

2026 CSWE Election: Candidate Statement

Jodi Helbert, PhD

Undergraduate Program Representative – CSWE National Nominating Committee

I am honored to be nominated for the position of Undergraduate Program Representative on the CSWE National Nominating Committee. It is with deep respect and appreciation for CSWE's leadership, mission, and the strong commitment to ensuring that undergraduate programs are meaningfully represented in national governance that I accept this nomination.

I currently serve as the BSW Program Director and Full Professor at Tennessee Wesleyan University in beautiful Athens, TN, where my work centers on student success, program leadership, development and innovation, accreditation compliance, NASW alignment, and teaching excellence for my faculty.

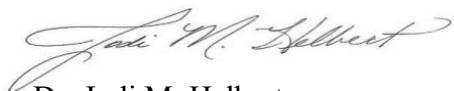
My 13-year tenure as a BSW program administrator has afforded me the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges facing undergraduate social work programs, particularly as we prepare students for ethical practice during increasingly complex, trauma-exposed political climates, and fraught social contexts. With more than two decades of social work practice experience, I know full well that a sound undergraduate foundation is essential to success in the field. Undergrad is where students first internalize social work values, develop professional identity, and engage critically with concepts such as social justice, equity, and ethical decision-making. *This* is when and where students tend to fall in love with serving vulnerable others. As such, undergraduate programs must have a strong voice in shaping the leadership of CSWE. I am particularly passionate about ensuring representation across institution types whose perspectives are essential to the strength of our profession. These include community colleges, faith-based programs, teaching-focused institutions, research-focused programs, rural and regional programs, and minority-serving institutions.

My leadership approach is grounded in celebrating diversity, ensuring equity that is always inclusive, and facilitating belonging. My commitment is toward advancing leadership pathways that intentionally elevate voices that have been historically underrepresented in national service, including educators from marginalized identities, early-career faculty, and those working in resource-constrained settings. I value transparent and accessible governance processes that encourage broader participation and demystify national leadership roles for undergraduate educators. To be truly representative, transparency, integrity, and ethical code and conduct are paramount within leadership. If selected for this role, I will bring these and more!

Trauma-informed reasoning is the overarching principle that guides my teaching and administrative responsibilities. I believe these principles are equally relevant to leadership selection, which calls us to recognize lived experiences, foster relational trust, and prioritize inclusive, ethical decision-making. If selected as the successful candidate

to serve on the National Nominating Committee, I would apply these values in identifying and supporting candidates who bring integrity, knowledge, empathy, and accountability to CSWE leadership. This role will allow me to contribute a collaborative, equity-centered perspective informed by years of accreditation experience, undergraduate program leadership, and a deep respect for CSWE's mission and values. It would be my honor and privilege to support the committee's work in cultivating representative leadership reflective of the diversity, resilience, and shared purpose of social work education.

With sincere gratitude for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jodi M. Helbert". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Dr. Jodi M. Helbert