

2026 CSWE Election: Candidate Statement

Sophia Fantus, PhD, MSW, HEC-C

Graduate Program Representative (Dean/Director) – Board of Directors

I am honored to be selected as a nominee for the Graduate Program Representative on CSWE's Board of Directors. I have been involved with CSWE in many capacities and am excited about the opportunity to engage in and contribute to social work discourse. I am dedicated to CSWE's mission and values and am passionate about cultivating the next generation of social work educators and practitioners. As the MSW Program Director at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), I lead one of the largest social work graduate programs in the U.S. at a dually designated HSI-AANAPISI institution that offers both in-person and online instruction. Our student population is diverse, with a large population of non-traditional, transfer, older adult, and first-generation students. I am focused on responding to the fast-changing political and educational landscape both in Texas and across the U.S. to seek ways to foster equity-centered programming that upholds CSWE values, policies, and standards.

In my role, I collaborate with our over 60 full-time faculty on program delivery and pedagogical innovation to strengthen student learning and readiness for the workplace. I am leading a full overhaul of our entire MSW curriculum to ensure content reflects emerging social issues and is in alignment with EPAS standards. I am orchestrating initiatives and policies to enhance our accreditation processes and to promote student retention and success that align with UTA's strategic plan. For example, in collaboration with UTA leadership and the Urban Institute, I am involved in campus-wide efforts to improve belonging and support for student-parents.

I have taught across UTA's BSW, MSW, and PhD programs. In 2024, I was the UTA nominee for the Minnie Stevens Piper Professor Award, a Texas-wide award in recognition of excellence in teaching and mentorship. I also mentor students and have chaired or served on PhD dissertation and MSW thesis committees, and supported student research on complex ethical and practice issues to elevate their professional development.

I bring my research into the classroom to model critical thinking and evidence-informed practice while engaging students in real-world social work challenges. My work has been published in major social work journals including *Social Work*, *British Journal of Social Work*, and *Social Work in Health Care* on moral injury and self-care, disability in health, and LGBTQ+ resilience and wellbeing. My background in social work and clinical ethics informs my teaching pedagogy. I integrate theory and practice to inform ethical decision-making and to evaluate the impacts of state and national policies on clients and clinical practice settings. I have contributed scholarship that has shaped conversations around

ethics pedagogy, self-care, and disability justice. I also have specific expertise in ethical AI development and deployment.

My administrative experience, nationally recognized scholarship, interdisciplinary leadership, and dedication to advancing high-quality social work education make me a strong candidate for CSWE's Board of Directors. The CSWE Board of Directors exemplifies thoughtful, values-driven leadership, and I would welcome the opportunity to be part of this work and continue to advance CSWE's strategic priorities to support our profession's future.