

Leadership Changes within the Department

Over the past year, our department and program has seen several important leadership changes. In summer 2019, Dr. Don Kurtz, Social Work Professor & Program Coordinator, became the Interim Department Head for Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work. After a thorough search and interview process, Dr. Kurtz accepted the permanent Department Head position in April 2020. Dr. Kurtz brings with him years of university and leadership experience in taking on this important role. Dr. Kurtz has been a faculty member at KSU since 2008 and served as Program Coordinator from 2017-2019. Kurtz has also served the College and University in a variety of capacities, including the College Committee on Student Retention, the College Committee on Planning, and as a McNair Scholars mentor. As a LMSW, Dr. Kurtz brings significant social work practice experience, including work at Sunflower CASA and Riley County Community Corrections.

To assist with Dr. Kurtz' transition to Department Head, Dr. Kristen Kremer, Assistant Professor of Social Work, took over Program Coordinator duties at the start of the fall 2019 semester and will continue in this role. Dr. Kremer joined KSU in fall 2018 and teaches practice and policy courses in addition to her work as Program Coordinator.

In summer 2019, Jana Thompson, academic advisor for social work majors, left the university. In her place, David Ollington was hired to serve as the newest academic advisor for both social work and anthropology majors. Join us in welcoming David to our team!

K-State Social Work Program Ranked #17 Nationally for Earning Potential

Our Social Work program was recently ranked #17 on Gradreports list of 25 best BSW programs for earning potential. Rankings are based on median annual salary of students one year after graduation as reported by the U. S. Department of Education.

Our social work program is excited to offer an affordable, high quality education in which graduates have the highest earning potential of any BSW alumni in the state of Kansas. In 2019, our graduates reported earning \$36,900 one-year after graduation. This compares to \$33,000 at the University of Kansas and \$27,900 at Wichita State University.

Meet David!

David Ollington started in September 2019 as Academic Advisor for Social Work and Anthropology. He's a retired K-State professor of Theatre and Dance and enjoys his new life as an advisor. Though not a Social Worker, he's close, long-term friends with several and has experienced their careers vicariously. David grew up in Manhattan, completed a bachelor's degree at K-State and a master's degree from Texas Christian University. He pursued work in show business while also supporting himself with a variety of occupations, mostly in the Kansas City area and Dallas/Fort Worth. After retiring from the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, David served as a para-professional educator at Manhattan High School working with special needs students.



David Ollington
Academic Advisor

With the advent of COVID-19, K-State asked the department to produce a video expressing support and encouragement. David wrote COVID-themed lyrics to the tune of "Wabash Cannonball" and accompanied himself on the guitar in SASW's representative video. Watch the video at: <https://youtu.be/HaCpung6h-4>

Contact David at dollingt@ksu.edu if you need help with class selection, academic assistance, or anything.

Congratulations to Recipients of Social Work's Student Awards for 2019-2020

Outstanding Graduating Senior	Lexie Whaley
Outstanding Graduating Senior	Christina Tran-Nguyen
Outstanding Graduating Senior	RaeLynn Roe
Dorla Jane (Dodie) Abbott Social Work Scholarship	Kieora Nichols
Elizabeth Bliss Garzio Endowment Scholarship	Samantha Gibson
Jacque Gibbons Social Work Field Placement Scholarship	Macy Pilgrim
Student Determination Award	Dalton Ramsey

Alumni Update

Emma Unsdefer reports on Peace Corps evacuation in the midst of COVID-19

When I signed up for Peace Corps back in 2018, I signed up for 2 years and 3 months. My contract was to end in October 2020. As I am writing this from my couch in Salina, KS, it's safe to say things did not go as planned. On March 16 I received an email that would blast every global Peace Corps volunteer into chaos for the next week. We were being evacuated, all 7,000+ of us. Historically, an evacuation of this size is unprecedented, and the logistics of such a feat would prove to be chaotic. Peace Corps Headquarters made the call to evacuate volunteers due to the looming threat of COVID-19 and the classification as a global pandemic threat. The week of evacuation was a blur. On Monday, I heard the news, Tuesday I packed up my entire house and said goodbye to my community, Wednesday I was in the capital closing out my service, and early Thursday I was on a flight home. Many goodbyes were left unsaid with host country nationals and volunteers alike.

The evacuation was sudden and immediately followed by a two-week quarantine so there was time to process. One thing was clear: Peace Corps Headquarters made the right choice. To leave volunteers in the field is putting our communities at risk of overwhelming medical systems; becoming a burden to the medical systems we were trying to assist. Before the epidemic, volunteers had been helping with COVID-19 related messaging and helping clinics throughout Botswana spread relevant, accurate information about the virus. Though I may not be there anymore, I still have ties to my community and through that, the work can still be done.

Though it was not the end of my service I had imagined, it was the end of my Peace Corps service. Looking forward, I am looking to go to graduate school and get my Masters in Social Work graduate degree.



Social Workers on the Front Line of COVID-19

Spring 2020 has turned into a semester that no one will soon forget. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 and soon after, Governor Kelly issued Executive Order No. 20-04 which began to limit mass gatherings in Kansas. It is no surprise that work as we know it changed dramatically. The social work program reached out to alumni and Advisory Board Members to learn more about changes in social work practice.

Most fields of practice have gone to a form of working remotely. In mental health and private practice, respondents indicated providing teletherapy either by telephone or using a video conferencing technology. Preparing to move to these methods included additional training and adding a telehealth addendum to practice insurance. Social workers were quick to provide continuity of service. A lesson gained is that it is more difficult to stay in the moment with stacked virtual sessions, so clinicians have made schedule adjustments to allow short breaks between. Those using Zoom or other video meeting software can relate to how much more exhausted one feels at the end of the day. Other mental health services such as case management is requiring creativity to keep clients engaged. One example included talking to a client who was on their porch, keeping a safe social distance (6' away) with a goal of easing their anxiety by seeing you. For clients who lack phone or internet service, some centers have allowed the client to check in and be escorted to an office with a computer or phone so that they can still have access to their services via technology. This requires limited but protected contact using masks and increased sanitizing between visitors. It shows a commitment to making sure services are not excluded from clients who may lack technology. In another case, mailing an old-fashioned letter got a client to check in.

In the fields of criminal justice, Alzheimer's support, addictions assessment, school social work, and medical advocates and case managers, different challenges have arisen. These include a reduction in referrals, difficulty contacting/tracking clients, and being ignored because they are using blocked personal phone numbers. There is a struggle in making at home technology work and in learning so many new technologies at once. Social workers are feeling pulled towards old ways of working and connecting with the people served while trying to embrace and succeed with new ways of working.

In residential settings and hospitals, social workers are considered essential workers and are required to report to work. For these social workers, screening is the new normal. Staff are asked upon arrival if they have had a cough or have been feeling ill. They then submit to having their temperature taken. Work settings are following other recommended guidelines of social distancing, limiting the number of staff allowed in the office at any given time, and wearing masks. Employers have increased cleaning and discontinued visits or visitors to further protect staff and clients. These social workers are providing crucial links for clients who are now cut off from physically visiting their families and must rely on technology to remain connected. Social workers are linking people to needed resources within the community to help provide for basic needs like food, diapers, and soap. They are reaching out to their community contacts and sharing resources within their network for the good of all.

The impact on clients is not fully realized but there have already been some noted concerns. Social workers are seeing an increase in anxiety and depression symptoms for some. Clients are facing new or worsened economic challenges. Isolation is a factor many are dealing with. The courts being closed leave many children, families, and even offenders in a state of limbo. In many settings, social workers are adapting their work to help clients meet the most basic needs. Support for parents includes discussing fear of going to work with children out of school. Some families are working at home or have no work, no income and that is also frustrating as they try to help their children with schoolwork. Most heart-breaking are those who must say their final goodbye to a loved one by phone because of the strict no visitor policies.

Social workers are not immune. Advisory Board Member, Chelsea Sutton, stated it best when she said, "We mutually share this pandemic with the people we serve. It is interesting that our mission is to focus on well-being in a social context, yet we are all facing the same health threat." Just like their clients, social workers are confronting the challenge of balancing remote work and having their children at home now doing home-school. They are concerned about their own personal health (some are dealing with compromised immune systems or underlying health conditions) and mental well-being. Others are dealing with their school (MSW) or clinical supervision plans being disrupted. Most of all, social workers miss their clients and the ability to engage with them face to face.

Self-care and care of each other as professionals emerged as a priority. Checking in on co-workers, setting boundaries, and sticking to a routine while working at home were suggested strategies. Carol Law (2017), Patient Advocate at Children's Hospital in Colorado, shared, "The hospital has deployed several ways for us to maintain our resiliency by offering mental health visits, a ton of resiliency programs offered through our health insurance and financial counseling all free of charge during a stressful time." Gina Nelson-Fishel (2018) from Department of Children and Families is grateful for her supervisor and co-workers and the technology that keeps them connected. Haley Doubrava (2016) from Sheldon Head Start stated, "It has been amazing to watch my community come together to collaborate during this very challenging time, to not only support children and families, but to also support each other."

Social workers will continue to be a part of the solution moving forward. Social workers are being recognized as essential workers and will need to use that status and voices to help craft policies that protect social workers, clients served, and local communities during the early phases of the pandemic. Once the initial containment phase passes, social workers will need to address the injustices that the pandemic revealed in terms of economic, racial, and health disparities.

Remote Learning: Practicum Students Adjust to Field Work Online

The last semester in the Social Work program here at K-State is one of the most crucial times for learning. Practicum is a time where all your learning and preparing and planning finally comes to fruition and you get to observe everything that you have learned about happen in real time. The Covid-19 Pandemic has drastically affected the latter half of our cohort's practicum and changed the way we have been able to learn. Kendal Janousek and Lexie Whaley were both placed at DCF for their practicums, with Kendal in Adult Protective Services and Lexie in Child Protective Services. The following is their experiences.

Lexie Whaley:

Child Protective Services Remotely

My first concern was graduating on time. When I heard that we wouldn't be allowed back at our agencies, I thought that there was no way that I would be able to complete my hours. Logistically, I didn't see how it would work. At that time, I had completed about 215 out of the 480 hours and had been having an incredible experience. I was lucky enough to have been placed under a field instructor that works in administration-my preferred line of work-and offered me many learning opportunities on both the front line and the administrative side of DCF. This made the switch to remote learning devastating. I had spent the past 7 weeks building rapport and getting comfortable within the agency and was just starting to settle into a routine that offered optimal learning opportunities. I was very sad that it was cut short, but most of all I was worried that this would push my ability to graduate back a semester and affect my post-graduate plans. Communication with my field placement instructor eased many of my concerns. She made it clear that she would do whatever was needed to help me finish my practicum and get my hours. Her continued communication throughout the experience was one of the main reasons I was able to stay busy. My field placement instructor gave me multiple research projects that were still beneficial to the agency, as well as activities that further encouraged my professional growth. Though this situation was less than ideal, I feel that I was able to learn a drastic amount of information during this time. Being able to adapt to circumstances that are ever-changing is a major part of social work, and what better time to practice adapting than a global pandemic!

Kendal Janousek:

Virtual Protection for Adults

When news broke that I would no longer be able to have face to face contact within the agency, I was numb. We had received news a week prior that K-State had cancelled spring graduation. I thought, how much worse could this get? News was delivered through email that early afternoon and by five o'clock my office space was packed with boxes I scavenged through the building. I went through the elevator one last time, leaving with confusion, anger, and sadness. I was curious to see how hours would work from at home. Unlike other individuals, I could not work on DCF assignments as I did not have government-issued software. I completed the last 100 hours in about 2 weeks. I stayed true to a 8-5 work schedule. I wrote research papers, clinical interview training, and watched education videos on topics that I was not interested in. I explored new issues and sought out resources that are available in Kansas. It was going too easy for me to work from home. This is because of the supervisor I had with Adult Protective Services. We had constant communication flowing each day, she provided additional learning opportunities and we had our weekly supervision time. Not only did I stay in contact with my supervisor, but with the other eight social workers too. As though my physical time at DCF was cut short, my learning was not. I am forever grateful to have an amazing learning opportunity and experience through my supervisor and the other social workers. Building relationships that involve integrity have shown me how important it is to communicate with others, especially in such a difficult time.

Social Work Student Receives Undergraduate Research Award

Polina Nations created a research project for her Undergraduate University Honors Program course work under the guidance and support of Sim Jun, Assistant Professor of Social Work, during the 2019 Fall Semester and the 2020 Spring Semester. This research project evaluated if the No More Rally at Kansas State University is an effective intervention to increase personal knowledge about sexual assault and domestic violence, increase readiness to help with activism, and increase personal knowledge of reporting processes and resources available to victims/survivors at Kansas State University. Nations presented her research proposal at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in December and received an award for presenting her research proposal. Additionally, she received an award for Undergraduate Research in the College of Arts & Sciences to aid in the funding of her project. She went on to go through the IRB process and received approval on her first submission. Unfortunately, Nations' research project was unable to be executed due to COVID-19. However, she is currently working on sending abstracts of her completed work up until this point to the Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at Kansas State University.

Social Work Faculty Awarded Funding for Research Projects

Dr. Don Kurtz was awarded a three-year National Science Foundation grant in collaboration with KSU Criminologist Kevin Steinmetz and Brian Schaefer of Indiana State University. The award amounts to more than \$480,000 between the two universities and will be used to conduct research investigating law enforcement cybercrime investigators. Through qualitative interviews and analysis of department official documentation, the project will address questions such as "how do investigators navigate the challenges endemic to cybercrime cases?"; "how do investigators decide which cases are worth pursuing?"; "how do officers perceive cybercrimes and their victims?"; among others.

Dr. Sim Jun received the University Small Research Grant (USRG) to support her research project to address a health disparity issue relating to the gastric cancer health among Korean immigrant older adults. With the grant support, she surveyed 120 Korean immigrant elders in California to understand gastric cancer health literacy and the roles of possible protective/risk factors (acculturative stress, social support, experiences of health care, use of technology for health information, and cultural belief/barriers) on gastric cancer health literacy. In addition, Dr. Jun has explored the participants' perceptions and experiences of using mobile health technology to promote gastric cancer health literacy since this population has been identified as the most high risk group. By utilizing the ecological perspective, she has explored what factors are related to gastric cancer health literacy positively or negatively. Dr. Jun is planning to prepare a couple of manuscripts to disseminate the findings.

Dr. Kristen Kremer also received a University Small Research Grant to examine the relationship between stressful school experiences and adult health. Results of Kremer's research found that individuals with an increasing number of stressful school experiences during adolescence were more likely to report illness in early adulthood. Understanding school-related stress at this pivotal point is an important first step toward finding ways to reduce stress levels, and further research should explore interventions to reduce stress.

Social Work Students Receive the Mary G. Tannahill Award

Two social work students from the Polytechnic campus completing practicum this spring received a financial boost thanks to a partnership with the Focus on the Future Foundation. Katie Curtis-Baker and Raelynn Roe became the first recipients of the Mary G. Tannahill Award. The award is specifically given to social work students on the Polytechnic campus who demonstrate a drive to succeed in the social work field and a financial need. Katie and Raelynn each received a \$500 check from the Focus on the Future Foundation to cover education or other expenses while they focus their attention on completing their full-time practicum experience.



Raelynn stated that she always knew she wanted to help people. She explained, "Helping others has been my calling since I was a little girl. When I turned 18 and entertained the idea of going to college, I had no clue how I wanted to go about helping others. I signed up as an EMT/Paramedic major. It wasn't long till I realized that blood was not my thing and multiplying fractions in my head was not my strong suit. I soon left school, not knowing what it was I wanted to do. I found myself in Salina, Kansas, of all places, and I got a job in a fast-food restaurant. I realized one day that I could not flip burgers for the rest of my life, and I needed to go back to my passion, helping others. Someone suggested social work to me, and I fell in love quickly."

Yet, despite her undeniable passion, Raelynn also commented on how she has had to overcome several financial setbacks that have at times threatened her ability to complete her K-State degree. "When I got the letter for this scholarship, I almost cried. The day before, I was sitting there thinking about money and if I was going to be able to finish or if I would have to drop out or take an incomplete." Raelynn went on to explain, "By helping me with this scholarship, you are allowing me to finish school and go on to help so many others." The Foundation's Board President stated he is "thrilled to be a part of these students' journey." The Focus on the Future Foundation exists to assist both "persons who've overcome major life challenges and non-traditional students returning to school." Katie was also excited to receive the award. Katie stated she bounced in and out of school for almost a decade before she landed on social work. "I decided to go back to school to complete my degree (finally!) in social work. I became a licensed foster parent, worked with youth aging out of foster care and continued my goal to graduate in May 2020... Social work is the most incredible field, and I am so honored to *almost* call myself a bachelor level social worker."



Social Work Students Participate in Annual Social Work Advocacy Day



On February 19, social work students attended the Kansas NASW's Social Work Legislation Education Advocacy Day at Washburn University. In addition, the students also visited Kansas Action for Children (KAC), a lobbying group that attempts to shape the health, education and economic policies targeting Kansas children and families. KAC works to give the most vulnerable citizens of Kansas, the children, a voice that can be heard. According to student Jason Gragg, "The experience was really interesting to me as I am a government nerd." KAC was excited on having the students visit and learn about their agency. Overall, the experience

on legislature day was successful and the students learned a lot about the importance of advocacy.

Students from the Polytechnic campus attended as part of their Social Policy course under the direction of Cheryl Calhoun. Social Policy challenges social work students to evaluate policies and programs designed to address various social problems. According to Calhoun, "As part of the learning process, students quickly come to the realization that they will be responsible for writing, presenting and debating over pieces of legislation that will determine what the particular semester's Social Policy course materials and procedures regarding attendance and participation will look like."

The Social Policy class was divided into groups and instructed to write a bill which addressed what the class would be doing on the afternoon of Legislature day. The class then had to present their bill to their classmates to be voted on. The group whose bill won the class over was John Decker, Jason Gragg, and Dalton Ramsey.



Advocacy Day from a Student's Perspective

Written by Stacy Tuxhorn

The only word that comes to my mind when I think about my experience at Advocacy Day is inspiration. From the speakers at the convention in the morning, to the rally for expansion on Medicaid; I was inspired. Inspired to make a change in the various systems, and ultimately a change in how people's lives will be affected based off the actions of others. The one person that inspired me the most was Representative Susan Ruiz. Rep. Ruiz spoke of how important voting was, but most importantly, spoke of the importance of getting involved with the communities we take part in. I felt that Rep. Ruiz's experience before her time in the House of Representatives speaks very loudly and encourages me to follow my passion: advocacy on a policy level. Rep. Ruiz earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in Social Work, and then spent many years working as a clinical Social Worker here in Kansas and in Missouri before her time as a Representative. While listening to her speak, I became motivated to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves, and to push myself to be the very best Social Worker I can be. The need for Social Workers is always present. Going to Advocacy/Legislative Day 2020 made it apparent that WE are needed. So, when people ask me how this day went, all I can say is, "I am inspired."



Social Work Program Offering New Electives in Fall 2020

SOCWK 350: Social Work with Criminal Offenders & Victims

With Don Kurtz on M/W/F from 10:30-11:20am

This course offers an overview of social work practice and professional helping skills in criminal justice and legal systems.

SOCWK 380: Social Work and Intimate Partner Violence

With Debi Holcomb on T/Th from 9:30-10:45am

This course will provide students an understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary to respond to intimate partner violence in an ethical, victim-centered and trauma informed manner.

Thank You to our Spring Field Instructors!

An **extra special THANK YOU** goes out to Spring 2020 field instructors who, when we discontinued face-to-face practicum placements on March 19, stayed on with their students remotely for the remainder of their hours. We made the decision to reduce our minimum 480-hour requirement to 400 hours, the CSWE minimum. The 18 students we had in the field stepped up, too, by identifying valuable trainings, TED talks, readings and other online opportunities, then tying those in with their previous agency-related activities. Students even gathered on Zoom to have group discussions about their learning. Social Workers are superstars! Thank you, field instructors and congratulations to our soon-to-be graduates.

Community Conversations on Race and Reconciliation

On Monday, February 24 over 150 people from throughout the Manhattan community participated in a conversation on racial relations in the Manhattan area. Dr. Lorenza Lockett, Assistant Professor of Social Work, steered the event in collaboration with Susanne Glymour from the Manhattan Non-Violence Initiative. The purpose of this community-wide event was to invite the public to examine and learn about the impact of diversity in The Greater Manhattan Kansas area in a safe space. Individuals from a variety of backgrounds were invited to share their personal experiences and challenges. We believe that a healthy Manhattan must be an inclusive Manhattan. Further events on this topic will be held at a later date.



Welcome to Our New Advisory Board Members

Rachel Bezek, Department of Child & Family Services

Rebecca Covert, Central Kansas Mental Health Center

Jennifer Dauer, Central Kansas Foundation

Kristen Martin, Meadowlark

Wendi Pratt, USD 393

Amanda Ruthstrom, Medicalodges

Jamie Womochil, 8th Judicial District of Kansas