



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

JANUARY IN REVIEW

Thrive Here, Thrive Forever!



SPECIAL GUEST
MONICA DORSEY



Listen to the "Blaze the Mic" podcast and read the stories below.

Podcast edited and hosted by Jaelon Jackson

[**CLICK TO LISTEN TO BLAZE THE MIC PODCAST**](#)



Debra Mitchell-Ibe, executive program manager of Denton County Friends of the Family (Left), Adam Powell, president and CEO of United Way of Tarrant County (Center Left), Dereka Hall, director of the Dallas College Social Work Academy (Center Right) and Dr. Janel Crutchfield, associate professor at the UTA School of Social Work (Right) pose for a photo at the "Power of Presence: Black Identity in Professional Social Work" Black History Month Panel on Feb. 5, 2026.

Panel at UTA reflects on professional identity during Black History Month

By Jaelon Jackson

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work hosted a Black History Month panel Feb. 5 titled "The Power of Presence: Black Identity in Professional Social Work," bringing students, faculty, staff and community members together for a conversation about professional identity, leadership and lived experience in the profession.

Hosted by the UTA Social Work Black Social Work Student Alliance, the event was held in recognition of the 100th year of Black History Month. BSSWA President Natasha Sutherland opened the evening by welcoming attendees and outlining the focus of the discussion.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THE POWER OF PRESENCE EVENT](#)



Dr. Micki Washburn, UTA School of Social Work associate professor (Right) and Dr. Catherine LaBrenz UTA School of Social Work associate professor and director of the Child Welfare Research Center (Left) pose for a photo at the 2025 Texas Childcare Administration Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

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

By Thomas Johns

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work is expanding the interprofessional education (IPE) program with new modules and opening participation to professionals from various backgrounds to better prepare students and professionals across disciplines to identify, report and respond to child maltreatment.

IPE brings students from different fields together to learn how their roles intersect. The approach fosters collaboration, builds understanding across disciplines and prepares future professionals to respond more effectively to complex, real-world situations. In the spring 2026 iteration, working professionals will be able to join UTA students for these important training modules.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT THE IPE EXPANSION](#)



Associate Professor, Micki Washburn

Supporting Student Mental Health, Resilience, and Meaningful Goal-Setting at the Start of the Semester

By Micki Washburn

The beginning of the semester is a pivotal time for students' mental health, academic engagement, and sense of direction. While a new term often brings optimism and motivation, it can also intensify stress related to academic expectations, financial pressures, work and caregiving responsibilities, and major life transitions. Recent research continues to show that mental health challenges among college and university students are both prevalent and consequential, influencing concentration, motivation, persistence, and overall academic functioning. For students, mental health is not separate from academic success—it is foundational to it.

[CLICK TO READ MENTAL TIPS FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER](#)



Carol Klocek, CEO of the Center for Transforming Lives, poses for an official photo. (Courtesy Photo)

Alumni Spotlight: Carol Klocek ('94 MSSW)

By Elizabeth Tejada

For Carol Klocek, social work has always been about creating stability, dignity, and generational change for families navigating poverty. With nearly two decades of leadership, she currently serves as CEO of Center for Transforming Lives, an organization dedicated to empowering single mothers and their children through housing, education, counseling, and economic mobility services.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT CAROL KLOCEK](#)

Research and Faculty Highlights



UTA School of Social Work professors, Dr. Dana Litt (Left) and Dr. Melissa Lewis (Right) pose for an official photo. (Photo by Doughlas Gutierrez)

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

By Thomas Johns

The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work is well known as a research hub which innovates alongside evolving technologies to find solutions to issues facing society. This innovation continues through groundbreaking research into how new forms of intervention can support reductions in alcohol and cannabis use in young adults.

In a study led by and collaborated with UTA School of Social Work professors Dr. Melissa Lewis and Dr. Dana Litt, respectively, interventions are being conducted through a smartphone-based system to better meet young

adults where they are in a more convenient and personalized way.

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



The lead authors of the study from UT Arlington are Drs. Philip Baiden and Catherine LaBrenz.

One in Four Teens Face Violence, Higher Substance Use

By Drew Davison

One in four U.S. adolescents is exposed to violence in their neighborhood, and those teens are more than twice as likely to use cigarettes, alcohol or drugs to cope, according to a new study from The University of Texas at Arlington.

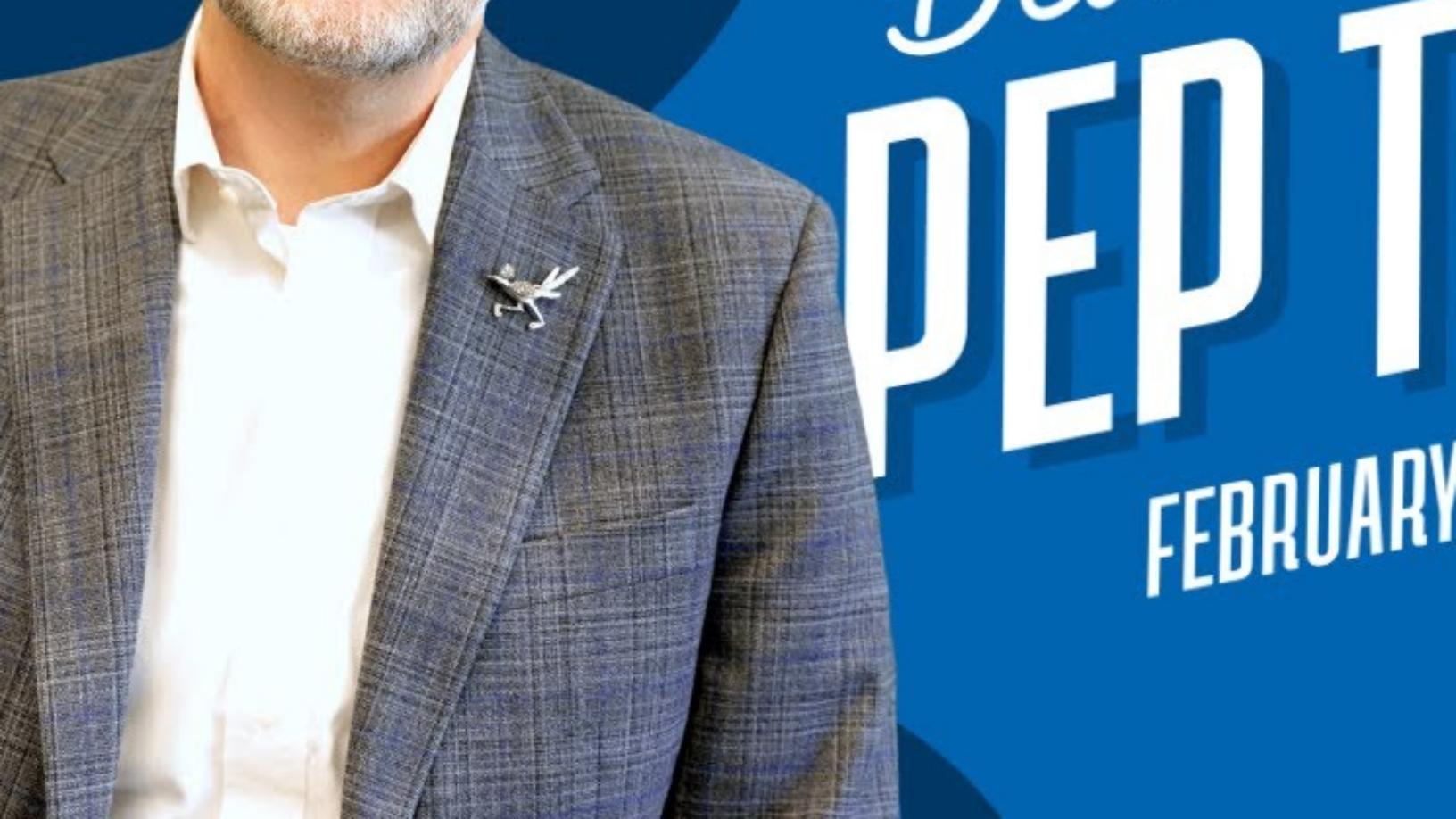
Published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, the study was led by UT Arlington School of Social Work Professor [Philip Baiden](#) and drew on national data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Researchers analyzed responses from 20,005 adolescents ages 12 to 18, offering new insights into early pathways to substance use, a persistent public health concern.

[CLICK TO READ MORE ABOUT DR. BAIDEN AND LABRENZ'S RESEARCH](#)

Looking Toward February



UTA
School of Social Work
Dean



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

Video edited and produced by Doughlas Gutierrez

CLICK TO WATCH THE DEAN'S FEBRUARY PEP TALK VIDEO

Upcoming SSW Events:

- **February:** Black History Month
- **Mar. 9 - Mar. 13:** Spring Break
- **April:** Child Abuse Prevention Month
- **Apr 3:** Last Day to Drop Classes

Other SSW News Products:

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