



**SOCIAL WORK FOR IMPACT:**  
OUR FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2027



UCONN

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is rooted in a passion for and commitment to social, racial, and economic justice and the improvement of human well-being, both locally and globally. Through our bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs, we strive to prepare the next generation of micro and macro social work practitioners and scholars through excellence in teaching and learning both in the classroom and through innovative field and research experiences. Our faculty is committed to the generation and wide dissemination of cutting-edge and impactful knowledge, informed by social justice and anti-oppressive lenses, through traditional and innovative research methodologies.

### FOCAL AREAS

- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism
- Inclusive and Impactful Research and Scholarship
- Student-Centered Teaching and Learning
- Flexible and Forward-Looking Field Education
- Emerging Areas of Excellence in Social Work



# MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

## NINA ROVINELLI HELLER

**A**s we look ahead to our 75th anniversary and celebrate our ranking in the top 12% of graduate schools for social work nationally, the UConn School of Social Work presents “Social Work for Impact: Our Five-Year Strategic Plan.”

In March 2021, the faculty and staff of the School of Social Work joined together to begin the process of charting our strategic plan and goals for the next five years. We did so in the broader context of a global pandemic, which required us to adapt, and reimagine the ways we deliver our programs, educate our students, and conduct our scholarship and research. At the same time, we were increasingly aware of the significant economic and health disparities underscored by the pandemic, and the deep and pervasive generational effects of systemic racism as they are embodied in our institutions and in the lives of the historically marginalized individuals the social work profession is committed to serving.

With input from our students, alumni, and advisory boards, we engaged in a participatory and collaborative process to develop our strategic plan. All members of the faculty and many members of our staff participated on one of five subcommittees, which reviewed data on workforce trends, student enrollment, and schools of social work in the region to chart our future.

We began the process with a commitment to having diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism as a lens for our efforts in all our focal areas: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism; Inclusive and Impactful Research and Scholarship; Student-Centered Teaching and Learning; Flexible and Forward-Looking Field Education; and Emerging Areas of Excellence in Social Work.

The strategic plan underscores the need for a strengthened sense of belonging for everyone in our School of Social Work community. Specifically, the plan:

- Provides a blueprint to offer life-transformative education while addressing student needs as well as Connecticut workforce needs
- Builds in accountability for administrators, faculty, and staff to provide access, equity, and flexibility in our programs
- Serves as a working document that will continue to be responsive to change in our students lives, research and scholarship imperatives, and workforce needs in our state.

The School of Social Work stands proudly on its history as the oldest program graduating social workers in Connecticut. Ranked among the top 12%, at No. 36 among graduate schools for social work as reported by *U.S. News and World Report*, we are also No. 1 in our state. As we embark on implementation of this strategic plan, we are also cognizant of our identity as part of a land-grant institution. Our academic programs are made stronger by our long-standing partnerships with state and community agencies. Looking ahead to the future, we are committed to supporting and advancing high-value and impactful research and scholarship in our field. Our community of more than 8,700 accomplished alumni is strong and growing. Our new strategic plan ensures that our faculty scholars continue their excellence in generating and disseminating impactful knowledge that furthers our mission and the well-being of our communities. With this road map, we are confident that our students will graduate prepared to draw on their education, experience, and passion for social justice to improve the lives of all people in Connecticut, the region, and beyond.

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**Nina Rovinelli Heller**  
*Dean and Zachs Chair*  
*UConn School of Social Work*

# 1

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ANTI-RACISM

The University of Connecticut School of Social Work facilitates critical and crucial conversations around systemic oppression, race, power, and privilege. We examine our own positionality and place in the system while having a commitment to collaborate with others against oppression in all its forms.

### **GOAL 1:**

Engage all faculty, staff, and students in regular meaningful dialogue about diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in our community and our work.

### **GOAL 2:**

Foster modes of accountability and action around racial justice.



# 2 INCLUSIVE AND IMPACTFUL RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

The Research and Scholarship subcommittee aims to chart obtainable goals for scholarly productivity and impact for the School of Social Work community, incorporating our diverse range of research and scholarship while emphasizing work that addresses interconnected, systematic oppression.



## **GOAL 1:**

Increase the School's commitment to growing research and scholarship that includes theorizing, confronting, and addressing structural, interconnected oppressions.

## **GOAL 2:**

Adopt structural reorganization at our School that supports collaboration and generation of knowledge around topical areas, including child welfare, international social work, substance abuse and mental health, violence and trauma, and health.

## **GOAL 3:**

Intensify and expand the School's investment in faculty research development.

# 3 STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING AND LEARNING



The School of Social Work is an inclusive, equitable community that provides life-transformative learning opportunities, ensuring access and success for all students. Our curriculum prepares Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), Master of Social Work (MSW), and Ph.D. students to contribute to the social work profession at micro, mezzo, and macro levels, fostering a lifelong commitment to anti-oppression and social justice.

## **GOAL 1:**

Prepare BSW, MSW, and Ph.D. students for anti-oppressive practice at macro, mezzo, and micro levels, grounded in the values and ethics of the profession.

## **GOAL 2:**

Ensure access to underrepresented groups and others by increasing flexibility of School of Social Work course offerings, field offerings and guidelines, and degree options.

## **GOAL 3:**

Support the learning of all students in our programs, including students from underrepresented groups, ensuring that students have the access, resources, and supports to take full advantage of their educational experience (including coursework, field, and extracurricular activities).





# 4 FLEXIBLE AND FORWARD-LOOKING FIELD EDUCATION

The Field Education subcommittee developed specific goals to enhance the professional training that bachelor's and master's social work students receive while completing their field internships, the signature pedagogy of social work education. The proposed goals have the dual aims of enhancing students' life-transformative educational experience and aligning field placement opportunities with Connecticut's pressing health and human services needs.

## **GOAL 1:**

Revamp field education to implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism practice in all aspects of field education, such as placement selection, advising, instruction, and student training and support.

## **GOAL 2:**

To promote equity and inclusion among our student body, develop strategies to increase flexibility in our field placement options while maintaining high-quality field assignments and supervision.



# 5 EMERGING AREAS OF EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WORK

The School of Social Work will build on its varied strengths to address emerging workforce needs, extending our collaborative efforts throughout the University, community, and state, with a commitment to social justice and equity.



## **GOAL 1:**

Enhance the profile of the School of Social Work as a center for excellence in social work education, research, and community-engaged practice.

## **GOAL 2:**

Enhance continuing education to support workforce needs with a particular aim on addressing anti-oppressive practices, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## **GOAL 3:**

Collaborate with community partners to develop innovative opportunities to address workforce needs with a particular emphasis on addressing anti-oppressive practices, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.



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