



# UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA GRACE ABBOTT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Governance Academic Year 2025-2026

The Grace Abbott School of Social Work operates under the guidance of standing and ad hoc committees, which include social work faculty, staff, students, and community representatives. These committees are tasked with initiating, monitoring, and evaluating all policies and procedures within the school. Policy planning and decision-making begin within these committees and progress through the appropriate channels before final presentation to the Faculty Staff Roundtable. Our committee structure promotes democratic involvement in program planning and governance, goal setting, decision-making, and achieving the school's mission, goals, and objectives. The director appoints ad hoc committees as necessary.

Updated August 13, 2025

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### *Grace Abbott's Roundtable*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring semesters.  
The first Wednesday of the month from 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

The Faculty Staff Roundtable comprises full and part-time faculty, staff, and graduate assistants. It meets monthly during the academic year to discuss program-related issues, plan, and collaborate. Reports from all school committees are brought to the Faculty Staff Roundtable.

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|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Kersten Borer          | 17. Nazaneen Rahmanzai    |
| 2. Amy Browning           | 18. Susan Reay, chair     |
| 3. Sonia Carbonell        | 19. Ellen Rice, co-chair  |
| 4. Deb Circo              | 20. Katie Robbins         |
| 5. Sandy Cook-Fong        | 21. Heidi Rueda           |
| 6. Darian Draft, GA       | 22. Anvar Sadath Vakkayil |
| 7. Henry D'Souza          | 23. Laurel Sariscsany     |
| 8. Heather Ford           | 24. Lisa Smith            |
| 9. Liam Heerten-Rodriguez | 25. Emily Soener          |
| 10. Brittany Jones, GA    | 26. Peter Szto            |
| 11. Theori Kenny          | 27. Lequisha Turner       |
| 12. Hannah Keck, GA       | 28. Aislyn Tyler, GA      |
| 13. Konnie Kirchner       | 29. Ciara Warden          |
| 14. Michelle Manning      | 30. Anna Wastell          |
| 15. Michelle Nelsen       | 31. Meghan Witte          |
| 16. Alisha Olson          | 32. Yiwei Zhang           |
|                           | 33. Student Workers       |

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### *Accreditation*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring semesters.  
Third Wednesday of the month from 1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

The accreditation committee coordinates the preparation, submission, and review of required reports, self-studies, and documentation. It also facilitates accreditation site visits and monitors ongoing preparation for the accreditation self-study submission.

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|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Kersten Borer          | 7. Ellen Rice    |
| 2. Darian Draft, GA       | 8. Katie Robbins |
| 3. Liam Heerten-Rodriguez | 9. Heidi Rueda   |
| 4. Michelle Nelsen        | 10. Emily Soener |
| 5. Alisha Olson           | 11. Anna Wastell |
| 6. Susan Reay, chair      | 12. Yiwei Zhang  |

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### *Admissions*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring semesters as needed.  
The third Wednesday of the month from 9:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.

The Admissions Committee, delegated from the College of Graduate Studies, the school's Program Committee, and subject to the approval of its Dean, is responsible for selecting graduate students. It has similar selection responsibility for undergraduate majors, under delegation from the College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS). The Admissions Committee works collaboratively with the BSSW and Program Committees on policies, procedures, and standards for admission.

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Kersten Borer, chair             | 8. Susan Reay, ex-officio |
| 2. Sonia Carbonell                  | 9. Ellen Rice, ex-officio |
| 3. Heather Ford                     | 10. Emily Soener          |
| 4. Hannah Keck, GA (as appropriate) | 11. Lequisha Turner       |
| 5. Liam Heerten-Rodriguez           | 12. Ciara Warden          |
| 6. Alisha Olson                     |                           |
| 7. Nazaneen Rahmanzai               |                           |

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### *Assessment Committee*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring semesters.  
Fourth Wednesday of the month from 9:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.

The Assessment Committee systematically evaluates student learning outcomes to ensure the program meets its educational goals and accreditation requirements. The committee develops and monitors assessment plans, collects and analyzes data on student performance, and uses the findings to guide curriculum improvements and enhance teaching effectiveness. The committee work supports continuous quality improvement and ensures graduates meet the required competencies.

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Henry D’Souza          | 8. Anvar Sadath-Vakkayil |
| 2. Hannah Keck, GA        | 9. Laurel Sariscsany     |
| 3. Konnie Kirchner        | 10. Emily Soener         |
| 4. Liam Heerten-Rodriguez | 11. Peter Szto           |
| 5. Susan Reay, ex-officio | 12. Yiwei Zhang, chair   |
| 6. Ellen Rice, ex-officio |                          |
| 7. Alisha Olson           |                          |

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### *BSSW Committee*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring semesters.  
Second Wednesday of the month from 9:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.

The BSSW Committee aims to improve the student experience by monitoring the curriculum, program policies, and advising. The committee makes necessary changes when appropriate. The committee will support students through partnerships with GASSW faculty, staff, and stakeholders. Additionally, the committee will welcome and solicit feedback from BSSW students regarding the program.

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Amy Browning           | 6. Lisa Smith                   |
| 2. Michelle Manning       | 7. Emily Soener, chair          |
| 3. Nazaneen Rahmanzai     | 8. Peter Szto                   |
| 4. Susan Reay, ex-officio | 9. Aislyn Tyler, GA             |
| 5. Ellen Rice, ex-officio | 10. Ciara Warden                |
|                           | 11. BSSW Student Representative |

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### *Departmental Engagement Committee*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring semesters.  
The second Wednesday of the month from 1:00 P.M. – 2:30 P.M.  
(Previously known as the Sunshine/GATSA/Fun Committee)

The committee oversees all externally and internally facing departmental events, including WBGB, scholarship and alumni events, booths/tables, holiday card signing, and GATSA collaborative activities. The committee oversees all social and celebratory events that are sunshine-y, such as planning departmental celebrations, collecting departmental research accomplishments, the annual report, and managing social media. Specific engagement activities are determined by the committee in collaboration with the director. This committee collaborates with other UNO departments. When appropriate, the committee enlists support from others within the department and across campus. The committee maintains outreach contact lists and files located in SharePoint.

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| 1. Amy Browning            | 12. Heidi Rueda                        |
| 2. Sonia Carbonell         | 13. Aislyn Tyler, GA                   |
| 3. Darian Draft, GA        | 14. Lequisha Turner                    |
| 4. Heather Ford            | 15. Ciara Warden                       |
| 5. Brittany Jones, GA      | 16. Anna Wastell                       |
| 6. Hannah Keck, GA         | 17. Meghan Witte                       |
| 7. Michelle Nelsen         | 18. Student Workers                    |
| 8. Nazaneen Rahmanzai      | 19. Other departmental stakeholders as |
| 9. Susan Reay, ex-officio  | needed                                 |
| 10. Ellen Rice, ex-officio |  |
| 11. Katie Robbins, chair   |  |

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### *Field Committee*

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The committee meets in September, October, November, February, March, and April.  
Second Wednesday of the month from 3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

The Field Committee consists of the field director, three field specialists, two student representatives (undergraduate and graduate), one-two faculty members appointed by the director of the school, and 4-6 community members who generally have experience as field instructors (appointed by the director of the school). The Field Committee is responsible for both graduate and undergraduate field program-related policies. Policy issues are presented to the BSSW and Program Committee for endorsement. The Field Committee reviews procedures and considers decisions based on student requests for practice in place of employment, practice outside of our region, and other special requests.

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|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Konnie Kirchner, co-chair | 6. Ellen Rice, ex-officio          |
| 2. Theori Kenny              | 7. Katie Robbins                   |
| 3. Michelle Manning          | 8. Laurel Sariscsany               |
| 4. Alisha Olson, co-chair    | 9. Maria Tonn, BSSW Representative |
| 5. Susan Reay, ex-officio    | 10. Jaiden Davis, Student Worker   |

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### *Curriculum Committee*

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The committee meets in the fall and spring and other times as determined by the chairs.  
Third Wednesday of the month from 11:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

The curriculum committee oversees and guides the development and continuous improvement of the department's academic program. The committee works to develop and evaluate teaching tools (media, textbooks, learning materials) and outcomes across the curriculum. This includes mapping courses across the curriculum to ensure appropriate sequencing, integration of key competencies, and progressive skill development.

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Kersten Borer                    | 7. Ellen Rice, ex-officio |
| 2. Amy Browning                     | 8. Heidi Rueda            |
| 3. Deb Circo                        | 9. Laurel Sariscsany      |
| 4. Liam Heerten-Rodriguez, co-chair | 10. Emily Soener co-chair |
| 5. Chelsea Hunter                   | 11. Aislyn Tyler, GA      |
| 6. Susan Reay, ex-officio           | 12. Yiwei Zhang           |

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### *Graduate Program Committee*

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The committee meets during the fall and spring semesters.  
Fourth Wednesday of the month from 11:00 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.

The Graduate Program Committee (GPC) oversees MSW program planning, admissions, policies, and curriculum. The committee oversees MSW students' progression toward the degree and readiness for graduation. While the UNO College of Graduate Studies gives the Graduate Program Committee authority for graduate program decisions. GASSW's Graduate Program Committee presents key decisions to the Faculty/Staff Roundtable. The Graduate Program Committee comprises at least three graduate faculty members, one of whom is the chair. At least two-thirds of the Committee are graduate faculty members. The director recommends the GPC chair and members to the UNO Graduate Studies dean, who makes the final appointments.

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Deb Circo                     | 7. Konnie Kirchner        |
| 2. Sandy Cook-Fong               | 8. Susan Reay, ex-officio |
| 3. Henry D'Souza                 | 9. Ellen Rice, ex-officio |
| 4. Heather Ford                  | 10. Lequisha Turner       |
| 5. Liam Heerten-Rodriguez, chair | 11. Aislyn Tyler, GA      |
| 6. Theori Kenny                  | 12. Ciara Warden          |

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### *Reappointment, Appointment, and Tenure (RPT) Committee*

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The committee meets as needed during the fall and spring semesters as determined by the chair(s).

The RPT Committee, which consists of tenured faculty members, has the singular task of annually reviewing and making recommendations on all faculty applications for reappointment, promotion, and tenure.

1. Sandy Cook-Fong
2. Henry D'Souza, chair
3. Susan Reay, ex-officio
4. Heidi Rueda
5. Peter Szto
6. Anvar Sadath Vakkayil

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### *Scholarship Committee*

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The committee meets as needed during the fall semester. Meetings occur at least monthly during the spring semesters as determined by the chair.

First Wednesday of the month from 1:00-2:30

The Scholarship Committee communicates the availability of scholarships to social work students annually, receives and evaluates applications, and makes and announces awards decisions. The committee also coordinates with the Engagement Committee on scholarship and donor-related events.

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|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Amy Browning    | 5. Susan Reay, ex-officio |
| 2. Sonia Carbonell | 6. Ellen Rice, ex-officio |
| 3. Deb Circo       | 7. Anvar Sadath Vakkayil  |
| 4. Theori Kenny    | 8. Lisa Smith, chair      |





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