

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY'S
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



CONGRATULATIONS BSW & MSW CLASS OF 2026 - YOU DID IT!!!

Thank you to the scholars, families, faculty, and staff who came out for the Spring 2026 Honors Ceremony!



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2026 National Association of Black Social Workers Annual Conference in Detroit



(L-R) SyMire Shackelford, Deanna Anthony, Kalani Brown, Anaya Riviere & Tyshawn Steward

(Center) Dr. Renata Hedrington-Jones NABSW National President



(Center) Prof. Kevin Holder

ABSW continues to uplift the profession through powerful advocacy and community-centered mental health initiatives. This year, the Richmond Chapter sponsored VSU BSW scholars, **Anaya Riviere, Kalani Brown, & SyMire Shackelford** and MSW scholars **Deanna Anthony & Tyeshawn Steward** to the national conference in Detroit, Michigan—an investment in the next generation of social work leaders. Special thanks to **Dr. Renata Hedrington-Jones & Prof. Holder** for their continued support of our students.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

From Classroom to Capitol: Advocacy in Action at the General Assembly

As a Virginia State University MSW graduate student and intern with the Office of the Children's Ombudsman, **Tiffany Leakes** (pictured in the middle left) participated in Advocacy Day at the Virginia General Assembly on Martin Luther King Day. The experience offered a direct connection between classroom learning and real-time policy engagement, illustrating how child fatality reviews, workforce data, and systemic trends shape legislative conversations and reform efforts.



“Your Money Psychology”

MSW Director Dr. Sade Younger was a featured speaker at Norfolk State University's 2026 Financial Social Work Conference. Centered on the theme “Building Endurance,” her interactive workshop, “Your Money Psychology,” explored how emotions, early financial experiences, and personal beliefs shape financial behaviors and relationships. Her presentation offered meaningful insight into the connection between financial well-being and mental health, equipping attendees with practical tools for both personal growth and professional practice.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Alasia Dillard BSW Class of '26

Inducted into Prestigious Charlie Hill Fellow Leadership Institute

This semester, Alasia Dillard achieved a significant milestone as the sole social work major inducted into the Charlie Hill Fellow Leadership Institute—one of the highest leadership honors at Virginia State University.

Alasia's accomplishments reflect a sustained commitment to excellence, leadership, and service. She serves as Vice President of the D.R.E.A.M. Institute, President of the Phi Alpha Honor Society, and is an active member of the T.R.U.E. Foundation Inc. and the VSU and Richmond Chapters of the Association of Black Social Workers. A Presidential Scholar and consistent Dean's List honoree, she is also a TCMF Scholar, a member of the Dr. Charlie Hill Honors College, and a Charlie Hill Fellow. Notably, she made history as the first intern for Live! Casino Virginia.

Alasia exemplifies the very best of Trojan excellence—leading with purpose, achieving with distinction, and making a lasting impact on campus and beyond.



Virginia State University's MSW program is the first and only CSWE-accredited HBCU program with a trauma-informed focus—according to CSWE.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



2026 Rally in the Valley Conference Brings Together Future Social Work Leaders

The 2026 Rally in the Valley Conference, sponsored by the Virginia Social Work Education Consortium (VSWEC) and the National Association of Social Workers Virginia Chapter, was held in Lynchburg, Virginia, bringing together undergraduate social work students from across the state.

VSWEC Vice President and BSW Director Dr. Brittany Short chaperoned VSU and VCU students as they engaged in fellowship, participated in breakout sessions and interactive activities, and explored opportunities at the graduate school fair. The conference provided a dynamic space for networking, professional development, and preparing the next generation of social work leaders.



DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Cedric Alexander BSW CLASS OF 2026

Cedric Alexander is a graduating senior earning his BSW, with the Homefront Readjustment for the Armed Forces Certificate. He has demonstrated a strong commitment to academic excellence, maintaining a 3.8 GPA while preparing for a career focused on supporting vulnerable populations.



His passion for child welfare and family services was strengthened through his internship with the Dinwiddie Department of Social Services, where he gained hands-on experience working with children and families involved in the child welfare system. During this time, Cedric developed skills in assessment, case management, and trauma-informed practice, while collaborating with multidisciplinary teams to promote client safety and well-being.

In recognition of his dedication, Cedric was selected as a Child Welfare Stipend Recipient, highlighting both his academic achievement and commitment to public child welfare. Following graduation, he will attend the University of Kentucky's Advanced Standing MSW program, where he plans to pursue a specialization in substance abuse and prepare for LCSW licensure.

Cedric's long-term goal is to integrate his social work and real estate expertise to address housing instability in his community. His dedication, compassion, and drive position him to make a meaningful and lasting impact.



Virginia State University social work students contribute over 54,000 hours of field education each year, delivering critical services across our communities. That's the equivalent of \$1.3–\$1.9 million in direct service value annually—supporting agencies, strengthening families, and expanding access to care.

This isn't just training—this is impact in action.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Paula M. Gillison Flipping the Script, One Page at a Time!

Paula Gillison-Aknwole, a rising junior, submitted a poem to Flip The Script Publishing for their upcoming anthology honoring Nikki Giovanni. A longtime scholar and admirer of Giovanni's work, she even had the privilege of sitting with her during a podcast the year before her passing. The poem, written in tribute to Giovanni, was selected for inclusion in the anthology. Although this is not her first publication, she considers it one of her most meaningful achievements—an opportunity to stand alongside other artists celebrating Giovanni's impact on the world.



Meet Gloria Elena Madriñán Mejí MSW Class of 2026



As a bilingual Latina professional, she has navigated the Master of Social Work program while serving in dual roles at Petersburg High School—as both a Spanish teacher and a school social work intern. Balancing these responsibilities has strengthened her commitment to trauma-informed and culturally responsive practice.



VSU was the first fully state-supported four-year HBCU in the United States, paving the way for generations of scholars and leaders.

Social Worker in session: calm, grounded, reflective
Social worker immediately after: deep sigh “Whew... that was a lot.”



Why did the social worker bring a ladder to work?

Because they heard the client needed help reaching their higher level of functioning

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Caring for the Community

MSW students Janiyah Kemp and Myajah Dillard hosted the Care for the Community Drive at VSU, successfully collecting over 1,000 hygiene products and undergarments for individuals in need. This impactful initiative reflects their commitment to service and community engagement. A huge shoutout to the Social Work Club and ABSW for their support and contributions to making this drive a success! Efforts like these continue to strengthen community partnerships and embody the mission and values of social work in action.



MSW student (Class of '27), **Mr. Mikhael Warith-Muhammad**, entrepreneur and author, presented at the **2026 Virginia State University Graduate Research Initiative (VGRI) Conference on Thursday, April 2, 2026**. His presentation highlighted the Growth Track Athletes App, an innovative platform exploring the intersection of financial literacy, identity transition, mentorship and community, career readiness, and the psychological impact of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) for college athletes. His work reflects a forward-thinking approach to supporting student-athletes as they navigate evolving personal, professional, and financial landscapes.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Beyond The Jersey: Staying Solid When The Game Gets Heavy



Sierra Turner, Craig Wrenn, Prof. Gary Taylor



MSW student, **Craig Wrenn**, recently led a powerful mental health workshop for student-athletes, promoting awareness, dialogue, and support across campus. Fellow graduate student **Sierra Turner** served as a panelist, sharing valuable insight that enriched the conversation. This collaborative effort between the **University Counseling Center** and the **Department of Social Work** reflects our shared commitment to student wellness and resilience. We are proud of the leadership demonstrated by our graduate students.



A Day at The Museum

The Senior BSW class, joined by **Dr. Brittany Short, Prof. Jane Parker, Mrs. Jean Fuller, and Prof. Keneisha Thornton**, visited the Fort Monroe Education Center and Casemate Museum to explore the historic context of the first African Americans in Virginia. This annual experience is part of **SOWK 495: Advanced Topics in Social Work—Black Lives Matter**, a course and signature trip established by Prof. Thornton, designed to deepen students' understanding of history, social justice, and the foundations of social work practice.



(L-R) Dr. Brittany Short, Prof. Keneshia Thornton, Mrs. Jean Fuller, Prof. Jane Parker

In Loving Memory of Shwikar Abdelrahman, MSW '27

In February 2026, we lost a cherished member of our Department, Collge, and University, Class of 2027, Shwikar Abdelrahman. Her passing is a profound loss to our academic community and to the future of the social work profession, everywhere.

"I chose social work because I've always wanted to understand the 'why' behind people; their stories, struggles, and strengths."

Shwikar was deeply committed to understanding others—their stories, struggles, and strengths—and was passionate about helping individuals find peace within themselves and their environments.

Shwikar was deeply committed to understanding others—their stories, struggles, and strengths—and was passionate about helping individuals find peace within themselves and their environments. She believed every person deserves a safe space to heal and was dedicated to being part of that work. Her compassion, purpose, and quiet strength reflected the very heart of social work.

Though her time with us was brief, her impact was meaningful and lasting. Shwikar's legacy lives on through the values she embodied and the inspiration she leaves behind for her peers and our community.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and classmates. As a department, we honor her by continuing the work she believed in—uplifting others, fostering healing, and leading with compassion.

*Forever
remembered.*

"I'm passionate about helping others find peace within their environments and within themselves. Every person deserves a safe space to heal, and I want to be part of building that."



DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Prof. Gary Taylor, LCSW-S continues to shine as a powerful voice in social work and mental wellness. As host of The G. Taylor Show—available on YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify—he creates engaging, video-based conversations on social work, mental health, entrepreneurship, and self-care through hobbies.

Through both his platform and dynamic keynote speaking, Prof. Taylor brings insight, authenticity, and hope to audiences seeking meaningful change. His advocacy centers healing, equity, and community care, while his work as an educator reflects a strong commitment to shaping the next generation with clarity, compassion, and lasting impact.

We also proudly celebrate his upcoming achievement of earning his **Doctorate of Social Work on May 8, 2026, from the University of Kentucky.**

The Harambee Ceremony

Masters of Social Work **Prof. Kevin Holder**, LCSW-S and **2025 National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), Educator of the Year**, escorted NABSW President, Dr. Renata Hedrington-Jones, during the Harambee Ceremony on Friday, March 27th. This moment signaled the formal closing of the conference and honored the rich traditions, unity, and collective spirit that the Harambee Ceremony represents. Prof. Holder's role reflected both respect for leadership and deep appreciation for the cultural significance of the event.



"**Harambee**" is a Swahili term meaning "all pull together." Traditionally, NABSW meetings and gatherings typically end with the group holding hands in a circle, shouting "Harambee!" 7 times while raising collective hands.

Baltimore Legacy Chapter, Association of Black Social Workers. (2022). Harambee circle. Association of Black Social Workers. <https://baltimoreabsw.com/join-1>

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS



TROJAN 10 UNDER 10



BSW Professors Amanda Whitlow, LCSW-S and Daryl Simmons, LCSW were recognized with the VSU Trojan 10 Under 10 Award (pictured on the right). Both professors, along with students, attended the Black Brilliance Gala, which focused on mental wellness and networking.

Prof. Whitlow also officially transitioned to full-time private practice with Concrete Roses Counseling and Consulting, with student support during the announcement, and has since earned certifications in grief therapy, anger management, and EMDR.

Both Virginia State University alumni, clinicians, and entrepreneurs, Professors Whitlow and Simmons exemplify excellence as innovative, industry-leading educators—making “Greater Happens Here” truly come to life at VSU.



It All Started Here...

Once BSW students at VSU, now leaders in the field—Professors Simmons and Whitlow embody the legacy of excellence, impact, and innovation that defines Trojan Nation.

Your turn starts now.



WE HONOR NOT ONLY A CAREER—BUT A CALLING DR. DENISE LUCOMBE, MSW, MA



Dr. Denise “Dee” Lucombe devoted her life’s work to service—strengthening families, uplifting communities, and shaping generations of social workers. From her early role as a Family Services Specialist with the Richmond Department of Social Services to her leadership as a Family Services Supervisor and Acting Human Services Coordinator, she stood at the critical intersection of child welfare, trauma responsiveness, and family preservation—doing the work where it mattered most.

Dr. Denise Lucombe’s commitment to trauma-informed practice extended far beyond theory. As a Certified Trauma-Informed Care and Trauma Responsiveness Trainer for the City of Richmond and a longstanding member of the Greater Richmond Trauma-Informed Care Network, she advanced healing-centered care across systems—impacting individuals, families, and communities.

At Virginia State University, where she served as BSW Field Education Director and later MSW Program Field Director, Dr. Lucombe was instrumental in strengthening field education—the backbone of social work training. Under her leadership, field became more than a requirement; it became a transformative bridge between classroom knowledge and real-world practice, shaping students’ skills, ethics, and professional identity.

A respected leader, her insight and commitment helped shape the Department of Social Work’s standards, structure, and culture. Her influence extended beyond VSU through mentorship, community engagement, and contributions across institutions.

Dr. Lucombe embodies the essence of a servant leader—grounded in practice, guided by purpose, and committed to equity. As she enters retirement, we celebrate her legacy—carried forward through every student she mentored, every program she strengthened, and every life she touched.

*Thank you,
Dr. Lucombe.
Your legacy lives
on.*



SELF-CARE IS THE BEST CARE

The 2026 Self-Care Raffle invited everyone to begin the year by investing in their own well-being. Ticket sales opened during the 2026 Black Family Ritual on February 14th, and the raffle drawing was held at the 2026 Social Work Mix and Mingle in March.

Participants purchased \$20 tickets, with no limit on entries, and many chose to enter on behalf of social workers deserving rest and appreciation. Prizes included a gift certificate to a Black-owned business, wine with glassware, a plush throw, great reads, and additional self-care essentials.



On the Rise: Unprecedented Growth in Social Work at VSU

The Department of Social Work is on the rise! Over the past two years, active student enrollment grew from 181 in 2024 to 357 in 2026—an impressive 97% increase—because our students, community partners, staff, and faculty continue to choose us. This momentum is also evident in our graduating cohorts, with spring graduates increasing 257%. These numbers reflect more than growth; they reflect a thriving future for social work at VSU.



Share Your Wins We're Proud of You!!!

Your journey matters, and we want to celebrate it! Whether you've published, launched an exciting project, received an award, reached a personal milestone, or simply have powerful moments captured in your work—we want to hear from you. Every achievement, big or small, inspires others in our social work community to keep Pushing forward. Email your accomplishments and photos to socialworkprogram@vsu.edu—let's uplift each other and celebrate the impact we're making together !!

Congratulations

to

The 2026 Social Work Graduating Class

Bachelor of Social Work

Cedric D'Andre Alexander
 Rahzel De'won Atkinson
 Sha'Niyah Boothe
 Jaila Denae Burke
 Janell Semaj Coleman
 Jenna Mackenzie Cook
 Laniyah Nicole Dennis
 Alasia Najay Dillard
 Sasha Brianna Fields
 Brittany Marie Garcia
 Jazlyn Nichelle Hicks
 Nasaye Nairae Joyner
 Tanajah King
 Tanaya- Latimer
 Alaysha Mcknight
 Janelle Mcneil
 Amya Sanaa Morgan
 Shayla Torre Murphy
 Alayshia Myrick
 Leilani Riddick
 Javien Rountree
 Louise Taylor
 Mykira Taylor
 A'asheia Michaela Tillman
 Kelsi Torres
 Damien Toulson
 Amya Renae Wright
 Damiyana M Wyche
 Darnessa Young

Master of Social Work

Anaya Allen
 Deanna Anthony
 Gekia Baugh
 Johneisha Bizzell
 Rhacquel Bonner
 Olivia Boone
 Kamari Boykin
 Bryce Bradley
 Ashley Carter
 Antoinette Childs
 Sade Coleman
 Rachel Cox
 Jordan Daniels
 Hailey Darrington
 Margarita Echavarría
 Deanna Edwards
 Emonie Ferguson
 Tinise Forbes
 Jayana Foster
 Kelly Gilliam
 D'Trel Haskins
 Dy'mon Hickman
 Darnisha Jones
 Juanickwa Jones
 Janiyah Kemp
 Sakiyah Kendall
 Jazzmein Lorenzo
 Solomon Lockett
 Gloria Madrinan
 Isatta Magona
 Kanika McBride
 Renille McCaskill
 Shondavia McPhail
 LaWanda Mingo
 Samiyah Mitchell Ramos
 Lah'rina Mosely
 Zikala Palmer
 Tamesha Pettiford
 Tyesha Shaw
 Ziaya Smith
 Alexis Stafford
 Anya Stevenson
 Tyeshawn Steward
 Cheryl Swift
 Shakela Thomas (Rivas)
 Sierra Turner
 Beaonka Walton
 Raven Webb
 Bria Webster
 Keshawn Wells
 Nakia Williams
 Lynnecha Winston

Innovative. Connected. Global Leaders.

Congratulations

to
The 2026 Social Work Outstanding Faculty & Staff

Excellence in Teaching
Amanda Whitlow; Gary Taylor

Mentorship
Felicia Bishop

Social Justice
Shabrial Henderson; Kesia Gwaltney

Excellence in Field Education
Tiffany Fells; Denise Lucombe

Innovation in Social Work Education & Technology
Keneshia Thornton

AI & Digital Innovation Distinction
Gary Taylor

Community Impact & Partnership
Daryl Simmons

Excellence in Administrative & Staff Support
Felicia Bishop; Felicia James

Rising Star
Morgan McKenzie; Kevin Holder

Spirit of Social Work
Tiffany Fells; Kesia Gwaltney

Chair's Distinguished Impact Award
Amanda Whitlow; Gary Taylor

Transformative Professional Experience
Dr. Denise Lucombe

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Calendar 2026

AUGUST

8.7-8.8

RESIDENCE HALLS OPEN

8.9-8.16

NEW TROJAN EXPERIENCE

8.17

CLASSES BEGIN

MANDATORY VERIFICATION

8.21

LAST DAY TO ADD/DROP FOR ALL CLASSES

SEPTEMBER

9.3

FINANCIAL AID DISBURSEMENT

9.7

UNIVERSITY CLOSED (LABOR DAY)

9.14

FORMAL CONVOCATION

9.25

LAST DAY TO APPLY FOR GRADUATION,
FALL 2026 COMMENCEMENT

9.29

TROJAN WELLNESS DAY
(NO CLASSES-OFFICES OPEN)

OCTOBER

10.6

LAST DAY ADD/DROP

10.10

HOMECOMING GAME
2PM ROGERS STADIUM

10.12

MIDTERM EXAMS BEGIN

10.17

MIDTERM EXAMS END

10.19-10.20

TROJAN WELLNESS DAYS-FALL BREAK
(NO BREAK FOR EIGHT WEEK CLASSES)

10.26

REGISTRATION BEGINS FOR NEXT SPRING

NOVEMBER

11.3

ELECTION DAY (UNIVERSITY CLOSED)

11.13

LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW

11.25

RESIDENCE HALL CLOSE AT NOON FOR
THE SEMESTER

DECEMBER

12.1

UNIVERSITY CLASSES END
SPRING CLASSES & REGISTRATION FOR
FALL CLASSES END

****LAST DAY TO PAY GRADUATION
FEES****

12.2

UNIVERSITY READING DAY

12.3

FINAL EXAMINATIONS BEGIN

12.8

FINAL EXAMINATIONS END
SENIOR GRADES DUE

12.10

SEMESTER GRADES DUE

12.11

COMMENCEMENT REHEARSAL AT THE
MULTIPURPOSE CENTER

12.12

COMMENCEMENT

12.13

RESIDENCE HALL CLOSES AT NOON
(GRADUATING STUDENTS)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected
with the Social
Work

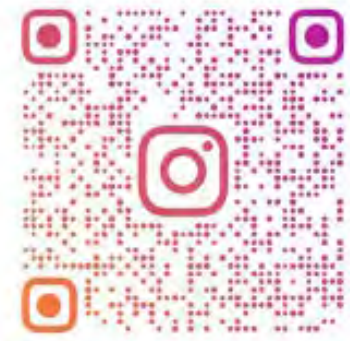
Department by
following us on
our social media
platforms for
news, highlights,
and upcoming
events.



VSU_SOCIALWORK



GREATERABSW.VSU



VSUCHANGEMAKERS

Know Your Worth: A Social Worker's First Offer

When Maya graduated with her MSW, she was excited—like many of our scholars stepping into the profession, ready to serve, lead, and make an impact. Within weeks, she received a job offer from a community agency. The salary? \$42,000.

Grateful for the opportunity and eager to begin, Maya accepted immediately. No research. No comparison. No negotiation.

At first, everything felt right—she was finally doing the work she had trained for. But within a few months, reality set in. After rent, transportation, student loans, and basic living expenses, Maya found herself stretched thin. She picked up extra shifts, delayed savings, and began to feel the weight of financial stress—something many helping professionals experience when they undervalue their worth early in their careers.

What Maya didn't realize at the time was this: **The market told a different story.**

In Virginia, entry-level MSW salaries ranged from \$50,000 to \$60,000, depending on the setting. Internship experience, strong evaluations, and specialized training made her a competitive candidate. She had more leverage than she thought—but she didn't use it.

Maya's story is not uncommon. Here's what poor research and negotiation can look like:

- Accepting the first offer without reviewing market salary data
- Not considering cost of living, commuting, and benefits
- Failing to translate internship and field experience into professional value
- Avoiding negotiation out of fear of losing the offer
- Not asking questions about growth, raises, or long-term earning potential

The truth is—knowing your worth is part of professional practice. Social workers are trained to advocate for others. We must also learn to advocate for ourselves. Before accepting an offer, take time to:

- Research salary trends in your region and specialty area
- Compare multiple positions when possible
- Assess your full financial picture—housing, transportation, debt, savings, and lifestyle needs
- Evaluate your experience—field hours, certifications, leadership roles, and skills
- Prepare to negotiate—respectfully, professionally, and confidently

Negotiation does not mean demanding more than the market supports. It means aligning your value with what is fair, informed, and sustainable.

Maya eventually learned this lesson. After a year, she transitioned into a new role—this time doing her research, asking questions, and negotiating her salary. She entered her new position not only as a social worker, but as a professional who understood her value.

Your first offer is not your only option.

Your degree is not your ceiling.

Your worth is not negotiable—but your salary is.

As you step into the profession, remember: You are not just entering the workforce—you are entering it with purpose, preparation, and power. Know your worth—and advocate accordingly.



A Message from the editor

Samiyah Mitchell Ramos
MSW Class of 2026

Celebrating VSU Social Work

Joy and pride filled the department as this season brought milestone after milestone for VSU Social Work. Students, faculty, and alumni continued to shine—whether presenting powerful research, leading community initiatives, earning competitive fellowships, or representing the Trojan spirit at statewide advocacy events. Each achievement reflected the heart of our program: innovation, compassion, and a commitment to justice.

- Students stepped into leadership through advocacy, scholarship, and community impact.
- Faculty advanced the profession through expertise, scholarship, and mentorship.
- Our programs grew stronger through partnerships, field education, and expanded impact.

The energy across the department felt contagious—proof that when Trojans lead with purpose, the world feels the difference. This edition celebrates the brilliance, resilience, and community that make VSU Social Work a place where leaders are shaped and futures are transformed.

“The message I'm sending to myself- I can't change the world until I change myself first.”

-Kendrick Lamar

Mental Health Resources

Mental health is vital to your overall well-being! On and off campus supports are available:

Warm Line

A peer-run support line offering nonjudgmental listening and connections to behavioral health and recovery resources.

(866) 400-6428

The Counseling Center provides up to 8 free visits per semester. Make an appointment (804) 524-5939 or visit the 4th floor of Memorial Hall.

District 19 Community Services Board (CSB)

20 West Bank Street
Petersburg, VA 23803

(804) 862-8002

24-hour Crisis Line: (804) 862-8000 or toll free: (866) 365-2130

The James House

24/7 Crisis Support

(804) 458-2840

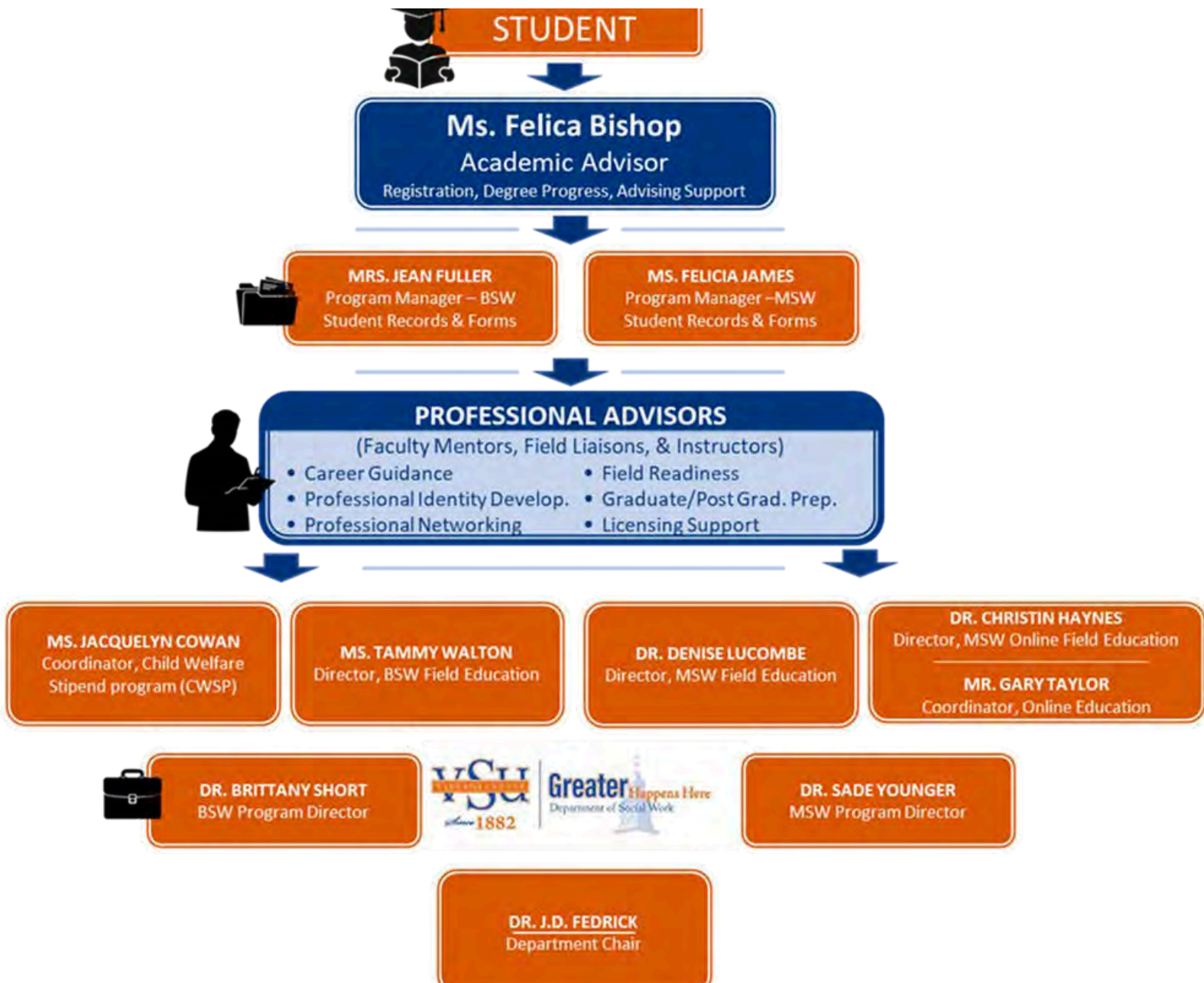
Need immediate assistance?

Call 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Hotline

SOCIAL WORK ORGANIZATIONS

The Social Work Club (BSW)
The Change Makers (MSW)
The VSU ABSW (BSW & MSW)
The Phi Alpha Honor Society (GPA Requirements)
For more information or to join, contact Ms. Bishop, Dr. Short, or Dr. Younger

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK'S STUDENT SUPPORT & SUCCESS



STUDENT SUCCESS TEAM CONTACT TABLE

ROLE	CONTACT	PRIMARY SUPPORT AREA	ROLE	CONTACT	PRIMARY SUPPORT AREA
Academic Advisor	Ms. Felicia Bishop fbishop@vsu.edu (804) 524-1217	Registration, course planning, degree progress	Online Coordinator	Mr. Gary Taylor ggtaylor@vsu.edu (804) 504-7074	Oversight of online education
Program Manager	Mrs. Jean Fuller jfuller@vsu.edu (804) 524-1435	Bachelor of Social Work Records, forms, administrative processes	CWSP Coordinator	Ms. Jacquelyn Cowan jcowan@vsu.edu 804-524-1240	Oversight of the Child Welfare Stipend Program
Program Manager	Ms. Felicia James fjames@vsu.edu (804) 524-3853	Master of SW Records, forms, administrative processes	Professional Advisors		Academic support, professional growth, mentoring
BSW Field Director	Ms. Tammy Walton twalton@vsu.edu (804) 504-7023	Bachelor of Social Work field placements and field education	BSW Director	Dr. Brittany Short bshort@vsu.edu (804) 504-7028	Bachelor of Social Work Program Oversight
MSW Field Director	Dr. Denise Lucombe dlucombe@vsu.edu (804) 524-2981	MSW field placements and field education	MSW Director	Dr. Sade Younger	MSW Program Oversight
Online Field Director	Dr. Christin Haynes chaynes@vsu.edu	Online field placements and field education	Department Chair	Dr. J.D. Fedrick	Department Leadership and Program Oversight

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Students, Alumni, Faculty, Staff, and Community Partners, This spring marks a historic moment for our department as we celebrate the largest MSW graduating class in our program's history—53 scholars. This milestone reflects the strength, growth, and collective commitment of our students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

I extend a heartfelt congratulations to our 2026 graduating class of BSW and MSW students. Your resilience, discipline, and passion for service have prepared you for the next chapter—entering the profession, advancing your education, and leading meaningful change in your communities. Your next steps are not only promising—they are powerful.

Through field education, our students have contributed thousands of hours of service—equating to hundreds of thousands of dollars in labor supporting the professional practice of social work. In real time, you have helped, advocated, empowered, and strengthened individuals, families, and communities.

This work is made possible by the unwavering dedication of our faculty, staff, field instructors, and administrators, whose commitment to student success continues to move this department forward.

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK IS BRIGHT—AND IT IS IN YOUR HANDS.