

**MELISSA L. ABELL**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

Virginia Commonwealth University  
School of Social Work  
1000 Floyd Avenue  
PO Box 842027  
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**EDUCATION**

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Ph.D. in Social Work.	December, 2000	University of North Carolina School of Social Work Chapel, Hill, NC Co-chairs: Mark W. Fraser, Ph.D. and Maeda J. Galinsky, Ph.D.
MSW	May, 1990	University of North Carolina School of Social Work Chapel Hill, NC
BA in Political Science	1984	University of Kentucky Lexington, KY

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**ACADEMIC HONORS**

Phi Beta Kappa, University of Kentucky, 1984

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**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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July 2012 to present	MSW Program Director
August 2007 to the present	Associate Professor, <i>Virginia Commonwealth University</i> , School of Social Work, Richmond, Virginia.
August, 2000-2006	Assistant Professor (tenure-eligible), <i>Virginia Commonwealth University</i> , School of Social Work, Richmond, Virginia. Taught human behavior in the social environment (HBSE) courses and research courses (methodology, and the clinical research concentration sequence) in the MSW program.
July, 1998-June, 2000	Instructor, Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, Virginia. Taught research methods and statistics in the social sciences for upper division students majoring in Sociology. Also taught an introductory Sociology course, and an Applied Sociology course that focused on social problems, causes, and interventions.

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January, 1998-June, 1998	Instructor, <i>University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill</i> , School of Social Work. Taught a course in research methods to graduate students in the MSW program.
August, 1997-June, 1998	Research Assistant, <i>Jordan Institute for Families, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</i> . Conducted research for the Carolina Children's Initiative under the direction of Mark W. Fraser and Maeda Galinsky. Co-authored a parenting curriculum that was part of a multi-component early intervention program to ameliorate aggressive behavior in elementary school children.
August, 1995-August, 1997	Research Assistant, <i>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</i> . Conducted research in the area of technology-based social group work under the supervision of Maeda Galinsky and Janice Schopler, professors at UNC.
June, 1993-August, 1995	Hospice Social Worker, <i>Virginia Baptist Hospital, Lynchburg, VA</i> . Worked within a five county rural area to provide individual, group, and family counseling around issues of anticipatory grief, bereavement, and crisis intervention with families dealing with terminal illness. Provided a range of services in order to link families to community agencies that could assist them with resources to cope with a medical crisis.
June, 1991-June, 1993	Family Therapist and Student Assistance Coordinator at <i>Central Virginia Community Services Board, Lynchburg, VA</i> . Provided individual, group, and family therapy in a community mental health substance abuse clinic. Also, worked in the public school system as a counselor to students at-risk of abusing alcohol and other drugs.
October, 1990-June, 1991	Employed as an Associate at the <i>Drug Education Center</i> in Charlotte, NC. Provided substance abuse prevention training to schools, government agencies, and businesses.

### **Accomplishments in role as MSW program director**

Primary goal for the program is a focus on student engagement through academic innovation.

- Enhanced program curriculum integrity through;
  - Developing structured adjunct orientation and training program [more than 50% of courses taught by adjuncts [over 30 sections per semester],

- Engaging in ongoing adjunct supervision and evaluation,
  - Developing a “core” community of adjuncts,
  - Promoting innovation in pedagogy, e.g., encouraging faculty to use standardized patients for practice courses, clinical simulation lab, and other ways to engage students experientially,
  - Modifying course competencies to more accurately reflect course content, integrate the curriculum both horizontally and vertically, and reflect new 2015 EPAs
  - MSW Program assessment conducted annually [see below]
- Conducted annual assessment of the program by;
    - Examining outcomes developed through measures of program effectiveness such as course evaluations, field evaluations, year-end student surveys,
    - Revising those same measures to more accurately reflect effectiveness, e.g., modifying course competencies,
    - Examining different “measures” that provide a more direct observation of student competency for assessment purposes.
- Implemented and continue to improve our fully online MSW program [distance education [DE] program] by;
    - Hiring and supervising a distance education [DE] coordinator who is skilled in social work education as well as media and technology,
    - Meeting with DE students regularly to solicit feedback and engage in problem solving.
    - Hiring field liaisons to manage field placements throughout the Commonwealth,
    - Teaching in the DE program to better understand the online teaching experience.
- Pursued and continue to develop a relationship with the medical campus focusing on inter-professional education [IPE] that includes social work, medicine, nursing, and pharmacy by;
    - Coordinating with the School of Medicine to implement an online training program for our clinical students that facilitates the development of inter-professional education and geriatric practice,
    - Working on a committee with the Assistant Vice President of Health Sciences and director of the Center for Interprofessional Education to coordinate a research symposium on inter-professional education and practice,
    - Working with social work students on a pilot project, “hotspotting,” that involved faculty and administrators in a collaborative initiative focused on “superusers” of health care facilities and resources.
- Enhanced focus on retention by;
    - Implementing a writing assessment and assignment for incoming foundation students to identify those students who may need remedial writing development,
    - Developing and implementing a more robust orientation program for incoming foundation students with a focus on academic rigor and retention,
    - Modifying recruitment and admissions procedures to foster retention,

- Implementing specific retention strategies for students most at-risk of attrition, e.g., distance education students.
- Oversee MSW admissions by;
  - Supervising the admissions coordinators as they prepare admissions folders and track students who complete applications,
  - Working with graduate admissions to ensure excellent customer service to prospective students,
  - Collaborating with our Office of Student Success and Director of Communications to ensure that prospective students are tracked and connected to the School,
  - Oversee the scoring of applicants' admission packets and provide final admission decision.
- Other administrative tasks such as;
  - Developing mission-based budgets that are aligned with University and School goals and initiatives,
  - Working with other program directors [BSW and Field], the dean and the associate deans to collaborate on administrative issues as a member of the Dean's cabinet,
  - Contributing to the curriculum transformation process [in progress],
  - Representing the program on various University level committees including the University Graduate Council, Academic Affairs sub-committee of the Graduate Council and the University Council,
  - Conducting grade reviews,
  - Supervising administrative staff,

## **AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

Social work education  
 At-risk families and children  
 Action/Intervention research with community agencies  
 Homelessness

## **BOOK CHAPTERS**

Abell, M.L. (2008). The Guatemalan stove project. In D. Fauri, S. Wernet, & F.E. Netting (Eds.) *Cases in macro social work practice*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Abell, M.L. (2003). The Guatemalan stove project. In D. Fauri, E. Netting, & S. Wernet (Eds.) *Cases in macro social work practice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Davey, T & Abell M. (2004). A community-based multiple family group intervention for sheltered families: Impact of the weekend retreat. *How Institutions are Shaping the future of Our Children: For Better or for Worse?* (Eds. C. Dulmus &

K.Sowers). The Haworth Press, Inc: Binghamton, NY.

### REFEREED JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Secret, M.C., Abell, M.A., Perkins, N.H., Keast, J., & Ward, C. [in press]. Research knowledge diagnostic and assessment instrument: Development, findings and application. *Journal of Social Work Education*, Accepted June 16, 2015.
- Abell, M.L., Manuel, J., Schoeneman, A. [2015]. Student attitudes towards religious diversity and implications for multi-cultural competence. *Journal of Spirituality and Religion in Social Work*. 34 (1), 91-104
- Secret, M.C., & Abell, M.L. (2011). The promise and challenge of practice-research collaboration: Guiding principles and strategies for implementing a successful program outcome evaluation. *Social Work*, 56(1), 9-20.
- Clark, T., Belgrave, F., & Abell, M. L. (2011). The mediating and moderating effects of parent and peer influences upon drug use among African American adolescents. *Journal of Black Psychology*.  
<http://jbp.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/04/01/0095798411403617.full.pdf+html>.
- Abell, M.L., Davey, T.L., & Clark, P., Perkins, N.H. (2009). Community case management intervention for hard-to-place homeless families leaving emergency shelter. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 19 (1-2), 121-147
- Abell, M.L. (2004). Women creating change: One social worker's retirement. *Affilia*, 19(2), 211-215.
- Abell, J.D., & Abell, M.L. (2004). Poverty reduction: Government transfer spending vs. macroeconomic change. *Journal of Poverty*, 8 (2).
- Davey, T.L., & Abell, M.L. (2004). A community-based multiple family group intervention for sheltered families: Impact of the weekend retreat. *Journal of Human Behavior and the Social Environment*, 9(1/2), 129-146.
- Abell, M.L., & Galinsky, M.J. (2002). Introducing students to computer-based group work practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 38(1), 39-54.
- Abell, M.L., Fraser, M.W., & Galinsky, M.J. (2001). Early intervention for aggressive behavior in childhood: A pilot study of a multi-component intervention with elementary school children and their families. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 6, 19-37.
- Schopler, J.H., Abell, M.D., & Galinsky, M.J. (1998). Technology-based groups: A review and conceptual framework for practice. *Social Work*, 43 (3), 254-268.

Schopler, J.H., Galinsky, M.J., & Abell, M.D. (1998). Creating community through telephone and computer groups: Theoretical and practice perspectives. *Social Work with Groups*, 20 (4), 19-34.

Galinsky, M.J., Schopler, J.H., & Abell, M.D. (1997). Connecting members through technology: Telephone and computer groups. *Health and Social Work*, 22 (3), 181-188.

## **PRESENTATIONS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS**

Abell, M.A., Secret, M.C., & Ward, C. (2015). *The Process and Peril of Program Assessment: The Devil is in the Details*. Interactive Workshop presented at the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Denver, CO.

Betts, S., Casey, R., & Abell, M. (2015). *The Effects of Peer Mentoring on Foundation Master of Social Work Students*. Poster presented at 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Denver, CO.

Conlon, A., & Abell, M. (2015). *Strengthening Social Work Geriatric Competencies through Interprofessional Simulation and Assessment*. Poster presented at the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Denver, CO.

Abell, M.L., Manuel, J., & Schoeneman, A.C. (2014). *MSW Student Attitudes towards Religious Diversity*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Social Work Research, San Antonio, TX

Keast, J, Perkins, N.H., Ward, C., Abell, M.L., & Secret, M.C. (2014). *Retention of Research Knowledge: A preliminary Comparison of Advanced Standing and Traditional MSW Students*. Poster presented at the meeting of the Society for Social Work Research, San Antonio, TX.

Abell M.L., Secret, M.C., Perkins, N.H., & Keast J. (2012). *Instrument Development: MSW Students' Research Knowledge Acquisition and Retention (RKA)*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Social Work Research, Washington, D.C.

Broce, R. & Abell, M. (October 28, 2011). *Use of a common factors training protocol for foundation BSW students*. Paper presented at the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education. Atlanta, GA.

Broce, R. & Abell, M. (February 3, 2011). *Development of the Multiple Family Group Weekend Retreat: Enhancing Family Functioning During the Middle School Transition*. Poster presented at the Virginia Graduate Schools Research Forum, Richmond, VA.

Broce, R. & Abell, M. (October 15, 2010). *Model development in the context of a university-community partnership*. Paper presented at the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education. Portland, OR.

Abell, M.L., Secret, M.C., & Davey, T.L. (2009, October) *University-Community Partnerships: Moving From the Ivory Tower to the Community?* Paper presented at the meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, San Antonio, Texas.

Abell, M.L., Davey, T.L., Clarke, P. (2005, March). *Intensive Case Management with Homeless Families: The Community Case Management Program*. Paper presented at the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council of Social Work Education, March 1, 2005, New York.

Abell, M.L., Davey, T.L., Clarke, P. (2005, January). *Intensive Case Management with Hard to Place Homeless Families: A Pilot Test of the Community Case Management Program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Social Work Research, January 18, 2005, Miami.

Abell, M.L., T.L. Davey, & Leisey, M. (2004, January). *An Evaluation of a Multiple Family Group (MFG) Weekend Retreat for At-risk Families*. Paper presentation at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference for the Society for Social Work Research, January 16, 2004.

Abell, M.L., T.L. Davey (2003, February). *Multiple Family Group Intervention for Sheltered Families: Evaluation of the Weekend Retreat*. Paper presentation at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Atlanta, Georgia, February, 2003.

M.W. Fraser, M.J. Galinsky, & Abell, M.L. (2002, October). *Designing Exercises for Children and Their Parents to Decrease Children's Aggressive Behavior and Increase School Bonding*. Workshop given at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of the International Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, New York, October 18th, 2002. “

Abell, M.L., J.D. Abell. Federal Government Human Resources Spending and Poverty Reduction: A Time Series Modeling Approach.” Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work Research, January 16 – 20, 2002.

“A Community-Based Multiple Family Group Intervention for Sheltered Families: Impact of the Weekend Retreat.” Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work Research, January 16 – 20, 2002 with Tim Davey.

“Preventing Youth Violence: A Randomized Trial of the Making Choices and Strong Families Programs with Children Who are Aggressive and Rejected by Peers.” Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work Research, January 16 – January 20, 2002 with Mark W. Fraser, Maeda J. Galinsky, Steven H. Day, Vanessa G. Hodges, Paul R. Smokowski, James K. Nash, and M. Daniel Bennett.

“Construct Validity, Measurement, and Treatment Fidelity in Cultural Context.” Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work Research, January 16 – January 20, 2002 with Mark W. Fraser, Martica Bacallao, Vanessa G. Hodges, Paul R. Smokowski, Maeda J. Galinsky, James K. Nash, and M. Daniel Bennett.

“A Pilot Study of an Early Intervention Program for Aggressive Children: Group and In-home Family Interventions,” presented at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Symposium on Social Work with Groups, Akron, Ohio, October, 12, 2001 (with Maeda J. Galinsky and Mark W. Fraser).

“Early Intervention for Youth Violence: Pilot-testing the *Making Choices* and *Strong Families* Programs,” presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Social Work and Research, Atlanta, Georgia, January 21, 2000. (with Mark W. Fraser)

“Teaching Social Workers to Lead Computer Groups,” paper presented at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Symposium of Social Work with Groups, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 21, 2000 (with Maeda J. Galinsky).

“Teaching Students to Lead Computer Groups: Entering the New Millennium,” paper presented at the Council on Social Work Education, 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting, February 28, 2000 (with Maeda Galinsky).

“Leading Computer Groups: Increasing Comfort and Competence,” workshop presented at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Symposium of Social Work with Groups, Denver, Colorado, October 22, 1999 (with Maeda J. Galinsky).

“Leading Groups in Cyberspace: Increasing Comfort and Competence,” workshop presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of Social Work with Groups, Miami, Florida, October 16, 1998 (with Maeda J. Galinsky).

“Resilience and Risk in Childhood: Implications for Practice,” paper presented at the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1998 (with Mark W. Fraser, Maeda J. Galinsky, Jack M. Richman, Gary Bowen, Carlean Gilbert, and James K. Nash).

“Teaching Doctoral Students to Teach: Curricula Comparison in Three Ph.D. Programs,” paper presented at the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Orlando, Florida, March 7, 1998 (with Amy D’Aprix, Jack M. Richman, M.C. Hokenstad, Deborah P. Valentine, and Angela Pereira).

“Crossing Spatial and Temporal Boundaries: Telephone and Computer Groups,” workshop presented at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of Social Work with Groups, Quebec City, Canada, October 24, 1997 (with Janice H. Schopler and Maeda J. Galinsky).

“Charting a Course for Telephone and Computer Groups,” paper presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Chicago, Illinois, March 9, 1997 (with Janice H. Schopler and Maeda J. Galinsky).

“Creating Community through Telephone and Computer Groups: Theoretical and Practice Perspectives,” paper presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of Social Work with Groups, Ann Arbor, Michigan, October 25, 1996 (with Janice H. Schopler and Maeda J. Galinsky).

“Connecting Members Through Technology: Telephone and Computer Groups,” paper presented at the 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Boston, MA, May 3, 1996 (with Janice H. Schopler and Maeda J. Galinsky).

## **GRANTS**

*Head Start of Virginia (May 2012—August 2012). Virginia State Department of Social Services. \$7500 to evaluate outcomes.*

*Community Engagement Grant—(June 2011 – June 2012) Virginia Commonwealth University. Traumatic Brain Injury Family Support: A Multi Family Group Model. \$17,000.*



*President's Research Incentive Program*—(July 2011 – December 2012) Virginia Commonwealth University. Post-Deployment Family Reintegration Support: A Multi-Family Group Model

*Virginia Consumer Provider Training Program* (2006 to present). Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services-- \$9,500 to evaluate outcomes for clients. Renewed for an additional year at \$9,500.

*Early Childhood Development Initiative*—City of Richmond (2008-2009). Developed a plan for evaluating their parenting program initiatives and analyzing their data.

*Lobs and Lessons* (2007 to 2008)—**VCU CSAP** award at \$5200 for developing intervention for at risk children in an after school program and developing a plan for evaluation.

*Children's Health Involving Parents (CHIP)* (2006 to 2008) \$18,000 to evaluate long term outcomes of clients.

*Multiple Family Groups—VCU and Communities in Schools Program of Richmond.* 10 Weekend Retreat Programs. Awarded \$30,000 ( September 2003 – May 2005)

*Multiple Family Groups—VCU and Communities in Schools* (2005 to 2007). Awarded \$21,600 to plan an intervention and evaluation for at-risk families.

*Community Case Management Intervention*—VCU and Caritas (2003 to 2005). Funded by the United Way of Greater Richmond. \$72,000.

*Multiple Family Group Weekend Retreat: An Intervention to Support the Reintegration of Military Members with their Families.* Presidential Research Incentive Program (2010 to 2013). Awarded \$50,000

## **PROFESSIONAL REPORTS**

Abell, M.L., & Davey, T.L. (April 2010). *Virginia Human Services Training Project, 2008 Cohort.*

Abell, M.L. & Perkins, N.H. (October 2009) *Early Childhood Development Initiative Nurturing Parenting Program.*

*Abell, M.L. & Ward, C.W. (Summer 2012) Head Start Program Evaluation.*

## **MEMBERSHIP ON BOARDS AND IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Society for Social Work Research

Council on Social Work Education

HomeAgain Board Member (2003-2006)

Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now) Board Member (2001-2003)

## **UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Grace Harris Leadership Institute Department Chairs Certification program August 2014

Search Committee Chair for Director of Field Education 2015-2016  
School Faculty Search Committee 2011-2012; 2014-2015  
School Promotion and Tenure Committee—2010–2013 and 2015-2018 [3 year appointment]  
Institutional Review Board Member—2009 to 2012  
Search Committee member for new Dean 2009---2010  
School of Social Work--Workload Document Sub-Committee—Chair—(2007-2009) Ad hoc committee of Faculty Rights and Responsibilities in the School of Social Work.  
MSW Program Committee –Member 2000 to the present [currently serve as Chair]  
MSW Admissions committee—Member 2009 to 2011  
Research Content Group—Member 2002 to 2012; Chair 2007 to 2012  
Faculty Rights and Responsibilities—subcommittee Chair-- Roles and Rewards (2007-2009).  
Comprehensive Exams Committee (2004-2005 and 2016-2017)  
Faculty Association—Co-Chair 2005 to 2007, 2010-2011  
Social Justice Committee—Member 2000 to 2003 Chair—2004  
Virginia Commonwealth University—Faculty Senate member 2000 to 2004  
Virginia Commonwealth University—University Council member 2004 to 2009  
Virginia Commonwealth University—University Graduate Council member 2012 to present  
Virginia Commonwealth University—University Graduate Appeals Board member 2012 to present  
Virginia Commonwealth University—Graduate Council member 2014 to present  
Virginia Commonwealth University—Honors Council member 2016

## **Dissertation Committees**

**Lisa Gray** [March , 2015]. Exploring the Dimensions of Well-Being among Spouses of Active Duty Military. **Committee Member**

**Angie Mann-Williams** (August, 2014) Understanding the Impact of Regulatory Changes on the Implementation of Therapeutic Day Treatment: A Case Study Approach. **Committee Member**

**Robert Broce** (May, 2011) Enhancing family functioning to buffer risk during middle school transition: Development of the Multiple Family Group Weekend Retreat. **Committee Chair**

**Jody Hearn** (May, 2010) Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work. Topic: Family preservation in families ecological systems: factors that predict out of home placement and maltreatment for service recipients in Richmond city. **Committee Chair**

**Trenette Clark** (December 2008). Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work. Topic: Pathways to drug use among rural and urban African American adolescents: The mediating and moderating effects of parent and peer influences. **Committee Chair**

**Allison Sampson** (August, 2010) Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work. Topic: Psychoeducational Training of Clinicians in Attachment Disorders. **Committee Member**

**Mike Howell** (April 2009). Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work Topic: Intake decision making in child protective services: exploring the influence of decision-factors, race, and substance abuse. **Committee Member**

**Paul Clark** (May 2008). Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work. Topic: *Health Care: Alternative Assessment of Cancer Patients*. **Committee Member**

**Jenny Crowell** (May 2005). Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work Gender, Power and Pedagogy: An investigation of formal sexuality education and its perceived impact on multiple dimensions of young women's sexual health. **Committee Member**

**Annette Clayton** (May 2005). Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work Topic: Survey of School social work practice around the issue of school failure. **Committee Member**

**Jan Ivery** (May 2004). Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work Topic: *Interorganizational Collaboration: An Examination of Factors That Influence the Motivation for Participation in a Collaborative Partnership of Homeless Service Literacy*. **Committee Member**