

2026 CSWE Election: Candidate Statement

Nafees Alam, PhD, LMSW

Undergraduate Faculty Representative - CSWE Board of Directors

As an associate professor of social work and a licensed master social worker with over a decade of teaching experience, I am honored to be nominated for Undergraduate Faculty Representative on the CSWE Board of Directors. My career has been dedicated to empowering the next generation of social workers through rigorous, inclusive education that honors our profession's core values while challenging its boundaries. I bring a heterodox lens to social work: one that champions self-determination, viewpoint diversity, open inquiry, and constructive disagreement as essential tools for ethical practice and societal impact.

My teaching portfolio spans undergraduate and graduate levels across institutions like the University of Nebraska, Boise State University, City University of New York, and Yeshiva University. I have designed and delivered courses including Introduction to Social Welfare, Social Work Research Methods and Statistics, and Foundations of Ethics and Diversity: Freedom of Thought. These emphasize critical thinking over conformity, equipping students to navigate complex social issues with evidence-based tools and intellectual humility. For instance, my redesigned research sequence integrates social psychology and group dynamics to foster skills in AI-enhanced learning, preparing undergraduates for innovative, distance-based practice. Beyond the classroom, I have developed curricula for ProSocial Workers and the Alliance of Social Workers in Sports, including courses on ideological diversity and transgender sport participation policy, which promote dialogue across divides.

Research drives my commitment to undergraduate education. With 38 peer-reviewed articles, including forthcoming pieces in the Journal of Social Work Education and Research on Social Work Practice, I explore how sport social work builds self-determination and viewpoint diversity. Publications like "Heterodox Social Work: Advancing Viewpoint Diversity, Constructive Disagreement, and Open Inquiry" and "The Point-Counterpoint Teaching Methodology" argue for curricula that dismantle ideological homogeneity, reclaiming critical thinking as a social justice imperative. My scholarship aims to bridge macro practice, ethics, and human behavior, directly informing undergraduate training for real-world advocacy.

On the CSWE Board, I will advocate for undergraduate programs to prioritize intellectual pluralism, ensuring social work education equips students to engage diverse stakeholders

without fear of dissent. This means amplifying voices from heterodox perspectives, integrating self-determination into accreditation standards, and fostering inquiry that strengthens our profession's relevance in a polarized world. By voting for me, you invest in a Board that models constructive disagreement, empowering undergraduates to lead with courage, empathy, and unyielding commitment to social justice.

Thank you for considering my vision.