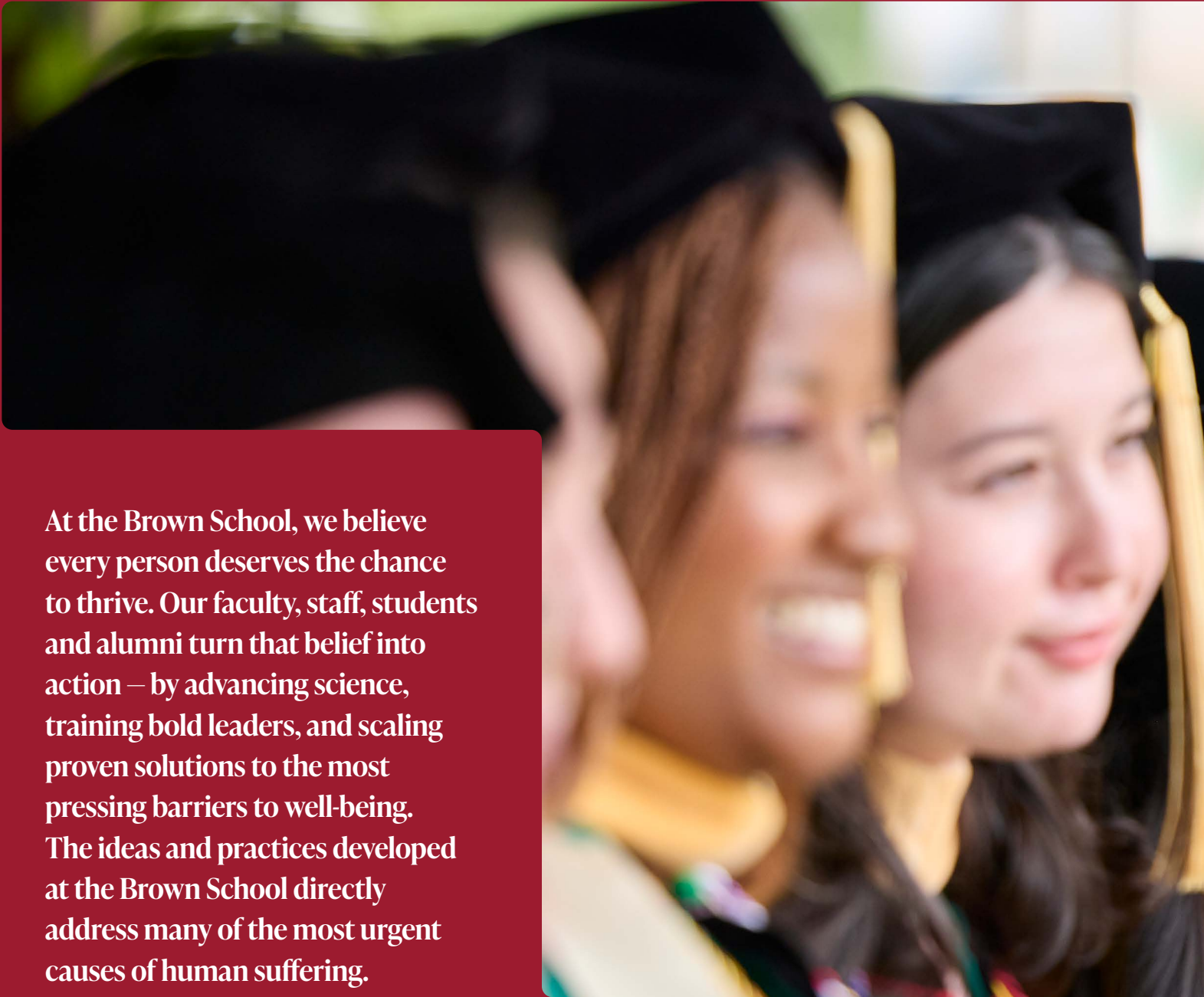




THE

Brown School

DIFFERENCE

A photograph of two graduates in black caps and gowns with yellow tassels. The graduate on the left is a Black woman with braided hair, smiling broadly. The graduate on the right is a white woman with dark hair, looking slightly to the side with a gentle smile. They are both wearing colorful stoles. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

At the Brown School, we believe every person deserves the chance to thrive. Our faculty, staff, students and alumni turn that belief into action – by advancing science, training bold leaders, and scaling proven solutions to the most pressing barriers to well-being. The ideas and practices developed at the Brown School directly address many of the most urgent causes of human suffering.

UNAPOLOGETICALLY
AMBITIOUS



Why Now?

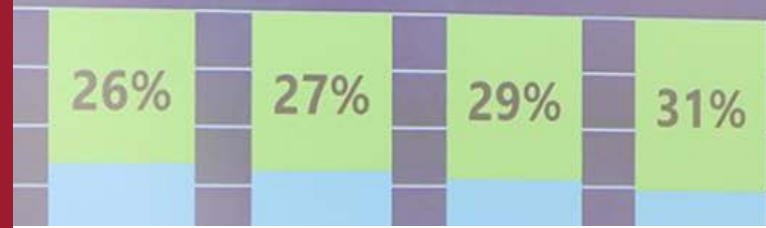
Our society is experiencing growing inequities and a mental health crisis that are impeding the development of human potential. These problems demand large-scale policy solutions and expertly trained practitioners if the United States is to cultivate the talents and wellbeing of its people and progress toward becoming a more fair and just society.

The Brown School Difference

At the Brown School, we turn research into results. We partner with communities to develop, test, and apply real-world solutions. We prepare leaders who drive policies and programs that improve lives and advance equity.

In doing this work, the Brown School reenvisioned how we understand the social contract, a reciprocal relationship by which we determine what society owes the individual and what the individual owes society. Discussions of the social contract often rely on moral arguments and remain philosophical in nature. Through the deployment of rigorous research methods, the Brown School brings science to this moral conversation.

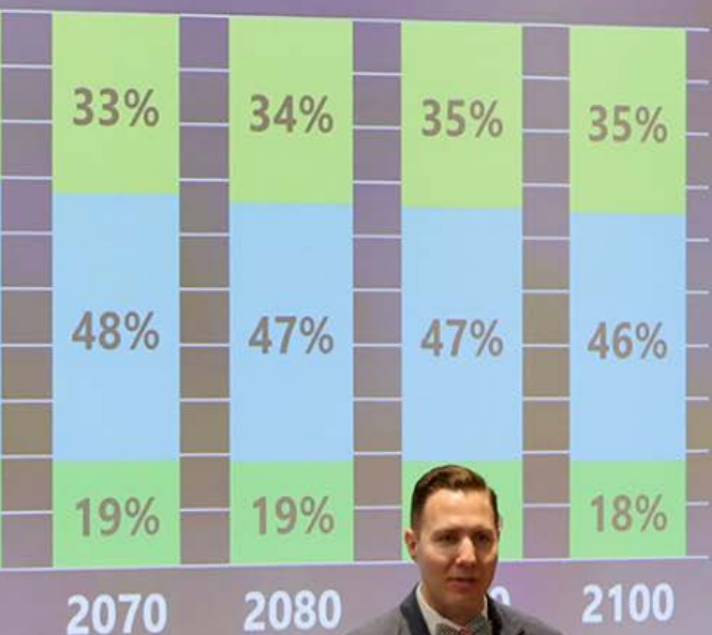
The American population continues to age, urban areas are growing, and the need for social services is increasing.



The Brown School is renowned for developing methods for identifying the most effective interventions (“evidence-based practice”) and strategies for ensuring the successful implementation of those practices (“implementation science”). We have a century of success in training people to be impactful, field-leading changemakers. Our curriculum prepares students with interventions that are not just well-intentioned but proven to be effective; this improves outcomes, uses resources wisely, and builds trust with clients and communities. Without a scientific approach to practice, social service interventions are often based on tradition, anecdote, or ideology. The Brown School pioneered the use of implementation science in social work. We don’t stop at knowing what works — we figure out how to make it work at scale, sustainably, and equitably.

The **WashU Public Exchange** exemplifies the Brown School's strength in turning research into results. Based in the Brown School, the Public Exchange works across the university to connect researchers with community and industry partners to address complex social challenges through collaborative research and action. It leads **CLEAN STL**, a multidisciplinary initiative launched to provide residents and city leaders with accurate air and soil data to support long-term recovery efforts from the 2025 tornado.

Population will
until at least 2100



Among our faculty's wide-ranging expertise, several strengths stand out:



We develop and determine the most effective interventions in **mental health** care and ensure those practices are implemented in diverse clinical settings.



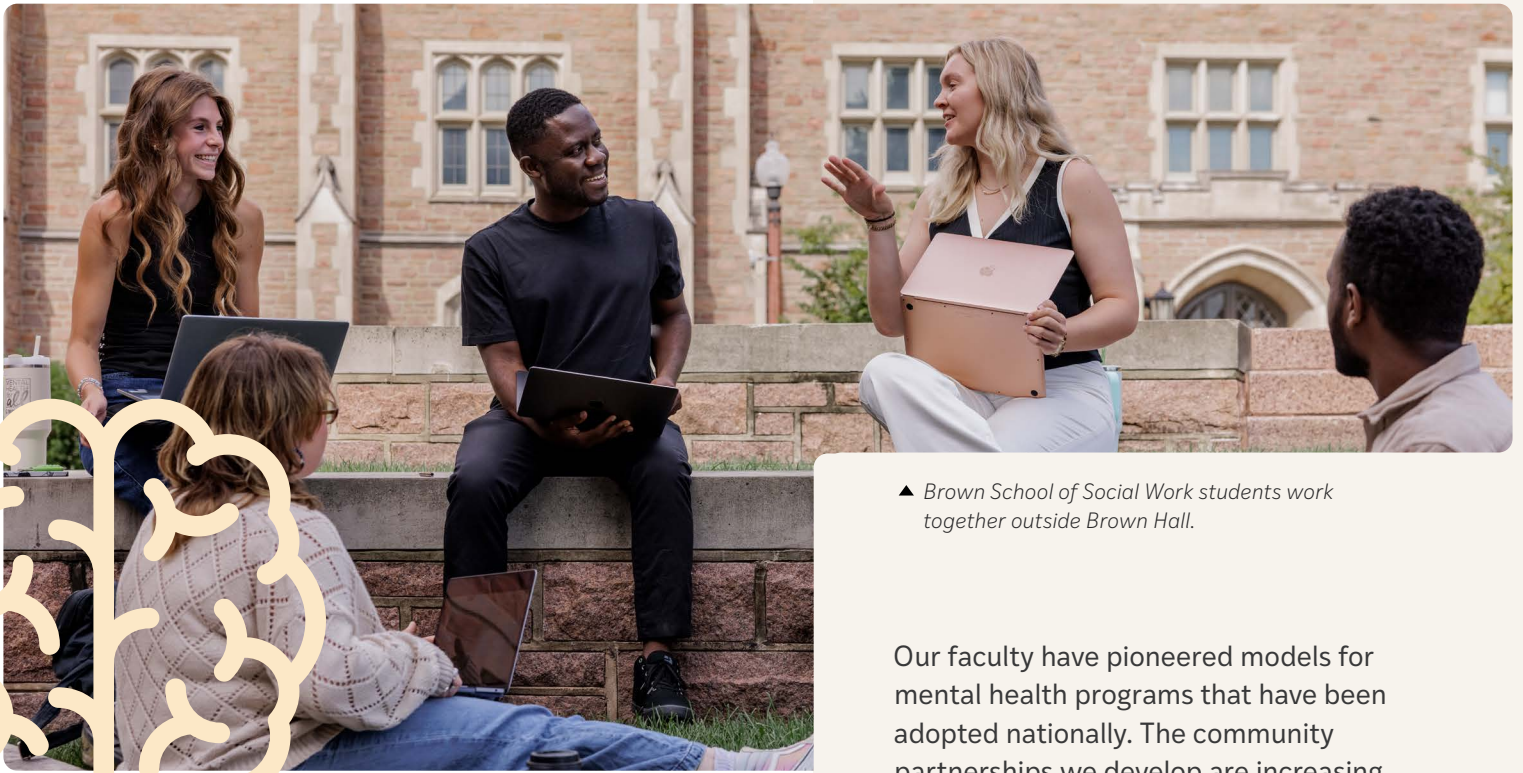
We alleviate **poverty** by identifying its root causes and devising structural solutions to systemic problems.



We promote the **welfare and education of children** by strengthening protections for the most vulnerable within our communities and building environments for kids that are safe, nurturing, and supportive.



We build the science of **productive aging**. We advocate for programs and policies that support wellbeing for the aging individual and for an aging society.



▲ Brown School of Social Work students work together outside Brown Hall.

Mental Health

Our country suffers a crisis in mental health.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), more than one in five US adults live with a mental illness (approximately 59.3 million in 2022; 23.1% of the U.S. adult population), but only half of those people received treatment in the past year. Among the 15.4 million adults with serious mental illness (SMI), only 10.2 million (66.7%) received mental health treatment in the past year. Systematic implementations of evidence-based treatments are necessary to address these problems, and the Brown School is leading the charge in advancing mental health care in America.

Mental health crosses all domains of the Brown School's work — from trauma-informed care to youth well-being to community mental health infrastructure. We bring both clinical and systems-level expertise to lead the field.

Our faculty have pioneered models for mental health programs that have been adopted nationally. The community partnerships we develop are increasing access to mental health services in underserved areas.

Enola Proctor is a foundational figure in the field of implementation science. Given that social workers lead and supervise complex organizations and provide direct services, she identified social work as the optimal profession for introducing and implementing high quality care. To proliferate this research and training, **Proctor founded the Brown School's training program in mental health services research**, which has for over three decades received continuous funding from the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH). This initiative is now co-directed by **Leopoldo Cabassa** and **Byron Powell**, both alumni of the Brown School and graduates of the program.

The importance of this work can be seen, for example, in Cabassa's research on improving the physical health of adults with serious mental illness. His projects led to increased preventive care and patients' involvement in their own medical care as well as obese people with serious mental illness reporting weight loss, increased fitness, and reduced risk for cardiovascular disease.

MEET THE FACULTY



Leopoldo Cabassa
Professor



Tonya Edmond
William E. Gordon
Distinguished Professor



Ryan Lindsay
Professor of Practice



Byron Powell
Associate Professor
Associate Dean for
Research



Enola Proctor
Research Professor
Shanti K. Khinduka
Distinguished Professor
(2014-2018)

Cabassa, along with **Tonya Edmond** and **Ryan Lindsay**, is advancing research and education in psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT), among the more promising and novel interventions to emerge in mental health care in recent years. Clinical trials of PAT have shown promising safety and efficacy results for treating numerous mental health conditions.



▲ The inaugural Hope Policy Academy event took place June 6, 2019 in Hillman Hall.

Cabassa has published influential articles outlining best practices for accelerating the implementation of PAT while balancing safety and quality. Edmond teaches PAT courses and organizes professional development opportunities for practitioners.

Lindsay, a professor of practice, focuses on training providers in evidence-based treatments, consulting with organizations on how to implement evidence-based programs, and aiding organizations in program development using

evidence-based principles. He recently received the Missouri Suicide Prevention Innovation Award for his work advancing suicide prevention efforts across the state, including the **Hope Policy Academy**, an initiative of the Brown School that seeks to support schools in examining and improving their policies regarding suicide prevention and intervention.

Lindsay also chairs the mental health concentration in the Master of Social Work program. Among his work in innovative education has been pioneering efforts to use generative AI in training social workers through the development of Empathy Helper, an advanced large language model that creates dynamic, emotionally responsive simulated clients. The platform helps social work students build communication skills in a safe, consistent, and scalable environment.

Mental health is the largest concentration within the Brown School's Master of Social Work program, accounting for 60-70% of MSW students.

The concentration requires 1,000 hours of practicum assignments, which place students in clinical settings in the St. Louis area where they develop foundational and specialized skills and gain exposure to the real-world demands of mental health care.



▲ CSD faculty and staff at the 2025 Second World Summit on Social Development hosted by the International Consortium for Social Development

Poverty

The persistence and prevalence of poverty in America are the outcomes of policy failures that advantage the wealthy and disadvantage the poor.

Our country is the richest on earth, yet we tolerate more poverty than any other advanced democracy. More than 38 million people in the US cannot afford basic necessities. More than 108 million people — about one in three Americans — live in households making \$55,000 or less. We have the resources to end these extreme levels of deprivation, but to do so we must implement social policies designed to invest in the poor.

Poverty alleviation is a unifying concern across the Brown School. Our faculty engage in policy, program design, and economic development to address structural drivers of poverty, including intergenerational poverty, food insecurity, housing instability, and barriers to social mobility.

This work has been foundational to anti-poverty legislation and program design. Local partnerships have expanded access to public benefits in Missouri and influenced the national discourse surrounding guaranteed income programs.

Among the most influential anti-poverty interventions pioneered at the Brown School are programs designed to foster progressive and inclusive asset building, particularly through child development accounts (CDAs).

Michael Sherraden and others at the **Center for Social Development (CSD)** have led the national conversation in favor of fortifying children with accounts that help them accumulate wealth over the course of their lives. Recently, the School recruited **Jin Huang** as Co-Director for CSD, deepening our scientific bench and the renown of our scholars.

MEET THE FACULTY



Jin Huang

Irving Louis Horowitz
Professor in Social Policy



Michael Sherraden

Warren Brown Distinguished
University Professor

The profound results from CDA programs emerge in Sherraden's long-term study SEED for Oklahoma Kids (SEED OK), a rigorous, large-scale project with randomly selected newborn children. Years after its launch, the SEED OK experiment reveals significant positive impacts in financial and nonfinancial outcomes, such as education and mental health.

The study has had widespread policy implications, with multiple states developing CDA programs. Based on the evidence of success, seven states have adopted the CDA policy model (Maine, California, Nevada, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Nebraska), and others are exploring the creation of programs.

In addition to its work in the U.S., CSD has advised CDA policy developments in Canada, the UK, Israel, Singapore, and South Korea.

Based on Brown School research, Kazakhstan announced CDA policy for all 7 million children starting in January 2024. The developing country is investing its oil and gas wealth to build a new economy based on human capital.

WashU faculty and affiliates are collaborating with policy makers at state and federal levels to advocate that programs are designed and implemented in ways research shows to be most effective.

“

During my time at the Brown School, I was fortunate to have many wonderful opportunities for learning and growth. I was deeply grateful for my connections with Dr. Michael Sherraden of the Center for Social Development at the Brown School. His visionary leadership and examples later inspired me to establish the first social work organization in Mongolia.”

— **ERDENECHIMEG
TSERENDORJ, MSW '02**

Executive Director, Center for Social
Work Excellence of Mongolia



▲ Erdenechimeg Tserendorj (middle) poses for a photo with CSD International Director Li Zou and Michael Sherraden.



▲ Kaleigh Lawrence, on the far left, with College Bound students and staff.

Child welfare *and* education

Early childhood and K-12 education are vital elements in the development of young people that have profound effects on the rest of their lives.

An extensive literature based on randomized controlled trials shows that high-quality early childhood education and care lead to better academic and cognitive outcomes as well as improved long-term physical health.

The Brown School has wide-ranging strengths in promoting child welfare and development. Much of our work falls into two broad categories: (1) responding to child maltreatment and strengthening protections for vulnerable children, and (2) designing systems, policies, and programs that ensure equitable access to education and services that shape the trajectories of children for the rest of their lives.

Our early childhood and K-12 work is deeply embedded in community partnerships and systems-level change. We are one of few schools integrating public health and social policy to improve our education system and ensure that all children receive the support they need. Our research shapes state-level early childhood policies and has led to evidence-based training being adopted by school districts.

MEET THE FACULTY



Jason Jabbari

Assistant Professor



Dorian Traube

Neidorff Family and Centene Corporation Dean of the Brown School and Professor

“

So much of my day-to-day is ingrained with what I have learned at the Brown School. Operating with professional integrity is something that I take really seriously, whether I'm working with a student and preparing them to speak in front of our donor community or I'm sitting down with the donor and talking with them about our programming.”

— **KALEIGH LAWRENCE, MSW '15**

Chief Philanthropy Officer,
College Bound

Brown School faculty lead a range of efforts to improve this important feature of society and ensure that it serves all children.

In collaboration with Parents as Teachers, **Dorian Traube** established the first virtual home visitation program, offering a reliable model via video conferencing technology. The program was scaled from offering 1,000 annual home visits in 2016-2019 with 25 home visitors to offering 600,000 virtual home visits in 2020 with 12,000 home visitors. Those numbers reflect only the growth of Parents as Teachers; far more home visits occurred through other organizations that followed this model.

Jason Jabbari directs the **Center for Education Research, Practice, and Policy Partnerships** (CERP³) as well as the **Clark-Fox Policy Institute**. A significant aspect of his research and policy work involves situating education in the broader social context of a child's life, and his education research focuses

on systems and recognizes that children are nested within families and schools and neighborhoods. CERP³ works closely with school partners to help define areas of research and propose policy solutions.

CERP³ provided first evidence on effects of the largest federal housing program on education outcomes.

This work led to scaling up of case management practices across the country and the Promise Neighborhood Initiative in 63106, based on a \$20.8 million grant in federal funding, one of the largest education investments in St. Louis by federal government.

In addition, the Clark-Fox Policy Institute collaborated with LaunchCode to provide first evidence on the impact of the organization's free technology training program.

LaunchCode used findings to expand the program and create additional sources of support for students at risk of non-completion.



▲ Small-group, hands-on exploration during a CERP3 learning session



▲ The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Older Adults and Aging Society

Aging is universal – we are all aging, and the development of policies and practices that support people’s wellbeing as they grow older is important for everyone.

Much of social work around aging, however, focuses on negative aspects, including illness and diminished capacity. While true for some, this focus doesn’t capture the full story of the life course. The Brown School reframes aging to expand the possibilities of fulfilling lives across the longer life course.

The **Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging** and the gerontology specialization in the MSW program anchor aging as a strategic priority. Through education and research, the Brown School addresses issues such as social engagement, older workers, caregiving supports, ageism, long-term care services, and ageing-in-place. Students in the Older Adult and Aging Society specialization, led by Associate Professor **Vanessa Fabbre**, are prepared to holistically support the needs and preferences of older adults and their families through clinical, community-based, and policy practice. Our work has influenced national aging policies and organizations, the local aging services network, and HR policies regarding older workers. The Brown School’s Friedman Center for Aging operates the **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)**, offering educational and social opportunities for nearly a thousand older adults in the St. Louis region each year.

MEET THE FACULTY



Vanessa Fabbre
Associate Professor



Cal Halvorsen
Associate Professor



Nancy Morrow-Howell
Betty Bofinger Brown
Distinguished Professor
of Social Policy

One of the hallmarks of the Brown School is that we are a leader in the concept of productive aging, which emphasizes the capacity of older adults and seeks to support them in work, volunteering, caregiving, and education through a range of programs and policies. **Nancy Morrow-Howell** and **Cal Halvorsen** are among the country's leading voices in the field of gerontological social work and have shaped the field's understanding of productive aging. This work has led to expanding opportunities through strategies such as age-inclusive hiring practices and targeted recruitment of older volunteers. As experts in productive aging, Morrow-Howell and Halvorsen frequently partner with local and national organizations to widen possibilities for older people's engagement in their families and communities.

+ They advise policy and research for the US Department of Labor to strengthen the only federal job training program for older adults.

- + They serve on aging advisory councils for St. Louis City and St. Louis County to improve programs and services for the region's older population.
- + Halvorsen and Morrow-Howell work with AmeriCorps to include older volunteers and to assess a pilot program to help older volunteers find jobs.
- + Morrow-Howell collaborates with the Oasis Institute, a national organization based in St. Louis. Her research shows the mutual benefits of a program that pairs older tutors with young students and advances the organization's efforts to secure funding.
- + Halvorsen is a senior research fellow for CoGenerate, a national organization that creates intergenerational solutions to social problems. His work helps the organization increase intergenerational engagement, bringing generations together on issues like climate change.

Intergenerational engagement occurs right here at WashU. Morrow-Howell co-teaches a Beyond Boundaries course "When I'm 64" that brings together 75 undergraduates with 12-15 older adults from the St. Louis community to learn about issues related to aging, including medicine, public health, law, business, and social work.



▲ Renita Waters, recipient of the 2025 Harvey A. and Dorismae Hacker Friedman Award with Brian Carpenter (left) and Nancy Morrow-Howell (right).

LOOKING FORWARD

BUILDING ON A CULTURE OF

Leadership at the Brown School

The Brown School has a 100-year legacy of being unapologetically ambitious in its aims to improve the quality of people's lives and alleviate the causes of suffering. Our curriculum emphasizes systems thinking and interdisciplinary leadership in the fields of social work and social policy. Our faculty's research drives change across a range of sectors that reposition our institutions at their most foundational levels so that they work better and more fairly. Our alumni include deans, public health directors, nonprofit CEOs, and leading researchers. Leadership is not just a product; it's part of our identity.



In order to maintain this culture now and in the future, we must:



Maintain affordability and access for students to assure a pipeline of future leaders, ready to tackle societal challenges

The school's highest fundraising priority is to become tuition free for its MSW students. Committing to practicum support and stipends was an important step toward reaching this goal.



Protect and invest in faculty development

As the examples in this document illustrates, Brown School faculty conduct research that significantly improves society and people's lives. We need to continue to fund their work and to recruit and retain the leading researchers and educators in the fields of social work and social policy.



Create more cross-sector leadership pathways

An excellent recent example is the **Public Exchange**, a new initiative that builds connections between WashU researchers and community partners in St. Louis to solve urgent problems. The program's pilot initiative assesses and addresses the ecological impact of the May 2025 tornado.





JUNE 2026