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One of Radford's Social Work professors is working to help combat rising education costs with his collaborative project, [Open Social Work Education](#) (OSWE).

Dr. [Matthew DeCarlo](#) is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Radford University. After graduating from high school in New Jersey, Dr. DeCarlo attended The [College of William & Mary](#) in Williamsburg, VA and acquired his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology.

Social Workers help people, families, and various groups solve and cope with problems within their everyday lives. As a school social worker, Dr. DeCarlo uses his skillset and knowledge to further support students in their academic performance at Radford University.

Dr. DeCarlo's pursuance within the field of Social Work led him to travel to Fairfax, VA to obtain his Master's of Social Work from George Mason University and a Ph.D. in Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA.

Dr. DeCarlo's teaching interests primarily pertain to Social work theory, research and scientific inquiry, and Social welfare and disability policies.

While working as a social work professor, Dr. DeCarlo noticed that many students majoring in Social Work were having a difficult time affording their course materials.

Due to the rapidly growing cost of textbooks, [research](#) shows that college students averagely spend \$1,300 a year on textbooks in both four-year college institutions and two-year community colleges.

This financial dilemma forces many college students to either rent textbooks at a discounted rate, or not purchase textbooks at all. To combat this problem, Dr. DeCarlo founded OSWE, a platform that provides free Open Education Resources (OER) for students studying social work.

A plethora of social work professionals create these resources and allow independent textbook writers to write and publish their textbooks within the platform itself. Since creating OSWE in 2017, Dr. DeCarlo aims for OSWE to change the core curriculum of social work by 2025 completely.



Dr. Matthew DeCarlo, a Radford Social Work Professor and founder of Open Social Work Education.

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Interview

The Tartan spoke with Dr. DeCarlo via Zoom Video Chat Friday, Sept. 21. During our interview, we asked Dr. DeCarlo about the common misconceptions many people have regarding social

workers.

He said, “The biggest misconception about social work is that most people think we’re ‘baby snatchers’ and that we want to separate families. In all actuality, child social workers are responsible for making sure children are safe, healthy, and secure within their living environments.”

Throughout the interview, The Tartan asked Dr. DeCarlo about his collaborative project, OSWE, and why OER are essential for college students.

Dr. DeCarlo said, “Considering that college students like yourself already pay enormous amounts of money in college tuition, it’s unfair that students have to pay for textbooks that don’t even get used on a daily basis. Major textbook publishers profit from the sales of their books from colleges, and they don’t take into consideration the finances of young students.”

He continued, “My company offers free textbooks for social work students. OER provides opportunities for up and coming writers to publish their own textbooks and creates an open dialogue among students and faculty members within different subject matters. I want to continue my work within OSWE and publish at least five articles in various peer-reviewed journals.”

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Featured Image: (Dr. Matthew DeCarlo)