

Congratulations 2020 Social Work Graduates! The world needs you!

I could not have imagined in a million years that we would not be all sitting together as we celebrate your momentous achievement as graduates of the UConn SSW! But neither could any of us imagine that we would have moved to online instruction and ended field instruction early. The pandemic has required each of us to adapt, regroup and move forward in our educational pursuit, while managing enormous social, economic, familial and personal challenges. I salute each of you, as well as our faculty and staff and for doing so with such grace, patience and caring.

What I can imagine, however, is that your collective commitment to our profession is only strengthened by your awareness of the serious economic, racial, social and health inequities further exposed by the impact on the communities and people we serve. For our first cohort of BSW graduates, you enter our profession, with the skills you need to make a difference. MSW graduates – you have the skills and knowledge to make change for individuals, groups, families, organizations and communities. And doctoral graduates, you embark on an exciting adventure, as you contribute to the knowledge base, while advancing practice and training the next generation of social workers. These things I can imagine.

I can imagine you nurturing the important relationships you created here, with each other, and with your faculty mentors. You have pushed us and prodded us and we are all the better for it.

I have wishes for each of you. That you remember to hold your loved ones close, in appreciation for everything they have done to make this journey possible for you. We never get an educational degree all by ourselves. I wish you find great satisfaction in your career – and that you are able to take the long view as we find our way forward. Clients, communities, particularly underrepresented ones, need us and our advocacy more than ever. Hope is a powerful force, when it is combined with knowledge, skills, compassion and commitment, it is unstoppable. Each of you, and all of us together, are unstoppable.

I can imagine that we will welcome you back in the fall, to celebrate your transition from student, to graduate, to alum.

On behalf of the UConn School of Social Work community, I wish you health, the warmth of family and community – and a fabulous career.

Congratulations, Class of 2020!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nina Rovinelli Heller". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Nina Rovinelli Heller, Ph.D.
Dean
Zachs Professor of Social Work