

GRAND CHALLENGES AWARDS WILL HELP SOCIAL WORK DOCTORAL STUDENTS TURN RESEARCH INTO POLICY & PRACTICE

*New York Community Trust awards \$100,000 to the
Grand Challenges for Social Work*

For Immediate Release

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BALTIMORE, June 22, 2022. – A new \$100,000 grant to the Grand Challenges for Social Work (GCSW) from The New York Community Trust will expand the corps of social workers with doctoral degrees and build their commitment to careers tackling some of society’s biggest challenges.

The funds will permit GCSW, a groundbreaking initiative that champions social progress powered by science, to provide fellowships coupled with mentoring to up to 26 doctoral students with approved dissertation or capstone topics. During the next two years, the fellowships will enable these graduate students to turn their research findings into proposals for policy and practice changes addressing one or more of society’s 13 biggest challenges.

The new program will provide \$3,000 stipends to support graduate students’ research in ways that better connect their scholarly work to the people and communities they are studying.

“Enormous thanks go to the New York Community Trust for its leadership in supporting the Grand Challenges,” said Richard P. Barth, PhD, MSW, a professor at the University of Maryland’s School of Social Work in Baltimore and Chair of the GCSW Executive Committee. “Helping emerging social work scholars to advance their careers—and the profession—speaks to the essence of our commitment to building a stronger scientific basis for social work and our allies to tackle the most significant societal problems.”

Developing the next generation of academic leaders

Beyond the tangible policy and practice change proposals that result from their dissertations, a main benefit of the fellowships will be to broaden the pipeline of social workers equipped for and committed to tackling and surmounting the 13 Grand Challenges.

GCSW is particularly interested in assisting graduate students from underrepresented communities to complete their doctoral work and become leaders of the profession, and so will partner with the Council on Social Work Education’s minority fellows’ program and seek applications from historically Black universities and other institutions with diverse student populations. A priority will be awarding fellowships to support dissertations or capstone

projects that can be translated into policies or practices that combat racism, promote diversity, or improve equity.

GCSW will also partner with the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE) to lead this project and develop a strategy for award selection and mentoring.

“This initiative will provide a meaningful mechanism for capitalizing on a vital constituency, the graduate students of today who are positioned to become the leaders in our field tomorrow,” said Denise Burnette, PhD, MSSW, MS, the incoming president of GADE, which will help make the fellowship awards. “These fellowships will promote continuity in our profession’s commitments to the development and implementation of high-quality, focused scholarship with real-world impact.”

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About the Grand Challenges for Social Work

In 2016, the GCSW initiative was launched to harness the ingenuity, expertise, dedication, and creativity of individuals and organizations within the field of social work and beyond to champion “social progress powered by science.” The fivefold mission of the GCSW is to identify the nation’s major social challenges; gather evidence-based practice models built on rigorous science; design imaginative, effective, and culturally relevant solutions; promote policies and professional practices that lead to positive change; and advance sustainable initiatives that achieve the positive impacts for all families and communities, tribal nations, and society as a whole. It is under the fiscal umbrella of the University of Maryland Baltimore Foundation.

About the New York Community Trust

Founded in 1924, The Trust is a grantmaking foundation dedicated to improving the lives of residents of New York City and its suburbs. It brings together individuals, families, foundations, and businesses to build a better community and support nonprofits that make a difference. It applies knowledge, creativity, and resources to the most challenging issues to ensure meaningful opportunities and a better quality of life for all New Yorkers, today and tomorrow.