

THE FIELD AND THE SCHOOL

MISSION

The Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice is dedicated to working toward a more just and humane society through research, teaching, and service to the community. As one of the oldest and most highly regarded graduate schools of social work, the Crown Family School prepares professionals to handle society's most difficult problems by developing new knowledge, promoting a deeper understanding of the causes and human costs of social inequities, and building bridges between rigorous research and the practice of helping individuals, families, and communities to achieve a better quality of life.

PROFESSIONAL PURPOSE

In January 2021, the School received a \$75 million gift from James and Paula Crown and the Crown family—the largest ever in support of a school of social work. In recognition of this significant gift, the School, long known as the School of Social Service Administration, was renamed the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice.

Founded in 1908, the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice is regarded as one of the world's foremost schools of social work, ranking anywhere from first to third in reputational surveys. Through a combination of research, teaching, and practice, the Crown Family School has shaped the field for more than 100 years.

The School's first leaders advanced a vision of social work as a real discipline, reimagining and revolutionizing the social work profession and social work education. They created a School that embodied the University's core mission of civic engagement, striving to enact social reform and make enduring impact through rigorous research. The School conducted the first empirical investigations of social welfare problems and solutions; established the first, and still leading, scholarly journal for the profession (*Social Service Review*); offered the first university-based graduate professional degrees in social work; and established the world's first PhD program in social work and social welfare (celebrating its centennial in 2020). Today, scholars conduct research on public policies, human service organizations, social programs, and social work practice, studying such topics as child welfare, urban education, criminal justice disparities, homelessness, health care, policing, youth violence prevention, urban politics, low-wage employment, immigration, child and family policy, and substance use and abuse.

In July 2019, the Crown Family School became the academic home of UChicago's Urban Education Institute (UEI), a research institute focused on addressing issues of education inequality to inform policy and practice. In 2025, the School received a \$25 million gift from Steven Kersten, JD'80, and his wife, Priscilla Kersten, that will advance K-12 education research and train the next generation of leaders at the Crown Family School and the Urban Education Institute (UEI). This generous gift establishes endowed faculty chairs, provides scholarships for students committed to careers in school social work, and elevates groundbreaking research that advances programs, interventions, and policies that strengthen schools and improve academic and life outcomes for all students. In recognition of this significant gift, UChicago has renamed UEI the Kersten Institute for Urban Education.

The Crown Family School currently offers one Master's Degree program: Social Work, Social Policy, and Social Administration (SW), a two-year full time program. The Master of Arts Program has been accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and its predecessor organizations since 1919. The Crown Family School was reaccredited through June 2028. Our AM degree is equivalent to an MSW, but with a broader educational and experiential foundation that combines direct social work practice with policy development, interdisciplinary research and social science theory. The School also offers a combined AB/AM degree for University of Chicago undergraduate students in The College, Advanced Standing, Evening, and Part-time programs, and joint degree programs (AM/MBA, AM/MDiv, AM/MPP) for the Social Work, Social Policy, and Social Administration AM; a joint degree program (AM/MPP) for the Social Sector Leadership and Nonprofit Management AM; a Part-time option for Social Sector Leadership; a dual AM SW/SSL program; a PhD program, and a PhD/AM program.

The Crown Family School also offers a minor, Inequality, Social Problems, and Change, exclusively for students in the College. The minor, which is open to all majors, examines the underlying causes and consequences of—and innovative solutions to—society's most pressing social problems. The minor places particular weight on understanding social issues that disproportionately affect marginalized and disadvantaged populations. It also helps students understand the ways in which social markers influence mass incarceration, immigration policy, access to health care, political power and participation, and physical and mental health.

Since 1920, our Doctoral Program has provided training for those interested in pursuing an academic career in social work and social welfare. The Crown Family School's doctoral graduates are leaders in the field of social work and social welfare scholarship. The program is designed to deepen students' mastery of both social science theory and research methods so that students are prepared to contribute to scholarly knowledge in innovative ways. The program accommodates students who are interested in developing and evaluating practice methods and interventions as well as those interested in understanding social problems and accompanying

institutional and political responses. The diverse theoretical approaches of the Crown Family School's faculty make it uniquely positioned to support an interdisciplinary course of study.

In November 2023, Grand Challenges for Social Work (GCSW), an initiative by the American Academy of Social Work and Welfare to champion social progress powered by science, announced an addition to its fields of focus: the Grand Challenge to Prevent Gun Violence. The network supporting this Grand Challenge effort is led by three cochairs representing the Crown Family School, the University of Buffalo School of Social Work, and the New York University Silver School of Social Work. This new Grand Challenge area recognizes the urgent need and great opportunities for social work to advance a body of research, build and disseminate practice knowledge, and develop impactful interdisciplinary partnerships to take action and meaningfully reduce gun violence.

Beginning in fall 2024, the School introduced a new curriculum – one that responds to changing societal problems and equips students with the critical skills, competencies, and values so they can make greater impact and have greater choices when pursuing careers.

The reimagined curriculum offers an integrated program so students can expect to make long-term, positive contributions across levels of practice and policy, communities and sectors.

It maintains the foundational elements essential to the profession, including rigorous instruction in social work and social welfare theories, principles, policy, and research, and also provides specialized training through courses within a set of integrated pathways. Students may choose from among five pathways:

- Transforming Justice & Violence Prevention
- Integrating Health, Mental Health & Social Care
- Disrupting Poverty, Economic Inequality, & Social Exclusion
- Children and Families in System Contexts
- Global Health & Social Development

Each pathway is designed to train students to work across levels of practice – with individuals, organizations, communities and government – offering exceptional training to pursue a range of careers, from direct practice to policy, working both domestically and globally.

Although students will gain integrative knowledge about how to work across levels of practice within their pathway, students will still be able to focus their training on one level of practice if desired. For example, if students want to focus their social work education gaining clinical therapeutic practice skills, they will have sufficient course electives to develop depth in clinical practice.

VALUES

The Crown Family School's educational program is informed by the values of the social work profession. As such, we prepare professionals who are committed to improving the lives of vulnerable and diverse populations and promoting social and economic justice locally, nationally, and globally. Social work values ensure that service is driven by a humanistic perspective that values difference and asks us to consider the impact of our ideas and our work on the well-being of our clients, of our colleagues, of our agencies, and on society as a whole. Our values require that we treat others with dignity and respect and make human rights and social justice central to our work. As a School, the Crown Family School strives to be an exemplar of social work education, committed to fostering an inclusive, engaging, and rigorous educational experience, welcoming to all.

Our values require that we behave ethically in both our personal and professional lives. Our ethical precepts encompass such matters as treating our clients with dignity, honoring human diversity and differences, never exploiting clients for our own interests, and always acting in the best interest of clients. This is accomplished through human relationships, honoring the value of integrity, and giving graduates the competence to achieve professional goals of the highest quality. Similar precepts govern our relationships with other professionals. We recognize our responsibilities to the organizations for which we work, but we also have the obligation to question policies and practices in the workplace that may not be aligned with the best interests of our clients. We value scientific inquiry and the use of scientific evidence, as well as the development and implementation of evidence-based policy and practice. Finally, our values require continued professional growth and development through lifelong learning.

PROGRAM CONTEXT

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Since its founding, the University's mission has been expressed in its motto, *Crescat scientia; vita excolatur*, "Let knowledge grow from more to more; and so be human life enriched." The University is committed to the development of new knowledge, both for its own sake and for the common good. The link of its mission to the mission and purpose of the Crown Family School is clear. As social problems become more complex, interconnected, and sprawling, the Crown Family School is building upon its distinctive interdisciplinary and applied traditions to generate more robust knowledge and to educate the most talented social work leaders, thereby achieving even greater social benefit, both locally and globally.

The Crown Family School's first dean, Edith Abbott, said in 1920 when it became a full-fledged professional school, that "only in a university, and only in a great university, could a school of social work get the educational facilities that advanced professional students must have if they were to become the efficient public servants of democracy." Paul Alivisatos, the University's 14th president, expanded on her sentiment during his inauguration address: "We are not known for accepting facile answers, for taking the easy path, or for being complacent. Nor do we seek the safety of agreement for the sake of momentary harmony. It is these core values that tell us we must continue to look at the University through fresh eyes and ensure that it is poised to confront the emerging challenges of our time in original and significant ways."

The Mies van der Rohe-designed building that is home to the University of Chicago's Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy and Practice was dedicated in honor of Edith Abbott, PhD 1905 on March 17, 2021 and is now named Edith Abbott Hall.

CITY OF CHICAGO

As a great American city, Chicago and its surroundings provide a superb context for learning in the field. It is one of the nation's most diverse cities—a kaleidoscope of social and cultural traditions and populations. Chicago experiences all of the significant problems of the modern metropolis: poverty, violence, crime, dysfunctional schools, inadequate health services, drug use, family breakdown, social exclusion, and community disruption. Our students are able to witness, learn from, and contribute to this complex of activity.

Chicago has notably been at the forefront of pioneering movements in social work, community organizing, women's rights, urban planning and architecture, labor organizing, and African American politics. The Crown Family School's deepening partnerships with the neighbors in our community strive to enhance the quality of life and economic development of Chicago's South Side, as well as the City of Chicago more broadly and beyond to the national and international levels. With this, the Crown Family School plays a very visible role in materially advancing the University's larger purpose to "enrich human lives."

To further advance our community commitment, the Crown Family School added an Associate Dean of Civic Engagement to lead new initiatives and deepen relationships with community partners. These mutually-beneficial partnerships are designed to enrich the academic experiences of our students and expand opportunities for research, while including and responding to the voices and needs of our community neighbors. In fall of 2018, the Crown Family School partnered with other campus entities when the University hosted the annual Clinton Global Initiative University. The summit welcomed more than 1,000 undergraduates and graduate students from around the world, subject matter experts, and other public figures, who addressed urgent social, economic, and environmental issues. At the conclusion of the summit, attendees participated in a "day of action" to support a project in an adjacent neighborhood.

Through the School's Office of Community Partnership and Impact, the Crown Family School launched Civic Treks, a program that gives students an inside look at how Chicago works through discussions and meetings with civic leaders. Treks focus on pressing social issues, including educational inequality, police accountability, community organizing, urban segregation, and gentrification.

With the Harris and Booth Schools, the Crown Family School launched the University of Chicago Obama Foundation Scholars Program. Working in partnership with the Obama Foundation, this highly competitive program brings together scholars who already have shown clear potential as civic leaders, and a clear commitment and a capacity to address urgent social challenges. Programming organized by the University and the Foundation explores how research and evidence can shape policy and programs, inform decision-makers, and impact lives. Students selected from the three schools address specific problems on the South Side and in other communities.

The School continues strengthening its community engagement projects with the city and the business community. It has served as an academic partner to the City of Chicago and Cook County as they implement two of the nation's largest guaranteed income pilots. With the School's support, Cook County recently announced a plan to continue its program in perpetuity. The School is also working with Mayor Johnson's administration to launch a second guaranteed income pilot for individuals returning from extended periods of incarceration. To amplify the impact of this work, the School has partnered with the City Club of Chicago to convene public conversations about these programs and their impact on poverty and inequality.

The Crown Family School also expanded a multi-year partnership with the Chicago Department of Housing by completing an analysis of the ways global governments are using housing policies to promote wealth-building in communities of color. The School will host a symposium where leaders from various cities will discuss ways to drive equity and build generational wealth through homeownership.

With city and state leaders, the School has provided training and technical assistance to community organizations as they support the emotional well-being of newly arriving migrants. In the coming months, Crown Family School faculty will help lead a series of meetings with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services to share best practices.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

As social problems become more globally interconnected, the Crown Family School implemented a strategic international social welfare program agenda. Our program integrates cross-national and comparative content into our curriculum, including study-abroad and internship placement opportunities for students, lectures by international scholars visiting Chicago, and scholarly and student exchanges in partnership with peer institutions. One outgrowth of our growing visibility on the global stage is an acceleration of our international student enrollment.

With support from the University's Provost's Office, the Crown Family School has expanded its faculty ranks, bringing in faculty with explicit expertise in global and international social welfare. Our first of several faculty hires in this emerging domain joined us in July 2012; since then, the Crown Family School has hired additional faculty members, allowing the School to forge a defining role in the globalization of social welfare concerns and problems. Our faculty examine social welfare policy and practice across Asia, Central/Latin America, the former Soviet Union, and Africa, which also complements work in Europe. The Crown Family School faculty also serve on the Steering Committee of the University's Center in Delhi, the University's Beijing Governance Committee, and the international advisory board of the *Indian Journal of Social Work*. We are completing our ninth year of a concentration in international social work, which builds out field experiences in India, China, and Hong Kong, and through the University's Human Rights program. In addition, this year, we welcomed a second cohort of students to the global social policy and practice certificate.

We run an annual, intensive, one-month study-abroad program on urban poverty and community practice for our master's students in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai, India, the oldest established school of social work in that country. This program combines classroom instruction, field experience (pairing the Crown Family School with TISS students in a small set of community placements), seminar discussion, and informal engagement with students and faculty from both schools. The program includes a reciprocal exchange in Chicago, in which TISS students engage in a parallel program to the one in India, strengthening comparative learning across institutions and countries and building meaningful peer relationships. This work has also begun to generate research collaboration among faculty at both institutions.

In China, the Crown Family School has established a relationship with colleagues at Peking University (PKU), the home to mainland China's oldest and most well-established social work program. We have hosted PKU faculty at Chicago and have visited PKU to share insights and orientations to social work curriculum and field education as well as to explore common research interests. We are partnered with PKU as part of the China Collaborative, an effort jointly sponsored by the Council of Social Work Education in the United States, China Association of Social Work Educators in China, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work to foster the advancement of social work education and the professionalization of social work in China during a time of rapid development. In addition to co-organizing with PKU two workshops in Beijing, the Crown Family School hosted, in fall 2014, a delegation of faculty from some of China's leading social work programs, introducing them to a week-long immersion in the Crown Family School's robust educational fieldwork-classroom integration.

We established, in 2013, an intensive Institute in China in partnership with Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) that focuses on responses to social exclusion in Hong Kong, mainland China, and the United States. The annual program allows students from the Crown Family School and PolyU to learn from and gain perspectives from each other. The intensive institutes have included local site visits in Hong Kong and Mainland China, where students have examined local social welfare issues facing migrants, asylum seekers, and tenant farmers, including housing shortages, health inequality, and economic development policies. As with the TISS program, this exchange is designed to maximize interaction and learning between students from Hong Kong, China, the U.S., and elsewhere, through a range of formal curricular, field-oriented, and informal interactions, and to leverage the comparative perspective such an exchange might provide to think critically about social work practice and social welfare.

The Crown Family School, with our counterparts at Peking University, co-sponsored and hosted a series of scholarly seminars and strategic planning workshops with support from the University of Chicago's recently established Beijing Center. Over the past few years, the Crown Family School hosted a series of symposia and workshops, in collaboration with colleagues at Peking University, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and Seoul National University, focused on the challenges of globalization and urbanization. These symposia explored international perspectives on social policy and urban problems, bringing together scholars from China, the United States, India, and South Korea to explore knowledge about, policy responses to, and enduring questions focused on urbanization and globalization across particular substantive themes—education, health, children and youth, and poverty and development—as they are playing out across these four national contexts. The symposia provided a foundation for collaborative research exploring the theme of inequality and social exclusion and how it is generated, reproduced, and responded to cross-nationally in the context of globalization. An edited volume based on this work, *Social Exclusion in Cross-National Perspective: Actors, Actions, and Impacts from Above and Below*, is now available from Oxford University Press.

Further galvanizing our efforts is the Tripartite Collaboration for Advancing Social Work in China, launched in 2016, which establishes an endowed joint social work educational exchange program in partnership with PKU and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Working together, the three universities seek to promote the

development of graduate social work education and research in China; facilitate international collaborative graduate education and research among the participating universities; and improve the quality of social work education in China, promoting a rigorously professionalized, effective, and ethical social work workforce and service system. In 2017, the Collaboration launched the Enduring Foundation project, an on-the-ground effort to address the needs of migrant families affected by rapid urbanization. This community-based project seeks to promote the positive development and mental health of rural children and adolescents through parenting training workshops, mentoring programs, and community programs. In addition to these developing relationships, the presence of the University of Chicago's Beijing and Paris Centers and the recent opening of the University's Centers in Delhi and Hong Kong offer exciting opportunities for cross-national exchanges, seminars, and conferences, including hosting students and scholars from China, India, the United States, and other countries for varying periods of time.

In February 2021, the Crown Family School announced a \$25 million gift from the Kiphart Family Foundation to establish the Susan and Richard Kiphart Center for Global Health and Social Development, led in partnership with the Biological Sciences Division. It formally opened in May 2022, hosting a day-long event that featured welcome remarks from University administration, a multidisciplinary faculty panel, a conversation with Ertharin Cousin (Distinguished Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs and Visiting Scholar, Freeman Spogli Institute at the Center on Food Security and Environment, Stanford University), and a reception. The Kiphart Center serves as the University's gateway in bringing together teams from around the University and partner communities to address social determinants of health and improve infrastructure to promote community health and well-being around the world. It supports the implementation of interventions by providing funding, on a competitive basis, to UChicago faculty and local partners on the ground through the **Kiphart Global Health and Social Development Innovation Incubator Fund**. An annual request for proposals is made available to faculty and other academic appointments to propose collaborative intervention projects. Proposals are reviewed by a multidisciplinary faculty advisory committee and assessed based on a set of criteria regarding the importance, quality, innovation, and practicality of the projects submitted.

The Kiphart Center also supports the development of a new generation of leaders in global health and social development at the master's and College levels. Supported scholars are master's students in the Crown Family School Global Social Development Practice Certificate program, who have expressed a commitment to pursue a career in global social policy and social work practice. They receive funding to engage in an intensive, six-month block field placement abroad, participate in a year-long seminar and complete a capstone project based on their work.

In a partnership with the Career Advancement office of the College, the Kiphart Center opened the *Kiphart Collegiate Fellows Program* to first-, second-, and third-year College students to support hands-on learning internships in global health and social development, many of which have a specific focus on low- and middle-income countries. In a second effort with the College's Career Advancement Office, the Kiphart Center initiated the *Kiphart Global Health and Social Development Policy Challenge*. The Challenge, open to second- and third-year undergraduate students interested in examining global health and social development challenges, is designed to cultivate critical thinking and team approaches in addressing complex challenges. Students selected for the four-week Challenge worked in teams during the Summer Quarter to analyze a case scenario and develop feasible policy solutions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE CROWN FAMILY SCHOOL MASTER'S CURRICULUM

The Crown Family School's curriculum promotes social justice through its commitment to pluralism, rigorous inquiry, engaged interdisciplinary scholarship, integrative practice, critical thinking, and informed action. These curricular commitments prepare students to understand the complex contexts and power structures that maintain and reproduce inequality and injustice, and to take action to promote individual, social, and structural change.

1. Social Justice

The Crown Family School supports students to analyze the social, historical, political, economic, and organizational factors that reinforce inequity and injustice. Students and faculty consider their own and others' positionality within those structures, with an appreciation of how identities and affiliations may intersect to compound or mitigate privilege and oppression. We work to increase access, opportunity, and agency in order to dismantle systems of oppression and to help meet the basic needs of diverse individuals, families, and communities with compassion and humaneness.

2. Intellectual Pluralism

Intellectual pluralism is at the heart of the Crown Family School's teaching. The curriculum reflects the intellectual diversity of our faculty, who come from an array of academic disciplines and professions and represent a variety of political perspectives. This pluralism allows our students and faculty to appreciate multiple ways of knowing, to be critical of what counts as knowledge and research, and to be more inclusive of perspectives that have not traditionally been centered in social work curricula. Our intellectual pluralism also encourages ongoing interrogation of the concept of social justice, which is central to the mission of social

work. It also provides us with the tools and flexibility to engage effectively with a broad range of individuals, communities, and social institutions.

3. Engaged Scholarship and Teaching

Crown Family School faculty are committed to promoting social justice and social equality through engaged scholarship and education. Scholarship at the Crown Family School emerges from interactive engagement with practitioners, policy makers, and communities. Crown Family School faculty members actively integrate their research into curricula and teaching. Students are educated to identify and analyze the causes, consequences of, and approaches to ameliorating human suffering and social injustice.

4. Integrative Practice

Our curriculum is built on the assumption that all social workers need to understand and act to mobilize change with and within individuals, families, communities, organizations, public institutions, and political and economic systems. Drawing upon and integrating field and classroom experiences, students will develop skills to practice across multiple levels. In addition, students are trained to use integrative frameworks that move beyond the micro-macro dichotomy.

5. Critical Thinking

Students learn to effectively question, assess, evaluate, and respond to assumptions, claims, and values, including those from social science and social work research. Students learn to consider a range of perspectives; carefully assess their assumptions, validity, and implications; and become skilled and insightful evaluators of their own thinking. This process includes reflection on how one's own affiliations and identities may lead to blind spots and biases. Students learn to integrate a critical sensibility into practice so as to make meaningful contributions to the profession, the client base, and to the analysis and resolution of social problems.

6. Theory to Action

Students prepare for positions of leadership and to be stewards of change while working in dynamic sociopolitical and fiscal contexts in hundreds of vetted field placements throughout Chicago and its surrounding communities. Chicago has a rich history of social reform, social service innovation, and community organizing that gives context and continuity to students' field experiences. The field model provides opportunity for students to engage in coursework and field work concurrently, challenging students to assess, understand and address the extraordinary range of needs that bring people into contact with nonprofit, public and private agencies. Simultaneously, students learn from the tremendous strength, resilience, and knowledge held by the individuals and communities they serve. Students are encouraged to identify practice questions that lead to analysis, research, and new approaches toward ameliorating social exclusion through community-engaged fieldwork.

While we strive to create conditions that will largely negate the need for a social work profession, we realize that social service programs and organizations serve vital safety net functions and can aid in societal transformations toward equity and social justice. Crown Family School faculty recognize that individuals, families, and communities are rarely helped by mediocre interventions and programs. Similarly, society is rarely served by poorly conducted research or poorly crafted social policies. Therefore, the Crown Family School strives towards excellence in our practice, teaching, and scholarship.

GOALS OF THE SCHOOL

Carrying out the Crown Family School's mission to enrich human life through scholarship, education, and service dedicated toward advancing a more socially just and humane society, we tackle the most intractable and costly of social problems by developing rigorous knowledge and rigorously trained professionals, as well as by leading and informing the field in ways that advance our society and the concerns of those who are most vulnerable. In keeping with its mission, the School's goals are:

- To educate competent and effective professionals able to apply clinical, analytical, and organizational knowledge and skills to solve social problems and relieve the distress of vulnerable individuals through ethical practice in a rapidly changing global environment. This requires a learning environment that models respect for diversity and lifelong learners who can think critically about the world around them.
- To produce scholarship that enhances our understanding of the nature and sources of problems of individuals, families, communities, and society and of effective means of preventing and intervening with those problems.
- And to use the School's resources to advance social justice and to serve its immediate community and the field of social welfare through the translation of knowledge into action. We aim to provide leadership both institutionally and through the efforts of individual faculty.

Graduates of the Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice should be able:

- To understand that the foundation of effective service lies in a grasp of the environment. Individual distress occurs in a social context involving the interaction of biological, psychological, familial, economic, community, and cultural factors.

- To understand that theories supported by empirical evidence serve as conceptual frameworks for examining individual distress, organizational functioning, community contexts, and social policies. These theories are drawn from multiple disciplines and become the foundation for a coherent framework from which to respond to human needs and promote social justice.
- To think critically and challenge the underlying assumptions, core values, conceptual frameworks, and evidence on which our professional knowledge is based.
- To engage in competent, ethical, and effective social work, clinical practice, or social administration.
- And to become effective leaders in the fields of social work and social welfare.

