

To the Executive Leadership and Members of the Alliance of Social Workers in Sport:

I have watched this organization grow in size, structure, and reach since attending the Denver Symposium in 2019. That growth was achieved by members who gave their time (without pay) while also working full-time jobs, raising families, thriving in graduate programs, carrying research agendas, mentoring students, managing clinical caseloads, and much, much more. I have been deeply awed by that commitment. I am writing to ask for your vote for member-at-large because I believe it is my turn to give back more fully to the people who have carried this organization.

While my involvement has been sporadic, ASWIS has been a significant presence in my life since I learned of it. Graduate school and early academic life can keep you stuck in survival mode, and there were times, especially recently, when my doctoral journey and my first academic job left me so depleted that I wasn't sure I could recover.

It's always this organization that brings me back to life.

It's given me lifelong friends, mentors and colleagues who continue to shape my practice and confidence, as well as resources I use and share consistently. Most of all, ASWIS has given me energy and optimism when I needed it most. Being in a room with people who care *this* much about athletes and this field has reminded me, again and again, why this work matters so much. I want to try to give back one-tenth of what ASWIS has given me in recent years, and I hope this role is where I can begin.

For those of you I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I want to share a bit about my background. I played basketball at the University of Richmond before the NCAA began doing anything to address student-athlete well-being—that's an important detail of my story. After graduation, I worked as a sports reporter at Sports Illustrated Kids and Sports Illustrated, where I wrote stories about topics including concussions and coaching abuse. I then spent several years as a beat writer, covering SEC football and men's basketball at Auburn University. Since 2018, I obtained my MSW from Fordham University, worked for the NFL Player Care Foundation, and gained clinical experience in acute care and emergency department settings. Amazing mentors willingly shared Sport Social Work Syllabi (thank you Sam Bates, Matt Moore, and Tarkington Newman), and I have been able to put my own spin on the class while teaching it at LSU and UNLV. I have also had the honor of working for Shelly Mullenix (who I deem the Godmother of Sport Social Work), and her LSU Sport Psych and Counseling team. My professional experiences, academic pursuits, clinical practice, and a bit of research here and there have been my life since 2018.

Looking ahead, I would like to see the Alliance continue to grow. I would like to sustain the volunteer base and increase membership. As part of that, I would like to re-engage members who stepped away as the organization was in developing stages, and have been more removed from its recent (and impressive) evolution. I would also like to prioritize the next generation by creating clear pathways for students and emerging practitioners to become involved in leadership, with the kind of official and unofficial mentorship many of us have received. I would like to strengthen the already wonderful symposium, and continue to create spaces where we can

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hear from experts across sport spaces. I would like to meet more members, and continue to help ASWIS evolve to meet the needs of its members. Let's just take over the world, already? Am I right?

In all seriousness, thank you for considering me. I would be honored to earn your vote and serve an organization that has given me so much.

With gratitude,
Lauren Shute, PhD, LCSW