

FALL 2025

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

NEWSLETTER



MSW Students Lead Feeding Virginia Families Initiative



MSW students led the planning and execution of the Feeding Virginia Families community event, demonstrating strong leadership and commitment to service.

Scholars **Tiffany Leaks** and **Erin Sifford** coordinated logistics with guidance from **Dr. Christine Haynes and Dr. Dee Lucombe**, while **Jamese James** led community outreach and **Gina Tanveer** expanded mental health supports. The Department extends appreciation to **Dr. Younger, Mrs. Fuller, Madam Provost Dr. Minnis**, and **VSU First Lady Dr. Cobb-Abdullah** for their support of experiential learning that connects classroom knowledge with meaningful community impact.



Welcome to the New Academic Commons

The Social Work Department is pleased to welcome our students, faculty and staff to our new home, The Alfred W. Harris Academic Commons. Headqaurters to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of Education. This state-of-the-art facility features a swimming pool, gymnasium, theater, and exhibition gallery designed to enhance learning and community engagement.



MSW Students Lead Health-Focused Outreach

MSW students played a vital role in this year's VSU Homecoming Delicious Tailgate, partnering with campus and community organizations to provide culturally grounded, health-focused outreach. In collaboration with Agriculture's Cooperative Extension, VCU Massey Cancer Center, and the Virginia Community Healthcare Association, students shared healthy food samples, wellness education, and cancer-prevention resources. Special thanks to **Tiffany Leaks** and **Erin Sifford** for their leadership and professionalism, which were instrumental to the event's success.



Alumni Spotlight**Brianna Mathura**

Congratulations to Ms. Mathura, BSW '24 and MSW '25, on her new role with Youth For Tomorrow.

Alumni Spotlight**Lauren Fields**

Congratulations to Ms. Lauren Fields BSW '23 and MSW '25 on her new position as a Medical Social Worker at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital

Alumni Spotlight**Alicia Mosher**

Congratulations to Ms. Alicia Mosher MSW '22 on passing the LMSW exam on her FIRST TRY!

**Senator Lashrecse Aird**

In **February 2026**, social work students will visit the Virginia General Assembly to observe the legislative process and engage in child welfare advocacy. The experience will include CWSP scholars, SOWK 340 students, and other BSW and MSW students, with opportunities to observe live sessions and engage with policymakers, including VSU alumna **Senator Lashrecse Aird**. This visit connects classroom learning to real-world policy practice affecting children, families, and vulnerable communities across the Commonwealth.

TEAM SPOTLIGHT



Felicia Bishop

Ms. Bishop represented our institution at the NACADA 2025 Annual Conference, engaging with advising professionals from around the world. She described the experience as energizing and insightful, offering valuable connections and new strategies to enhance student advising on our campus. Her participation reflects our continued commitment to strengthening advising excellence and supporting student success.

Morgan Mckenzie

Prof. Mckenzie is an educator with over a decade of mental health experience, specializing in acute inpatient care and crisis stabilization. A graduate of Norfolk State University, she is deeply committed to training future social workers, inspired by her brother's autism journey and her passion for advocacy. Known as "Sunshine," she brings a warm, encouraging presence to her teaching, creating a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Tiffany Fells

Richmond native Prof. Fells brings strong academic preparation and extensive professional experience to her role. She holds degrees from J. Sargent Reynolds Community College, the University of Richmond, and a Master of Social Work from VCU. With over a decade of clinical experience at VCU Medical Center and work in community-based settings, she now serves on Chesterfield County CSB's Emergency Services CORE Team.

Behavioral Development

- **Created by:** B. F. Skinner
- **Core idea:** Behavior is learned through reinforcement and punishment.
- **Why it matters:** Foundation for behavior modification and applied interventions.

TEAM SPOTLIGHT



Prof. Jacquelyn Cowan

Please join us in welcoming Professor Jacquelyn Cowan to her new role as Child Welfare Coordinator for the Department of Social Work. A longstanding leader in the classroom, she brings exceptional dedication and expertise to this prestigious program, which partners with the Commonwealth of Virginia to address the critical shortage of child welfare and healthcare professionals. Additionally, we proudly congratulate Professor Cowan on passing the LMSW exam in December, demonstrating outstanding leadership in professional practice. Let's go! **Congratulations, Professor Cowan!**



Prof. Gary Taylor

Professor Taylor showcased his academic, clinical, and professional expertise while representing the Department of Social Work and our scholars as a keynote and guest speaker at the NASW-Wisconsin Annual Conference and the NASW-Virginia Annual Conference. In Wisconsin, he presented on “The Power of Mentorship and Our Responsibility to Pour into the Next Generation,” and in Virginia, he addressed “Supporting Black Men in Social Work.” Professor Taylor exemplifies Greater Happens in the Department of Social Work & at VSU

Be sure to check out his podcast, The G. Taylor Show!

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Congratulations to our very own, Sasha and Carra for being a part of history and winning the USCAA National Championship!!!!!!



Dr. Brittany Short



Prof. Tammy Walton

Initiated by the Department of Social Work's Alumni Committee, chaired by Professor Tammy Walton, the Department proudly established VSU's Social Work Alumni Chapter. Dr. Brittany Short serves as the inaugural Chair of the University's Alumni Organization, helping to strengthen alumni leadership and engagement. Through this chapter, VSU social workers—past and present—can stay connected, share resources, and support the University's mission.

Thank you to Professor Walton and her team for making this milestone possible, and to Dr. Short for leading the charge!

FALL 2025

SPRING 2025 PINNING CEREMONY

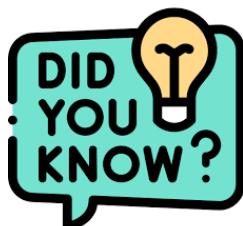


SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT



ADOJA WILLIAMS

Ms. Adjoa Williams, We want to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the recipient of the 2025 KLM Scholarship! We are thrilled to celebrate your selection for this honor. This achievement reflects your hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence. We are proud of each of you and grateful that this opportunity could support your continued growth. We look forward to seeing all the great things you will accomplish in the Social Work program and beyond.



Social workers are trained as **change agents**, meaning they don't just help people cope with problems—they learn how to change the systems (schools, healthcare, justice, child welfare) that create those problems in the first place.

Phi Alpha 2025 Induction and Honors Event Pics



Child Welfare Stipend Program

The Department of Social Work is pleased to announce that information about the Child Welfare Stipend Program (CWSP) is now available on our departmental website. Students can review program details and access the CWSP application by visiting the Department of Social Work webpage.

The CWSP is a competitive program with a limited BSW and MSW stipends available. Students interested in child welfare practice are encouraged to submit a strong application by the appropriate deadline.

Application Deadlines

- **BSW Students:** Applications are due **Thursday, February 20, 2026, by 5:00 p.m.** No applications will be accepted after this deadline.
- **MSW Students:** Applications are due **Thursday, March 20, 2026.** After this date, applications will continue to be reviewed until all available slots are filled.

Students interested in the program, its benefits, eligibility requirements, etc., are encouraged to visit the CWSP webpage @
<https://www.vsu.edu/sola/departments/social-work/child-welfare-stipend-program.php>

SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS

The Social Work Club (BSW)

The Change Makers (MSW)

The VSU ABSW (BSW & MSW)

The Phi Alpha Honor Society (GPA Requirements)

For more information or to join

Contact Ms. Bishop, Dr. Short, or Dr. Younger

UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING CALENDAR

1.14.26 Res Hall Open (New)

1.16.26 Res Hall Open (Returning)

1.19.26 King Holiday VSU Closed

1.20.26 Classes Begin

2.11.26 Assessment Day

2.23.26 Wellness Day

3.1.26 Res Hall Open

3.2.26 Midterms Begin

3.7.26 Midterms End

3.8.26 Res Hall Close

3.8.26 SPRING BREAK

3.19.26 VSU Founders Day

4.6.26 Honors Convocation

5.5.26 Classes End

5.6.26 Reading Day

5.7.26 Final Exams Begin

5.12.26 Final Exams End

5.15.26 Commencement Rehearsals

5.16.26 Spring Commencement

LEADERSHIP

Dr. J.D . Fedrick

Department Chair
jfedorick@vsu.edu
(804)524-3853

Dr. Sade Younger

MSW Director
syounger@vsu.edu
(804) 524- 2471

Ms. Felicia James

Executive Assistant
fjames@vsu.edu
(804) 524-3853

BSW Team**Dr. Brittany Short**

BSW Director
bshort@vsu.edu
(804) 504-7028

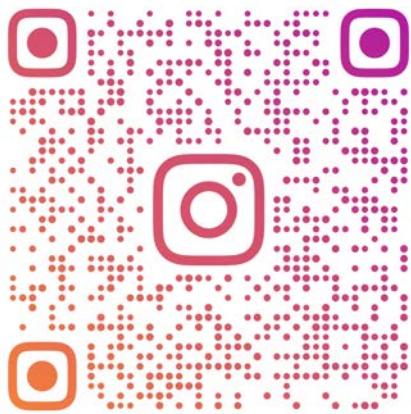
Mrs. Jean Fuller

BSW Program
Administrator
jfuller@vsu.edu
(804) 524-1435

Ms. Felicia Bishop

Academic Advisor
fbishop@vsu.edu
(804) 524-1217

Stay connected with the Social Work Department by following us on our social media platforms for news, highlights, and upcoming events.



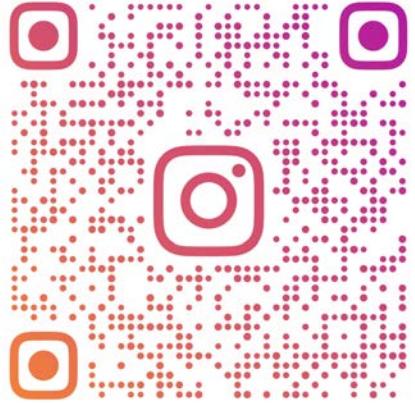
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As I conclude my time as a Graduate Assistant after two enriching semesters, I find myself reflecting with sincere appreciation. This step in my MSW journey has challenged me, inspired me, and strengthened my commitment to the work ahead. Every opportunity, every conversation, and every moment of growth has reminded me why I chose this path. Social work calls us to lead with empathy, to advocate with courage, and to believe deeply in the potential for healing and transformation. I am grateful to have learned and served in a community that embodies these values each day. Thank you for being part of my development as both a scholar and a professional. I look forward to carrying these lessons into the next chapter of my career and continuing the work that truly makes a difference. With gratitude,

Gekia G. Baugh, Editor

Share Your Wins

We're Proud of You !!

Your journey matters, and we want to celebrate it! Whether you've published research, launched an exciting project, received an award, reached a personal milestone, or simply have powerful moments captured in your work—we want to hear from you. Every achievement, big or small, inspires others in our social work community to keep pushing forward. Email your accomplishments and photos to **socialworkprogram@vsu.edu**—let's uplift each other and celebrate the impact we're making together !!

Mental Health Resources

Mental health is vital to your overall well-being!

On and off campus supports are available:

Warm Line

A peer-run support line offering nonjudgmental listening and connections to behavioral health and recovery resources.

(866) 400-6428

The Counseling Center provides up to 8 free visits per semester. Make an appointment (804) 524-5939 or visit the 4th floor of Memorial Hall.

District 19 Community Services Board (CSB)

20 West Bank Street Petersburg, VA 23803
(804) 862-8002

24-hour Crisis Line: (804) 862-8000 or toll free: (866) 365-2130

The James House 24/7 Crisis Support is (804) 458-2840

Need immediate assistance?

Call 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Hotline

A Letter From The Chair

Dear Students, Alumni, Faculty, Staff, and Community Partners,

As we begin the Fall 2025 semester, I am filled with pride in the strength, growth, and heart of the Virginia State University Department of Social Work. This past year has reminded us that social work is more than a profession—it is a calling grounded in service, advocacy, and hope.

Our students continue to lead with purpose, compassion, and courage—bringing classroom learning to life through community engagement, field practice, and meaningful service. Your commitment to justice and care inspires the work we do every day. Our faculty and staff remain the backbone of this success, providing mentorship, innovation, and unwavering support that shape ethical and skilled future practitioners.

To our alumni and community partners, thank you for walking alongside us and extending learning beyond the university. Your collaboration strengthens our mission and expands our impact.

As we move forward together this fall, let us remain rooted in our values, bold in our leadership, and united in our purpose. The work ahead matters—and you are an essential part of it.

Greater truly does happen here.

With pride and gratitude,

Dr. J.D. Fedrick, LCSW