Social Work PhD Candidates

Fall 2021
Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the dean and the faculty, I am pleased and honored to share with you a snapshot of the University of Utah College of Social Work’s current PhD candidates “on the market.” These are engaged teachers, passionate researchers, and exceptionally bright individuals who are dedicated to advancing the field of social work through their scholarly pursuits. Their skill and sincerity gives me great hope for the future of the profession, and confidence in the generations of practitioners they will educate and mentor. I enthusiastically invite you to “meet” each of these unique scholars through the following pages and to learn about the contributions they have already made to the critical mission of social work.

Warmly,

Christina Gringeri, PhD, MSW
Professor & Director of Doctoral Studies
PhD Candidates

Malisa Brooks, MSW, CSW
malisa.brooks@utah.edu
Website  |  Curriculum Vitae

Dissertation (working title): “Examining the Psychometric and Diagnostic Properties of the PCL-5 in Student Veterans”

Malisa is currently a research associate and clinician for the National Center for Veteran Studies, where she focuses on the assessment and treatment of traumatic stress disorders in both civilian and military populations. Her professional research program focuses on sexual trauma, assessment instruments, and the use of translational research to bridge the gap between research and clinical practice communities. She is passionate about training other mental health and social service professionals, for the state of Utah and across the country, in Crisis Response Planning for suicidal individuals. Additionally, she works part-time as a licensed therapist at a private practice in Utah, helping low-income women who are struggling with posttraumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Her educational background includes double majoring in both social work and psychology at Utah Valley University and completing a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Utah, where she is currently a fourth-year doctoral candidate pursuing a PhD in the College of Social Work.

Karla Arroyo, LCSW
karlaa@mccounseling.com


Karla is currently enrolled in the PhD Program at the University of Utah College of Social Work. She works full-time as the director of the Multicultural Counseling Center (MCC), an agency that provides counseling to individuals, couples, families, and children and that specializes in trauma survivors. Her practice utilizes a multidimensional framework, systems theory, and trauma-informed care when delivering interventions.

Karla Arroyo was born and raised in Mexico City where she earned her bachelor’s degree in Economics from the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana (UAM). Karla moved to Provo, Utah in June of 1999 and earned a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Utah in 2006. Karla has spent the last 10 years working with the Latino community in Salt Lake County and some rural areas within the state of Utah. Her involvement in the community has been direct clinical practice, community organizing and leadership. She is passionate about training other mental health and social service professionals, for the state of Utah and across the country, in Crisis Response Planning for suicidal individuals.
Natalie Lecy, LCSW, MSW  
natalie.lecy@utah.edu  
Website  

Dissertation: “The Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences on College Graduation Rates by Generational Status”

Natalie Lecy is a PhD candidate, adjunct professor, and research associate at the University of Utah’s College of Social Work. Her research is focused on mindfulness-based interventions and increasing inclusivity in higher education for first-generation and marginalized students through trauma-informed and student-centered approaches. Natalie is a licensed clinical social worker with over a decade of experience in clinical and community practice. Throughout her career she has secured over $2 million in grant funding and has supervised teams of social workers to facilitate community-driven practice and impact model. Natalie also operates a private practice utilizing mindfulness-based therapy while working primarily with LGBTQ+ populations. She enjoys enhancing her clinical practice through mindfulness-based research and vice versa.

Kwynn M. Gonzalez-Pons, MPH, CPH  
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Website  |  Curriculum Vitae

Dissertation: “Improving Outcomes for Students Impacted by Partner Violence”

My overarching professional goal is to develop and implement creative solutions to prevent and respond to interpersonal violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking. How I approach research is heavily influenced by the training I received during my Master of Public Health program, which emphasized the intersectionality of health outcomes with individual and community resources and political support, as well as socioeconomic factors like income, level of education, and childhood experiences. My dissertation research will examine how relationship abuse experiences follow students as they seek support, define their goals, and reflect on the impact of their actions in their journey to empowerment. I am also testing the effectiveness of myPlan, an interactive safety decision aid created by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, compared to a university webpage dedicated to interpersonal violence on campus. My goal with this research is to develop a research-based focus on empowerment during and following relationship abuse, particularly among college students. From there, campus and community-based services can be better tailored to meet students’ needs. By doing so we can continue to more accurately represent the voice of survivors in our work.
Hanna E. Morzenti, LMSW, MA
hanna.morzenti@utah.edu
Website  |  Curriculum Vitae

Dissertation: “Treatment Recommendations for Individuals with High Functioning Autism in the Criminal Justice System: A Delphi Consensus Study”

Hanna E. Morzenti is adjunct faculty and a doctoral candidate in the College of Social Work at the University of Utah. She received undergraduate degrees in Sociology and Criminal Justice from the University of Wisconsin, Superior, a Master’s degree in Criminal Justice from Washington State University, and an M.S.W. from Northwest Nazarene University. Along with her extensive educational experience, Hanna has nearly two decades of practice, including seven years working as an LMSW. Her clinical skillset includes working with non-profit organizations and state governments to provide community-based mental health, skill building, rehabilitation, on-call crisis intervention, and conducting court-ordered evaluations. Hanna’s interdisciplinary background provided the framework for her research and practice. Her dissertation focuses on alternatives to incarceration and typical criminal justice sanctions for individuals with high functioning autism. Hanna is passionate about sharing her clinical, academic, and personal experiences to enhance the education and critical thinking skills of social workers.

Misty McIntyre Goodsell, LCSW
mistymcintyre@gmail.com
Website

Dissertation: “Exploring the Relationship between ACEs and Pubertal Timing for Adolescent Females: Analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent and Adult Health”

Misty McIntyre Goodsell is a person with a lot of questions. Questions are what led her to pursue her master’s degree at the College of Social Work. Notebooks of unanswered questions and ideas for research continue pushing her education forward. In considering her path, earning a PhD in social work was the option that made the most sense to her. “Social work’s core values mirror my own,” she said. “Social justice and the empowerment of oppressed and/or disadvantaged populations is what drew me to social work. My ultimate goal was to be a therapist and researcher, and earning my degree in psychology was never an option. The values of social work are core to my identity as a social researcher and clinician and I can’t imagine an opinion that would separate social work from the pack.” Her long-term career aspirations include becoming a mental health therapist for Doctors Without Borders.
Allison O'Connor, LCSW
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Website


Allison specializes in evaluation design and mixed-method analyses, with a particular focus on outcome measurement. Passionate about supporting community agencies to use data-driven processes for decision making and effective programming, Allison is additionally interested in child welfare, animal-assisted therapy, and field education. Allison is currently earning a PhD in social work, and researching utility of existing child welfare assessments for use in outcome monitoring. She has designed and conducted research studies at the University of Utah since 2009, and additionally provides clinical psychotherapy services to adults and families.