

The Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work Newsletter



✦ December 17, 2025



A Message From Our Dean

Dear Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work Community,

Welcome to the Fall 2025 edition of our school newsletter! As always, we strive to celebrate the people, events, and achievements that continue to move the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work forward. This semester was filled with engaging and exciting moments that highlighted the talents of our students, faculty, staff, and community partners.

We begin by spotlighting the energy and innovation showcased at our early-November student-led conference, where nearly 100 students and faculty came together in a powerful exchange of ideas. We also reflect on the insightful perspectives and proposed solutions for mental health care in the City of Portsmouth, VA, shared by Ms. Alexis Campbell, the inaugural speaker for the John G. Hatcher Memorial Fellowship Lecture. We were honored to welcome Mayor Shannon Glover and members of the Hatcher family to this meaningful event.

In keeping with tradition, we proudly celebrated Homecoming 2025, a vibrant display of Spartan spirit and community pride. We also marked a significant milestone—the 30th Anniversary of the PhD in Social Work Program, a testament to three decades of scholarly excellence, leadership development, and transformational impact. We invite you to explore the stories in this issue as we continue advancing our mission of empowering communities and shaping the future of social work.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SEMESTER:

- Strong Summer Camp
- Dr. Strong's Birthday celebration
- Homecoming
- Student Led Conference
- Hatcher Lecture
- 30th Anniversary of our PhD Program
- Whitney M. Young volunteering in the community
- Student conference attendance
- Graduation



Embracing the Journey of Learning

This semester, our School of Social Work truly embodied a spirit of growth, collaboration, and experiential learning.

Our students took the lead in organizing a full social work conference, planning sessions, coordinating speakers, and managing logistics from start to finish. The event featured a dynamic panel discussion (pictured), bringing together professionals from diverse social work backgrounds to share their career journeys, insights, and advice. The conference was not only educational, but also a powerful display of student leadership in action.



We were proud to have five of our students represent the School of Social Work at the National Association of Christian Social Workers Conference, held right here in Norfolk. Attending the conference allowed our students to network, engage with current issues in the field, and expand their understanding of faith-informed social work practice.

Several faculty members, and a few of our students, also attended the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting. This national gathering offered opportunities to learn from leading scholars, explore innovations in social work education, and engage in conversations shaping the future of the profession.





Student Organizations

This semester, the Whitney M. Young Social Work Society, powered by the leadership of our BSW students, has been one of our most active and community-centered student organizations. Their commitment to service was evident through their volunteer work with the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia, where members supported hunger-relief efforts impacting families across the region. They also played a meaningful role in hurricane relief efforts for Jamaica, helping prepare and pack barrels of essential supplies following the recent storm.

In addition to community service, the Society hosted a Social Work Social Hour, providing a welcoming space for students to build relationships, connect across cohorts, and strengthen their sense of belonging within the School of Social Work. The organization is already planning to continue its work next semester, with new service opportunities, campus engagement, and professional development activities on the horizon.



Hatcher Lecture

Hatcher Fellowship recipient, Alexis Campbell, an MSW student whose work embodies the spirit of scholarship and service the fellowship was created to support. Alexis had the opportunity to present her research on health equity and environmental justice to an audience of faculty, students, and even the Mayor of Portsmouth! Her thoughtful, community-centered approach to research highlights the critical connections between environmental conditions, access to care, and social justice!



Strong Summer Camp

Over the summer, we were excited to host the Strong Summer Camp, welcoming 16 high school students from across Hampton Roads for a full day of exploring social work as a career path. Students had the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning, participate in workshops led by our dedicated faculty, and hear directly from current BSW and MSW students who volunteered their time to support the event. It was an educational, energizing day that gave future Spartans a meaningful introduction to the field of social work and the impact they can make in their communities.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE!

30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE PHD PROGRAM



As the semester wound down in November, we took time to honor a major milestone, 30 years of the Ethelyn R. Strong School of Social Work's PhD program. The celebration brought together members of our campus community, including the Provost, our former dean Dr. Moses Newsome, current students, faculty, alumni, and friends of the program. We also proudly recognized our very first PhD graduates and their contributions to the field.

A heartfelt thank you to Dr. Vaughan-Eden for her leadership in coordinating this meaningful event, and to our dedicated student volunteers whose support helped make the celebration a success. It was a wonderful moment of reflection, connection, and pride for our School of Social Work!

CELEBRATING HOMECOMING : SPARTAN PRIDE IN FULL EFFECT!



This year's Homecoming was full of energy, connection, and Spartan pride! We kicked things off with a warm and welcoming alumni reception, where graduates from across the decades came together to reconnect with faculty, celebrate their journeys, and reflect on their time at NSU.

The next day, our students showed up in full force for the Homecoming Parade. They created signs, shared smiles, and spread spirit throughout campus and the community. It was a joy to see our BSW, MSW, and Ph.D. students representing social work with enthusiasm and pride!



HONORING DR. ETHELYN R. STRONG

Each year, we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Ethelyn R. Strong, a beloved member of our social work community. This year, students created beautiful paper butterflies to decorate the social work suite in her memory. The display is a tribute to her enduring impact, and all students are welcome to stop by and see the butterflies in person!

CELEBRATING DECEMBER GRADUATES

We were thrilled to host a special graduation celebration for our December graduates! Dr. Fairfax served as MC, making the event both heartfelt and memorable. It was a wonderful way to recognize our students' hard work and accomplishments, providing a joyful capstone to the semester!





Closing This Chapter and Opening the Next

Wow, what a semester! This newsletter feels longer than ever, and honestly, that's because there was just so much to celebrate! From the amazing work our students are doing in and out of the classroom, to the dedication and creativity of our faculty, the semester has been packed with moments worth honoring. Even so, we know we haven't captured it all, there's so much good happening every day, and it's truly inspiring to see.

To our students: congratulations on making it through the semester! College is no easy journey, and finishing strong, amid all the challenges and deadlines, is something to be proud of. As we head into the holiday season, know that the School of Social Work is a space where we all do our best to make everyone feel welcomed, supported, and included. Whether this is "home" for you or a home away from home, we hope you feel the warmth and encouragement of our community!

Here's to recharging, celebrating your hard work, and stepping into the next semester ready to keep learning, growing, and making a difference. You've got this!

Thank you for reading!

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