



Request for Proposal – President/CEO Search

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OVERVIEW

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is the preeminent organization convening and representing social work education in the United States and its territories Puerto Rico and Guam. As the recognized accrediting body for social work programs nationally, CSWE is in a singular position to catalyze discussions both within the academy and at the federal level regarding the future of social work education.

To lead the organization into the future and to play a primary, visible role in increasing its impact, CSWE seeks a president to serve as its chief executive officer. Reporting to the Board of Directors and managing an operating budget of more than \$7 million and a staff of 35, the president/CEO will lead CSWE during a period of significant opportunity. As higher education becomes increasingly visible as a matter of national and international policy, CSWE is well-positioned to play a principal role in discussions on such issues as accreditation, multiple modes of delivery, antiracism and anti-oppressive education, globalization, student financial aid and indebtedness, and academic freedom. The president of CSWE, which is headquartered in Alexandria, VA, will work closely with the Board and membership to add the voice of social work education to these national and international discussions.

Vision: To ensure a well-educated social work profession equipped to promote health, well-being, and justice for all people in a diverse society.

Mission: To advance excellence and innovation in social work education and research by providing leadership, ensuring quality in teaching and learning, and strengthening the capacity of our member institutions.

Land Acknowledgment: CSWE acknowledges that its office and events are located on ancestral lands of Indigenous Peoples throughout the continental United States, Alaska, Hawai'i, and territories. CSWE's office is in Alexandria, VA, and we honor the 11 state-recognized ancestral tribes. Our organization is committed to achieving social justice and equity for Indigenous Peoples in ways that respect their ancient cultures and sovereign rights and that address a legacy of colonization and oppression. Social work education strives to prepare tomorrow's practitioners to effect social change for all people. With humility, we recognize and respect all Indigenous Peoples and their ties to the land.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Antiracism: CSWE is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism work that enhances the well-being of all, including CSWE members, staff, and communities that social workers serve. CSWE is committed to valuing and reflecting the diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences of our members through a deepening understanding about the intersectional, complex, and nuanced nature of diversity and to being responsive, innovative, and forward-thinking.

Under its 2020 Strategic Plan, CSWE aims to do the following:

- Provide leadership for the future of social work education
- Promote quality teaching, learning, and scholarship to prepare graduates for the future of social work practice
- Support the career development of students, faculty members, and administrators
- Foster a diverse, interconnected, and inclusive community of social work educators
- Ensure CSWE provides exceptional value to its members and member institutions

PURPOSE

CSWE is seeking proposals to contract with a professional search firm to work with its Search Committee to conduct a national search for the president/CEO of CSWE. The scope of the selected search firm's work will be to lead and/or participate in all stages of the recruitment, selection, and transition process, including serving as a centralized point of contact for all candidates, whether self-identified, actively recruited, or sought out; gathering the credentials of candidates; providing initial screening for qualification and compensation "fit"; coordinating interviews; and reference checking of finalist(s). The Search Committee anticipates presenting final candidate(s) to the Board of Directors no later than November 10, 2022. See Appendix A for the current position description and Appendix B for the proposed timeline.

REQUIREMENTS

Please provide complete responses to each of the following questions and submit an electronic copy of the proposal to Sharon Reed at sreed@cswe.org by March 22, 2022.

Please address the following questions and requests.

Process

- Please describe your search process, focusing on your firm's unique qualifications, experience, and expertise at filling leadership roles for associations.
- What measures will you take to ensure that the candidate pool is demographically and geographically diverse and that appropriate consideration of all candidates occurs?
- Do you have any comment on the proposed timeline regarding schedule, progress reporting, and other deliverables?
- What relevant limitations or conflicts exist that could affect your firm's ability to perform on this search, including current clients who may present as a potential or perceived conflict of interest?

Staffing the Engagement

- Describe how you would staff the engagement, including the practice lead and/or primary contact. How many president/CEO searches have you handled since January 2020? What was the average salary, and how many were successfully completed? How many concurrent searches does the primary contact typically conduct?
- Please provide a professional bio for the primary contact.

References

- Please provide three client references for work that the primary contact personally completed for similar clients within the past 2 years. Please include the name of the organization, the position filled, the client contact and their title, and the best way to reach the reference (phone or email).

Contractual Items

- Please provide a proposed fee structure, payment terms, and sample contract. Note that no expenses incurred by the RFP firm candidates in responding will be reimbursed. The selected

firm candidate should price its proposed services to reflect all internal costs, including overhead.

- What additional expenses can reasonably be expected for this search? Please provide your expense approval process.
- What is your policy in the event that the candidate placed with CSWE leaves for any reason within the first year?
- What is your policy in the event that CSWE hires a candidate presented during this current engagement for a position other than the assigned vacancy?
- Under what conditions could your firm withdraw from the assignment or consider it sufficiently changed to start a new search?

Additional Information

- Please disclose and discuss any past or present civil or criminal investigations, pertinent litigation, and/or regulatory action involving your firm or any employees that could affect your firm's role or ability to perform the relevant services.
- Please identify any prior or current work performed for CSWE.

Evaluation of Proposals

The Search Committee will select finalist search firms no later than March 30, 2022, and subsequently notify all submitting search firms of their status. CSWE and the chosen search firm will review the final search agreement presented by the search firm and execute prior to the search start date.

APPENDIX A
President/CEO Position Description

TITLE	President
LOCATION	Alexandria, VA
REPORTING RELATIONSHIP	The president/CEO reports to the CSWE Board of Directors and manages the annual budget and professional staff.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT/CEO

The president of CSWE, who is appointed by and accountable to the Board of Directors, is the chief executive officer of the organization. The president sits as a nonvoting member on the Board of Directors and in collaboration with the Board is responsible for the overall vision, direction, and operations of the organization and the promotion of social work education at the national and international levels. The president will foster high ethical and institutional standards and successfully engage volunteer leaders and members in organizational activities.

The president serves as the central and publicly visible representative of the organization and provides leadership in cultivating and strengthening relationships and partnerships with other higher education associations and other social work organizations, including those representing research, policy, and practice. In addition, the president is the organization’s primary spokesperson in all matters related to public policy and advocacy.

The president is responsible for organizational operations including staff leadership, membership development, association finances, strategic planning, and accountability to the organization’s constituents and the public at large. The president speaks for and promotes the core values of social work education and responds to the aspirations and concerns of member social work programs, staff, and affiliated groups.

OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

The following represent some of the immediate opportunities that the new president will address during the first 2 to 3 years in office. They are presented here in no particular order of priority.

Promote social work education

The demand for professional social workers is very high. Factors such as the impact of health disparities on disenfranchised racial and ethnic groups, a lack of access to technology and jobs, and growing economic disparities and social injustice increase the pressure on vulnerable populations. To meet these challenges, the president will play a vital role in advocating for social work education to improve access to education and to graduate professional social workers from accredited social work programs at the baccalaureate and master's levels. CSWE recently has undertaken a process for approval by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit professional doctorate of social work degree programs. Although CSWE plays no formal role in assessing PhD programs, its advocacy can and should have a positive impact on access to education of future social work educators and scholars.

Central to CSWE's mission is professional and leadership development in social work education. In recent years, considerable attention has been given by CSWE to this charge, and the new president will have an opportunity to continue to refine and focus CSWE's educational capacity and to ensure access to these opportunities. These offerings are important to the benefits of membership in the organization.

Access and diversity are primary themes for CSWE, and the president will be their champion. One example of a CSWE initiative in response to these priorities was the 2021 CSWE Anti-Racism Task Force. This task force produced a number of recommendations, including updates to the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards; ideas for a clearinghouse of curricular resources that address antiracist, anticolonial, anti-immigrant, and anti-oppressive theories and pedagogies; and suggestions to improve data collection on program faculties, leadership, and students to better understand the social work education ecosystem as it relates to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. The president will need to continue to work with staff and members to actualize these recommendations.

Build coalitions across the social work profession

The landscape of professional organizations across the social work profession is highly diverse. There are many national organizations—some large, others small—dedicated to social work issues such as policy, advocacy, education, practice, research, and scholarship.

The variety of social work organizations is an asset of the profession because they engage many different constituencies around core issues relevant to the field, including issues of social and economic justice. At the same time, the acute challenges facing the nation and the social work profession—particularly in terms of funding, licensure, accreditation, and the employment market—require coordinated and unified responses on matters of national interest. Efforts to leverage the strengths of the different organizations will become critical.

The president will be asked to build strong relationships with the leadership of other social work associations and related coalitions in the pursuit of collegiality and common purpose.

Enhance the capacity of the organization

The incoming president will inherit an operation that is sound financially and coherent administratively. It has a large number of advisory commissions and councils that enable the members to shape the growth of the profession and the operation of CSWE, though the commissions and councils differ in their levels of activity and engagement. Further, there are other affiliate groups that seek to have impact on the profession and the organization. From this base, the president will need to assess the potential of the current organization and work to enhance its capacity to serve its members and the social work profession.

Diversify revenue streams

CSWE's \$7 million operating budget derives principally from three sources: institutional memberships (which are tied directly to the accreditation process), individual memberships, and the overhead from grants. Thus, the president will ensure and enhance the membership totals that form the organization's most stable revenue stream.

With opportunities to expand its influence and the services it provides, CSWE would benefit from multiple streams of revenue. One potential additional source of revenue would be philanthropic support. CSWE has in the past accepted unsolicited gifts, but it has no history of an infrastructure for fundraising. The president will expand CSWE's fundraising efforts by committing time, effort, and prestige to engagement with potential donors and funding sources. CSWE has had some significant successes in recent years in grantsmanship, and the potential of increased support from private foundations and the federal government would seem highly feasible.

Become part of the national and global conversation about education

Perhaps never in the history of the United States has higher education been so visibly a part of and party to the conversation about national policy. With myriad educational issues now so much a component of the national consciousness—including growing student loan debt; the attack on the discussion of racism, equity, and social justice in the classroom; and the overall value of higher education as a public good—CSWE stands poised to play a leading role in this critical dialogue. Working with colleagues in other disciplinary professional and education-focused organizations, the president of CSWE will have the opportunity to influence policy makers as these difficult issues are resolved, building on the president's personal strengths, experience, and passions.

Among the many issues to be discussed, it will be most critical that the president and the organization are heard and thus make a substantive impact on the future of accreditation. The president, working with CSWE's retained public advocacy firm, will continue to strengthen relationships with the U.S. Department of Education, CHEA, and other

interested parties (e.g., the American Council on Education) and will position themselves and CSWE as major players in the discussion.

CSWE has also increasingly been engaged in global and international partnerships as well as conversations about social work education and higher education. The president, working with the Board and its globally focused commission and councils, will participate in discussions that address human rights and social and economic justice in international and global settings and have opportunities to promote global awareness and collaboration on behalf of and among its membership.

QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Ideally, the candidate will have earned an advanced degree and a degree in social work. Moreover, they will possess a distinguished record of successful and progressively responsible administrative experience and leadership, preferably in social work education and/or higher education.

Experience in the nonprofit sector, teaching, and the international arena are desirable. Experience and demonstrated effectiveness in working with boards of directors in creating and advancing organizational vision and mission are essential.

A candidate must demonstrate strong organizational and educational leadership experience that includes the ability to manage a complex organization and to work effectively with colleagues representing diverse institutions and programs. A candidate must demonstrate knowledge of the challenges and issues confronting higher education in the United States and beyond and the strategies emerging for addressing the critical issues that characterize the current educational context. The successful candidate will have demonstrated leadership in strategic planning and organizational visioning, public policy and advocacy, resource development, fiscal management, and in coalescing diverse constituents around common goals and aspirations. Last but not least, the successful candidate will value the fundamental commitment of the social work profession to its core values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.

APPENDIX B
Search Timeline

Task	Date
Executive Committee to review/finalize RFP	February 20, 2022
Disseminate RFP	March 1, 2022
Due date for RFP applications	March 22, 2022
Select top 2 search firms	March 26, 2022
Have these 2 firms present to Executive Committee	March 30, 2022
Select search firm	April 1, 2022
Execute signed agreement with search firm	April 10, 2022
Launch search	April 15, 2022
Due date for applications	May 30, 2022
Select candidates for preliminary interviews	June 30, 2022
Video interviews with preliminary candidates	July 10–30, 2022
Select 2–3 final candidates	August 15, 2022
Schedule Board interviews of final candidates	September 2022
Select first-choice candidate	October 2022
Make offer to candidate	October 2022
Execute signed contract	October 2022
Announce to membership	November 10, 2022
Consideration of “overlap” with current President/CEO	December 2022
New CEO to start work	January 2, 2023