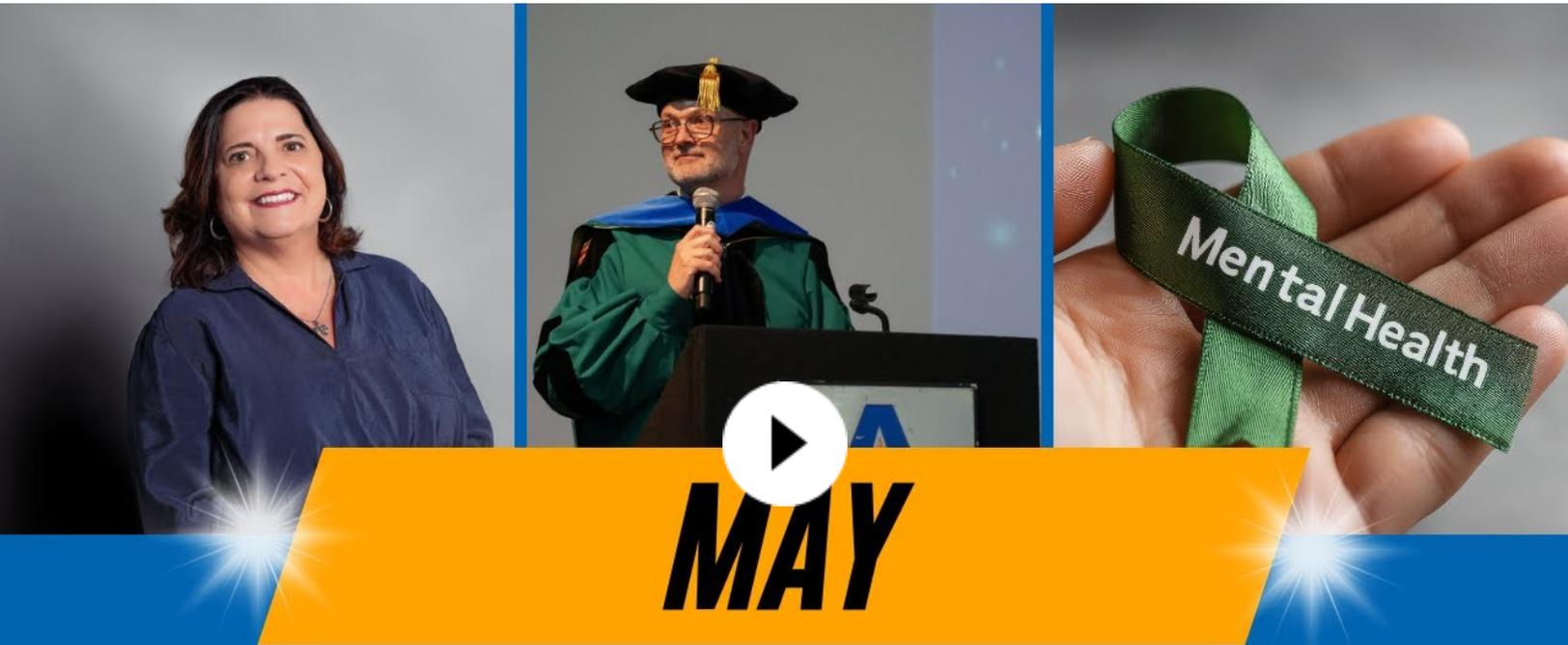


# UTA School of Social Work

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

## MAY 2025 NEWSLETTER

*Thrive Here, Thrive Forever!*



## **MONTHLY NEWS UPDATE 2025**



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON  
School of Social Work

**Watch the May 2025 Monthly News Video Update and read the stories below.**

Video edited and produced by Douglas Gutierrez

[CLICK TO WATCH MAY 2025 NEWS VIDEO UPDATE](#)



School of Social Work graduate at Spring 2025 Commencement

# UTA School of Social Work graduates 214 students during Spring commencement ceremony

By Jaelon Jackson

The University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work held its Spring Commencement Ceremony Friday, May 9, graduating three PhD, 120 master's and 91 bachelor's students.

The ceremony, held at Globe Life Field in Arlington, celebrated the achievements of students across the Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work and PhD in Social Work programs. Family, friends and faculty gathered to recognize the hard work, resilience and dedication of the Spring 2025 graduates as they stepped into the next chapter of their personal and professional lives.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT SPRING 2025 COMMENCEMENT](#)

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## Dean's May Pep Talk to Students





or returning next fall,



*Spring 2025 SSW graduate being pinned by family member*

## SSW hosts Spring 2025 Celebration of Excellence

By Jaelon Jackson

The University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work honored the achievements of its graduating students during the Spring 2025 Celebration of Excellence on May 8. The event recognized Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Social Work, and PhD in Social Work graduates for their academic success, leadership, research and community service.

Hosted by Dean Kirk A. Foster and program directors across all degree levels, the celebration brought together students, faculty, staff, families and friends to applaud a wide range of accomplishments. The ceremony featured the revival of the school's hooding tradition, the presentation of dozens of awards and remarks from distinguished alumni.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THE 2025 CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE](#)



PhD graduate, Jessica Cassidy

## PhD graduate develops new tool for dementia prevention

By Jaelon Jackson

Jessica Cassidy defended her dissertation titled *“Developing the Rural Older Adult Dementia-prevention Health Behaviors (ROAD-HB) Questionnaire: A Mixed Methods Approach to Instrument Development.”*

Her research was inspired by her late grandmother’s struggle with dementia while living in a rural community in Northeast Texas. Cassidy’s firsthand experience with the gaps in care and support systems ultimately led her to focus on dementia prevention in rural settings, where older adults are disproportionately affected.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT JESSICA CASSIDY'S DISSERTATION](#)



PhD graduate, Ahmed Alanazi

## PhD Candidate Defends Dissertation on HIV and COVID-19

By Jaelon Jackson

Ahmed Alanazi defended his dissertation titled *“Resilience and Reality: The Lived Experiences of People With HIV in Texas During the COVID-19 Pandemic.”*

His research focuses on how people living with HIV navigated the unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic —balancing health risks, medical access, stigma and social isolation. Alanazi’s study gives voice to a

marginalized population often left out of pandemic conversations and highlights their strength, adaptability and resilience during the pandemic.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT AHMED ALANAZI'S DISSERTATION](#)



*PhD Graduate, Lacey Jenkins*

## PhD candidate explores role of Family Resource Centers in child well-being

By Jaelon Jackson

Lacey Jenkins defended her dissertation titled “Strengthening Child Well-Being: Evaluating the Role of Family Resource Centers in Preventing Child Maltreatment.”

Her research focuses on how Family Resource Centers (FRCs) can serve as effective community-based tools to reduce child maltreatment and enhance child well-being. Jenkins’ work draws from both her academic training and her years of professional experience in child welfare.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT LACEY JENKIN'S DISSERTATION](#)



Social Work’s new student-focused Blaze the Mic Podcast - Episode 11 featuring BSW alumna Shanell Bohannon

## New Social Work Blaze the Mic Podcast now available

In this powerful episode of *Blaze the Mic*, host Jaelon Jackson sits down with Shanell Bohannon, a resilient BSW alumna and aspiring MSW student at the University of Texas at Arlington. Shanell shares an unflinchingly

honest journey through trauma, healing, and the unwavering pursuit of purpose. From being a high school graduate at 15, to discovering her calling in social work through a dream and a chance encounter, Shanell's story is a testament to courage, faith, and the transformative power of empathy.

LISTEN TO SSW BLAZE THE MIC - EPISODE 11

**Courtyard**  
conversations

## HEALING TOGETHER: MENTAL HEALTH, ANIMALS, AND ADVOCACY



**GUEST: DR. DANA LITT**

**HOSTED BY  
DOUGHLAS GUTIERREZ**

**MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER**

**UTA**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON  
School of Social Work

School of Social Work's Blaze the Mic featuring Dr. Dana Litt - Season 3 Episode 4

## New Courtyard Conversations Episode

In this episode of Courtyard Conversations, we delve into the profound connection between mental health and the therapeutic presence of animals. Our guest today is none other than Dr. Dana Litt, Professor at the UTA School of Social Work and Co-Founder of Cowtown Friends of Fort Worth Animal Care & Control.

Dr. Litt's research centers on understanding and preventing health-risk behaviors, particularly alcohol use among adolescents and young adults. Through her academic expertise and community advocacy, she offers valuable insight into how animals can ease emotional distress, reduce social isolation, and provide meaningful companionship on the path to healing.

WATCH COURTYARD CONVERSATION 3 EPISODE 4

### Upcoming SSW Events:

- **Jun. 19:** Juneteenth

- **Jul. 4:** Independence Day
  - **Aug. 6:** Last Day of Summer Classes
  - **Aug. 7:** Summer 2025 Celebration of Excellence
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## Other SSW News Products:

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