Scholars, Educators, Leaders

Upcoming Graduates
PhD in Social Work
2019-2020
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the upcoming graduates of the PhD Program at the University of Tennessee College of Social Work.

Our students are trained in rigorous research methods and innovative pedagogy. They are eager and ready to serve as the newest scholars, educators, and emerging leaders in our profession.

At the University of Tennessee, we are proud of our scholarship grounded in community needs, with an eye to social impact and societal change. Our students’ research interests reflect these values and—as their biographies and curriculum vitae attest—include a deep commitment to improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable groups in society.

It would be my pleasure to connect you with any of our upcoming graduates or to provide you with additional information. Please contact me at (865) 974-3802 or mason@utk.edu.

Sincerely,

Lisa Reyes Mason, PhD, MSW
PhD Program Director
University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
Aaron Brown

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“Any change that reduces drug-related harm is progress. Harm reduction is about empowering clients to be safer and healthier so they can rebuild their lives.”

Aaron Brown’s research focuses on evidence-based practices for addictions and rural social work. Aaron enjoys employing advanced quantitative methods in his research including confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and hierarchical linear modeling. For his dissertation, Aaron developed an online training and text-messaging intervention designed to change attitudes towards medication-assisted treatments among clinicians.

Aaron has taught several courses independently, at both the Master’s and Bachelor’s level, and in face-to-face and online formats. His students appreciate how he uses his own practice and research experience to provide them with real world examples.

Aaron has worked in community mental health for over a decade in a variety of roles. Most recently, he worked as an outpatient therapist in rural areas of East Tennessee. Aaron’s experiences treating addictions motivated him to pursue research on how to improve access to and utilization of evidence-based practices for addictions in rural communities.

Aubrey Jones

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“I became a social worker to contribute to the advancement of social justice. I pursued a Ph.D. to address health disparities and advance health equity through teaching, research, and service.”

Aubrey Jones’s research centers on health equity, particularly as it relates to vulnerable and oppressed women. She has published in eleven peer-reviewed journals and presented her research at numerous local and national conferences. Her dissertation examines the predictors of treatment-seeking among women with postpartum depression with a focus on mediating and moderating effects of stigma.

As an MSW student, Aubrey was the recipient of the Joan Amery Van Vleck fellowship for a non-profit agency serving girls involved in the juvenile justice system. Aubrey’s post MSW experience includes crisis response work for youth with suicidal and homicidal ideations and medical social work. Prior professional experience includes serving as an AmeriCorps Vista member to build an inclusive campus for LGBT students, and as a community health worker for sexual assault survivors. Additionally, she has taught at the Graduate and Undergraduate levels for three years.
Joe Strong

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“To understand the brain is to understand the entirety of the human experience.”

Joe Strong’s dissertation work tests the effects of exposure to natural scenery via immersive virtual reality on mood and navigational ability in older adults who have mild to moderate dementia. His primary areas of research interest are in dementia and other aging-related neurological conditions, particularly Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

Joe was selected for the 2016 Association for Gerontology in Social Work Education Pre-Dissertation Fellowship. Neuroscience in social work education, research, and practice has been the primary subject of his publications and conference presentations. He also has five years post-MSSW practice experience in medical social work. Joe has a BS in Molecular Biology and Microbiology from the University of Central Florida and a MSSW from the University of Tennessee. In addition to his Ph.D., he has completed the requirements for a minor in statistics.

Jayme Walters

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“In pursuit of social justice, I give a voice to nonprofits who provide essential services to marginalized populations in Rural America by shedding light on their contributions and challenges.”

Jayme Walters’ research focuses on nonprofits as a mechanism for improving the well-being for disadvantaged and oppressed individuals and families in Rural America. With a mixed methods approach, her dissertation assesses organizational capacity of nonprofits in persistently poor, rural counties in the southern U.S. Jayme has established scholarly activity that supports the goals of a long-term research agenda, including seven publications, three manuscripts under review, and 20 conference presentations in three years.

Jayme has also taught social work courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels for more than four years. Her research and teaching are informed by a decade of practice experience. Jayme’s professional focus has been in macro social work including non-profit management, program development, fundraising, and grantwriting. She has served as the lead author for over 150 program grants, earning $4.7 million for various non-profits.
Grounded in social justice, the University of Tennessee College of Social Work equips professional social workers with the skills needed to serve diverse and vulnerable populations. We build knowledge by conducting groundbreaking research that focuses on solving social problems. We engage with our communities through meaningful service.

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