

Profile: Traci Wilt

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Traci Wilt

Traci Wilt, LCSW, is an online Doctor of Social Work (DSW) student living in Illinois. Wilt holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Beyond being a doctoral candidate, Wilt is a Peer Mentor through Tulane School of Social Work's [Peer Mentoring Program](#), which aims to decrease feelings of isolation, increase guidance on adjusting to doctoral studies, and provide mentoring experience and training to recent or soon-to-be DSW graduates. We've asked her a few questions about the DSW program and her experience as a Peer Mentor.

Why did you decide to get your DSW? Why Tulane?

I graduated with my MSW in 1999. When I was growing up, I wanted to be a pediatrician and my Grandma always said I would be the 1st doctor in the family. I found social work and fell in love with it. I never thought that I would achieve that goal that I had set with my Grandma. When I heard about the DSW program, I was in a place in my life where I felt called to do something big, something that would give me a new view of social work and open more doors. I also realized that it would allow me to achieve that dream of becoming the "1st doctor in the family", even if it was a different type of doctor. Honoring my Grandmother with this win means everything!

Tulane has a great reputation and a program that worked with a busy social worker's schedule. It was an easy choice!

Did you receive mentorship in the early days of your DSW program? How was that?

I did not receive mentorship in the early days of my DSW. I think having a mentor would have helped ease fears and now how to tackle some of the struggles that come up when you've been out of school for 20+ years.

Why did you decide to become a mentor?

I love helping people and I think that having a mentor in that first DSW semester would have been so enlightening! I want to give people that support and encouragement to keep going!

Share a little bit about your APP and the work you do, both academically and professionally. In what ways has the DSW program helped you grow?

I have been a school social worker for 25 years in a small, rural Illinois county. I have struggled with social anxiety, specifically speaking in front of similarly aged peers all of my life. The DSW program has challenged that and allowed me to start to feel comfortable with my knowledge and ability to present that knowledge in front of others. It has been quite life-changing, actually. I still don't want to command an audience of 10,000, but I can get up in front of an MSW class and teach now and present in class without feeling like I am going to pass out!

My APP is rooted in the obsession that teens have with social media. I also do testing for special education qualifications in the social-emotional domains. I have noticed that executive functioning in teens seems to be a greater struggle and, after watching *The Social Dilemma*, decided to look at the impact of the number of daily hours on social media and its impact on executive functioning scores.

What's your best tip for incoming DSW students?

Get to know your cohort, find your people and stay connected to those people and your professors.

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