

FALL NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2025

MESSIAH UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The 2025-2026 academic year is in full swing, and the campus has come alive with students' chatter and laughter. The social work department is excited to welcome a new group of students who have answered the call to pursue the social work profession. The rise in mental health issues following the pandemic, aging populations, and the ongoing opioid crisis continue to impact communities. The federal government's budget cuts are affecting the most vulnerable members of our society. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (2025) latest data projects 74,000 job openings for social workers each year over the next decade. There is an urgent need for competent social workers to meet the growing demand in our society.

Our social work students are pursuing a worthy profession to fill the gap in meeting the needs of our community.

As a department chair, I have the privilege of hearing our social work students' personal stories. Our students challenged stereotypes about their generation and are thoughtful, justice-driven, generous, and financially responsible individuals. Financial stress is often the biggest obstacle for our students in their social work education journey. Many of our students work over 20 hours a week to pay their tuition while maintaining a high grade point average (GPA). One of my main goals this year is to connect more students with scholarship opportunities to lessen their financial burden. We are thankful for the opportunity to partner with University of Pittsburgh's Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program. The CWEB program offers our senior social work students who are passionate about the child welfare field a tuition-free senior year. The department also created the Social Work Education Enhancement Fund to help cover travel costs associated with students' field practice.

Messiah University's social work department is committed to training faith-integrated social workers to share the message of Jesus' love to our hurting world. We are grateful to many of you who have invested in our students by giving your time, sharing your expertise, or contributing to various scholarship funds. THANK YOU for your ongoing partnership in training competent social workers. We could not have done it without you!

Grace and peace,

Ling



Dr. Ling Dinse
MSW, LSW

SOCIAL WORK CLUB

The Social Work Club exists to create a faith-integrated and relational community to support Messiah social work students in their education training in becoming compassionate world changers. The club hosts regular events such as welcome back events, study sessions, and prayer walks to provide an opportunity for social work students to engage with peers and faculty.

President - Abby Davis
Vice President - Rylee Eastridge
Peer Mentor Coordinators - Ilaiza Vargas and Ayva Sechman
Prayer Chaplain - Maggie Pettus

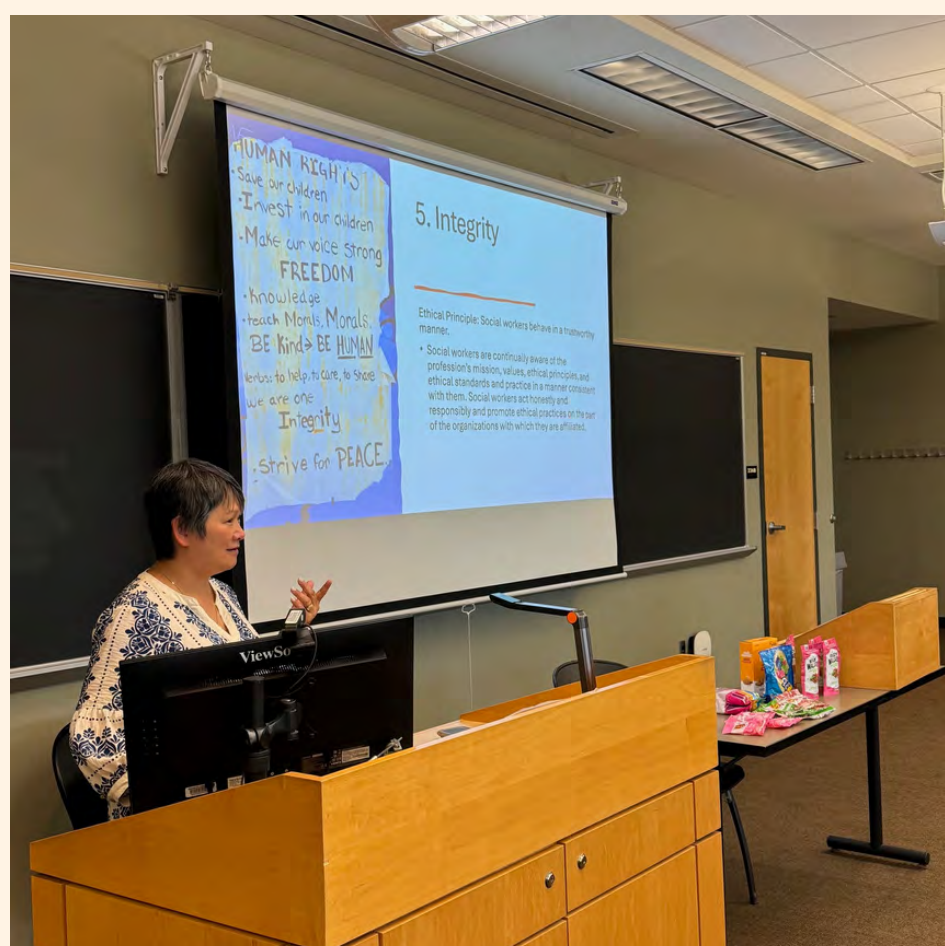
PHI ALPHA HONOR SOCIETY

Phi Alpha is a national honor society that was created to connect social work students through service, professional development, and common humanitarian goals. You can apply to be in Phi Alpha the spring of your sophomore year.

President - Selah Stolfus
Vice President - Sarah Dills
Secretary - Mariah Fortney
Treasurer - Ella Newell



SOCIAL WORK WELCOME BACK PARTY



Faculty and students from the social work department kicked off the semester in the best way we know how - community, laughter, and a social work bingo! This evening was a great time of fellowship. We can't wait to see what the new semester has in store!

SAVE THE DATE:

**Social Work Mix & Mingle
October 9
8:00-9:30 am**





SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT FUND

Recipients of this fund will receive the award in addition to other forms of financial aid detailed in the recipient's financial aid package, which is determined by the Messiah University Financial Aid Office. The award is considered for one semester and assists students with their field placements and other out-of-pocket expenses related to attaining a degree in Social Work. We have 29 students participating in the field this semester! Students in field courses can apply for \$200/semester. Your financial contributions support the training of the next generation of faith-integrated social workers who share the love of Jesus with compassion and competency.

Please use this link to make a tax-deductible contribution:

[Click here to donate to the Social Work
Enhancement Fund](#)





CWEB SCHOLARSHIP



CWEB's goal is to strengthen public child welfare services in Pennsylvania by educating and armoring undergraduate social worker majors interested in a dynamic and exciting career in public child welfare who are enrolled in a participating school of social work.



Participant Benefits:

- Fully paid in-state tuition and fees for your senior year
- Fellowship payments of \$600 a month for 8 months
- Upon hire in a child welfare agency: A bonus payment of \$640 or \$2,200 if completing Civil Service Intern position (975 internship hours)
- \$100 book allowance
- Smooth transition from student to employee: Training and child welfare internships are highly valued by counties looking for caseworkers

Application Deadlines:

- April 30 for Fall admittance
- November 15 for Spring admittance

Contact your school social work faculty or email cwerp@pitt.edu for details!

Virtual Information Session October 16 from 9:30-10:30am

Go to BSW Canvas for zoom link

HANNAH JENKINS

We are excited to congratulate social work senior Hannah Jenkins on being awarded the 2025-2026 Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) scholarship! This scholarship provides full tuition and fees for her senior year, along with a stipend and book allowance.

Congratulations Hannah!





FREE CEU OFFERINGS

WHAT IS A CEU?

A CEU stands for a continuing education unit! A competent social worker practices life long learning and CEU is a formal method to engage in this practice. All states, such as Pennsylvania, require social workers to receive continuing education credits to renew their licenses. Usually these credits cost money to receive but the department is offering them to social workers for free!

WHAT IS STUDENT IMPACT?

When students attend these sessions they can start developing this discipline of life long learning, receive professional credit, and be able to network with social workers in the field.

UPCOMING DATES:

October 29

Lisa Witmer, MSW LSW

Topic: Rooted in Resilience:

**Understanding the Body's Response to
Trauma, Creating Safe Spaces, and
Exploring Self-Care Practices**

1 CEU

Virtual - 12 to 1pm

November 12

Morgan Adams, MSW

Topic: Forensic Interviews

1 CEU

Virtual - 12 to 1pm

**Register with
the QR Code!**





FIELD INSTRUCTOR AWARD



ERIC SAUNDERS

In the spring, we recognized our Social Work Field Instructor of the year. Our award winner is an outstanding mentor, leader, and steadfast partner to our department.

For more than 17 years, this recipient has played a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of social workers, generously investing time, wisdom, and care into the development of our students.

Eric Saunders has worked closely with one to three students each year, both at the sophomore and senior levels, offering a rich, hands-on learning experience rooted in compassion, service, and excellence.

Eric's mentorship has consistently gone above and beyond, providing not only professional guidance but personal encouragement and support that leaves a lasting mark on every student he works with. He is a valued and trusted partner to the Messiah University Social Work Department, and embodies the very heart of our mission—preparing students for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.

Eric Saunders serves as the Executive Director of New Hope Ministries, where his leadership and commitment to community impact are evident every day.

Please join us in congratulating this year's Field Instructor of the Year! We are deeply grateful for your unwavering commitment to our students and to the profession of social work.

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!





GRANT UPDATE



Emily Caulfied, BSW Class of 2025, was awarded a \$5000 Spark Grant for her macro project, which has been used by She's Somebody's Daughter (SSD) to hire Jenna Breon to support SSD's outreach ministry.

The mission of She's Somebody's Daughter is "erasing lines of separation that isolate those affected by sexual exploitation."

We are so excited to see Emily's hard work help them to further their very important mission!

