

PhD in Social Welfare, The Graduate School and University Center  
City University of New York

@gcsocialwelfare



<https://socialwelfare.commons.gc.cuny.edu>



## Spring 2026 Semester Begins

As we move into the spring semester, I want to acknowledge the energy, care, and intellectual rigor that define our PhD Program in Social Welfare. This is a time when many of you are navigating milestones, such as preparing for exams, advancing dissertation work, refining research questions, while also managing teaching and other work responsibilities. I hope you continue to draw on our collective strengths as a community. Please take advantage of opportunities to connect and support one another through our numerous community engagement activities that we are planning this semester. These moments of engagement are vital to sustaining our shared mission and academic goals. Wishing you continued focus, connection, and momentum as the semester unfolds.

- Barbra Teater, Executive Officer

## December “End of Semester” Party



## FEATURING:

- Important Dates
- Student Achievements
- Leading a Legislative Breakfast
- SSWR 2026 Reflections
- Spring 2026 Show Up and Write
- Student Spotlight: Kathleen McKenna

## IMPORTANT DATES

- CSWE 2026 APM
  - [Abstract Submissions 2/12/26](#)
- DGSC
  - [Grants deadline 2/27/26](#)
  - [2026-2027 Election nominations 3/2/26](#)
- Graduate Center Funding
  - GCDI Provost's Digital Innovation Grant [Proposal submissions 2/10/26](#)
  - ERI/PS2 Summer Public Scholarship [Grant Applications due 2/10/26](#)
  - Spring 2026 Conference Lottery [Applications due 3/9/26](#)

# Student Achievements: December & January



**Evelyn Bautista-Miller** was named the National Association of Social Work-New York's (NASW-NY) 2025 Doctoral Student of the Year.

**Jordan Margolis** had a proposal accepted for a workshop at ECSWR 2026, The European Conference on Social Work Research Conference taking place in Aberdeen, Scotland from April 15-17, 2026: "Decriminalizing Mental Health Crises in the US and Scotland: Saving Lives, Dignity, and Resources."



**Ian G. Williams** and **Jamie Borgan** had the following conference proposal accepted, and Ian had an additional abstract accepted:

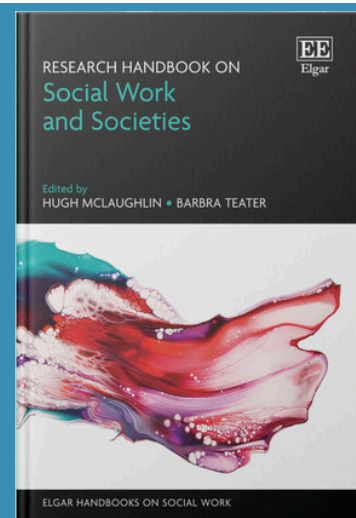


Williams, I.G. and Borgan, J. "Cultivating Critical Digital Literacies in Social Work Practicum Education: Implications for Third-Sector Research". 17th Conference of the International Society For Third-Sector Research (ISTR). Lisbon, Portugal.

Anasti, T., Bakko, M. Guz, S., Maschke, A. and Williams, I.G. "Integrating Organizational and Critical Theories: Methodological Countermeasures in Researching Third-Sector Human Service Organizations". 17th Conference on the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR). Lisbon, Portugal.

**Jamie Borgan, Bobbie Justin, Carla Silva, and alumna Dr. Sabretta Alford** authored chapters in this recently published book co-edited by our Executive Officer, **Dr. Barbra Teater**. Congrats to all!

McLaughlin, H., & Teater, B. (Eds.). (2025). *Research handbook on social work and societies*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035329274>



# Leading a Legislative Breakfast



On Friday, January 16, 2026, 218 East Harlem residents and their supporters filled The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College's auditorium for the 7th Annual Legislative Breakfast and Town Hall. Hosted by the East Harlem Community Health Committee (EHCHC) and the Human Services Consortium of East Harlem (HSCEH), in partnership with State Senator Cordell Cleare, the standing-room-only event brought together elected officials—including Senator Cordell Cleare, Senator Jose Serrano, Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Councilmember-elect Elise Encarnación, and Assemblymember Jordan Wright—as well as representatives from the offices of Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and Senator Charles Schumer. Community members and service providers also attended to deepen shared understanding of key policy issues and elevate the needs of East Harlem.

**Michael Clements**, Vice Chair of HSCEH and a doctoral student in the PhD Program in Social Welfare at The CUNY Graduate Center, emceed the event and moderated a panel with elected officials. Grounded in community voices and stories gathered by EHCHC, elected officials heard directly from residents and shared information about current legislation they are sponsoring to address health care access, food insecurity, immigrant justice, and after-school funding.

Hunter College President Nancy Cantor welcomed participants and reaffirmed Hunter's commitment to its students and community partners.

# The Virtual Town Square: Dispatches from #SSWR2026



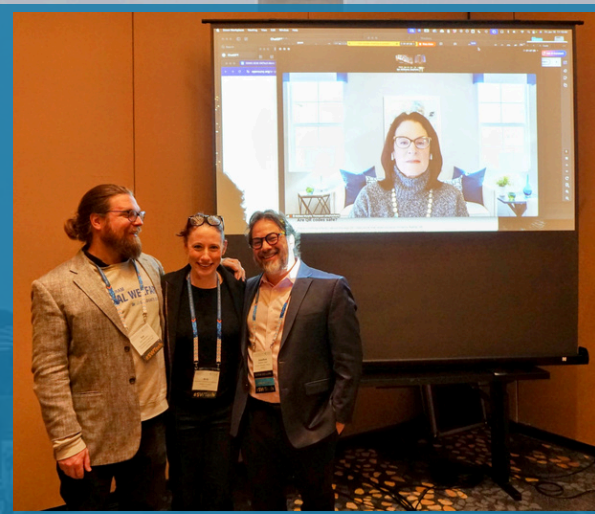
Vanessa Bishop and Dr. Marina Laylants  
(Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College)



Ian G. Williams and Haien Son



Deputy Executive Officer Dr. Esther Son and  
Cristian Cosey



Ian G. Williams, Dr. Counselman-Carpenter (Adelphi University),  
Dr. Jonathan B. Singer (Loyola University),  
and Melissa M. Thompson, LCSW (Salisbury University)



Vanessa Bishop



Jamie Borgan, Ian G. Williams,  
and Dr. Peter Raeymackers (University of Antwerp)



Ian G. Williams, Dr. Miguel Rodríguez (Morgan State University), and Jamie Borgan

The 30<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) occurred from January 14-18, 2026 in Washington, DC, and we had a strong presence among students, alumni, and faculty. Thanks to Jake Gutter (Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College), Dr. Esther Son, Vanessa Bishop, and Ian G. Williams for the photos. Check out the details for our lineup, where seven students gave nine presentations at our [CUNY Academic Commons](#) site.

Next year, SSWR will be held in San Francisco. Stay tuned for their call for proposals, which will be due by mid-April.

PH.D. PROGRAM

# **SOCIAL WELFARE**

[gc.cuny.edu/socialwelfare](http://gc.cuny.edu/socialwelfare)

  **GRADUATE CENTER**

## **Show Up and Write!**

**Spring 2026 drop-in co-writing**

**Thursdays 4:30-7:30pm**

**GC Room 6203.02 & online**

**If interested, email:**

**[iwilliams1@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:iwilliams1@gradcenter.cuny.edu) &**

**[rcadoff@gradcenter.cuny.edu](mailto:rcadoff@gradcenter.cuny.edu)**



# Student Spotlight: Kathleen McKenna

## Why did you apply to the PhD in Social Welfare?

*At my day job, I work in coalitions with people impacted by unjust systems to advocate for better policies. I saw that my collaborators were able to change the hearts and minds of legislators, but also recognized the deep emotional toll advocacy work was taking. When I looked for resources on how to make the work more sustainable, I found a pretty glaring gap in the literature (that is fortunately starting to be filled!). I always knew I wanted to return to school and the PhD in Social Welfare program allowed a space where I could remain deeply engaged in my work while studying.*

## What has been your favorite course so far as a student? Why?

*I really appreciated Policy I and II in the first year, taught by Joel Blau and Michael Lewis, respectively. Dr. Blau's class provides a really deep grounding in social welfare policy from colonization to the present. Dr. Lewis's class pushed us to understand the economics of how the welfare state does(n't) operate. Together, they provided a great foundation for the program and have helped me make better arguments in my legislative advocacy work.*

## What do you want to do after you graduate?

*I really enjoy teaching and mentoring students – so I hope to teach in a social work program with a strong macro / policy / community-organizing track.*

## What leadership and/or employment positions do you hold within CUNY?

*I am a student representative on the Social Welfare Admissions Committee and I serve as an alternate representative to the Graduate Center Graduate Council.*

## What's something that people would be surprised to know about you?

*When I moved into a policy role after a period of clinical work, the thing that I missed the most was home visits! I decided to find a way to keep visiting in my spare time. I've been a friendly visitor with SAGE Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ+ Elders since 2018. SAGE is a non-profit that supports LGBTQ+ older adults, through community centers, affirming senior services, and advocacy. The friendly visitor program brings all that to elders who are homebound or face barriers to making it to the centers. I spent almost every Saturday for over 4 years with my first friend-at-home, Rogelio, which was such a gift. I took a break after he passed away and for the past 7 months have been visiting with my new friend-at-home.*

## What is the focus of your research?

*My research is focused on older adult activists who have been engaged in liberatory social movements across their lifetime. The research tells us a lot about why youth join social movements and why people leave – but there is a gap in understanding what makes people stay. I hope to expand knowledge on activist retention in an effort to inform sustainable activist praxis to keep emerging activists engaged across the life course.*

## What are you currently reading, watching or listening to?

*I started my winter break by reading all the fun fiction books I didn't have time for during the semester. Highlights include: *The Impossible Fortune* by Richard Osman – the latest novel in Thursday Murder Club Mystery Series, a delightful series about older adults in a retirement community in the UK who solve cold cases (and new cases!) in their spare time; and *Best Woman* by Rose Domm – her debut queer romantic comedy novel set at a wedding in Florida, hijinks ensue.*

## What's something we should ask you? What's your answer?

*What's your dog's name? Olive! Olive is a sweet little terrier mix who was found on the streets of Selma, AL and brought to NYC by Badass Animal Rescue. She is 5 years old and she loves to run and jump and play. She is very good.*

