The National Association of Social Workers North Carolina Chapter (NASW-NC) has named five North Carolina social work students as the inaugural recipients of the NASW-NC Equity and Inclusion Student Award. This monetary award supports the inclusion of a diverse chapter membership and supports students pursuing a variety of social work specialties. The recipients were selected based on their commitment to incorporating and promoting equity and inclusion into their social work practice, their high academic achievement and leadership.

**Bridgette Agbozo**
UNC Chapel Hill - MSW Student

Bridgette is a first-year, dual degree Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health student at UNC-Chapel Hill. Their advocacy, activism, and leadership are evident in the wide-reaching micro and macro work they have engaged in. As an undergraduate student they created Health4Us, a peer education program focused on sexual and reproductive wellness for womxn and femmes of color. Bridgette brings their focus on equity and social justice for individuals and communities to their role as an intern with Pro-Choice NC and the Carolina Abortion Fund. In this role they provide trauma-informed support to individuals in need of abortion care, while also connecting them to funding. In addition, they have created and facilitated multiple trainings infused with the principles of equity and inclusion that focus on reproductive justice, advocacy, sexual health, community-based participatory research, and more! In the future, Bridgette plans to pursue a PhD and study the impacts of climate-induced displacement on sexual and reproductive health. Bridgette’s supervisor shared, “Bridgette consistently approaches tasks and projects in their field placement from a social justice perspective and brings a racial justice and gender justice lens to their social work practice... I know Bridgette will be a very valuable addition to our profession, and that they will greatly enhance social work’s mission and values!”

**Jessica Bravo**
UNC Charlotte - MSW Student

Jessica is an advanced standing Master of Social Work student at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte (UNCC). She has extensive experience with social services, having been both a bilingual income maintenance caseworker and a Spanish interpreter for Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, Foster Care, Adoptions, and Kinship social work programs. Jessica has also helped to create a new agency partnership between the Integrated Behavioral Health program at UNCC and Care Ring to bring behavioral health services to underserved populations in the Charlotte area. Her commitment to promoting the mental health and wellbeing of the Latinx community and addressing barriers for individuals, programs, and communities is inspiring. (continued p.2)
Nakyah McNeal
UNC Wilmington - BSW Student

Nakyah is a Bachelor of Social Work student graduating from UNC Wilmington (UNCW) with a Leadership Minor in the spring of 2023. She has served on the UNCW Seahawk Leadership Advisory Council and is currently the activity chair for the Student Social Work Organization (SSWO). During the pandemic, Nakyah worked with the Good Shepherd Center providing shelter, support, and meals to people struggling with homelessness in addition to her roles on campus. During this experience, she observed how the pandemic exacerbated existing inequities experienced by people of color in the Wilmington area. After graduation, Nakyah plans to obtain her Master of Social Work or a degree in higher education, and earn a position in the school system supporting students of color and low economic status. The BSW coordinator at the UNCW School of Social Work shared “I admire her desire to engage incoming first-year students and provide support to African American students and students from other racial and ethnic groups interested in social work as that support is needed. Service is at the forefront of Nakyah’s efforts and purpose.”

John Moss
Johnson C. Smith University - MSW Student

John is a MSW student at Johnson C. Smith University where he also holds the title of Master of Social Work Student Government Association President. He supports the social work students within the School of Social Work (SSW) as a Field Office intern at the UNC Charlotte School of Social Work in addition to establishing and maintaining relationships with agencies in the area. John is an administrative assistant to the R.O.L.E. Models non-profit organization providing HIV education and free testing opportunities through drag shows and fashion. Another of his numerous contributions includes volunteering at the Dream Center in Charlotte as a squad leader and offering meal distributions, opportunities for connection, and hope for the local families and children struggling with poverty. After graduation, John aims to seek employment in his institution and create a program in partnership with the School of Social Work and the Office of Equity and Inclusion to help middle and high schoolers to envision and participate in collegiate life. His supervisor shared, “John is inquisitive and passionate about advocating for underserved communities... I confidently envision that John will continue to grow into a dedicated social worker who will make definitive social change through both research, evaluation, and action.”
Marisa Tatum
UNC Wilmington - BSW Student

Marisa is a Bachelor of Social Work student at UNC Wilmington and has emulated social work values since she was in kindergarten. As a camp counselor with the YMCA before her program, she worked with hundreds of children and was named Counselor of the Week and Honor Counselor. She has also supported youth as a middle school counselor, elementary student-tutor, and Assistant Children’s Ministry teacher at Covenant Love Church. She was awarded the prestigious Mpact Honor Award through the Children’s Ministry. Recently she has volunteered with Elderhaus PACE, a senior care day facility addressing the social justice issue of ageism. Her dedication and passion for supporting individuals of all ages are evident throughout her experiences. In the future, Marisa plans to work with children in a private practice setting who have experienced abuse or trauma. The Children’s Ministry Director shared, “At the age of 12, Marisa began serving as a volunteer in our Children's Ministry Nursery and Preschool Department. She is kind, patient, gentle, and engages with the kids...Marisa takes seriously all that she does and gives her all.”

More information about the NASW-NC Equity and Inclusion Student Award and how to donate to this award can be found here: www.naswnc.org//EquityAward

The National Association of Social Workers North Carolina Chapter (NASW-NC) is a membership organization that promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW-NC also seeks to enhance the effective functioning and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities through its work and advocacy.

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