

2026 CSWE Election: Candidate Statement

Samantha Dutton, PhD, LCSW-R, Lt Col(Ret)

Undergraduate Program Representative (Dean/Director) – CSWE Board of Directors

Thank you for the opportunity to stand for election as the 2026 CSWE Undergraduate Program Representative on the Board of Directors. I am honored to be included on the slate and to contribute to CSWE's mission of advancing social work education and strengthening our profession's impact.

My commitment to undergraduate social work education is grounded in a belief that the BSW experience is both an entry point to the profession and a critical foundation for lifelong ethical, evidence-informed practice. Undergraduate programs sit at the intersection of student development, community engagement, and workforce preparation. As Undergraduate Program Representative, I would focus on ensuring that CSWE's strategic priorities and Board deliberations reflect the realities of BSW programs and the diverse students we serve.

If elected, my work would be guided by three priorities:

1. **Student success and belonging.** I will advocate for policies and resources that support retention, advising, and holistic student support, particularly for first-generation students, students from historically marginalized communities, and students balancing work and caregiving. I am committed to promoting inclusive learning environments that strengthen professional identity formation, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making.
2. **Field education capacity and quality.** Field education is the signature pedagogy of our profession, and undergraduate programs face persistent challenges in securing placements, supporting field instructors, and ensuring equitable, high-quality learning experiences. I will champion collaborative solutions that expand field partnerships, strengthen training and support for field educators, and elevate innovative field models that maintain rigor while increasing access.
3. **Program sustainability, curricular relevance, and accreditation support.** BSW programs navigate resource constraints, changing higher education landscapes, and evolving community needs. I will advocate for clear guidance, practical tools,

and opportunities for peer learning that help programs implement accreditation standards with integrity. I also support curricular approaches that prepare graduates for contemporary practice realities that are trauma-informed, anti-racist, and culturally responsive practice; policy and macro skills; behavioral health and integrated care; and the ethical use of technology.

As a Board member, I would bring a collaborative, solutions-oriented approach, grounded in listening to program directors, faculty, field leaders, and students. I will work to amplify undergraduate voices, translate concerns into actionable recommendations, and strengthen connections between CSWE initiatives and campus-level implementation.

I appreciate your consideration and would be grateful for the opportunity to serve. Together, we can ensure that undergraduate social work education remains rigorous, equitable, and responsive, preparing the next generation of social workers to lead with competence, courage, and compassion.