Social Work

The objective of the PhD in Social Work is to educate scholars for research careers in the social and behavioral sciences. The program is highly interdisciplinary, mentoring students with interests in such areas as social and economic development, child welfare, gerontology, addictions, health, mental health, and public health. Our graduates pursue teaching and research careers in social science institutions throughout the world.

The program requires 72 units of credit, 21 of which may come from a student’s master’s degree. While in the program, the student will take a variety of theory and research methods courses, plus 15 units of elective credits outside the traditional social work curriculum. Electives may include classes in psychology, psychiatry, public health, anthropology, education, law, economics, or political science. Teaching and research assistantships and the writing of an “area statement” round out the required credits. Competence is assessed through a qualifying examination and the defense of the dissertation. We are unable to offer distance learning or part-time study.

A completed master's degree in social work, public health, or related social science is required of all applicants for admission; a minimum of two years of post-master's practice and/or research experience is strongly recommended. The deadline for applications to the PhD in Social Work is December 1 of the year preceding enrollment.

Contact Person: Doctoral Program Office
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Departmental website: http://brownschool.wustl.edu/Admissions/PhDProgram/Pages/PhD-in-Social-Work-Overview.aspx

Dean
Edward F. Lawlor
William E. Gordon Distinguished Professor
PhD, Brandeis University
Access to health care; Health care reform; Policy analysis; Aging

Associate Dean for the Doctoral Program
Renée M. Cunningham-Williams
Associate Professor; Director, NIDA T32 (TranSTAR) Pre- and Postdoctoral Training Program; Director, PhD Program in Social Work
PhD, Washington University
Epidemiological, prevention, and intervention research; Health and mental health disparities; Pathological gambling and comorbidity; Risk taking, substance use and antisocial behaviors; Crisis intervention

Endowed Professors
Wendy Auslander
Barbara A. Bailey Professor of Social Work
PhD, Washington University
Health behavior and health promotion; Childhood abuse and adolescent risk behaviors; Trauma treatment for adolescent girls; Family, psychosocial, and behavioral issues in diabetes; HIV prevention; Community participatory research; Cultural and ethnic factors related to health; Intervention research and evaluation

Ross C. Brownson
Bernard Becker Professor; Director, Prevention Research Center
PhD, Colorado State University
Chronic disease prevention through environmental and policy change; Evidence-based public health; Policy effects on physical activity and obesity; Dissemination research

Sarah Gehlert
E. Desmond Lee Professor of Racial and Ethnic Diversity
PhD, Washington University
Health disparities; Women's health and mental health; Adaptation to illness and traumatic injury; Community-based participatory research; Transdisciplinary research and team science

Shenyang Guo
Frank J. Bruno Distinguished Professor of Social Work Research; Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Affairs—China
PhD, University of Michigan
Quantitative Research methodology; Program and practice evaluations; Child welfare; Child mental health

Debra Haire-Joshu
Joyce Wood Professor; Associate Dean for Research; Director, Center for Diabetes Translation Research; Director, Center for Obesity Prevention and Policy Research
PhD, St. Louis University
Health policy; Preventing obesity and diabetes in underserved populations; Transdisciplinary approaches to biomedical, behavioral, and public health research
Sean Joe  
Benjamin E. Youngdahl Professor of Social Development  
PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Role of religion in black suicidal behavior; Salivary biomarker discovery for adolescent suicidal behavior; Father-focused family-based interventions; Preventing self-destructive behaviors in African-American adolescent males; Racial Inequality in Adolescent Development  

Matthew W. Kreuter  
Associate Dean for Public Health; Kahn Family Professor of Public Health  
PhD, MPH, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Health communication; Cancer prevention and control; Integrating health and social services; Health disparities  

Nancy Morrow-Howell  
Bettie Bofinger Brown Distinguished Professor of Social Policy; Director, Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging  
PhD, University of California, Berkeley  
Productive and civic engagement in late life; Social engagement in later life  

Enola K. Proctor  
Shanti K. Khinduka Distinguished Professor; Director, Center for Mental Health Services Research  
PhD, Washington University  
Mental health services delivery; Post-acute health and mental health community care; Outcomes of clinical practice; Evaluation of clinical social work  

Mark Rank  
Herbert S. Hadley Professor of Social Welfare  
PhD, University of Wisconsin  
Poverty and economic inequality; Social welfare; Family; Social policy; Demography; Life course  

Michael Sherraden  
George Warren Brown Distinguished University Professor; Director, Center for Social Development  
PhD, University of Michigan  
Asset building; Civic engagement and civic service; Productive aging; Social policy; Community development; Youth development  

Associate Professors  

Tonya Edmond  
Associate Dean for Diversity  
PhD, University of Texas at Austin  
Violence against women; Trauma-focused intervention research; Evidence-based practice  

Jack A. Kirkland  
MSW, Syracuse University  
International & national community economic development; Urban issues; International, state, and regional planning; International social development; Multicultural education  

Patricia Kohl  
Associate Dean for Social Work (interim)  
PhD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Child welfare; Evidence-based practice; Engaging hard to reach populations in treatment; Parent training  

Douglas A. Luke  
Director, Center for Public Health Systems Science  
PhD, University of Illinois  
Evaluations of public health programs; Tobacco control and prevention policy; Community health interventions  

Timothy McBride  
PhD, University of Wisconsin–Madison  
Health policy; Health economics; Health insurance; Medicare and Medicaid policy; Rural health care; Health reform; Social Security and pensions; State health policy  

Vetta L. Sanders Thompson  
PhD, Duke University  
Cultural competence; Racial identity; Disparities in health and mental health services; Psychosocial implications of race and ethnicity in health communications; Access to health services  

Gautam N. Yadama  
Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Affairs - India  
PhD, Case Western Reserve University  
Community-based conservation; Collective action and public goods provision; Formal and informal institutions and community development; Environment, health, and development nexus; Human-natural system interactions; Environmental risk and adaptation  

Vettsa Pandey  
PhD, Case Western Reserve University  
Women’s empowerment; Gender equity; Maternal and child health; Social welfare policy and program evaluation  

Professors  

F. Brett Drake  
PhD, University of California, Los Angeles  
Children born prenatally exposed to drugs; Child protection and child protective practice  

Melissa Jonson-Reid  
Director, Center for Violence and Injury Prevention  
PhD, University of California, Berkeley  
Education and child welfare services policy; Child abuse and neglect; Interagency service delivery systems; School social work
Carolyn Lesorogol  
Associate Dean for Global Strategy and Programs  
PhD, Washington University  
International social development; Capacity building and participatory development; Institutional change; Political economy; Ethnographic research

Amanda Moore McBride  
Bettie Bofinger Brown Associate Professor; Director, Richard A. Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement  
PhD, Washington University  
Civic and community engagement; Civic service & service learning programs (international, national, and community service); Youth development; Qualitative field methods and analysis; International, comparative research

Ramesh Raghavan  
PhD, University of California, Los Angeles  
MD, Kasturba Medical College  
Access to mental health services; quality of mental health care; Medicaid policy; Child well-being; Public health ethics

Assistant Professors

Derek Brown  
PhD, Duke University  
Health economics; Stated preference methods & health-related quality of life; Child abuse and neglect; Medicaid

Sheretta T. Butler-Barnes  
PhD, Wayne State University  
Positive Youth Development; African Americans; Academic Achievement; Mental Health; Religiosity

Alexis Duncan  
PhD, St. Louis University  
Psychiatric epidemiology; Obesity and eating disorders; Substance use and related disorders; Comorbidity; Child abuse and neglect; Behavior genetics

Amy A. Eyler  
Assistant Dean for Public Health  
PhD, Oregon State University  
Physical activity; Childhood obesity; Policies and preventative health

Vanessa Fabbre  
PhD, University of Chicago  
Aging and the Life Course; Health and Mental Health; Gender and Sexuality; Interpretive Methodology

Patrick J. Fowler  
PhD, Wayne State University  
Housing and homelessness; Child maltreatment and child welfare system; Developmental psychopathology; Policy and program evaluation; Prevention science; Violence exposure

Jenine Harris  
PhD, St. Louis University  
Dissemination research; Social network analysis; Social media; Public health systems

J. Aaron Hipp  
PhD, University of California, Irvine  
Built environment; Geographic Information Systems (GIS); Environmental design; Physical activity policies and interventions; Emerging technologies in public health surveillance; Worksite environments and policies that support energy-balance

Darrell L. Hudson  
PhD, University of Michigan  
Health disparities; Mental health; Health behavior; Health education; Violence and injury prevention

Lora Iannotti  
PhD, Johns Hopkins University  
Young child nutrition; Micronutrient deficiencies; Infections diseases and poverty pathways; Evaluation research

Kimberly Johnson  
PhD, University of Minnesota  
Epidemiology; Human genetics; Cancer

Molly W. Metzger  
PhD, Northwestern University  
Affordable housing; Social policy; Poverty and inequality

David A. Patterson  
PhD, University of Louisville  
Alcohol and other drug treatment retention and effectiveness; Implementation of evidence-based practices; Native American and Indigenous People’s health and wellness; Underrepresented minority college success

Carrie Pettus-Davis  
PhD, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
Intervention research; Criminal justice; Substance abuse; Mental health; Social support

Jason Q. Purnell  
PhD, Ohio State University  
Health behavior; Information and communication technologies; Health disparities

Zorimar Rivera-Núñez  
PhD, University of Michigan  
Chemicals Exposures; Exposure Assessment Tools Development; Environmental Epidemiology; Maternal and Child Health

Jean-Francois Trani  
PhD, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris  
Mental health; Disabilities; International Social Work
Anjanette A. Wells  
PhD, University of Southern California  
Adherence/Compliance to health/mental health treatment;  
Recruitment/Retention of low-income/minorities to research and practice;  
Culturally competent clinical interventions;  
Psychosocial oncology

Degree Requirements

PhD in Social Work

Students will need a minimum of 72 graduate credit hours for a PhD from the Brown School. These can include 21 master’s-level credits.

The curriculum at the Brown School emphasizes substantive, theoretical and methodological preparation. Courses include:

- Introduction to Advanced Research  
- Conceptual Foundations of Social Science Research  
- The Role and Use of Theory in Applied Social Research  
- Foundations of Data Analysis  
- Applied Linear Regression Analysis  
- Structural Equation Modeling

The first year of study includes basic principles in research, statistics, measurement, as well as theoretical orientations and content underlying the knowledge base of social work and social welfare.

The second year turns to a more individualized program of study. A curriculum plan is developed by each student and the adviser, focusing on an area of specialization within the field of social work.

The orientation of the PhD program is interdisciplinary, requiring 15 credits of course work in the social sciences. Social science courses are selected that are related to the student's developing area of specialization. Courses in research methodology, research and teaching practica, and specialized courses also help to build the student's expertise as a social work scholar. Professional competence is assessed through a qualifying examination and successful completion of a research dissertation.