We are Making WAVES

Columbia School of Social Work
transforming: individuals, communities, the world
In the era of Big Data and data visualization, we have been mining information on our School to determine the impact of our faculty, students, and graduates on the wider world over the past five to ten years. The results include the nine infographics shared in this special issue of Spectrum, dedicated to how we are “making waves” in so many ways.

We have known that members of our faculty are doing groundbreaking intervention research on multiple dimensions of poverty-related issues that bear significant implications for the nation and the world. But now we appreciate more than ever how many of them are deeply engaged in far-reaching investigations, scholarship, education, and service. And our strength and breadth in clinical social work and the three other methods (policy, social enterprise administration, and advanced generalist practice and programming) are a noteworthy source of pride.

The data indicate how our School is building its capacity to help transform the future. We have tenured 11 next-generation scholars and are preparing students who have incomparable opportunities to customize their studies—in a wide range of specializations from social enterprise administration, which the School first introduced some 40 years ago, to clinical practice in newly emergent areas like complicated grief. In all, students have more than 28 different specializations available, with the intellectual capital of Columbia writ-large to tempt them because they are part of its vibrant community.

Many of our Ph.D. graduates hold positions in top-ranked universities. A large number of our alumni have started their own NGOs/NPOs. Many have risen to leadership positions in recognized institutions.

We are making waves . . . and we have our faculty, alumni, students, and staff to acknowledge for their passion, creativity, intelligence, productivity, and resolve.

Jeanette C. Takamura
Dean and Professor
Half of our faculty members are engaged in grant-supported poverty-related studies, in the United States and around the world.

As the oldest social work school in the country, the Columbia School of Social Work has been a pioneer in addressing the root causes of poverty. From the 20th century on, the School conducted studies of the welfare, education, health, housing, and other systems critical to improving the lives of poor people, especially in the United States.

In recent times, our faculty members can be credited with advancing poverty-related research from an evidence-based, multidisciplinary perspective, analyzing its political, social, economic, and public health dimensions. In addition, they have broadened the focus of their studies to include countries around the world.

Associate Professor Robin E. Gearing and Michael MacKenzie, and Craig S. Schwalbe have combined their expertise in mental health, juvenile justice, and child welfare in a UNICEF-funded project to develop services for youth in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The Community-Family Integration Team (C-FIT) project provides therapeutic support to foster care and diverted delinquent adolescents from detention center placements. Both programs, family foster care and diversion, are the first of their kind in the Middle East.

Associate Professor Leopoldo J. Cabassa has served as a Fulbright Scholar in India and Botswana, more than 20 journal articles and presentations on topics ranging from dementia in India to grandparents caring for HIV/AIDS-affected adolescents in Botswana.

Professor Jane Waldfogel has co-authored over 25 journal articles and six books on low-income children and families in NYC, the U.S., and other developed countries. Research: Over 100 articles and two books on poverty—include two of which were published in top-tier journals and ten book chapters on immigrants and other vulnerable populations.

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Two-thirds of our faculty members are engaged in international social, economic, and health research and education. This map shows some examples.

Many of our faculty members have been at the forefront of Columbia’s global mission. Within a premier international research university, they are bringing social work values and knowledge to bear on global challenges such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, abandoned children, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, juvenile justice, and other social issues. CSSW was among the first schools within Columbia to embrace the University’s Global Centers, beginning with Amman, Beijing, Istanbul, Mumbai, Nairobi, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, and Santiago. Several of our scholars have achieved world renown for their multi-national research on social, economic, and health and mental health issues.

Professor Irwin Garfinkel is a leader on comparative social welfare policy; Professor Jane Waldfogel, on policies related to maternal and child well-being; Professor M. Katherine Shear collaborates with her counterparts in other countries to ensure that research-based interventions are employed with persons beleaguered by complicated grief.
We are a school of **global firsts**: first to institute research centers in Central Asia and a major development center in Africa; the only social work school to have begun an NICHD-funded population center; and the locus of the first-ever university-based center for complicated grief. These are in addition to ten existing centers that are already part of the School.

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**Columbia Population Research Center**

**CO-FOUNDERS/DIRECTORS:** Mitchell L. Grinstein Professor of Contemporary Urban Problems Irvin Garfinkel and Professor Constance A. Nathanson of Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health

**SIGNATURE RESEARCH AREA:** Children, youth and families; e.g., studies of the effects of welfare and child support policies on child and family well-being, by Professors Irvin Garfinkel, Neeraj Kaushal, Ronald B. Mincy and Jane Waldfogel.

**NEWLY RELEASED:** Findings on the relationship between worsening economic conditions and harsh parenting, using the dataset from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study.

**MISSION:** To further the rigorous research and service programs led by Dr. Ssewamala over the past decade, which aims to combine youth-focused economic empowerment through savings-led asset building interventions with health and developmental programming, targeting poverty-impacted and HIV/AIDS-affected children, youth, and families in sub-Saharan Africa.

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**International Center for Child Health and Asset Development**

**DIRECTOR:** Dr. Fred Ssewamala, Associate Professor

**HEADQUARTERS:** Uganda and New York

**FUNDING/SUPPORT:** National Institutes of Health, Columbia University, and private foundations

**MISSION:** To further the rigorous research and service programs led by Dr. Ssewamala over the past decade, which aims to combine youth-focused economic empowerment through savings-led asset building interventions with health and developmental programming, targeting poverty-impacted and HIV/AIDS-affected children, youth, and families in sub-Saharan Africa.

**LATEST INITIATIVE:** Funded by two Columbia University grants, the Center is conducting two studies on the developmental impacts of savings interventions on youth in Kenya.

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**Global Health Research Center for Central Asia**

**LEADERSHIP:** Willma and Albert Musher Professor Nabila El-Bassel and Associate Professor Louisa Gilbert

**LOCAL LEADERSHIP:** CSSW alumni from the region, whose graduate studies at CSSW were sponsored by the Open Society Foundation

**FUNDING:** National Institutes of Health

**HEADQUARTERS:** Almaty, Kazakhstan, with branch offices in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, as well as regional representatives in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** Seven externally funded projects and ten completed studies related to developing interventions for segments of the population at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and other STIs.

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**The Center for Complicated Grief**

**DIRECTOR:** M. Katherine Shear, M.D., Marion E. Kenworthy Professor of Psychiatry

**FUNDING:** National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH)

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** Creation of a pioneering 16-session complicated grief treatment, tested through a prospective randomized controlled trial; more than 100 papers on complicated grief-related topics.

**LATEST INITIATIVE:** A year-long “train the trainers” program for 20 experienced clinicians with experience training other therapists.

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**Over the past several decades, the AIDS epidemic has spread at an alarming rate throughout Central Asia. Our Global Health Research Center for Central Asia (GHRCCA) was established in 2007 to address the region’s social and health problems through multidisciplinary research, education and training, and policy and dissemination.**

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Our School has the world’s first university-based center on complicated grief, a condition that occurs when the natural adaptive response to bereavement stalls. The Center for Complicated Grief, established in early 2013, improves the lives of people with this debilitating condition through a comprehensive program of outreach, education, training, and research.
Half of our full-time faculty and close to half of our part-time faculty are experts in clinical practice, each with their own area of specialization.

Clinically trained social workers provide an estimated 65 percent of all mental health services in the United States. Our School has noteworthy strength in rigorous, evidence-based clinical practice. Many of our clinical faculty members have international reputations and are the recipients of prestigious awards. They have a wide range of specializations: from treating complicated grief (Professor M. Katherine Shear) to developing new interventions for adolescents at risk of suicide (Dr. Dana Alonzo) to addressing treatment non-adherence among mentally ill youth (Dr. Robin E. Gearing). They also serve a range of populations, from Latinos (Drs. Dana Alonzo, Leopoldo J. Cabassa) to the disabled (Drs. Michelle S. Ballan, Rick Greenberg) to the imprisoned (Drs. André Ivanoff, Craig S. Schwalbe). Supplementing our full-time clinical faculty is an array of adjuncts with high professional standing and specialized expertise in particular fields of interest to our students, such as couples therapy, veterans’ mental health, and foster care services.

Dana Alonzo
Associate Professor
Special interests: Latinos, suicide, depression, risk behaviors
Population: Adolescents

Michelle S. Ballan
Assistant Professor
Special interests: Disabilities including autism
Population: Disabled

Denise Burnette
Professor
Special interests: Mental health, health, aging
Populations: Elderly and children

Leopoldo J. Cabassa
Assistant Professor
Special interests: Mental health, health, health disparities, policy
Population: Latinos

Anne Conway
Associate Professor
Special interest: Cognitive development and processing
Population: Children

Ronald A. Feldman
Centennial Professor for the Advancement of Social Work Education
Special interest: Human behavior and the social environment
Population: Adolescents

Robin E. Gearing
Associate Professor
Special interests: Mental health, adherence to treatment
Population: Adolescents

André Ivanoff
Associate Professor
Special interests: Dialectical Behavior Therapy, suicide
Population: Impaired persons with serious mental illness

Rick Greenberg
Lecturer
Special interests: Learning disabilities, impulse disorders
Population: Youth, adults, parents, and families

Richard Hara
Lecturer
Special interests: Cultural competence- oncology, end-of-life, domestic violence
Population: Cancer patients, caregivers

Ellen P. Lukens
Sylvia D. & Mose J. Firestone Centennial Professor of Professional Practice
Special interests: Psychoeducation, education, evidence-based practice with serious mental illness, trauma
Population: Adolescents, adults, families

Lynn Michalopoulos
Assistant Professor
Special interest: Impact of culture on trauma outcomes in low- and middle-income countries
Population: Trauma/ torture victims

Steven Schinke
D’Elbert and Selma Keenan Professor of Social Work
Special interest: Substance abuse prevention
Population: Teens and mothers

Craig S. Schwalbe
Associate Professor
Special interests: Juvenile justice, assessment, probation
Population: Young offenders and their probation officers

M. Katherine Shear
Marion E. Kenworthy Professor of Psychiatry
Special interests: Complicated grief, anxiety disorders, diagnosis and treatment
Population: Bereaved

Mary E. Sormanti
Professor of Professional Practice
Special interests: Grief/bereavement/trauma, palliative care, mental health
Population: Families

Susan S. Witte
Associate Professor
Special interest: HIV/AIDS interventions
Population: Victims of domestic violence, women, injection drug users

Marianne R. Yoshioka
Associate Professor of Professional Practice
Special interest: Domestic violence
Population: Victims of domestic violence, immigrant women

Allen Zweben
Professor
Special interests: Alcohol and substance abuse, motivational interviewing
Population: Alcohol abusers
Eleven scholars have been tenured over the past ten years, nine of whom are at the School forming a critical core of multidisciplinary researchers in social policy, practice, administration, and research.

The tenure process at Columbia University is widely known for its rigor. Thus, we are proud of the eleven scholars who have earned tenure over the past ten years at Columbia. Their numbers include academic stars such as Maurice V. Russell Professor Ronald B. Mincy and Marion E. Kenworthy Professor M. Katherine Shear. This past year two more leading scholars joined their ranks: Drs. Craig S. Schwalbe and Elwin Wu.
Our doctoral graduates have been appointed to positions at ranking U.S. social work, public health, and medical institutions. This map shows examples from the past five years.

Our Ph.D. program is highly competitive. Once accepted, our doctoral students are mentored by some of the most innovative and productive scholars in the country. It is no surprise that students who are recruited to assist in faculty members’ cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research find they have an advantage when seeking positions in academia or as researchers/administrators in government or nonprofit organizations.
Our curriculum offers four methods and seven fields of practice for a total of 28 options with matching field placements. There are also four minors and nine dual degrees.

**MINORS**
1. Law
2. Business Administration
3. International Social Welfare
4. Public Policy & Administration

**Advanced Clinical Social Work Practice**

**Advanced Generalist Practice & Programming**

**DUAL DEGREES WITH OTHER COLUMBIA SCHOOLS**
1. Columbia Business School – M.B.A.
2. Mailman School of Public Health – M.P.H.
3. Jewish Theological Seminary – M.A., Jewish Studies
4. Columbia Law School – J.D.
5. Union Theological Seminary – Master of Divinity
6. Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation – M.S., Urban Planning
7. School of International and Public Affairs – M.P.A.
8. School of International and Public Affairs – M.I.A.
9. Bank Street College of Education – M.S., Education
Columbia Social Work Review

Christopher Mitchell (M.S.’14), Editor in Chief

Reason for getting involved: I enjoy writing and editing, and I also wanted to be part of a group that encourages CSSW students to become more confident in their writing ability. We publish several student papers each year, which is a unique and exciting opportunity for master’s-level social work students.

Most important function: By providing a forum for the exchange of innovative ideas from the point of view of social work students, we can elevate the level of discussion of social work issues, both within and beyond Columbia’s campus.

Favorite part of last year’s Review: Several articles that addressed the question: “What is at the core of social work practice?” For instance, one writer urged social workers to incorporate the question: “What is at the core of social work practice?”

Criminal Justice Caucus

Jasmine Wynn (M.S.’13) and Cameron Rasmussen (M.S.’13)

Reason for joining: NW: already had a B.A. in criminal justice and knew I wanted to continue working on these issues. The caucus was one of my reasons for choosing CSSW. CR: My involvement in the Men’s Caucus in my first year got me interested in working with incarcerated fathers. Reading The New Jim Crow was another catalyst.

Criminal Justice Conference: NW: The centerpiece of the caucus’s work is the criminal justice conference held every spring. Helping to organize this conference was life changing. My favorite part was hearing the stories of the formerly incarcerated and the work they are doing now. CR: It was great to be able to leverage Columbia’s resources and prestige to put on such an important event. For the restorative justice panel, we had four people in the room, all doing powerful work, who had not met before. And on the last day, we brought together students from across the city to form a city-wide student coalition, which is still active.

Level of commitment required: NW: The caucus required around six extra hours each week, which increased as the conference approached. But when you’re passionate about something, the drive within you pushes you each day. It also helps to be surrounded by students who are willing to work together to reach a common goal. CR: Making time is tough. Part of it is about priorities and whether your life circumstances allow you the time to invest in work outside of class and field.

Main benefits: NW: As a result of my caucus activity, I am an even bigger advocate of change, have a better grasp of the issues, and have a much wider network. I think I’m also a better social worker. CR: I was able to engage with professors and the community in ways I may have not otherwise. And I’ve just now landed a job as project manager in ways I may have not otherwise. And I’ve just now landed a job as project manager.

Student Union

Eric Jones (M.S.’14), President

Reason for getting involved: I am an African American male and having a learning disability, I wanted to prove to myself and other that people like me are capable of dynamic leadership. I also wanted to be part of the planning of my graduation and other activities related to my final year of study.

Most important functions: Promoting an inclusive environment by supporting students’ activities; working with faculty and administrators on school-wide concerns.

Time commitment: Honestly, being a part of SU is not too stressful. We meet once a month, sometimes twice. We work as a team to make sure we take care of each other.

Black Caucus

Joel Livingston (M.S.’14)

Reason for joining: At orientation, I met with some of the caucus representatives, and was amazed at all the great things they do. I ended up serving as Vice President, and this year, I am President. Caucus mission: It’s important for students of color to have more of a voice at CSSW. We also strive to give back to the Harlem community. Last year we started up the BC Rising Star Scholarship for a graduating 8th- or 12th-grade student in Harlem. Upcoming events: A community-wide cleanup with some Harlem middle-school students; a purely social trip to Atlantic City; and a community-wide cleanup with some Harlem middle-school students; a purely social trip to Atlantic City; and a community-wide cleanup with some Harlem middle-school students.

Alumni mentoring: We plan to match current students with BC alumni who are pursuing careers in similar fields.

Latin/o Caucus

Estrella Alvando (M.S.’14)

Reason for joining: Being Latina, I value family and culture. The caucus helped me transition from Arizona to NYC and Columbia University. It’s my family away from home.

Caucus mission: The caucus grew out of an initiative to start a bilingual graduation ceremony. We wanted to ensure that our families, who mostly don’t speak English, could celebrate our successes. Many of us are the first in our families to pursue higher education.

Typical activities: Films—last year we screened one about the struggles of transgender Latinas in the Bronx—and discussions of immigration issues.

Time Commitment: You have to dedicate around ten hours a week. Time management is crucial, but it helps that I can collaborate with fellow classmates. I highly encourage incoming students to get involved.

Anticipated benefit: Leaving CSSW knowing I contributed to Bettying the community.

Asian Pacific Islander Caucus

Sohee Kim (M.S.’14)

Reason for joining: I wanted to be part of an API community on campus and was happy to find others who felt the same way. It’s a supportive space and gives the School’s API population more of a voice.

Caucus mission: Our caucus sheds light on the multiple barriers—poverty, mental illness, and lack of adequate healthcare—faced by many Asian ethnic groups.

Typical activities: We organize panels and other events around the issues of adaptation, immigration, and mental health. We want to do more on the latter in the coming year. It’s important for social workers-in-training to understand the stigma associated with mental illness in many Asian families.

Time commitment: Being active in a caucus takes up time. It helps that there are four of us who divide up the responsibilities.

Key benefits: As a Korean American, I’ve learned so much about myself through conversations with fellow caucus members. Greater self-knowledge makes me more competent in interacting with my clients as a professional. Another benefit has been the chance to extend my work within the larger NYC social work community.

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Student life at our School is enriched by a 23-member student union, 21 caucuses, a student journal, and a host of other activities.

All professional social work education programs require field education to provide valuable real-world experience, and ours is no exception: our students annually contribute more than half a million service hours as interns to tri-state and other communities.

What is exceptional is how many of our students choose to hone their leadership and other skills by participating in the wide array of activities our School has to offer. The students featured here are just a few of our many student leaders.
Over the past decade, scores of our alumni have started up their own enterprises or risen to the pinnacle of their chosen fields.

From the moment our students set foot on campus, they are offered a wealth of resources to help identify and focus their career goals. Those resources cover all aspects of social work: clinical, public policy, community organizing, corporate consulting, government, and civil society. That said, our goal is not simply to help our students get jobs but to develop their skills as leaders. The alumni profiled here are exemplars of our School’s cherished leadership ideal.

Alexandra Butler, M.S.’10
Career: Full-time writer and poet
Current Projects: A completed book of poems, to be published this fall by OHWOW Press, and a memoir about caregiving, to be published by Columbia University Press in 2017
Greatest achievement: Continually shaping my memoir on caregiving from an aerial view so that it can remain a personal story with universal applications.
Best CSSW memory: The many hours I spent in the beautiful library

Frank Cohn, M.S.’06
Career: Founder and Executive Director, Global Potential; nonprofit management consultant
Typical day: A combination of fundraising, partnership development, staff training, support, and facilitation with youth and community participants.
Last week I coordinated a conference in rural Haiti for 200 local youth leaders from 25 villages and urban slums. Then I traveled to NYC for a day for a staff meeting and did a stopover in Istanbul to run leadership training

Alexis Miesen, M.S.’04
Career: Co-founder and proprietress of Blue Marble Ice Cream and its nonprofit, Blue Marble Dreams, which opened up an ice cream shop in Butare, Rwanda, called Inziizi Niza (“Sweet Dreams”).
Career span: Sweet Dreams, a feature-length documentary about Inziizi Niza, by award-winning filmmakers Rob & Lisa Fruchtmann.
Typical day: As a small business owner, you have to be prepared to wear many different hats, sometimes all at the same time. It can be exhausting. But it’s also a great mental exercise, helping me to master every aspect of my business.

Tessa Horst, M.S.’06
Career: Founder of Infant Growth Group, a practice providing diadic therapy to young children at risk for developmental delays, and their caregivers.
Most gratifying moments: The successes experienced in my direct practice work—for example, when a mom becomes reflective about her parenting for the first time.

Best CSSW memory: The first day of my second year: I knew exactly where I was going and felt as though I belonged.

Best CSSW memories: Discussions with Professors Alfred Kahn and Sheila Kamerman, and my invitation by Dean Takamura to lecture at the Distinguished Visitors Alumni Series in 2006, Advantages of CSSW training: Too many to spell out! But while in government I used much of what I learned about the policy and planning of personal social services.
Advice for foreign students: Don’t be shy, and keep asking questions until you understand 100% of the material.

Caucus and now an institute, CRISP, to complement the caucus’s work. As CRISP president, I work on bringing social work research to bear on policymaking at the federal level.

Best thing about CSSW: Having the opportunity to study with some of the best minds in the world: e.g., ivr Garfinkel, Sheila Kamerman, Marcia Meyers, and Alfred Kahn.
Advice to other doctoral students: Make all the sacrifices necessary to ensure that you give your best. Don’t be afraid to knock on your professors’ doors. And enjoy the entire Columbia experience. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Benefit of social work training: Being a good leader is about understanding people. Social work trains you to see and understand context and its influence on people’s behavior. And keeping a business fresh and current—especially in a competitive market like NYC—requires constant needs assessment. And then there’s the evaluation piece: is this working? Finally, I view businesses as members of communities. We don’t just exist to make money from our customers. We must make a contribution. This is very much a social work-minded approach, but it’s also a business.
Advice to students: Entrepreneurship is a fantastic way to make a difference. There’s so much room to be creative and do good in the private sector. And take a basic accounting course I didn’t have to learn the entire hard way.

Benefit of CSSW: I chose social work as a career because it’s so versatile. You can find social workers in just about every agency, organization, and business across the world. I love that CSSW is one of the few institutions that recognizes this and offers multiple tracks, from policy to clinical and everything in between. Every single one of my classes in the Advanced Generalist Practice and Programming (A.G.P.P.) track prepared me for my career: needs assessment, grant writing, program development and evaluation, as well as the clinical classes in adolescent and school-based topics.
Advice to students: Find your passion. Don’t settle. Don’t be afraid to make your own path and create your own job. Your dream job may not exist yet. So, go make your dream job. Take advantage of trainings and other professional development opportunities. Don’t be afraid to step up and take on a project that may feel a little too big for you. It will push you professionally. Take an interest in every person you meet. You never know when they will open a window or door.
And again, don’t settle. You only have one life, so make the most of it.
As we go to press, news is breaking of exemplary leadership by faculty and students on several fronts:

- Associate professor Julien Teitler, who is involved in research activities in Vietnam, has received funding from Columbia University’s provost for his groundbreaking work in setting up a global network of scholars focused on the health consequences of migration worldwide, using the Columbia Global Centers network as a platform. He shares that honor with Sandro Galea, professor and chair of the epidemiology department at the Mailman School of Public Health. The two scholars are working under the aegis of the Columbia Population Research Center, based at CSSW and the School of Public Health. There were nearly 90 submissions from across Columbia that competed for support.

- Doctoral student David Burnes was selected by the Association of Gerontology Education in Social Work (AGESW) to receive the 2013 Doctoral Student Leadership Award.

- Second-year student Aline da Fonseca is one of three students awarded a $27,500 Lemann Foundation-endowed scholarship. The Brazil-based foundation is committed to the advancement of social change in Brazil. Ms. da Fonseca was selected by the Columbia University Office of the Provost from a pool that included applicants from, in addition to CSSW, the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Mailman School of Public Health, the Graduate School of Journalism, and the Graduate School of Architecture, Preservation and Planning.