

School of Social Work Newsletter



A Message from the Dean

Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni, and Community Partners,
It is my pleasure to share this newsletter highlighting the incredible work of the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work over the past several months. As we move through this academic year, I am continually inspired by the dedication, resilience, and passion demonstrated by our students, faculty, and partners.

Since January, our community has engaged in meaningful scholarship, impactful service, and dynamic programming that reflects the heart of our profession. From faculty achievements and student success stories to community partnerships and professional development initiatives, each effort represents our shared commitment to advancing social work practice and promoting social justice.

This year's Social Work Month theme, "Uplift. Defend. Transform.", has been more than a guiding phrase—it has been evident in the ways our community shows up for one another and for the communities we serve. Whether through advocacy, education, or direct service, our work continues to center equity, compassion, and accountability. As we look ahead, we remain committed to preparing the next generation of social workers to lead with integrity, think critically, and respond to the evolving needs of our society. I encourage you to stay engaged, support one another, and continue building the strong foundation that defines our School. Thank you for being an essential part of our community.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SEMESTER:

- Panel Discussions
- Financial Social Work Conference.
- Black History Month Presentation
- Social Work Month
- Rally in the Valley Student Conference.
- Agency Breakfast
- Ethics Summit
- Students publishing and presentations.
- Student-Led Advocacy.

FINANCIAL SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE

30 JANUARY 2026



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS: BRIDGING EMOTION WITH ECONOMIC HEALING

This spring, the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work proudly partnered with Dr. Alicia Tetteh and community collaborators to host the Financial Social Work Conference, Mental Health Matters: Bridging Emotion with Economic Healing. The conference created a dynamic space for students, professionals, and community members to explore the critical connection between financial wellness and mental health.



Through engaging presentations and meaningful dialogue, attendees examined how financial stress impacts emotional well-being, relationships, trauma, and overall quality of life. Speakers shared practical strategies, professional insights, and culturally responsive approaches to supporting individuals and families navigating financial challenges.

The conference also highlighted the growing importance of financial social work as an emerging area of practice that empowers social workers to address both economic and emotional barriers affecting communities. With participants from various disciplines and backgrounds, the event fostered collaboration, learning, and professional growth while reinforcing the School's commitment to holistic and community-centered practice.



The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work extends sincere appreciation to Dr. Alicia Tetteh, our presenters, partners, volunteers, and attendees for contributing to the success of this impactful event.



Black History Month Presentation

February 12, 2026



ADDRESSING THE BLACK HUMAN CONDITION IN COMMEMORATION WORK

In celebration of Black History Month, the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work proudly partnered with the Departments of Sociology, Political Science, the Robert C. Nusbaum Honors College, and the NSU Black History Month Committee to host a campus-wide program centered on reflection, education, and community engagement.

The event, Addressing the Black Human Condition in Commemoration Work, encouraged students, faculty, and community members to critically examine the importance of preserving Black history, honoring collective experiences, and engaging in meaningful conversations surrounding identity, justice, and resilience.

The day began with a Historical Scavenger Hunt that invited participants to explore and connect with Norfolk State University's rich history and cultural legacy. The program continued with a campus lecture delivered by Justin G. Reid, whose presentation challenged attendees to reflect on the role of commemoration work in shaping public memory and social understanding. Through dialogue, education, and shared experience, the program reinforced the School's commitment to cultural awareness, social justice, and community-centered learning while honoring the significance of Black history and its continued impact on society today.



March 2026

SOCIAL WORK Month



OUR EVENTS

Uplift. Defend.
Transform. Panel
Discussion

Lunch & Learn:
Social Work in
Rural Areas

Field Agency
Fair

Comics &
Culture

Whitney M.
Young Social
Work Club
Events

Generational
Trauma in Black
Families: Panel
Discussion

Learn Sign
Language

Faculty & Staff
Luncheon

Social Work
Family Feud

UPLIFT. DEFEND. TRANSFORM.

The month served as an opportunity to recognize the impact of social workers while highlighting the profession's commitment to advocacy, community engagement, ethical practice, and social justice. Students, faculty, alumni, and community partners came together through a series of engaging programs designed to inspire connection, professional growth, and celebration.

Throughout the month of March, the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work proudly celebrated Social Work Month 2026, embracing this year's theme from the National Association of Social Workers: "Uplift. Defend. Transform."



CELEBRATING THE PROFESSION

From professional development opportunities to community-building events, Social Work Month 2026 reflected the School's continued dedication to preparing compassionate, ethical, and transformative social workers. The month served as both a celebration of the profession and a reminder of the important role social workers play in uplifting individuals, defending human dignity, and transforming communities.



Field Agency Fair

One of the featured events of Social Work Month was the annual Field Agency Fair, where students had the opportunity to connect directly with community agencies and organizations from across the region

The fair provided valuable opportunities for students to:

Explore internship and field placement opportunities

Network with professionals in the field

Learn about various areas of social work practice

Gain insight into community-based services and programs



HOSTED OVER

20

AGENCIES



The event reinforced the importance of field education as a cornerstone of social work training and highlighted the strong partnerships between the School and local agencies committed to student learning and community impact.

Generational Trauma in Black Families

As part of Social Work Month programming, the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work hosted a powerful panel discussion focused on Generational Trauma in Black Families. The discussion created space for honest dialogue surrounding the long-term impact of historical trauma, systemic inequities, family dynamics, and the ways trauma can be carried across generations.

Students, faculty, clinicians, and community members engaged in meaningful conversations about healing, resilience, mental health, and culturally responsive approaches to support Black families and communities. Panelists shared personal insights, professional experiences, and strategies for addressing trauma through advocacy, therapeutic intervention, community connection, and education.

The event emphasized the importance of breaking cycles of silence and stigma while recognizing the strength, resilience, and cultural wealth within Black families. Attendees were encouraged to reflect on the role social workers and helping professionals play in creating spaces for healing, empowerment, and intergenerational restoration.

Through discussions like these, the School continues its commitment to advancing culturally informed practice, promoting mental wellness, and preparing future social workers to engage communities with compassion, awareness, and intentionality.



**Contributing
Authors to
A DSM-5-TR®
Companion on
African American
Mental Health:
What Happens
in This House.**

RALLY 26



RALLY IN THE VALLEY: EXPANDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

This spring, Bachelor of Social Work students from the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work participated in Rally in the Valley 2026, a statewide professional development conference hosted annually by the Virginia Social Work Education Consortium. Held in Lynchburg, Virginia, the conference brought together social work students from across the Commonwealth for two days of networking, learning, collaboration, and interdisciplinary engagement during Social Work Month.

Designed to strengthen leadership, professional identity, and student connection within the field, Rally in the Valley provides students with valuable opportunities to engage with peers, faculty, and professionals from social work programs throughout Virginia.

This year marked an exciting milestone for the School, as student interest reached an unprecedented level. While participation interest has traditionally ranged between six to eight students, this year more than 50 students expressed interest in attending the conference – a reflection of the growing enthusiasm and commitment of Norfolk State University social work students toward professional development and leadership opportunities.



  **PREPARING**  

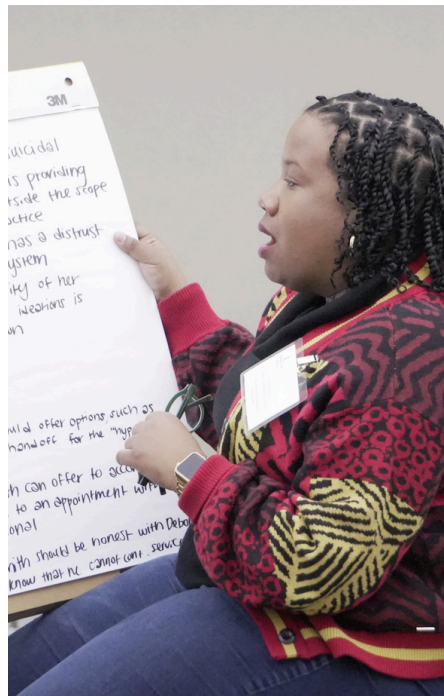
Ethical Leaders

for Real-World Practice!

The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work proudly hosted the Ethics Summit: Ethics in Action, a dynamic professional development event that brought together students, licensed clinicians, supervisees, educators, and community partners for a day of critical dialogue and ethical reflection.



Grounded in the NASW Code of Ethics, the summit explored real-world ethical decision-making across micro, mezzo, and macro practice settings. Through engaging panel discussions, poster presentations, and interactive learning experiences, attendees examined complex issues related to direct practice, organizational leadership, policy, social justice, trauma-informed care, and culturally responsive practice.



The summit featured distinguished speakers and presenters who challenged participants to think critically about the evolving ethical responsibilities of social workers and helping professionals. Discussions emphasized the importance of integrity, accountability, cultural humility, and ethical leadership in serving individuals, families, organizations, and communities.

Students also had the opportunity to showcase research and practice-based work connected to their field placements, further reinforcing the School's commitment to experiential learning and the integration of research into practice.



Ethics in Action reflected the School's ongoing dedication to preparing ethical, socially conscious, and practice-ready professionals who are equipped to navigate the complexities of today's social work landscape.





We are proud of our students for taking initiative to attend RISE 2026 and actively engaging in opportunities that supported their academic and professional growth.

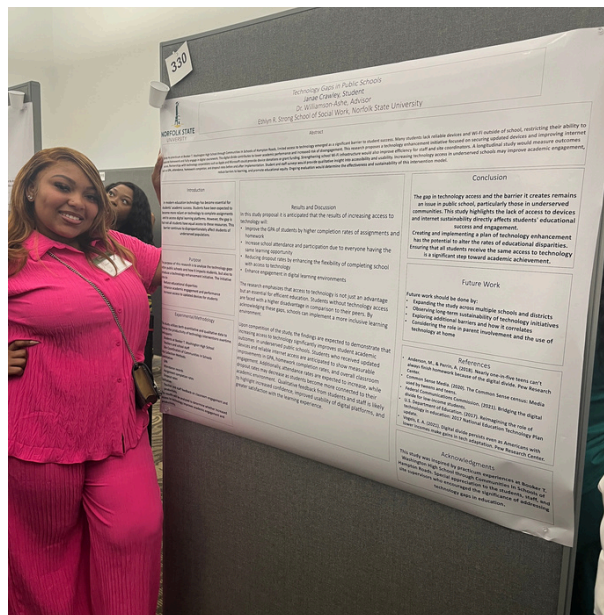
We commend their commitment to expanding their knowledge by participating in workshops, discussions, and sessions that strengthened their understanding of social work practice and community impact.

We celebrate their dedication to building connections and representing the values of social work through networking, professionalism, and a clear passion for creating positive change.

RISE CONFERENCE

During the RISE 2026 Conference, social work students were able to actively engage in a dynamic series of events outlined in the conference calendar, beginning with the opening plenary session on Thursday, April 23. Throughout the conference, they attended workshops, panel discussions, and presentations that focused on themes of research, resilience, and building a better future.

Students had the opportunity to hear from influential speakers, including Dr. Kristian Edwards, whose keynote address emphasized innovation, community empowerment, and sustainable practices. These experiences allowed social work students to connect their academic learning to real-world applications, particularly in areas such as advocacy, policy, and community engagement. In addition, the conference created space for meaningful networking, enabling students to interact with professionals, faculty, and peers from diverse disciplines.



Impact

By participating in RISE 2026, social work students not only expanded their knowledge and critical thinking skills but also strengthened their commitment to ethical practice and social change, leaving the conference feeling more prepared and inspired to make a lasting impact in their communities and future careers.

Student Spotlight & Achievements

Highlights of The Semester

Leiani Stafford and Dr. Fairfax, engaging in a political forum at Gethsemane Community Fellowship Baptist Church.

Kayla Ratley-Amartey won the social impact competition at the I love My HBCU Biennial Summit.

Students participated in Day on the Hill at the Virginia State Capitol

Students were able to witness the monkey Walk for Peace in Richmond, VA.



Academic Excellence

Amina Cedeno and Dr. Mitchell presented at the School social Work Association of America Annual Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

Chase Parker-Bennett and Imani Bluitt presented at the Title IV-E Roundtable Conference in Denver, Colorado on emotional regulation and interventions for adolescent mental health.

Student Publication

Alexis Campbell, Riley Emick, and Dakota Bailey have worked hard on various publications with Dr. Mitchell, Dr. Riddick, and Dr. Gainey. These publications are under review for publication.



Social Work Graduate Student of the Year

Alexis Campbell was announced as the Social Work Graduate Student of the Year by Graduate Studies, a title well deserved. Her accomplishments include being a John G. Hatcher Fellowship recipient, winning the poster presentation for the Student Conference at BPD with her poster titled "Aging in the Era of Climate Change"



FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS



The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work



Grants

Barrett-Peake Heritage Foundation

Dr. Colita Fairfax, co-founded the Barrett-Peake Heritage Foundation to preserve African American historic sites in Hampton, Virginia. Her project, Preserving Sacred Spaces of the Contraband in Public Memory, received funding from the Outsider Preservation Initiative–Mellon Foundation at UVA's School of Architecture Center for Cultural Landscapes. Through this work, social work student La'Shanea Liggins serves as the Foundation's inaugural board intern, receiving mentorship in qualitative research, nonprofit leadership, and administrative practice.

HBCU Scholars Fellowship

Dr. Stephenie Howard was awarded the HBCU Scholars Fellowship, which supports HBCU-affiliated scholars through research funding, publishing opportunities, and professional development while amplifying historically marginalized narratives and human-centered scholarship.

Veteran Engagement Program

Dr. Sharon Alston received funding to support the Veteran Engagement Program, which provides culturally responsive, trauma-informed mental health services for justice-involved Veterans, promoting suicide prevention, community reintegration, and family well-being through evidence-based care and support.

Publications

Mitchell, B., *Emick, R., Gainey, B., *Campbell, A., *Bailey, D., & *Cedeno, A. (revise and resubmit). Qualitative Suggestions to Target Inequities and Abolish Oppressive Frameworks.

Mitchell, B., Gainey, B., *Campbell, A., *Emick, R., *Cedeno, A. & *Bailey, D. (revise & resubmit). School Social Workers Responding to Inequities and Challenged by Ambiguity.

Mitchell, B., *Campbell, A., Knox, K. (under review). Perspective Shifting and Structural Change in School Social Work.

Mitchell, B., *Bailey, D., Campbell, A., & Riddick, P. (under review). Reshaping Education Through Executive Power: An Analysis of President Trump's Executive Action in 2025.

Community Engagement

Led by Dr. Brown-Meredith and Dr. Phillip Riddick, the Spartan Research & Practice Scholars were recognized as one of only 14 community partners for their impactful work supporting students and families at College Park Elementary School.



Dr. Riddick and Professor Calvin Cooper were named President and Vice President of the National Association of Black Social Workers Hampton Roads Chapter.



Dr. Phillip Riddick, Dr. Breshell Jackson-Nevels, Professor Paris Holley, and students Darius and Ronisha represented NSU at Hampton University's Senior Wellness Forum, promoting healthy aging, wellness education, and intergenerational community engagement.



GRADUATION



LOOKING AHEAD

As we conclude another remarkable semester, we reflect with gratitude on the many accomplishments, partnerships, and milestones that have shaped the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work this spring.

From student research presentations and professional conferences to community partnerships, global learning experiences, and impactful service initiatives, our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners continue to exemplify the values of social work through leadership, scholarship, advocacy, and service.

This semester has demonstrated the power of collaboration and the importance of preparing future social workers who are committed to advancing equity, strengthening communities, and creating meaningful change. We are especially proud of our students, whose dedication to learning, research, and professional growth continues to inspire us.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering academic excellence, expanding experiential learning opportunities, strengthening community partnerships, and empowering the next generation of social work leaders.

Thank you to our students, faculty, staff, alumni, field instructors, agency partners, and supporters for contributing to another successful semester. Together, we continue to uphold the legacy of excellence that defines the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work.

We wish everyone a productive summer and look forward to the exciting opportunities that await in the coming academic year.

Behold the Green and Gold.

The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work
Norfolk State University

Preparing ethical leaders. Strengthening communities. Transforming lives.

