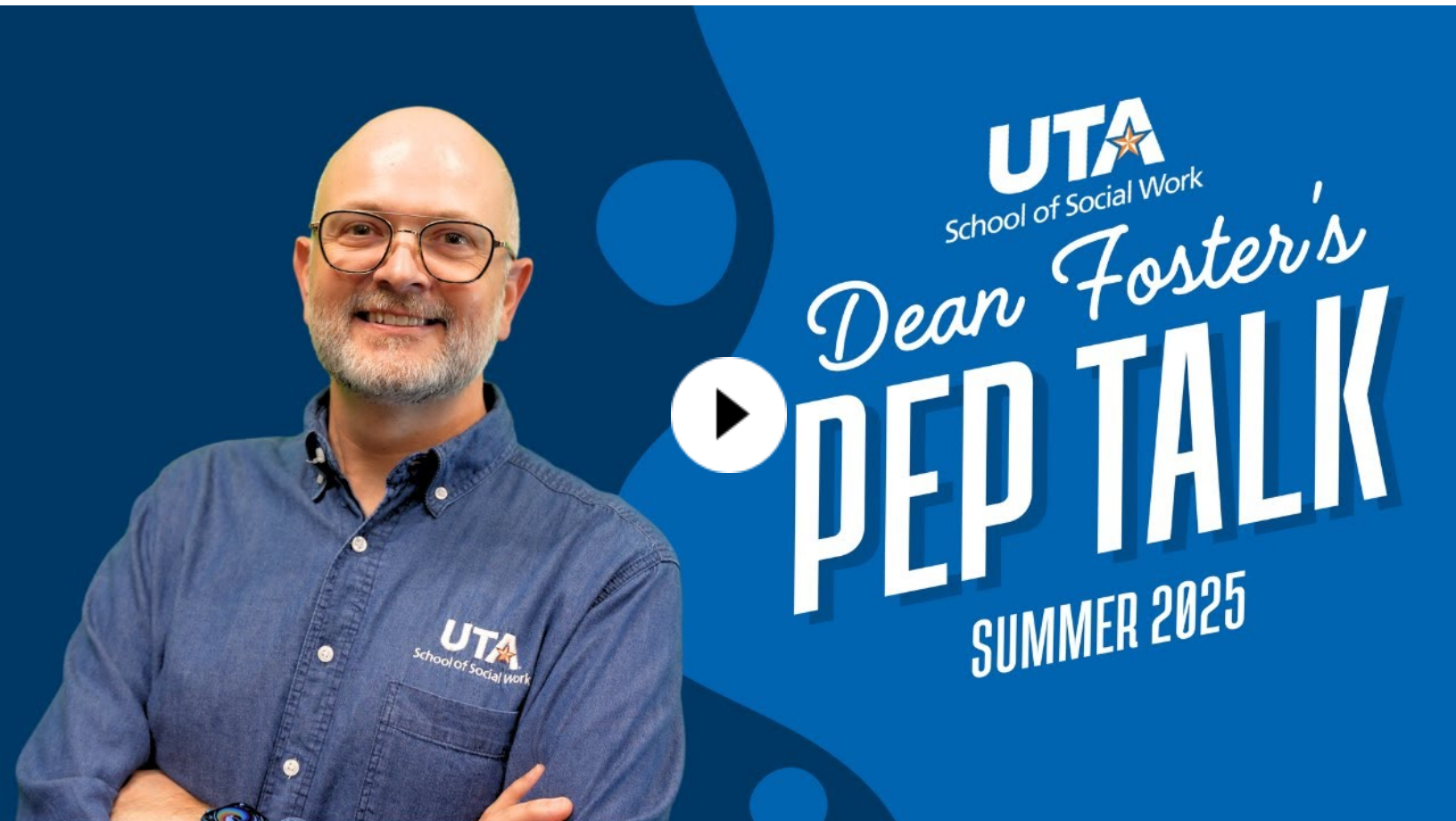


UTA School of Social Work

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

JULY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Thrive Here, Thrive Forever!



Watch the Dean's July Pep Talk to Students and read the stories below.

Video edited and produced by Douglas Gutierrez

[CLICK TO WATCH THE DEAN'S JULY PEP TALK](#)



*Associate Professor of Practice, Kiva Harper and
Assistant Professor of Practice, Kelli Rogers*

BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month

By Jaelon Jackson

This July, mental health advocates across the country are observing BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to address the ongoing disparities Black, Indigenous and other people of color face when it comes to emotional well-being, access to care and trust in mental health systems.

For Dr. Kelli Rogers, assistant professor of practice at The University of Texas at Arlington’s School of Social Work, the mental health conversation must begin with the systems that shape people’s daily lives.

“Systemic inequality isn’t just a barrier — it’s a burden Black and brown communities have been carrying for generations,” she said. “These injustices don’t just shape our environment. They take root in our minds, our bodies and our everyday lives.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT BIPOC MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH](#)



*School of Social Work Professors, Dr. Dana Litt (Left)
and Dr. Melissa Lewis (Right)*

SSW tackles youth alcohol use with the STARR Lab

By Thomas Johns

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work emphasizes advocacy, leadership, and community involvement. Students in the program develop the skills necessary to influence and drive change, address issues often overlooked by the general population, and find solutions to problems faced by people across all levels and demographics worldwide.

Through this mission to drive change, two faculty members have developed a lab to target a growing issue within society. UTA School of Social Work professors, Dr. Melissa Lewis and Dr. Dana Litt, are leading the “Studying Alcohol and Related Risks Lab”, or STARR Lab, to seek answers to the ongoing issue of youth alcohol use.



Associate Professor, Dr. Kathy Siepker

UTA School of Social Work professor joins interdisciplinary study

By Thomas Johns

A new interdisciplinary research project at The University of Texas at Arlington is exploring how microplastics—tiny plastic particles found in food, water, and everyday consumer products—may impact the health of aging adults, particularly in relation to muscle and brain function.

The study is funded through UTA's Interdisciplinary Research Program (IRP) and brings together experts from multiple fields. Dr. Unjung Kim, assistant professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, is leading the project in collaboration with the College of Nursing and Health Innovation's Bone and Muscle Research Center. Dr. Kathy Siepker, associate professor in the School of Social Work, serves as a co-investigator.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY](#)

Assistant Professor, Dr. Morgan PettyJohn

UTA fights digital abuse in domestic violence cases

By Drew Davidson

An interdisciplinary research team at The University of Texas at Arlington is working to combat technology-facilitated abuse, a form of digital harassment that is common among survivors of domestic violence.

The [Mavericks Ending Technology-Facilitated Abuse Project](#)—known as MAVS ETA—brings together faculty and graduate students from the School of Social Work, the College of Engineering, and the Department of Communication in the College of Liberal Arts. Their shared expertise spans intimate partner violence, cybersecurity and digital communication.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT MAVS ETA](#)

Upcoming SSW Events:

- **Aug. 18:** First Day of Classes
- **Aug. 22:** Alumni Night at the Rangers
- **Aug. 26:** [Social Work Welcome Back Event](#)
- **Sep. 1:** Labor Day Holiday
- **Sep. 25:** Community Voices for Suicide Prevention
- **Oct. 31:** Last Day to Drop Classes

Other SSW News Products:

- [News Stories and News Releases](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Monthly News Video Updates](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Monthly Newsletters](#)
- [Courtyard Conversations - SSW Talk Show](#)
- [SSW in the Media](#)
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