

SPRING 2022

action

The Magazine of the Mandel School

New to the Neighborhood

Dean Dexter Voisin works to
build consensus and bridges



JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL
SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES

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On the cover:
Dexter R. Voisin, PhD, LCSW
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Sciences

Photo by Roger Mastroianni

From the Dean



Dear Mandel School Alumni and Friends:

I am honored to serve as dean of the the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. Transparency, communication, equity and collegiality are the core pillars of my leadership approach.

Because we are stronger together, I have been engaged in a large number of listen-and-learn conversations with staff, faculty, students, alumni and other key stakeholders.

I have learned a great deal during these conversations—including how our alumni are deeply committed to the Mandel School and are prepared to work collaboratively to usher in our next chapter of excellence and build on our most recent ranking by *U.S. News & World Report* as the No. 9 social work school in the country.

Many segments of our society are eager to embrace change. At the Mandel School, we are also embracing change so we can evolve and further equip our Change Leaders to help individuals, families, communities, organizations and society in the most impactful ways.

I look forward to listening and learning alongside many of you, and to our upcoming collective work. I hope to connect with you in the months and years ahead.

Best regards,

Dexter R. Voisin, PhD, LCSW
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean
in Applied Social Sciences

Honors and appointments

Recognizing some of the recent achievements of Mandel School faculty, staff and students

Mark L. Joseph, PhD, the Leona Bevis/Marguerite Haynam Professor in Community Development and founding director of the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities (NIMC), and **Amy T. Khare, PhD**, research director of NIMC, co-edited the book *What Works to Promote Inclusive, Equitable Mixed-Income Communities*.

Published last fall by the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank, the book includes cutting-edge essays discussing mixed-income communities as a strategy to address poverty, racial disparities, segregation and other challenges facing society. Free copies are available with \$7.99 shipping; to obtain a copy, call the university bookstore at 216.368.2650.

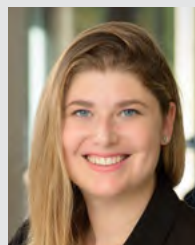


Joseph



Khare

Dana Prince, PhD, assistant professor, was a panelist at the National Institute of Mental Health's two-day virtual workshop in November. In "Advancing Training in Suicide Prevention Clinical Care," she discussed the contextual and population-specific factors for sexual orientation and gender identity that complement standard training information. The ultimate goal of the workshop was to prevent suicidal behavior through the improved training of providers.



Prince

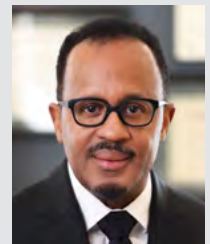
Aloen L. Townsend, PhD, the Ralph S. and Dorothy P. Schmitt Professor of Social Work, was appointed to the University Budget Committee (UBC) as the Mandel School's faculty representative last November. Her term continues through June



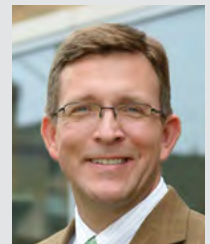
Townsend

30, 2024. The UBC serves as an advisory body to the provost and chief financial officer and is charged with oversight of the budgeting and forecasting models and related processes, assumptions and activities.

Dexter R. Voisin, PhD, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Sciences, moderated the "Social Determinants of Health" panel at Case Western Reserve's Think Showcase: The Next Generation of Health event in February. **Robert L. Fischer, PhD**, co-director of the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, was a featured panelist.



Voisin



Fischer

Voisin also delivered the Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month keynote address in February. "Promoting Racial Equity in Healthcare Alongside Communities," presented by Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Excellence, explored what it means to work alongside communities to promote health equity among racialized groups. The theme was inspired by King's quote, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhumane."

Scott A. Wilkes, PhD (LAW '94; GRS '13, social welfare), assistant dean of academic affairs, began a one-year term as chair of the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker and Marriage and Family Therapist (CSWMFT) Board in September. Wilkes started serving as a board member in January 2020; he also is co-chair of the CSWMFT's Social Work Professional Standards Committee.



Wilkes

Making data science work for good

New certificate unites engineering, social work schools on mission to make social impact

As a statistician by training and a former research economist for the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, **Francisca García-Cobián Richter, PhD**, understands the power of data. But the research associate professor at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences believes social work practitioners have yet to take advantage of its immense potential.



Richter

So she set out to change that.

Teaming with **Claudia Coulton, PhD (GRS '78, social welfare)**, a Distinguished University Professor, the Lillian F. Harris Professor of Social Work and the founding director of the Mandel School's Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, the two pitched Roger French, PhD, the Kyocera Professor of Ceramics in Case School of Engineering, on an idea to merge their respective expertise into a new program.

In January, the Mandel School and Case School of Engineering officially launched a Certificate in Data Sciences for Social Impact, a four-course program for graduate students and working professionals to apply data science technologies to their own areas of study—whether social work or another field.

In this four-course program, degree-seeking graduate students and working professionals learn to apply data science technologies to their own areas of study, whether social work or another field.

"We can bring more brave and more smart voices to the table to make these data technologies more useful," Richter said. "The new generation of social workers should not shy away from the data technologies that will help them address social justice and systemic racism, and will help communities make informed decisions."

The certificate program received initial funding from longtime donor Meredith M. Seikel, who saw its potential to "demonstrate a way in which technology can have a positive impact on humanity," she said.

During this first year of the program, Richter is collaborating with colleagues in nursing and engineering—as well as the local community—to create sample projects for students. "These projects will allow students to integrate the voice of their community into the analysis and into the questions they want to answer with data," said Richter. "Scientists have not relied as much on the voices of the people, whereas social workers have. This is their opportunity to incorporate those voices into the work."

To learn more about this program and to apply, visit case.edu/socialwork/data-science.

The Mandel School announced in December the Arol Shack Dissertation Awards for Outstanding Social Welfare Doctoral Students. The award funds are used to support students' work on their dissertation research. This year's winners were recognized during commencement in May:

Kylie Evans, for her proposal, *An Examination of Relational Resilience Among Adolescent Girls and Emerging Adult Women Exposed to Childhood Intimate Partner Violence*.



Evans

Tyrone Hamler, for his proposal to investigate the prevalence and predictors of decisional conflict among non-dialysis-dependent Black Americans over the age of 50 who are diagnosed with advanced chronic kidney disease.



Hamler

Fei Wang, for her proposal to examine stressors and depressive symptoms experienced by individuals who are primary caregivers for people with autism spectrum disorder.



Wang

School News

Groundbreaking brings local housing development “from waiting to action”



The Woodhill Homes public housing neighborhood is undergoing a six-phase redevelopment.

As they prepared the application for a federal grant to transform Cleveland’s Buckeye-Woodhill neighborhood, researchers from the Mandel School’s National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities (NIMC) spent months talking with residents about the assets already within their community—and their aspirations for its future.

In October—16 months after helping secure a \$35 million U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant—**Mark Joseph, PhD**, founding director of NIMC, shared a recent conversation with a Buckeye-Woodhill resident, Cynthia Dancy.

“Every year, we hear about change that’s coming,” he recalled her saying of the mostly unfulfilled promises of neighborhood revitalization, “and every year we have to wait.”

But wait no more. Joseph shared this story at a groundbreaking ceremony to kick off the first of a six-phase redevelopment of the Woodhill Homes public housing



Marilyn Burns, a community leader known as the “Mayor of Woodhill,” speaks at the complex last fall.



On this page: (left) Indigo Bishop (CWR '08, SAS '12), formerly of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority; Burns; and Taryn Gress (SAS '11), strategic director of CWRU's National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities, walk through the soon-to-be-redeveloped Buckeye-Woodhill neighborhood and greet residents (right).



Photography by Matt Shiffler

neighborhood, which, when complete in approximately 2027, will include:

- 638 new, mixed-income rental units (plus 162 vouchers for units in other developments in the region);
- a new health clinic;
- an early childhood education center; and
- retail space on a commercial corridor.

"As we turn these first shovels in the ground," said Joseph, also the Leona Bevis/Marguerite Haynam Associate

Professor in Community Development, during the groundbreaking, "let this be a turning point from waiting to action. Let this be a turning point from isolation to connectedness and social cohesion. Let this be a turning point from stigma to respect. Let this be a turning point from trauma to healing.

"And let this be a turning point from the racial wrongs of the past to the racial justice of the future."

—Emily Mayock

The numbers behind the grant

\$35M

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



1 of 5 cities in the country to earn the grant in 2021



2 partners who received the grant: the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority

Media moments

At the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, our faculty members' research has profound effects on the field of social work. But their impact extends beyond scholarly journals: Nearly daily, they help increase the public's understanding of complex topics through appearances in local, national and international media outlets. Here, we highlight just a few of their many recent insights:



“ We don't educate kids enough about what stress feels like, and how to manage it. We're not able to access the parts of the brain that allow us to take in new information and think about it critically. We're in this high-alarm state. ”

—**Jennifer King, DSW**, assistant professor and co-director of the Center on Trauma and Adversity, to **Mashable** on managing children's stress during the pandemic



“ COVID-19 is absolutely devastating police departments around the country. I'm certain there are local departments that have been ravaged by this disease, as well as our hospitals' staff, firemen and EMS. We need to do everything we can to promote healthy, safe first responders. ”

—**Mark Singer, PhD (SAS '79; GRS '83, social welfare)**, the Leonard W. Mayo Professor in Family and Child Welfare and deputy director of the Begun Center, in **The Seattle Herald** about COVID-19 vaccine mandates for police



“ We found that this type of high-effort coping strategy can really be detrimental to the health of African Americans. ”

—**Ann Nguyen, PhD**, assistant professor, on **WCPN ideastream's Sound of Ideas** on how “John Henryism” leads to long-term physiological costs for Black Americans (for more information, see p. 10)



“ It is certainly easier in modern-day society, such as it is, to provide all those social and economic resources to a housing complex and a neighborhood if there is an economic mix of residents. ”

—**Mark Joseph, PhD**, the Leona Bevis/Marguerite Haynam Professor in Community Development and founding director of the National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities, in **Stuff** on mixed-use housing projects in New Zealand



“ It's way easier to get a handgun than it is to do just about anything else in this country. Our background check is woefully inadequate. ”

—**Dan Flannery, PhD**, the Semi J. and Ruth W. Begun Professor and director of the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education, to **ABC News** about the availability of handguns in the United States



“ That preparedness, that social-emotional learning, that interaction with peers is something that is a potential gap that they're going to carry. ”

—**Rob Fischer, PhD**, associate professor and co-director of the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, to **NBC affiliate WKYC** about the longer-term effects of early childhood enrollment declines during the pandemic

Successful treatment options identified for opioid abuse

Study shows combining methadone and behavioral therapy is key

Medications for opioid abuse are associated with lower death rates and improved quality of life for people in recovery. But which of the commonly used medications for opioid abuse are most effective? And how does that effectiveness improve when combined with behavioral therapy?

A new study conducted by researchers in the Center on Trauma and Adversity at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, recently published in the *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, examined those questions in hopes of improving recovery rates for what has become a national epidemic.

Since the early 2000s, the United States has seen unprecedented increases in opioid-related deaths nationwide. In Ohio alone, the death rate from accidental opioid-related overdoses increased 1,081% from 2000 to 2017, according to the Ohio Department of Health.

The study

The team, which included researchers from Indiana University, Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Medicaid, analyzed data from nearly 82,000 Medicaid claims in Ohio. They examined the length of time between when a person started and stopped taking each of the three common medications for opioid abuse: methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone.

The medications in the study are used to treat opioid abuse for short-acting drugs such as heroin, morphine and codeine, as well as semi-synthetic opioids like oxycodone and hydrocodone.

The longer the time span between starting and ending the treatment, the more effective the medication. Conversely, people who discontinued their medications sooner were less likely to stay in treatment.

The research found that, overwhelmingly, methadone was associated with the lowest risk of treatment discontinuation, followed by buprenorphine, then naltrexone. Among patients on buprenorphine, after a period of time, the risk of discontinuation of treatment was similar to that of methadone.

Researchers also found that medication-assisted treatment, combined with behavioral health therapy such as counseling, increased success in patient retention.

"Treatment retention is the lens through which we did this research," said study co-author **Krystel Tossone, PhD**,

a research assistant professor in the Mandel School's Center on

Trauma and Adversity at the time of the study's release who is now a researcher at the Ohio Colleges of Medicine Government Resource Center. "If you want to keep a patient on medication-assisted treatment for a longer period of time, methadone is the best option."

Implications

Tossone said she hopes the research demonstrates the need to expand access to methadone and buprenorphine treatment, noting that medications for opioid abuse aren't always available in some areas.

For example, although it has the shortest retention period of the three medications, naltrexone is often the only medical option available in some areas, she said.

"We want to reduce barriers to treatment on a systemic level—to make sure that people who want to get treatment have access," she said. "If you think about any chronic conditions, do we limit access to medication? Could you imagine if only one diabetes medication was available? The stigmatized nature of opioid use disorder—and its treatment—has created such barriers."

—Colin McEwen

For more on how Mandel School faculty, staff and alumni are fighting the opioid crisis in Ohio, turn to p. 16.



Tossone

Measuring the poor health outcomes of 'John Henryism' for older Black Americans

Working harder to cope with stress and discrimination actually backfires

According to late-1800s folklore, Black American railroad worker John Henry endured a contest that would tax his strength enough to kill him.

The legend goes that John Henry, whose job was to hammer metal rods into rock, was pitted in a race against a steam-powered drill that threatened the workers' livelihoods because the machine was faster. Against the odds, he won—but died from the stress.

Coined in the 1980s by renowned epidemiologist Sherman James, "John Henryism" is a term describing some Black Americans' response to discrimination—namely that they can overcome its effects through working harder and longer. Unfortunately, James and others found that such extraordinary ongoing exertion also leads to accumulated physiological costs, such as hypertension and high blood pressure.

The tale of the "steel-driving man" inspired songs, books and films—and, now, research from Case Western Reserve University Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

"In short, the John Henryism effect suggests that inequality has a hidden health impact that builds up over a lifetime," said **Ann W. Nguyen, PhD**, assistant professor at the Mandel School. She has co-authored a study examining differences in the



Nguyen

John Henryism hypothesis across subgroups of the Black diaspora in the U.S. including African and Caribbean Americans.

The study, involving a team of researchers from several universities across the nation, examined data collected from the National Survey of American Life of 546 African Americans and 141 Caribbean Blacks, all older than 55. Participants were surveyed about their health concerns, such as hypertension and blood pressure; that data was compared and measured against John Henryism and discrimination.

More than 85% of the participants reported using John Henryism as a strategy to cope with discrimination,

according to the study. However, the resulting health concerns for African Americans was significantly higher than for Caribbean Blacks.

"For African Americans, we saw greater use of this coping strategy at high levels of discrimination resulting in greater risk for hypertension," Nguyen said. "But it's the reverse in Caribbean Blacks. This group actually has decreased risk for hypertension at higher levels of both John Henryism and discrimination."

John Henryism legend meets the myth

Working harder as a coping mechanism—especially when facing discrimination—could essentially

“Think of high-effort coping as the idea of trying and trying, and when you’re set back, you try harder rather than going to other people for help and support.”

— Ann W. Nguyen, PhD

backfire for Black Americans, according to the research, published in the *Journals of Gerontology*.

“Caribbean Blacks’ experiences have been much different from those of African Americans,” Nguyen said. “Additionally, the concept of Blackness is much more stigmatized here in the U.S. than in Caribbean countries.

“Think of high-effort coping as the idea of trying and trying,” Nguyen continued. “And when you’re set back, you try harder rather than going to other people for help and support.”

Nguyen wondered whether the findings for Caribbean Blacks would hold up over time.

“This survey is a cross-sectional study, essentially a snapshot in time,” she said. “I think a longitudinal study—which would follow participants over a length of time—might provide deeper insights and possibly show that the use of high effort coping in response to discrimination is just as harmful for Caribbean Blacks over time as it is for African Americans.”

Nguyen was joined in the research by **David Miller, PhD**, associate professor at the Mandel School; Omonigho Bubu from New York University; Harry Owen Taylor from the University of Toronto; Ryon Cobb from the University of Georgia; Antoine Trammell from Emory University; and Uchechi A. Mitchell from the University of Illinois Chicago.

—Colin McEwen

Monitoring Cleveland’s effort to address to address lead poisoning

Interactive online dashboard goes live, highlighting progress of public-private Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition partnership

When Cleveland City Council passed the Lead Safe Cleveland ordinance in 2019—landmark legislation resulting from data showing the toxic heavy metal was poisoning the city’s youth at an alarming rate—a team of researchers from the Mandel School was tasked with tracking and evaluating the initiative’s progress.



Fischer

And now the public—tenants, landlords, advocates, politicians and the media—can monitor the progress, too, on a new interactive online dashboard.

The work is part of an association with the Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition, a first-of-its-kind, public-private partnership to help landlords and tenants access resources to make housing lead-safe throughout Cleveland. That work includes increased screening, early intervention to remediate lead risks and policy recommendations.

“The dashboard is now at a place where it becomes a major transparency mechanism for this vital community initiative,” said **Rob Fischer, PhD**, associate professor and co-director of the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development. “It allows the public to see how the progress is going. We’re now fielding calls from other Rust Belt cities, like Milwaukee and Detroit, about how the data can be used in collaborative lead prevention work.”

—Colin McEwen



New to the *neighborhood*

An accomplished scholar and a trailblazer in academia, the Mandel School's new dean, Dexter Voisin, works to build consensus and bridges

By Ginger Christ

With a last name that literally means “neighbor” in French, it’s of little surprise that fostering community is among **Dexter Voisin’s** highest priorities as dean of Case Western Reserve University’s Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Immediately upon starting at the Mandel School in January, Voisin (pronounced *vwah-zan*) embarked on a listening tour, meeting with students, faculty, staff and alumni to talk about their passions and aspirations for the school.

And he has plenty more conversations—and, importantly, actions—planned.

“I use a metaphor of being at the airport and on the tarmac and building speed for takeoff,” Voisin, PhD, said about his first few months on the job. “It’s been intense, exhilarating, exhausting and very meaningful all at the same time.”

As a leader long known for both strengthening bonds and forging new paths, Voisin is focused on using those qualities to engage his colleagues.



A lifetime of “firsts”; a record of action

Throughout his life, Voisin has been a trailblazer. He was the first in his immediate family to migrate to the U.S. from Trinidad and Tobago, and the first among them to attend college (St. Andrews College) and graduate school (University of Michigan and Columbia University).

He was the first person of color to be promoted to full professor at the University of Chicago’s Crown Family School of Social Work Policy and Practice.

He was the first non-white dean appointed at the University of Toronto’s Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work in 105 years—and the first Black dean at the university in 194 years—when he took the helm in 2019.

“I never stepped out with the goal of being the first. I entered these roles without knowing this history and was simply motivated by a desire to work hard and do my best,” he explained. “In hindsight, I now tend to frame these experiences as being a bridge builder. You need to have someone who steps out to pave a path forward for others.”

Which is precisely who he’s been. Shortly after he came to the U.S., his brother followed suit. And, by the time Voisin left the University of Toronto for Case Western Reserve at the end of 2021, the University of Toronto had appointed three more Black deans.

But for Voisin, it’s about more than just being first; it’s about being able to make real change. After two decades as a faculty member at University of Chicago, Voisin had grown restless, listening to people have the same conversations they’d been having for years about problems for which he saw solutions.

Taking the advice of trusted mentors, he decided to pursue a deanship. After his appointment at University of Toronto in 2019, Voisin quickly set out to attract more students of color to the school, engage the community, increase funding from a variety of sources and raise the school’s profile.

“It was a truly exceptional visit. I was just blown away by the volume of applied work being done by this world-class faculty who care deeply for—and engage authentically with—communities.”

“The bottom line is I wanted to make change on a bigger institutional level,” Voisin said. “I wanted to move beyond talking about problems to actually working with others to collaboratively solve them.”

And he was successful.

In his nearly two-and-a-half years at University of Toronto, Voisin and his colleagues increased the international applicant pool by 300%, raised money for the school’s first indigenous endowed professorship, increased diversity among faculty and postdoctoral fellows by 44%, and elevated the profile of the school within the university, the community and the global stage. He served on

a number of university-wide committees, including co-chairing its Anti-Black Racism Task Force, and led the school through much of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“What really came across right from the beginning was his commitment to education, his strong sense of the importance of education of clinical social workers, his real commitment to research in social work and the value of the social work profession,” said Cheryl Regehr, PhD, provost of the University of Toronto.

Research powerhouse

This commitment to research is ingrained in him. Noted as one of the top 2% of most-cited researchers in any field, according to global data from Stanford University and Elsevier, Voisin has authored more than 170 articles in peer-reviewed journals. He still is active in research, focusing on racism, violence and health—and often shares his knowledge as a commentator for local, national and international news outlets. In 2019 Voisin authored a book, *America the Beautiful and Violent: Black Youth and Neighborhood Trauma in Chicago* (Columbia University Press).

Voisin has seen that same dedication to research at the Mandel School since he first gave a presentation on campus in 2019. He remembers being struck by the thoughtful questions he fielded—and the expansive, highly innovative research efforts faculty were leading.

"It was a truly exceptional visit," Voisin remembered. "I was just blown away by the volume of applied work being done by this world-class faculty who care deeply for—and engage authentically with—communities."

Three years later, now as dean, Voisin is keenly focused on elevating the work of the Mandel School's researchers so their influence on government policy and impact on the world continue to grow.

Case Western Reserve Provost Ben Vinson III called Voisin "a top-caliber intellectual" who will serve as an inspiration for the school—and beyond. And the provost feels confident Voisin can make the Mandel School—which is the top-ranked social work program in Ohio and No. 9 in the country, according to *U.S. News & World Report's* recently released 2023 listing—even greater.

"I hope that he can lead our faculty to achieve their greatest heights and aspirations. I hope that he can build our student body into the finest anywhere," Vinson said. "And I hope that he can make a positive impact on our city through his incredible energy and uncanny knowledge about the social issues that are fundamental to building a better, greater society."

Bringing people together

Vinson noted that Voisin has impeccable leadership and listening skills—sentiments echoed by those who have known him throughout his career.

Ralph DiClemente, PhD, chair of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the New York University School of Global Public Health, first met Voisin in 2000 when the Mandel School's new dean was a doctoral student at Columbia University. DiClemente had given a presentation at the University of California, San Francisco, and Voisin approached him afterward, asking if they could work together. The young doctoral student explained that he thought he could learn a lot from DiClemente.

The conversation marked the start of decades of collaboration.

"He's a great partner—thoughtful, insightful, congenial, collegial, collaborative, and I think one of his strengths is his ability to communicate ideas," DiClemente said. "He brings out the best in people, and that includes me."

Voisin's students have been enriched by his mentorship, guidance and collaboration, DiClemente said, noting that the two-time dean has a genuine interest in promoting the

careers of his students and helping them "catalyze their trajectories."

Even those who were not his students have benefited from his guidance. In 2011, Jun Sung Hong, PhD, an associate professor in the School of Social Work at Wayne State University, was a doctoral student at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, when he met Voisin, then on the faculty at University of Chicago.

More than a decade later, the two continue to collaborate. Sung Hong said the dean goes out of his way to support doctoral students and junior faculty. "He's encouraging and reasonable, yet has high standards," recalled Sung Hong.

Lois Takahashi, PhD, director of the University of Southern California Price School of Public Policy in Sacramento, characterized Voisin, her research partner, as an "inspirational leader"—someone who can bring together people from across different disciplines to work and tackle a problem.

"He pushes us to be our best. He pushes me to be more than I thought was my best," said Takahashi. "He's the hardest-working person I know ... really smart, very productive.

"He's also somebody," she said, "who wants to push the envelope."

Listening for the future

Voisin has big ideas for the Mandel School. He wants to grow research and awareness of its local, national and global impact. He has plans to create more opportunities for students of color, and reduce the tuition burden for all students. He wants to challenge the social work profession as a whole to look internally, not just externally, to address racial inequities.

And he intends to build more bridges—within the school, across the university and in the community.

But it starts, first and foremost, with listening to his new neighbors. Voisin hopes to develop a plan through what he calls a "collective approach" that is "grounded in community." He wants to know what has and hasn't been tried in the school—and then build a shared vision based on what he hears.

"An incredible heart makes him an empathetic leader and keen listener," Provost Vinson said of Dean Voisin. "He's the right man for the right time." ■





The unrelenting crisis

While much of the world focuses on COVID-19, an epidemic surges in Cleveland and beyond—and Mandel School faculty, staff and alumni are there to respond

BY LAUREN MARCCHAZA

Last fall, the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner issued two public health alerts unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic: The first came when 12 people in the northeast Ohio county died of opioid overdoses in two days, and the second when eight died in a single day of the same cause.

By the end of 2021, drug overdose deaths in the county, which has consistently seen among the worst overdose fatality rates in the state and the U.S., surged to near record-breaking highs—approximately 700 in total. The numbers surpassed 2017's statistics, which previously marked the worst year in the county's history.

But this time, carfentanyl—a synthetic opioid used as an elephant tranquilizer that is 100 times more potent than fentanyl—was not the culprit as it was in 2017. Instead, it was fentanyl, which is cheaper to produce in smaller quantities, leading to higher profits for traffickers, according to **Ryan McMaster**, research data manager at the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

IN 2021

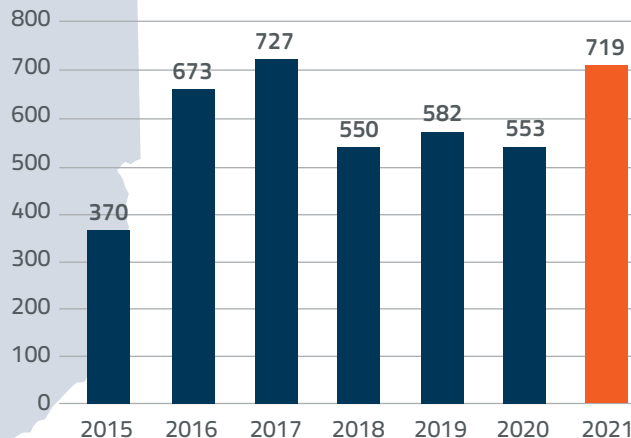


CUYAHOGA COUNTY

More than 700 people died of drug overdoses—a 30% increase over 2020.

The majority of deaths were caused by synthetic opioids like **fentanyl**.

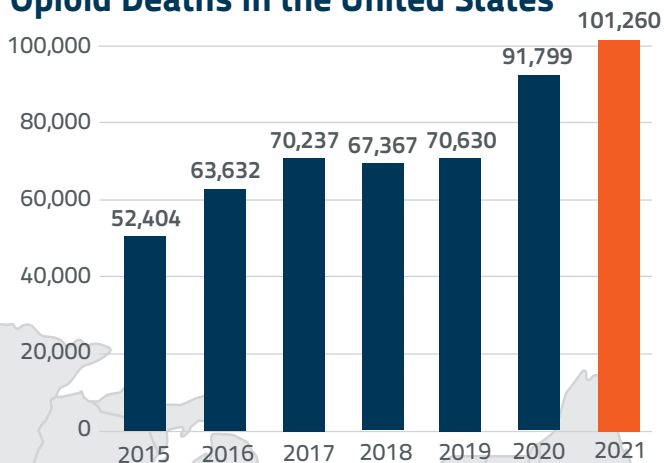
Most overdose deaths were **white men aged 45** and older.



Opioid Deaths in Cuyahoga County

Source: Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office

Opioid Deaths in the United States



UNITED STATES

In 2021, record-breaking 105,752 people died of suspected drug overdoses—a 15.9% increase over 2020.

The majority of deaths were caused by synthetic opioids like **fentanyl**.

Most overdose deaths occurred in people **ages 25 to 55**.



Ohio ranks third for the most overdose deaths in the country.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



“Synthetics like fentanyl are cheap, and their use is on the rise here because there’s a market for them.”

—Ryan McMaster

“Ohio has a very large population and drugs are easily accessible in Cuyhoga County,” said McMaster. “Synthetics like fentanyl are cheap, and their use is on the rise here because there’s a market for them.”

Illegal fentanyl is typically made in labs in other countries and smuggled into the United States through Mexico, said **Daniel Flannery, PhD**, the Semi J. and Ruth W. Begun Professor at the Mandel School. Traffickers and dealers mix fentanyl in with other drugs—such as cocaine and methamphetamines—to increase potency and profit.

“There are pills and cocaine that have fentanyl in them, and people aren’t always aware of it,” said Flannery, who is also the director of the Begun Center. Because just two milligrams of fentanyl can be lethal, highly potent fentanyl and users—unwitting and otherwise—make for a deadly combination.

“It makes you wonder what’s going on in substance use in general,” said McMaster. “It seems like there’s a new wave.”

And that wave is being brought to shore by an overwhelming demand for deadly synthetic drugs—in the midst of another lingering public health crisis.

“A perfect storm”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a report last year calling the convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the opioid crisis “a perfect storm” that pushed drug overdose deaths to record-breaking levels across the country: more than 100,000 in a single year.

When the first stay-at-home order was issued in March of 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19, **Monika Trgovich (SAS ’21)** was the director of recovery housing at Y-Haven, the YMCA of Greater Cleveland’s homeless shelter and drug abuse and addiction treatment center.

“There was no handbook on how to help somebody in recovery during a pandemic,” she said. “COVID has changed how we operate in the world, and it’s had a negative impact on people in recovery.”

The isolation that kept so many people safe during the pandemic crippled recovery efforts for those struggling with addiction, as meetings were canceled, held virtually or avoided by those worried about catching COVID-19, Trgovich explained. Fewer people were coming in for the in-person meetings that are crucial for those in recovery, as they

connect people with “a common goal,” she said.

When people lost their jobs or their homes, stimulus checks distributed through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act were a lifeline for many Americans. But for people struggling with substance abuse disorders, it sometimes became just the opposite.

In fact, a recent study published in the April issue of the *International Journal of Drug Policy* shows that overdose deaths spiked in the weeks after stimulus checks were mailed. Referred to as the “check effect,” an unintended consequence of these economic payments was that those with substance abuse disorders were thrown back into their cycle of abusing drugs—in an even more isolated world.

“The checks were a huge trigger for our clients,” said Trgovich. “And even though we talked with them about how to manage these checks, we’d lose clients after the checks were sent out. We knew they were using again.”

Data tells the story

One might expect that, as the pandemic wanes and people return to more socially connected life, drug overdoses will decrease. But Flannery and Begun Center researchers recently conducted a study—published last fall in *Police Chief*, the International Association of Chiefs of Police magazine—that predicted another wave in opioid overdose deaths. That prediction appears to be playing out in reality.

During the pandemic shutdown, as Trgovich pointed out, many people

Approximately two-thirds of those who died from overdoses in 2021 had more than one drug in their systems.

Cuyahoga County Board of Health data

who use or abuse opioids stopped their treatment and were socially isolated, making them more inclined to begin using again. Then, in May and June of 2020, COVID lockdowns lifted, and overdose deaths spiked. Though the reasoning for the drastic increase can't be pinpointed to a single cause, Flannery fears the data indicates a repeat could be in store as restrictions everywhere are lifted.

"Unfortunately, 2022 is probably going to look a lot like 2021," said Flannery. "But knowledge is power here. The more data and information we have, the better we can empower different players to do their jobs and save lives."

One such player: **April Vince (SAS '98)**, grant program manager for the Overdose Data to Action Initiative at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. Three years ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention awarded Ohio \$4.4 million annually to address the opioid epidemic, and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health disseminates that funding to organizations battling the crisis throughout the area. With a careful

eye on data and results collected by the Begun Center's team, Vince oversees the work of these subgrantees, looking for ways to improve or customize their work around the needs of each community.

"We are not going to have an easy year ahead if the drug seizures are any indication," she said. The Drug Enforcement Agency called 2021 drug seizures in northeast Ohio "record-shattering," noting a 400% increase in methamphetamines and fentanyl pills designed to look like prescription painkillers. Yet despite the startling amount of drug seizures in 2021, supply on the streets of Cuyahoga County remains alarmingly high, according to McMaster.

Another source of critical data Vince references is the Overdose Data Dashboard on the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's website—a resource McMaster developed in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's surveillance team. The dashboard shares timely, high-quality, comprehensive data on drug overdoses throughout the

county, including deaths, naloxone administrations, emergency department visits and drug lab testing, in an effort to help the public understand the drug overdose epidemic, as well as inform prevention and response efforts.

"Data drives programming," said Vince. "You need to analyze the data and be very methodical and purposeful so that you know when you put programming in place, you're not just playing whack-a-mole."

Complex problems require complex solutions

But, as the name of Vince's grant program makes clear, that data must be put into action.

"We're not just sitting around collecting data," said Flannery.

"We're embedded with our partners in the community. And it's not just us—all of these partners are working together here." That includes law enforcement, the medical examiner, social workers, government agencies, hospitals, researchers, nonprofit organizations and the intelligence community.

And, working together, they've made significant progress.

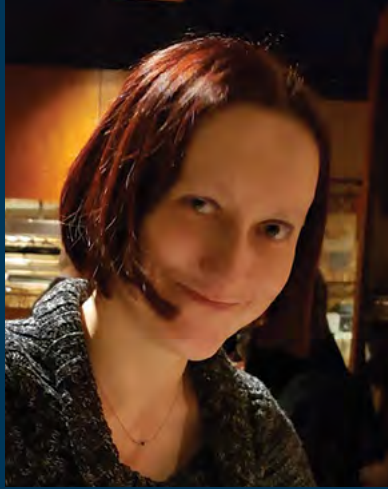
Naloxone kits—which can reverse the effects of an overdose—are more accessible than they used to be. These and fentanyl testing strips—which allow users to identify the presence of fentanyl in their drugs—have been placed in high-risk communities at hotels, restaurants, bars and gas stations.

Thanks to the Overdose Data to Action Initiative, first responders and law enforcement officers now



"Knowledge is power here. The more data and information we have, the better we can empower different players to do their jobs and save lives."

—Dan Flannery, PhD



“We need to make it easier to access services. We have to figure out ways to get clients into treatment sooner.”

—Monika Trgovich (SAS '21)

receive trauma-informed training on substance abuse, administering the naloxone they more regularly carry and treating an overdose scene.

Quick Response Teams—housed at the Office of Opioid Safety in Cleveland’s MetroHealth hospital system—snap into action every Monday when they receive a weekly report of every non-lethal overdose that has occurred in Cleveland over the past week. A social worker and a plainclothes police officer knock on each door on the list in an effort to guide the individual to treatment.

But treatment for substance abuse disorders is just as complex as the crisis itself. “It is not one size fits all,” Flannery explained, “nor is it equally accessible.” Medically underserved populations have less access to healthcare, insurance coverage and treatment. And COVID-19 has kept people from seeking treatment as they avoid congregate settings.

“We need to make it easier to access services,” said Trgovich. “We have to figure out ways to get clients into treatment sooner.”

Not giving up

The stigma associated with substance use and abuse continues to keep many people from seeking help. “We need to destigmatize addiction and

drug use so we can talk about it more, so people won’t be scared to come forward for treatment,” said Vince.

For her, education and changing perceptions about substance abuse disorder is a personal priority. “I don’t know one person who hasn’t been touched by this epidemic,” Vince said. “Addiction may be a choice the first time someone uses, but it’s a disease once they’re addicted. And every life is worth saving.”

Trgovich agrees that education is still the key to undoing the crisis. She recently accepted a position as director of recovery services for Aware Recovery Care, which provides treatment to people in the privacy of their own homes—a different and,

she hopes, more effective approach.

Now that the Overdose Data Dashboard is up and running, McMaster has moved on to analyzing overdose deaths in relation to social determinants of health in an attempt to identify new risk factors. Not surprisingly, he’s already beginning to see a connection between death rates and poverty.

“I feel like we’ve been tackling this for a long time,” McMaster said. “We’re talking about this like it’s just an issue, but it’s taking people’s lives. We have to start sharing information to spread the story, otherwise it’s going to continue to go on at this rate.”

The key, Flannery noted, is education and awareness of the crisis and its potential solutions—including research-supported recommendations for law enforcement, hospitals, policy makers and social workers.

“We all have a role to play to address these complicated issues in a way that can affect change over time,” he said. “We can’t do it alone.” ■



“Addiction may be a choice the first time someone uses, but it’s a disease once they’re addicted. And every life is worth saving.”

—April Vince (SAS '98)

A passion for protecting vulnerable populations

One alumna's public health skills and trauma-informed approach are aiding humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and surrounding regions

Tensions between Russia and Ukraine had been climbing for nearly two months when

C. Robin Rentrope (SAS '19; GRS '19, public health) began work as a global health security fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in January.

Assigned to an operations unit within the CDC, Rentrope and her colleagues were charged to report daily on refugee and healthcare-specific crises. When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, pinpointing critical issues in bordering countries became her nearly round-the-clock responsibility.

"I hardly remember what I was doing when I first started," Rentrope said of her first few weeks at the CDC. "Ukraine is our top priority now."

Hours before her interview with *Action* on a Saturday in mid-March, the busy young mom had prepared for her next CDC report by reading the news and checking refugee relief updates on her phone during a haircut appointment.

"I haven't been there long, but I'm diving in and trying to keep up to speed," Rentrope said, as she bounced her 1-year-old daughter on her knee. "I hate that [the war in Ukraine] is the reason that I get to do this work with refugees ... but I'm surrounded by people who care. People are staying up all night—some are risking their own lives to help save others. So in that way, it's really incredible."

The yearlong global health security fellowship is co-funded by the Public Health Institute, with an aim of providing frontline experience to



Photo courtesy of Robin Rentrope

Rentrope

recent public health graduates and recruiting future leaders in the field to the CDC.

Rentrope remarked that her time and experiences at the Mandel School have proven invaluable in her role at the CDC—and in her continued work at Case Western Reserve.

On top of her full-time, remote job at the CDC and various volunteer roles, Rentrope works part time as a co-investigator with the Center on Trauma and Adversity at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and as lab supervisor of the HIV Biobehavioral and Symptom Science research team at Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing.

"I didn't imagine being employed by the university after graduating. I thought I would be getting back into

the field, in grassroots movements to promote health equity," Rentrope said. "But the research we are doing at CWRU is really important to improve the health of a vulnerable population—people living with HIV."

Rentrope enjoys that the work allows her to conduct long-term research while using the trauma-informed approach she learned as a Leadership Fellow at the Mandel School.

"My team members at the nursing and medical schools really value my social work skills," she said. "I've been able to retain research participants by building trust, staying flexible, providing referrals and increasing research compensation when appropriate. These may seem like little things, but those little things add up to big changes."

—Carey Skinner Moss

Class Notes

Reported to the Mandel School from Sept. 1, 2021, through March 31, 2022.



Emiko Honma (SAS '57) and her family are assembling care kits for essential workers of a nearby hospital in New Jersey as a small contribution to their community in these uncertain times.



Wilma Peebles-Wilkins (SAS '71) was featured in a story in Oberlin College's fall alumni magazine about the history of Oberlin Village, North Carolina.

The article relates to Peebles-Wilkins' oral history and documentary work on Oberlin Village, which also includes the WRAL documentary *Oberlin: A Village Rooted In Freedom*.

Charles "Charley" Emlet, PhD (GRS '98, social welfare), announced his retirement from the University of Washington School of Social Work, where he has been a member of the faculty since 1999.

Shari Nacson (SAS '02) is a contributing author and editor in the newly released *Far From Their Eyes: Ohio Migration Anthology, Volume I*, a collection of paintings, poems, essays and short stories from Ohioans with a connection to migration.



Phyllis "Seven" Harris (MNO '05) was appointed to serve as one of six co-chairs on Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb's transition team. Harris also serves as the executive director of the LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland.



Sister **Erin Zubal (SAS '06)** of Cleveland was named the first chief of staff for NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice at the beginning of the new year. Previously, Zubal was a social worker and educator for 15 years in multiple Catholic elementary and high schools in the Diocese of Cleveland.

Teresa Schleicher (SAS '07), who is a Mandel School Alumni Association Board member, started a new position as a foundation gift officer for the Cleveland Orchestra.



Ebony Speakes-Hall (SAS '11) was selected as one of the faculty members for Warner Music Group's new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Institute. She's also an assistant professor of social work at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and the equity officer on the American Civil Liberties Union Ohio affiliate board.

Ramses Clements (SAS '13), a Mandel School Alumni Association Board member, was promoted to interim manager of the education and outreach unit in Public Affairs at the Cleveland Water Department, where he coordinates community outreach events. In September, Clements married Mikayla Miller in Canton, Ohio, and they will appear in an upcoming episode of *House Hunters* on HGTV.

Kara Davis (SAS '14) was selected as the new continuous quality improvement senior manager for the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services. She has been with the agency for more than 27 years.



Vincent



Ballard



Farkas

Aviva Vincent, PhD (SAS '19), and **Isabel Ballard (SAS '21)**, along with Associate Professor **Kathleen J. Farkas, PhD (WRC '73, SAS '84)**, published the article, "Mind Full or Mindful? A Cohort Study of Equine-Facilitated Therapy for Women Veterans," in the *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*. Vincent also led a team that published the article "Evaluation of a Modified Bit Device to Obtain Saliva Samples from Horses" in *Veterinary Sciences*.

Class Notes, continued

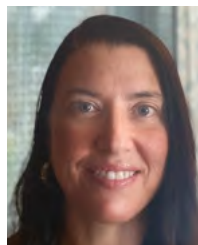


Denise Caviness (SAS '20) of Cleveland was promoted to social services supervisor at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Division of Senior and Adult Services.



Gabriela Sehinkman, PhD (SAS '20), started a new private practice, TeleAyuda, designed to serve and be staffed by Latinos in Northeast Ohio to provide culturally appropriate and specialized therapy.

Briona Borgos (SAS '21) works as a school social worker in a high school in Hilliard, Ohio. Borgos meets with students individually and in groups, including one for female athletes, another for those suffering from anxiety and one for people seeking to form healthy relationships.



Anna Brooks (SAS '22) was hired as a teletherapist with NewPath Family Solutions, formerly St. Joseph's Orphanage, in Cincinnati. She also accepted a position with the Lindner Center of HOPE/UC Health as a coordinator and patient advocate for the Outpatient

Comprehensive Adolescent and Child Diagnostic Assessment Program.

Nicole Hatcher (SAS '22) accepted a role as the operations manager for Foluke Cultural Arts Center in East Cleveland, and assists grantees at Neighborhood Connections, a community-building program in Cleveland.

Devon Jones (SAS '22, MNO '22) of Cleveland is the new student organizer for National Association of Social Workers Ohio, where he's working on the Campaign for Paid Field Practicums.

In Memoriam

Death notices reported to the Mandel School from Sept. 1, 2021, through Feb. 28, 2022.

Georgia A. Westervelt Anderson (SAS '54), of Amherst, Massachusetts, died Nov. 25. An avid reader and lover of yoga, she was a social worker in many different settings—community and medical centers, schools, mental health clinics, and her own private practice she opened after retiring at age 65.

Kerry Beldin, PhD (GRS '08, social welfare), of Omaha, Nebraska, died Jan. 5 after a six-year battle with lung cancer. She was a professor of social work at the University of Nebraska-Omaha from 2008 until she retired in March 2021. Her research focused heavily on human trafficking and improving community responses to sexual assault.

Fred L. Bracken (SAS '66) died Nov. 18 in Kansas City, Missouri. His career as a clinical social worker spanned 45 years.

Linda Van Buskirk (SAS '72) died Oct. 26 in Bradenton, Florida. She was a child welfare caseworker for the Orleans County Department of Social Services before moving on to The Dale Association in Lockport, New York, where she worked for nearly 40 years and eventually rose to the level of president and CEO.

Carol Calladine (SAS '66), died in Cleveland on May 9, 2021. She is survived by her husband of 54 years, **Andrew Calladine (SAS '66)**. She spent her career working for children's service agencies, and retired from her position of director of senior services for the city of Rocky River in 2014. She was an educator, public speaker, television and radio personality, as well as an author of four books, a newspaper column and numerous magazine articles.

Amber Lee Donovan (SAS '06), of Bay Village, Ohio, died Jan. 5 following a prolonged battle with cancer. Donovan was the founder and executive director of Community of Hope, an organization serving youth in Ohio as they age out of the foster care system. Donovan devoted much of her career to serving Cuyahoga County's houseless population.

Maribeth Cleary Ebner (SAS '72) died Jan. 7. She was a social worker in Cleveland before transitioning to working in the insurance industry for more than 25 years.

Suzanne R. Ermin (SAS '89) died Oct. 26. She worked for the Lucas County Department of Health and Human Services for more than 30 years and taught at Lourdes University in Sylvania, Ohio.

Robert Falkenstine (SAS '74), of Lorain, Ohio, died Nov. 25 after fighting lymphoma. He was a clinical social worker for 40 years, which includes his time as director of social work services at the former St. Joseph's Hospital and as a therapist at Firelands Counseling Center in Amherst, Ohio.

Laura P. Gaines (MNO '03), of Cleveland, died Nov. 19. She most recently worked at the Cleveland Sight Center as manager of donor relations.

Janice Gammon (SAS '57), of Albuquerque, New Mexico, died Sept. 7 from complications due to pneumonia. A lifelong advocate of equal rights, treatment and justice, she worked in social services for many years.

Gloria Jean Griffin (SAS '86) died Dec. 21. She taught elementary school with Youngstown (Ohio) City Schools for many years and served as a social worker at Woodside Receiving Hospital. A devout Baptist, she was a licensed Christian counselor through her own agency, Beauty for Ashes.

Constance Williams Hall (SAS '89), of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, died Oct. 8.

Judith A. Lang (SAS '90), of Albuquerque, New Mexico, died July 9. A lifelong social worker and educator, she also held a certification in reflexology and was a Touch for Health instructor.

Sylvia Zarkower Leeb (FSM '38, SAS '40) died April 28, 2021. Although she spent most of her social work career in Chicago, she spent the last nine years of her life in Portland, Oregon.

Mary Makhoully, PhD (GRS '76, social welfare) died Nov. 21 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She worked for the UNRWA and UNICEF in Geneva, Switzerland before emigrating to the United States in 1990.

Dana Arlene Mears (SAS '83) of North Canton, Ohio, died Sept. 12. In addition to her career in social work, she was an avid gardener who won accolades for her well-maintained residential garden.

Elizabeth N. Mills (SAS '68) died Nov. 7 in Charlotte, North Carolina. She was an affirmative action coordinator at the State University of New York, and started the Minority, Women's and Business Enterprise Program for the City of Rochester, as well as Liz Mills LTD to help minority business owners, women and contractors. She also provided diversity and purchasing training to businesses, state and local governments.

Marta Whelan Murphy (SAS '85), of Youngstown, Ohio, died Jan. 12. Murphy returned to graduate school at Case Western Reserve University in her 60s and graduated with distinction after founding District 11 Area Agency on Aging, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the elderly in Cleveland.

Laverne Brown Nevins (GRS '73, SAS '94), of Cleveland, died Sept. 26. An educator and social worker, she worked at Cleveland Catholic High School, Cuyahoga Community College, and Remington College throughout her career.

Raford D. Odom (SAS '90) died Dec. 21 after a brief illness. He worked for the Department of Aging for the city of Cleveland after first serving in the United States Air Force.

Jean Lull Reynolds (SAS '50) died Sept. 6 at her home in St. Paul, Minnesota. She worked for more than 20 years in children's services in Cleveland, helping place 206 infants and children for adoption.

Stanleus B. Robinson (SAS '75) died Nov. 29. He was a social worker for many years in Akron, Ohio, serving organizations such as the YMCA and Summit County Juvenile Court before moving to Columbus, Ohio, where he eventually founded his own agency, His Vision Enterprises.

Roy H. Schlachter (SAS '59), husband of **Lillian G. Schlachter (SAS '76)** and father of **Scott D. Schlachter (SAS '84)**, died Feb. 17 after a long battle with dementia. Schlachter was a clinical social worker for over 45 years. He was honored in 2003 for his outstanding efforts with the Mandel School's Distinguished Service Award.

Helen Stephens Spears (CLC '49, SAS '52), of Stone Mountain, Georgia, died Oct. 10.

Howard J. Stanback (SAS '71) died Sept. 16 in Hedgesville, West Virginia. An activist who believed strongly in the value of public investment for underserved communities and populations, he worked in higher education for many years as assistant dean at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, and associate professor of economics at the New School of Social Work. He later transitioned to politics as Chicago Mayor Harold Washington's deputy director of employment and training.

Patricia A. Snyder (SAS '75), of Hudson, Ohio, died July 31.

Driven to act

Retiring after nearly 45 years on the Mandel School faculty and almost 35 leading the Poverty Center, Claudia Coulton's career has centered on using data to make community change

When **Claudia Coulton, PhD (GRS '78, social welfare)**, delivered a major presentation on the potential impacts of welfare reform in Cleveland in 1996, she came prepared with four overhead projector transparencies—and a wealth of knowledge gleaned from data-driven studies.

Facing a room of politicians, reporters, human-services professionals and volunteers for the Federation for Community Planning seminar, she overlaid transparencies of maps and data points to display the spatial mismatch between where poor Clevelanders—especially those who are Black—live, and where jobs are located. In turn, she identified the barriers that kept poor individuals in those neighborhoods.

More than 25 years later, what Coulton demonstrated is now commonly known as systemic racism. And though it took time for the term to come into the national lexicon, this presentation, among many others Coulton has given across her career, brought to light the myriad, deep-rooted issues facing poor Americans.

Coulton started her PhD in social welfare at Case Western Reserve in the mid-1970s, fueled by an overwhelming desire to fix both the injustices rampant in society and the underuse of data in social work.

Within six years of earning her doctorate, she became a full professor. Four years later, she launched the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development—an organization that today harnesses big data to help reduce lead paint risks, raise awareness of child maltreatment, and influence social policy and practice around the globe. This spring, she retires from the university, but will continue to serve the center as a consultant.

"Professor Claudia Coulton is a national and international luminary in social work, social welfare and beyond," said **Dexter Voisin, PhD**, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Dean in Applied Social Sciences. "She has set the standard for what many scholars hope to achieve during their careers, and the impact of her scholarship will leave an enduring professional legacy."



Coulton

In her early career, Coulton's passion for "crunching numbers" led to positions on the National Association of Social Workers' team developing national quality assurance parameters for use in healthcare and on a six-city, data-driven Rockefeller Foundation study examining persistent urban poverty—a project that spurred the launch of the Mandel School's Poverty Center in 1988.

Coulton's more than 200 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, papers and reports—on everything from lead poisoning to the foreclosure crisis—place her among the top 2% of most-cited academic researchers in any field, according to a Stanford University/Elsevier global list. Her accomplishments in her field and at Case Western Reserve, including chairing the Mandel School's doctoral program and helping guide curriculum transformations, earned her the university's highest honor: Distinguished University Professor. She was among the first six people nominated to the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare. And, in 2019, the National Association of Social Workers named Coulton a "Social Work Pioneer."

"Some people call what we do at the Poverty Center 'bringing truth to power,'" Coulton said. "Throughout my career, that's what I've tried—and will continue to try—to do: use technology, data and visualizations to move the needle on the thinking and make a real impact in our communities."

—Emily Mayock

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If you are interested in serving as a Class Agent (graduation years ending in 2 or 7) to encourage your classmates to gather together and attend the events, please contact Nada DiFranco, senior director of alumni and donor relations, at 216.368.2281 or nada.difranco@case.edu.

We look forward to seeing you! For more information, visit case.edu/homecoming.

Questions? Email mandelschoolevents@case.edu.

Individuals attending Case Western Reserve events are expected to be fully vaccinated, including booster if eligible. Masks are not required at this time, but we respect the choices of those who elect to wear them. University leaders continue to monitor pandemic developments and will adjust health protocols as circumstances warrant.



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*U.S. News & World Report