


UTA School of Social Work

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

SEPTEMBER IN REVIEW

Thrive Here, Thrive Forever!



UTA 
School of Social Work
Dean Foster's
PEP TALK
Fall 2025

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

Video edited and produced by Douglas Gutierrez

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



Panel featuring Brad Hunstable, founder of Hayden's Corner, CEO of Linear Labs, and Founding Board Member of Branch to Hope Community Center; Esmeralda Nava, UTA alumna and Mental Health Program Manager at the Grant Halliburton Foundation; and Kristi Wiley, vice president of programs at the Jordan Elizabeth Harris Foundation.

Social Work panel highlights community voices in suicide prevention

By Jaelon Jackson

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work hosted a community panel on September 25 to mark Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, bringing together survivors, advocates and experts to discuss ways to combat one of the nation's leading causes of death.

The event, titled *Community Voices for Suicide Prevention*, featured Brad Hunstable, founder of Hayden's Corner, CEO of Linear Labs, and Founding Board Member of Branch to Hope Community Center; Esmeralda Nava, UTA alumna and Mental Health Program Manager at the Grant Halliburton Foundation; and Kristi Wiley, vice president of programs at the Jordan Elizabeth Harris Foundation.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT WHAT THE PANEL DISCUSSED](#)



Monica Dorsey, Social Work MSW Alumna

UTA Social Work Alumna Turns Passion into National Advocacy

By Thomas Johns

Social Work is a diverse field that addresses many issues facing populations, societies, and regions. For many, the concept of Social Work exists in narrow definitions, shaped by what they've seen or heard—child welfare, case management, or community programs. But for those who've studied and worked in the field, they know Social Work can take you almost anywhere.

For Monica Dorsey, a 2022 graduate of the UTA School of Social Work and recent national workforce development program and grants manager for the TD Jakes Foundation, Social Work has meant finding her purpose—and helping others find theirs.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT MONICA DORSEY](#)

Research and Faculty Highlights



Dr. Ling Xu, Associate Professor of Social Work

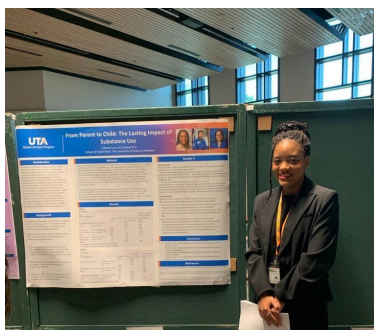
UTA researcher studies dementia, resilience and immigrant families through intergenerational connections

By Thomas Johns

University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work associate professor Dr. Ling Xu's path to social work research began in Shanghai and has grown into a career examining aging, dementia and immigrant family dynamics in the United States.

"My bachelor's degree was in education," Xu said. "But I realized I wanted to study people, society and how families function, so I changed to sociology. That shift opened the door for me to focus on aging, family dynamics and eventually immigrant populations."

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT DR LING XU'S RESEARCH](#)



Student presenting research at conference

UTA revitalizes Child Welfare Research Center to strengthen community partnerships

By Thomas Johns

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work continues its mission to advance research, advocacy and community partnerships that improve lives. As part of this effort, the School is relaunching the Child Welfare Research Center (CWRC) to strengthen connections between research, policy, and practice in child welfare.

“The CWRC is the Child Welfare Research Center. It is a hub where we can partner university scholars, whether that’s faculty, staff or students, with practitioners and policymakers,” said Catherine LaBrenz, UTA School of Social Work associate professor and director of the center. “Focusing on how we can best get research built and disseminate research to improve the lives of children, families and communities that we serve.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THE CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH CENTER](#)



Dr. Kelli Rogers, along with Master of Social Work graduates Anne George and Cosette Eisenhower-Epp, presented an interactive workshop titled “Breaking the Cycle: Evidence-Based Interventions for Children and Families Impacted by Parental Incarceration.”

Social Work faculty, graduates present research at international conference

By Jaelon Jackson

Faculty and recent graduates from the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work represented the program at the 2025 International Community Justice Association Research Conference in Denver, Colorado.

Dr. Kelli Rogers, along with Master of Social Work graduates Anne George and Cosette Eisenhower-Epp, presented an interactive workshop titled “*Breaking the Cycle: Evidence-Based Interventions for Children and Families Impacted by Parental Incarceration.*”

The session highlighted strategies designed to support children and families navigating parental incarceration, with a focus on strengthening resilience and breaking cycles of justice involvement.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THEIR RESEARCH FROM THE CONFERENCE](#)



Dr. Saltanat Childress, Assistant Professor of Social Work

UTA School of Social Work Professor Examines How Immigrant Families Navigate Identity, Resilience and Well-Being

By Thomas Johns

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work is home to faculty whose research advances understanding of families, resilience and well-being across the globe. Among them is Dr. Saltanat Childress, associate professor of social work, whose scholarship examines prevention of interpersonal violence and adverse childhood experiences, immigrant and refugee adaptation, and the cultural factors that shape family health. Her career reflects a commitment to improving services for vulnerable populations and ensuring that institutions are equipped to meet the needs of diverse communities.

Childress's recent work, published in *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *Children and Youth Services Review*, and *Global Social Welfare: Research, Policy, & Practice*, explores how immigrant families from Central Asia, Ukraine, and the Middle East and North Africa in the U.S. navigate cultural and social challenges while building new lives.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT DR. CHILDRESS' RESEARCH](#)



Dr. Saltanat Childress, Assistant Professor of Social Work

Study Sheds Light on Immigrant Acculturation

By Jaelon Jackson

A University of Texas at Arlington social work researcher is shedding new light on the often-overlooked experiences of Central Asian immigrants and Ukrainian refugees as they navigate life in the United States.

Dr. Saltanat Childress, assistant professor in UTA's School of Social Work, has led a series of qualitative studies exploring how families adapt to new cultural norms, shifting gender roles, and changes in professional identity while rebuilding their lives.

"For many Central Asian men, there's a real sense of loss around their role as primary providers," Childress said. "That loss of status can affect their ability to acculturate. At the same time, many women described finding new opportunities for self-expression, education, and financial independence."

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THEIR RESEARCH](#)

Upcoming SSW Events:

- **Oct. 3:** Social Network Analysis Research Interest Group | 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. | SWSH 421
- **Oct 3:** Social Work Townhall with Shelby Boseman
- **Oct. 4:** Save the Date - Day in The Life Simulation
- **October 16-18:** NASW-TX Conference - Virtual
- **October 23-34:** CSWE Conference - Denver
- **Nov. 1:** Trunk or Treat Food Giveaway
- **Nov. 4:** Social Work Symposium
- **Nov. 9-15:** Homecoming Spirit Week
- **Nov. 11:** Veteran's Day

- **Nov. 19:** Wellness Wednesday: Sound Therapy
 - **Nov. 27-28:** Thanksgiving Holiday Break
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