

Service Statement

Growing up in Shandong, China, the home province of Confucius, I came to understand human life as deeply relational. Confucian ethics places relationships marked by mutual care and respect at the center of a well-lived life, and the virtue of “ren” (仁) is often explained through caring for others. This idea has stayed with me through my own experience as a dementia caregiver, my training in social work and public health, and a decade of social work practice with minoritized individuals, families, and communities. I envision a world with connections that make everyone feel seen, included, and able to contribute.

For me, service is a responsibility practiced through connections and relationships. It begins with listening and showing up consistently. As a former dementia caregiver, a community social worker, and an immigrant who has navigated barriers in the United States, I have learned to approach this work with humility and respect for different ways of knowing. I attend to whose perspectives are underrepresented and how academic resources can be used to benefit our communities. These commitments guide my community engagement, caregiver advocacy, student mentorship, and institutional and professional service.

Connecting Communities and Knowledge

My commitment to community service began during my MSW program in New York City. For more than ten years, I have volunteered with CaringKind, a leading Alzheimer’s and dementia caregiving organization in New York City, by offering caregiver support resources, educational talks, and community advocacy for Chinese American dementia caregivers. I now serve on CaringKind’s Chinese Community Advisory Board. Working with Chinese-speaking older adults and their families, I have developed culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to discussing brain health, healthy aging, and self-care with compassion. Through individual counseling, community education, and advocacy, I seek to support older adults with and without dementia and their caregivers in making informed health and care decisions that reflect their needs and values. After moving to Austin, Texas, for my doctoral studies, I continued this commitment through weekly involvement with Memory Matters, a cognitive-stimulation and social support program for older adults experiencing early memory changes. I have also delivered invited presentations on healthy aging and memory care in English and Chinese at the Asian American Resource Center through Austin Public Health.

I have extended this relational approach to public service as a member of the City of Austin’s Commission on Aging. In the Commission and Age-Friendly Austin workgroups, I bring expertise in community social work, caregiving, and dementia to discussions about how the city’s transportation, housing, health and social services, public spaces, and policies impact older adults’ independence and social connections. My research intentionally engages older adults living with cognitive impairment or dementia so that their lived experiences and priorities inform our understanding of their support needs. Drawing on research with diverse older adults and caregivers, I bring their perspectives and concerns to city discussions and contribute to age-friendly and dementia-friendly strategic plans for the next five years. As a community representative and an immigrant in Austin, I also participated in a multilingual poetry reading to open the City’s Welcoming Week kickoff event, joining other community leaders in celebrating our languages, cultures, and stories.

Connecting Students and Disciplines

At the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), my service has centered on helping graduate students find community across disciplines. I served as Vice President and then President of the Texas Institute on Dementia, Aging, and Longevity Graduate Student Council from 2024 to 2026. During my presidency, I organized research flash talks and roundtables that brought students and trainees across campus together to exchange ideas and receive feedback on aging research. Through the university’s *Reimagining Professional Development Award*, I also designed and led programming on emerging trends in aging research and diverse career pathways in aging with panelists from academia, industry, nonprofit organizations, and government. Our activities engaged over 60 participants from more than 10 departments and schools. As a student representative on the Doctoral Program

Committee at UT Austin's School of Social Work, I have also brought the experiences and challenges of international and nontraditional students into discussions with faculty about program-level changes.

Over the years, I have also built relationships with prospective students and provided informal mentorship, particularly to international students. My earlier peer advising and service on the admissions review committee for the Master of Public Health program at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai reflected the same commitment to helping prospective and incoming students feel welcomed and informed. Many of these relationships have continued as our roles and identities have changed, with some leading to research collaborations and new opportunities.

Service to the Profession

My service to the social work and public health professions includes serving on the Association for Gerontology Education in Social Work (AGESW) Student Ad Hoc Committee, where I collaborate with fellow members to develop professional opportunities for students interested in gerontological social work and help host a weekly workspace where students can advance projects and exchange ideas. I also review manuscripts for journals including *The Gerontologist*, *BMC Public Health*, *BMC Health Services Research*, and *JMIR Aging*, and I have reviewed conference abstracts for the *Gerontological Society of America (GSA)*.

Future Commitment

As I transition to a faculty role, I will build on this record through service in student mentorship, community engagement, and interdisciplinary aging workforce development. I am committed to mentoring students as they navigate research, practice, and professional development, with particular attention to those whose backgrounds or educational pathways have been less visible in academic settings. Beyond the university, I will cultivate reciprocal partnerships with older adults, caregivers, service providers, healthcare systems, and community leaders so that our work reflects community priorities and attends to cultural and linguistic barriers to participation. I plan to sustain my longstanding service with CaringKind and AGESW and my contributions through peer review. For me, service means remaining engaged as the needs and priorities of the people, communities, and organizations I work with evolve and sustaining the mutual care and respect that first shaped my understanding of service.