

Meet the **Southern Miss** Social Work Faculty



Karen Aderer, Lecturer | LMSW



Ms. Aderer has been a resident of the Mississippi Gulf Coast for over 20 years. She has worked in a child advocacy role for much of that time, having served most recently as the District Social Worker for Bay Waveland School. She worked previously at an emergency children's shelter, and has served as a DHS foster parent and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Youth Court.

Interests: Cultural Competence & Fighting Racism, Ethics, Ethics & Social Media, & Human Rights

Tamecia Curry, | LMSW, PhD Candidate



Tamecia M. Curry received a BSW and MSW from the University of Southern Mississippi. She is currently a PhD candidate in Social Work at Louisiana State University. Her research examines mental health service utilization rates among African American emerging adults with an emphasis on mental health stigma in the Black community and minority help-seeking behaviors. She has worked as a school-based clinician for Hattiesburg High School and a Pine Belt wraparound facilitator serving families and at-risk youth in need of mental health service intervention. As a Southern Regional Education Board Fellow, she travels the nation to participate in initiatives focused on the enhancement of teaching, mentoring, diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia. She is a member of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women where she advocates on behalf of girls and women in the areas of education, health, and economic empowerment.

Interests: Mental Health Service Utilization |Service Barriers| Emerging Adulthood

Bret Blackmon, Associate Professor | Ph.D.



Dr. Blackmon received his Ph.D. from the School of Social Work at Louisiana State University. He joined the faculty at The University of Southern Mississippi in 2014. He has taught courses in human development, research methods, social entrepreneurship, and program evaluation. Blackmon has engaged in numerous research projects involving the juvenile justice and educational systems, psychological resilience in disaster-prone communities, and person-centered practices. His work experience includes program development and evaluation for at-risk youth, multisystemic therapy for youth involved in the justice system, research and training to address substance abuse in collegiate communities, and case management for individuals with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries.

Interests: Person-centered Practices, Disaster and Mental Health, Health Disparities and Healthcare Policy, & Intersections of the Juvenile Justice and Education Systems

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Michelle Brazeal, Assistant Professor | Ph.D., LCSW/LICSW



Dr. Brazeal is an Army veteran and licensed as an LCSW. Her experience includes working in community mental health in both administrative and clinical roles. As a clinician, she primarily provided mental health services to children and transitional age youth with serious emotional disturbances in both outpatient and residential programs. She also worked as the Clinical Director for a community based nonprofit agency providing services to individuals struggling with substance use disorders. Brazeal also served as Program Director for the Mississippi Integrated Health and Disaster Program from 2012-2017 and currently manages an integrated health program in Hattiesburg.

Interests: Impact of Trauma and Family Disruption on Children, Transitional Age Youth & Young Adults, Relationship between Physical Health and Mental Health, & Social Work Education

Zibei Chen, Assistant Professor | Ph.D., LMSW



Dr. Chen holds an MSW and PhD from Louisiana State University, and received postdoc training at the Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion housed in the University of Michigan School of Social Work. She is a poverty scholar with a research agenda centered on understanding financial lives and decision making of low-to-moderate income families and developing evidence-based interventions that promote financial capability and economic prosperity. Her current research projects include identifying characteristics of the unbanked and underbanked groups and examining access to basic financial services and products, with a particular focus on the role of race, gender, income.

Interests: Financial Access and Inclusion, Financial Capability, Financial Knowledge and Behaviors, Economic Justice, & Financial Social Work

Melissa Coker, Finance and Administration Specialist



Mrs. Coker has been with the University of Southern Mississippi for 22 years. She has been a part of the School of Social Work for 20 of those years. Working as the Finance and Administration Specialist, Mrs. Coker manages department budgets, procurement, hiring procedures, assists with grant management, and provides supervision of the graduate assistants and student workers. Currently, Mrs. Coker serves as the Immediate Past President of the Association of Office Professionals (AOP), and as Staff Representative on the CoEHS Dean's Advisory Council. She has previously served as Faculty Senate Bookkeeper 2010-2013 and chaired committees within AOP. In 2004, Mrs. Coker received the College of Health's "Distinguished Office Professional" award. Mrs. Coker has a Bachelor of Science in Office Administration with a minor in Business Administration and is working toward a Business Foundations Certification.

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Melody Davisson, Student Support Specialist & Instructor | LMSW



Ms. Davisson is the Student Support Specialist and Instructor for the School of Social Work. She is a Hattiesburg native and received her bachelor's of Social Work from Southern Miss in 2017. She continued her studies at The University of Alabama where she completed her master's degree in Social Work in 2019. Ms. Davisson's professional career started as a medical social worker for a local hospice company.

Interests: Adults and Families, Medical Social Work, School Social Work

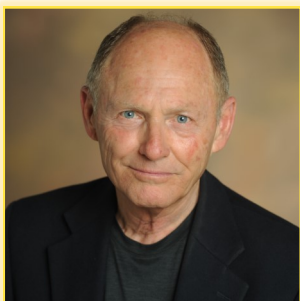
Rene' Drumm, Professor | Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Drumm is a recognized educator, researcher, and program developer challenging and confronting the social ills plaguing the world today. Using research as impetus for social change, Dr. Drumm presents research results at professional conferences all over the globe and inspires hope for positive transformation. When she is not teaching or engaged in research, she loves walking, the combination of sun and sand, and anything related to chocolate. Her expertise includes Educational Administration, qualitative research, and clinical social work.

Interests: Counseling Skill Development & Training, Curriculum Development, Intimate Partner Violence, Learning Styles and Approaches to Learning, Marriage and Family Life, and Parenting

Michael Forster , Professor | Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Forster serves on several nonprofit boards, including the Mississippi Public Health Institution and the Hattiesburg chapter of USA Dance Incorporated. He co-founded the Family Network Partnership, a community-based youth/family services agency in Hattiesburg; is author/co-author of 60+ academic publications; and is co-Principal Investigator of \$15M+ in externally funded grants and contracts. He previously worked in child welfare in Chicago.

Interests: Politics & Social Movements, Leadership & Organization Management, & Social Welfare Policy

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Kimberly Hogan | MA, LMSW, PhD Candidate



Mrs. Hogan is a current PhD Candidate and holds an MSW from Arizona State University. She has a focus on domestic sex trafficking and the therapeutic needs for exiting. Kimberly is a research scholar-in-training with the Global Association of Human Trafficking Scholars (GAHTS). She has worked closely with community groups, including the United States Department of Justice, National Criminal Justice Training Center, AMBER Alert, Navajo Nation, Las Vegas Rape Crisis Center, City of Phoenix Starfish Place, Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution (S.O.A.P. Project), Starfish Mentoring Programs, and the Phoenix and Las Vegas Metropolitan VICE Units. Her research work spans the prevention, detection, identification, and treatment of minor and adult sex trafficking victims.

Interests: Human Trafficking, Homelessness, LGBTQ+ Issues, Social Enterprises, and Social Justice.

Jenine Housewright, Field Education Specialist | LMSW



Mrs. Housewright has been a Golden Eagle for more than 20 years, with the majority of that time in the School of Social Work. She has worked in the field office to assistant in all placement needs for students, field agencies and faculty within the school. In 2018, she received her MSW degree from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Interests: Field Education, Medical Social Work, & Hospice Behavioral Health

Susan Hrostowski, Professor | Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Hrostowski is a social justice advocate who has worked to address policy issues related to race, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Her research includes resilience in late life, LGBTQ+ issues, and public policy on HIV. Dr. Hrostowski is also an Episcopal priest who serves on the Diocese of Mississippi Commission on Ministry with LGBTQ+ People.

Interests: Aging, HIV/AIDS, LGBT Issues, Resilience, Social Justice, Social Welfare Policy, & Theology

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Tamara Hurst, Associate Professor and MSW Coordinator | Ph.D., LCSW



Dr. Hurst has extensive experience as a forensic social worker and forensic interviewer. She serves on the Mississippi Human Trafficking Council and is also the principal investigator for the Mississippi Wraparound Institute which assists mental health agencies that support families of children with serious emotional disturbances. She frequently conducts keynote presentations and trainings related to child abuse, neglect, and human trafficking.

Interests: Food Insecurity in Higher Education, Nonprofit Agency Development, Prevention and Identification of Child Maltreatment and Exploitation, Training and Education - Child Maltreatment Professionals, & Training and Education - Macro Social Work

Jerome Kolbo, Director, Professor, | Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Kolbo is the Director of the School of Social Work and coordinates the school's MSW degree program. He is the Principal Investigator of numerous weighted, representative child obesity studies, including biennial Child and Youth Prevalence of Obesity Studies among public school students; prevalence of obesity among Head Start students; shifts in extreme weight distribution (underweight and severe obesity) among public school students; and perinatal factors associated with the prevalence of obesity among Pre-K children in licensed child care facilities.

Interests: Adolescent Sexual Health, Childhood Obesity, Children's Health, Fitness and Academic/Behavioral Health, Sex Education Policies, & Women's Health and Contraceptives

Rachel Lahasky, Clinical Instructor & BSW Coordinator | MSW, LCSW-BACS



Ms. Lahasky has a professional background in primarily school-based social work. She worked as a school-based therapist in both Louisiana and Delaware and served students diagnosed with an emotional or behavior disorder. She also has a medical social work background, and has most recently worked in the medical social services department at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg, Ms. Lahasky also teaches fitness classes at the Payne Center on the Hattiesburg Campus.

Interests: Adolescents & Teens, Grief & Bereavement, School Social Work, Medical Social Work, and Animal Assisted Therapy

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Joohee Lee, Professor | Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Lee joined the Southern Miss faculty in 2006. She earned her master's degree and doctoral degrees in Social Work from the University of South Carolina and the University of Texas at Austin, respectively. The areas of her research interest include: mental health [different populations: people exposed to disasters; people with chronic health conditions; immigrants]; child welfare; and violence against women (domestic violence and sexual assault). She has produced numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations related to these areas. One of her recently achieved goals is enhancing student participation in research. She has served as a faculty advisor for many students who conducted research and presented at various conferences.

Interests: Child Welfare, Community Resilience, Disaster and Mental Health, Disaster and Psychological Resilience, & Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault Among Asians

Lauren Zakaras, Field Education Coordinator & Instructor | DBH, LCSW



Dr. Zakaras is the Field Education Coordinator/Instructor for the USM School of Social Work. She served as the Integrated Health Project Director where she collaborated with Forrest General's Family Medicine Residency Program to implement social workers in primary care. Dr. Zakaras worked with the MS Integrated Health and Disaster Program in positions of Team Leader, Coordinator of Clinical Programs and Training, and Clinical Director. Dr. Zakaras is a certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor for the Adult, Youth, Public Safety, and Military Programs and frequently conducts presentations and trainings on topics related to integrated care, patient engagement and empowerment motivational interviewing, mental illness, ethics, and evidence-based treatment.

Interests: Field Education, Integrated Health, Medical Social Work, Mental Health, & Sports Social Work