



Thomas P. Felke, Ph.D., MSW
Executive Director - Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging
Professor of Social Work

Phone: (239) 590-7841

E-Mail: tfelke@fgcu.edu

Office: Merwin Hall 134-A

Dr. Tom Felke serves as Executive Director of the Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging, an interdisciplinary initiative at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) focused on older adults. He also serves as Professor of Social Work within the Marieb College of Health & Human Services. Dr. Felke received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary and Special Education from Providence College. He continued his studies at New York University, conducting research in educational sociology at the Boys & Girls Club of Coney Island and later participated in an early childhood assessment project at Yale University in the Edward Zigler Center for Child Development & Social Policy.

He completed his Master of Social Work (MSW) degree with concentrations in administration, policy, and international issues at the University of Connecticut. He also earned his Ph.D. in social work from the University of Connecticut, completing his dissertation research in Armenia on the situation of ethnic Armenian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

He began his social work career with Catholic Charities of Southern Connecticut as a Child & Family Services Manager. Dr. Felke then moved to public service as an Organization & Skill Development Manager in Connecticut with both the Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services.

Arriving at FGCU in 2011, Dr. Felke now focuses his teaching and research on macro social work, the application of technology to social work practice and evaluation, and international social work issues. A major focus of this work is the use of geographic information systems (GIS) for program evaluation and research efforts. He has conducted several studies using GIS technologies and published several articles on these efforts. The focus of these research projects has been on the needs of older adults, affordable housing, and food insecurity. He has also authored two chapters on the use of technology in the social work curriculum. He is a regular contributor in the media, including national and international appearances in visual and print media on his research.

Dr. Felke has been recognized for excellence in teaching, with awards received in 2016 from the Southwest Unit of the National Association of Social Workers and in 2018 from the FGCU chapter of the National Society for Leadership & Success. He has also been recognized for his academic leadership at FGCU having received the 2021 Chair Excellence Award. In 2024, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Florida Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) for his efforts in the field of social work. He is active as a member of several boards and committees in Southwest Florida as well as for the Florida Council on Aging and national social work organizations including the Council on Social Work Education and National Association of Social Workers.