

# The Social Buzz

## School of Social Work

August 2025

### MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

Find joy in the challenge

As we come up on the start of the new semester, I've been reflecting on what I did over the summer. Work, obviously. Time with family and friends, of course. But the biggest thing was a 6-day backpacking trip across Isle Royale.

Isle Royale is the smallest national park in the U.S. and can only be accessed by small plane or a 6-hour ferry ride. It sits above Michigan in the middle of Lake Superior. When I returned, so many people asked me if I had "fun". I found it a hard question to answer. Hiking four miles in the pouring rain with a 30-lb backpack was not fun. Sleeping in a tent with two strangers (who quickly became friends) was not fun. Using an outhouse with spiders the size of my head and having to conserve our limited toilet paper supply was not fun. Six days without a hot shower and no cell service, not fun.

And yet...hearing loons calling, jumping in Lake Superior, watching the sun set over the lake, meeting new people and hearing their stories, knowing I can backpack for six days without a shower, warm bed, or having my phone brought me more joy than I've experienced in a long time.

I hope as you contemplate the year ahead you find joy in the challenges that present themselves. It may not always be "fun" but I'm sure it will always be worth it.



Dr. Mary Nienow, Director



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## **Congratulations to Angelina Valdespino on Her New Role!**

We are pleased to announce that Angelina M. Valdespino, LCSW has transitioned from Visiting Assistant Professor to College Assistant Professor at the NMSU School of Social Work.

Angelina has been part of our faculty since 2022, bringing over a decade of clinical and teaching experience. She is the Owner and Clinical Director of Zia Vista Therapy, LLC, where she provides psychotherapy for clients of all ages and oversees a group mental health practice. Her background includes leadership roles in trauma-informed foster care, attachment-based therapy, and intensive outpatient services.



An NMSU alumna (BSW, 2011), Angelina earned her MSW from San Diego State University and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Psychology at Northcentral University. She has taught a wide range of social work courses and is known for her trauma-informed and culturally responsive teaching methods.

Within NMSU, she serves as Chair of the Diversity & Social Justice Committee, is a member of the MSW Program Committee, and advises the Graduate Student Social Work Association. Her dedication to social justice, cultural competency, and community service makes her an invaluable part of our team.

You can reach Angelina at [amvaldes@nmsu.edu](mailto:amvaldes@nmsu.edu).





# WELCOME!

## **Welcome Professor Nikki Pauls DeSimone to the School of Social Work!**

We are pleased to welcome Nikki Pauls DeSimone, LMSW to the NMSU School of Social Work faculty. Professor DeSimone brings over 15 years of professional social work experience and a strong background in higher education, most recently serving as an Assistant Professor at Park University.

Her experience includes serving as Director of Practicum Education, extensive work in domestic and international adoption services, policy development, and trauma-informed care with rural populations. She is fluent in Spanish and has cross-cultural expertise, including study abroad in Mérida, Mexico



Professor DeSimone's teaching strengths include social work policy, human diversity and social justice, generalist practice, ethics, and human behavior. She is also active in the professional community as Director of Programming for the Metropolitan Adoption Council and DEIB Liaison for the Shawnee Mission Public School District.

She began her appointment on June 2, 2025, teaching BSW courses including Social Welfare Policy, Social Work with Communities and Organizations, and Introduction to Social Work.

Please join us in welcoming Professor DeSimone! She can be reached at [nikkipd@nmsu.edu](mailto:nikkipd@nmsu.edu).





# WELCOME!

## **Welcome Marisa Gonzalez to the School of Social Work!**

We are excited to welcome Marisa Gonzalez, MSW as a Global College Assistant Professor at the NMSU School of Social Work.

Marisa joins us from Colorado State University Pueblo, where she coordinated practicum placements—including international sites in Mexico and New Zealand—and led an annual international social work and diversity class in Mexico. She has also served as a College Social Worker in Minnesota, created a campus food pantry serving hundreds of households, and worked with diverse communities including refugees, LGBTQ+ individuals, and New American families.



Her international work includes serving as a graduate intern in Kathmandu, Nepal, where she supported marginalized youth, taught undergraduate courses, and partnered with a transgender support program.

Marisa is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Social Work at Colorado State University (expected Summer 2027) and was recently awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Vietnam to research and expand international social work collaborations.

Please join us in welcoming Marisa! She can be reached at [gonzalma@nmsu.edu](mailto:gonzalma@nmsu.edu).







# WELCOME!

## **Welcome Dr. Tasha Hart Guerrero to the School of Social Work!**

We are excited to welcome Tasha Hart Guerrero, DSW, LCSW as a Global College Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, New Mexico State University.

Dr. Hart Guerrero brings over 19 years of experience serving Native American communities, along with a strong commitment to Indigenous social work practice and education. She earned her Doctorate of Social Work from the University of St. Thomas (May 2025), a Master of Social Work from the University of Minnesota, and a Bachelor of Social Work from New Mexico Highlands University.



Her career includes:

- Serving as a School Social Worker at the Native American Community Academy
- Teaching at New Mexico Highlands University on Social Work Practice and Social Work with Tribal Communities
- Federal service with the Bureau of Indian Affairs as Victim Assistance Program National Coordinator and Family Advocacy Social Worker, providing nationwide support on Indian child welfare, family violence, and cultural preservation

Dr. Hart Guerrero is also an accomplished scholar, having presented her research on Indigenous wellness, social emotional learning, and child welfare at national conferences such as the Council on Social Work Education and the National Indian Child Welfare Association.

Please join us in giving her a warm welcome! You can reach her at [thart08@nmsu.edu](mailto:thart08@nmsu.edu).





On July 16 through July 18, 2025, MSW Students: Aubrey Caballero, Katie Heitman, Rachell Signoretti and 2 Professors: Susie Facio and Ted Nieto, participated in the HEST:13th Annual Interprofessional (IPE) Immersion. IPE is an approach to teaching and learning that brings together students from two or more professions to learn about, from and with each other in service of enabling effective collaboration. The faculty and administration of these NMSU programs value the collaboration between nursing, pharmacy, psychology, and social work and have witnessed the positive impact this collaboration can have on patient care. The MSW students participated by sharing social work knowledge in teams and during a patient simulation





## Fall 2025 payment plan now open

The fall 2025 payment plan is currently available and will remain open until Sept. 12. Enroll today at [pay.nmsu.edu](http://pay.nmsu.edu) to make your tuition more manageable by spreading payments over time. Reduce financial stress by breaking your balance into smaller, more convenient payments. For details, visit [uar.nmsu.edu/payment-plan](http://uar.nmsu.edu/payment-plan), call 575-646-3927, or email [paymentplan@nmsu.edu](mailto:paymentplan@nmsu.edu).



# HEST Ambassadors

An organization run based on cooperation between students and the College of HEST in hopes to promote the college and facilitate student involvement in the community

**What an Ambassador Does:**

- Participation in bi-monthly meetings
- Volunteer Work
- Tabling Events
- Represent the College of HEST
- Make Meaningful Connections

Interested in Joining. Please email one of the contacts below!!

**Contact Information:**

- Kipley Lewis (President) email: [kipleyl@nmsu.edu](mailto:kipleyl@nmsu.edu)
- Ashlee Ayers (Student Recruitment Specialist) email: [aaayers@nmsu.edu](mailto:aaayers@nmsu.edu)

Engage. Transform.







**BE BOLD. Shape the Future.®**  
New Mexico State University

# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK 2025-2026 ACADEMIC YEAR KICK-OFF!



**WHEN:** AUGUST 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

11am-12pm: Everyone together

12pm-1pm: Lunch Provided

1pm-2pm: Meet with your Program

**WHO:** ALL BSW AND MSW  
STUDENTS

**WHERE:** ON CAMPUS  
(HSSA 101) AND ONLINE VIA  
ZOOM

**WHAT:** • "Re-orient" to important program  
expectations and information!  
• Network with your colleagues and  
faculty!  
• Free lunch!

**RSVP HERE**



<https://forms.office.com/r/e0JYZ7U07b>



(575) 646-2143



[www.socialwork.nmsu.edu](http://www.socialwork.nmsu.edu)



[socwork@nmsu.edu](mailto:socwork@nmsu.edu)



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School of Social Work

# DSJ Student Fellowship 2025-2026



This Diversity and Social Justice (DSJ) fellowship will support students and encourage meaningful engagement in directed learning activities that challenge structural inequalities, foster an inclusive academic environment and expand equity engagement with the communities served by the NMSU School of Social Work.

This fellowship is sponsored by the DSJ committee.



## **Fellowship Announcement**

**August 13th**



## **Application Deadline**

**August 31st**



## **Fellowship Notification**

**September 5th**

## **ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP**

- Collaborate with other DSJ fellows, Faculty Lead and Mentoring Faculty
- Contribute to developing and implementing a DSJ-focused project or initiative
- Engage in community engagement, research, policy analysis, or advocacy efforts
- \$3,000 awarded per academic year

*To Cultivate Future Leaders in Social Work*



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO APPLY**

**Applications will be accepted from  
August 13th to August 31st**





Are you interested in a career in child welfare and obtaining financial assistance during your Social Work academic program? **We have an opportunity for you!**

The Child Welfare Scholar Program (CWSP) continues accepting applications for the 2025 – 2026 academic year. **Approximately five (5) awards remain available for this year!** For additional information, visit the Child Welfare Website or contact Mónica Montoya, CWSP Director, at 575-646-6342 or by email at [monicamo@nmsu.edu](mailto:monicamo@nmsu.edu).

**SCHOLAR AWARD AMOUNTS:**

\$10,000 for MSW 3-year students

- Required 12-month CYFD work agreement

\$11,000 for BSW students

- Required 18-month CYFD work agreement

\$12,000 for MSW Adv. Standing/2-year students

- Required 18-month CYFD work agreement

**PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:**

- Be officially admitted into the School of Social Work and in good standing

- Cumulative GPA of 3.0

- Complete. Required practicum placement with CYFD-Protective Services

- Complete child welfare course elective(s)

- Be willing to accept employment with CYFD Protective Services upon graduation.

**Application deadline is 8/15**

**BSW Juniors and 3 Year 1st year MSW's are welcome to apply.**

**APPLY NOW**





# 9th Annual Recovery Celebration

## YOUNG PARK

Las Cruces Suicide Prevention Task Force

 **SATURDAY,**  
**SEPT. 13, 2025**

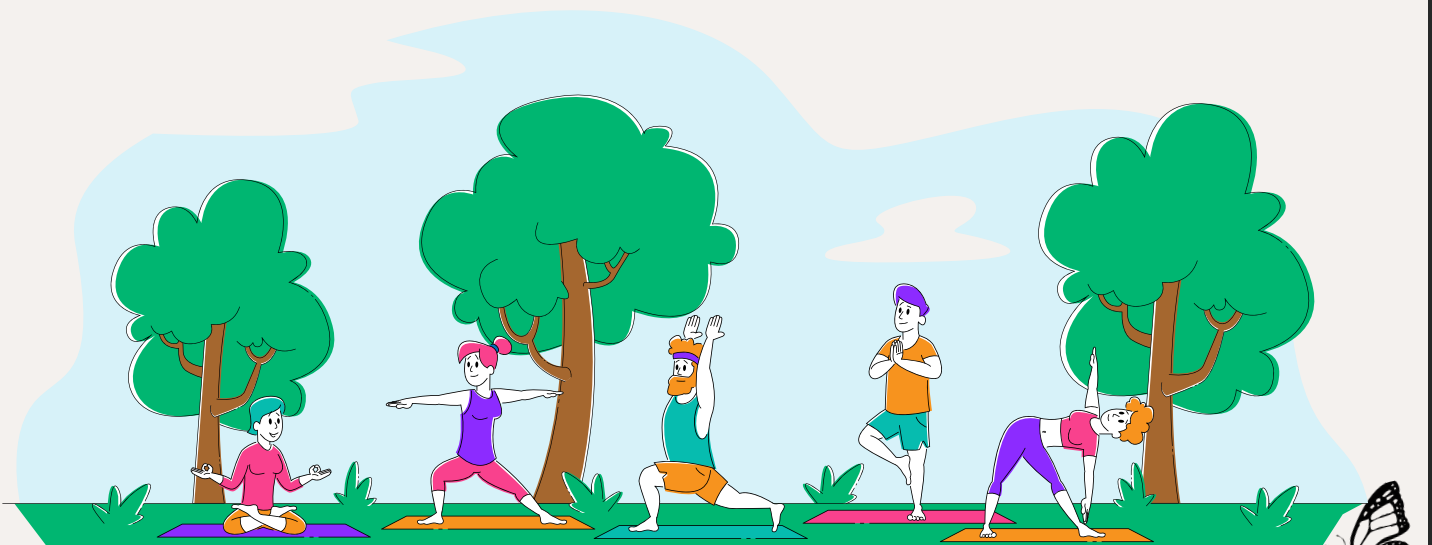
 **10:00AM - 2:00 PM**

**Dedicated to promoting recovery from  
mental health and substance  
conditions.**

***Come as  
YOU are!***



- SOUND BATH & YOGA IN THE PARK
- LIVE DJ
- FREE CHILDCARE!
- LOCAL RESOURCES
- COMMUNITY VENDORS
- FAMILY ACTIVITIES
- COMMUNITY ALTER



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## SPEAK YOUR TRUTH, IN ANY LANGUAGE: QUEERING THERAPY FOR BILINGUALS

Engage in a series of heart-to-heart conversations (pláticas~testimonios) to share our opinions about how to make therapy a safe and authentic space for the queer and bilingual community in the borderlands.

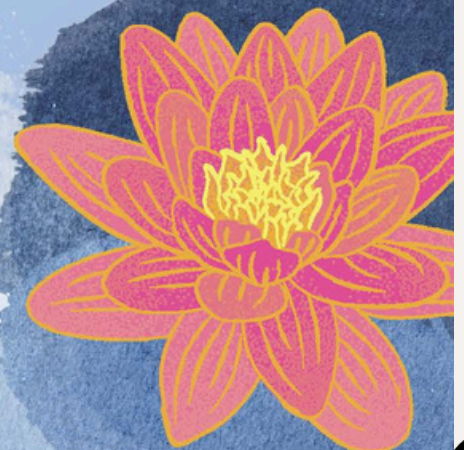
### You can participate if you:

*\*Seeking participants until December 2025*

- Are 18 years of age or older
- Live in Las Cruces, El Paso, or the surrounding area
- Speak Spanish and English
  - (You're bilingual)
- Identify as queer or LGBTQIA+
- Have formerly or are currently using both languages in therapy



Questions? Contact:  
Sophia Daley [sophiad@nmsu.edu](mailto:sophiad@nmsu.edu)







**CENTER FOR  
EXCELLENCE**  
IN SOCIAL WORK

**\$45**

**CEUS 3  
CULTURAL  
& ETHICS**

# **FOUNDATIONS IN PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED THERAPY FOR SOCIAL WORKERS**

**AUGUST 30, 2025 (Saturday)**  
9 am–12:15 pm MT

**ZOOM Training**  
w/ **CANVAS** Learning Platform

**ENROLLMENT @**  
[learn.nmcesw.org](https://learn.nmcesw.org)



**SCAN ME**

**PRESENTER: MARISA L. C DE BACA, LMSW**



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# WHAT IS PLUGGED-IN-FOR-GOOD?

## Las Cruces, neighbors!

We can fix up your home to use less electricity and stay cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

Our program, Plugged In For Good, helps local families save money every month on their utility bills. We'll teach local people the skills to do this work, creating good jobs right here in our community. Together, we can make Las Cruces a place where everyone can afford their energy bills and have a comfortable home.



### Find your family size & income level below

| FAMILY MEMBERS | QUALIFIES FOR MOST STATE & LOCAL REBATES | INCOME THRESHOLD |
|----------------|--|------------------|
| 1              | \$30,120 or less                         | up to \$39,550   |
| 2              | \$40,880 or less                         | up to \$45,200   |
| 3              | \$50,850 or less                         | up to \$51,640   |
| 4              | \$56,500 or less                         | up to \$62,400   |
| 5              | \$61,050 or less                         | up to \$73,160   |
| 6              | \$65,550 or less                         | up to \$83,920   |
| 7              | \$70,100 or less                         | up to \$94,680   |
| 8              | \$74,600 or less                         | up to \$105,760  |

Disclaimer: amount of rebates will depend on verified income level.

## Who is Eligible for this Program?

- ✓ Own a home
- ✓ Receive government assistance (like SNAP or Medicaid)
- ✓ Qualify as low-income (based on state or federal guidelines)

CONTACT US TO SIGN UP FOR A FREE HOME CHECK-UP:  
[pluggedinforgood@gmail.com](mailto:pluggedinforgood@gmail.com) | (575)541-2175

PLUGGED-IN  
FOR GOOD







**Careers & Opportunities** webpage dedicated to connecting you with meaningful job openings. From roles within NMSU to opportunities in the broader community, this page is designed to help you find positions that align with your passion and expertise. Visit the page to explore the latest listings and take the next step in your career!

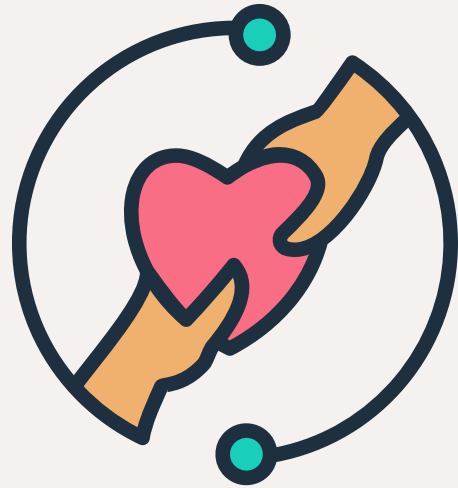


**Careers & Opportunities**



# CONNECT WITH US

## School of Social Work Website



## Facebook



## Instagram



Stay tuned for the latest updates, stories, and highlights from the School of Social Work!

In next week's edition, we'll bring you:

- Spotlights on Recent Achievements
- Upcoming Events and Workshops
- Student and Faculty Features
- Useful Resources and Tips

Got something to share or a question to ask?

Feel free to reach out to us:

✉ [socwork@nmsu.edu](mailto:socwork@nmsu.edu)

☎ Phone: 575-646-2143

🏢 Office: HSS 210

We'd love to hear from you and feature your news in our next issue!

