

GEO Organizing Committee  
**Candidate Pamphlet**  
Spring 2026 Election

**Name:** Augustine Aboh

***Short Biography***

I am a doctoral candidate in Global Governance and Human Security. I hold a dual Master of Arts degree in Global Governance and Human Security from UMass Boston, and Terrorism, International Crime and Global Security from Coventry University, UK, and a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from University of Calabar, Nigeria. Before joining UMass doctoral program, I have over a decade of professional experience where I worked, amongst others, as a lecturer at the department of Political Science, University of Calabar, Nigeria, British Council as examination officer, United Nations Representative for Security Women and currently I sit at the Harvard Mass Atrocities Prevention Lab as a community of practice steering committee member, working with diverse stakeholders globally to prevent conflict and mass atrocities through the utilization of emerging technologies for early warning systems.



***Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

Sustainable success, I believe, is achieved through collective vision and resilience, which reflects GEO core objective. Over the past decade of my professional experience in academic, policy and advocacy I have been profoundly passionate about working with diverse stakeholders, groups and institutions to advance human security within my organization and community. GEO represents our collective aspirations for a better and dignified life as graduate employees at UMass Boston. Therefore, as a strong believer in transformative leadership and organizing, I would like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee to work with other members in advancing the welfare and dignity of all graduate employees at UMass Boston. I am convinced that I have the required aptitude and skills to function well in this role, given my extensive experience in strategic leadership engagement, negotiation and mediation acquired from years of training and practical engagement with high-level stakeholders at the United Nations, government, civil society and leading students led union activism at the university Calabar, Nigeria, and Coventry University, UK. Through these experiences I have honed my skills in bargaining and lobbying which would be an invaluable asset to function well as a GEO Organizing Committee Member, serving the best interests of our collective aspirations.

**Name:** Sahar Badiezadeh

***Short Biography***

I am a Ph.D. candidate in Global Governance and Human Security at the McCormack Graduate School of Public Policy and Global Studies. I hold a master's degree in Conflict Resolution, with a certificate in Mediation, and a prior degree in International Law. My research focuses on the lived experiences of immigrants and refugees and how immigration policies affect their health, well-being, and integration.

In addition to my academic work, I bring experience across civic and nonprofit sectors. Prior to pursuing my Ph.D., I worked for several years as a legal consultant in my home country. After moving to the United States, I served as an intern with the Massachusetts State Senate, as a Civic Action Project Fellow with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, and as a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) intern at Essential Partners, supporting inclusive dialogue and community engagement initiatives.



***Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

I am running for the GEO Organizing Committee because I believe we need to strengthen support for graduate student well-being and build a more connected community.

First, I want to focus on mental health and well-being. Many students face stress, pressure, and uncertainty, yet awareness of available psychological support services remains limited, and clear information about how to access them is not always easy to find. I believe GEO can play a more active role in improving communication around these resources, encouraging their use, and advocating for stronger and more responsive mental health support that meets the needs of graduate students.

At the same time, there is a strong need for more community and social connection. Many students, especially those new to the country or campus, experience isolation and have limited opportunities to build meaningful relationships. Current spaces are often focused on sharing information, but less on fostering connection and mutual support.

I want to help create more welcoming and informal spaces where students can meet, talk, and support each other. Sometimes what students need most is a simple opportunity to sit together, share experiences, and connect over common challenges, whether academic, personal, or professional.

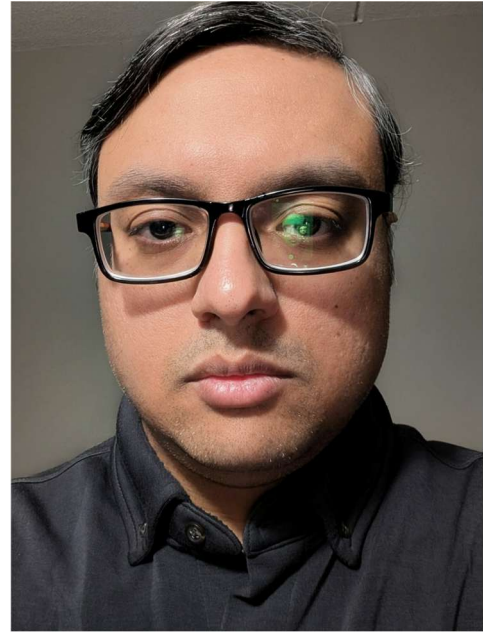
My goal is to help GEO become not only a space for representation, but also a community that actively supports student well-being, connection, and a sense of belonging. I am committed to contributing to a more inclusive and supportive environment for all graduate students.

**Name:** Kaustav Banerjee

### **Short Biography**

My preferred name is KB, it's easier for people to pronounce and for me to connect with them without hesitation. KB is a PhD student in the College of Management at UMass Boston, started in Fall 2024. He brings over a decade of experience navigating fluid, cross-cultural environments while collaborating with international teams.

He has always been academically rigorous, professionally accomplished, deeply family-oriented person who has never missed calling a family member on their birthday. He values relationship above all.



He has lived in 5 of the largest cities and a college town in India; and Dallas, TX during his master's and now in Boston. His experience has deepened his belief in equality, justice, and empathy.

KB also co-directs a 501(c)(3) non-profit that financially supports and offers personal mentorship to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds – demonstrating a deep commitment to collective action and equitable support.

### **Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?**

I'm KB, a second-year PhD student and I have been a GEO member since April 2025. I'm running for the Organizing Committee because graduate employees need leaders who understand power, leverage, and how to win concrete gains.

I have over seven years of professional experience — leading team migrations, process automation, and delivering real savings under tight timelines. At my workplace, I have seen how uninformed decision-making by management hurts workers, and I intend to change that for my fellow graduate students.

As co-director of a 501(c)(3) non-profit, I've learned that sustainable change requires transparency, accountability, and relentless follow-through. I have donated to this non-profit, Wikimedia Foundation, and liberal political causes and media outlets. I believe in putting money where my mouth is.

I've lived in 6 different Indian cities and in Dallas, Texas before coming to Boston — sharing living space with people from diverse backgrounds. Those experiences have deepened my belief in equality, justice, and empathy.

If elected, I will prioritize three things:

1. Better Visibility for GEO – I was not aware of GEO until eight months into my studies. That means we are not reaching graduate students enough. A better-informed grad student is more empowered.
2. A Financial Literacy Initiative – Using my finance background, I want to help GEO members understand budgets, stipends, healthcare costs, and contract proposals. Learn credit, build credit, good credit gives you choices. Everyone should be aware.
3. Relentless Advocacy – UMass Boston charges \$1100 for one credit of internship work, even when the student finds the opportunity themselves. This hurts international students especially. Taking value without providing any is injustice and we must fight against it. This is just one example. There will be more.

I don't have union experience, but I have something different: proven problem-solving, negotiation skills, and a deep commitment to collective action.

Let's build a GEO that's strategic, transparent, and relentless for graduate students.

Together we thrive.

Vote KB for Organizing Committee

*Name:* Lila Hope Bovenzi

***Short Biography***

I am the second oldest sibling out of six, born and raised in southern Rhode Island. I moved to Roxbury in 2024 to pursue my MFA in creative writing at UMass Boston. In my time here, I have had multiple assistantships working with experienced professors and literary editors. I have also been lucky enough to teach English 101 for two semesters. Besides reading and writing, I love cooking, baking, karaoke, watching video essays, and doing the Monday crossword. Even though Massachusetts is not my home state, I have become an active member of the community through supporting small businesses (shout-out to my favorite, Madhouse Cafe, and their cat), attending cultural events, and exercising my right to protest! I will be living in the Boston area for at least two more years while I finish my degree.



***Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

I am always looking for new ways to get involved. My peers at UMass Boston have given me so much support over the past two years, and I want to help them in return. The rights of UMass Boston's diverse population are being eroded and censored every day, especially for our international, and LGBTQIA+ members. Outsourcing critical thinking to AI is becoming valued over human labor and connection. On top of this, pathways to funding are more and more limited. All of these factors make it even harder to balance coursework, jobs, and a personal life, while navigating the significant financial stress that often accompanies us through the duration of our degrees. If I am elected as a member of the GEO Organizing Committee, I will stand up for students in every way I can. My top priority will be making sure that everyone feels safe and supported by their academic community in a time of so much instability. My father is a union leader for a public school district, so I've seen firsthand how much courage, dedication, and compassion it takes to represent the often unrecognized interests of teachers, teaching assistants, and students. I am also looking forward to learning from the Organizing Committee members who have been putting in the work for months or years, and who, like me, started out by making the same commitments, hoping to gain the voters' trust.

*Name:* Diallo Ferguson

### **Short Biography**

**Diallo Ferguson** is a dedicated educator and advocate committed to advancing equity and inclusion in Massachusetts' public education system. Currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Urban Ed. at UMASS Boston, Diallo's work centers on creating opportunities for marginalized communities to succeed and lead in their chosen fields.

**Diallo** earned a Master of Arts in Teaching (ESL) from Bridgewater State University and a Bachelor's in Economics from UMASS Boston. His expertise encompasses curriculum development, culturally responsive teaching, and fostering inclusive learning environments.



**Diallo** serves in the Randolph Educators Association as the **Political Action Liaison** where he actively engages local union members to mobilize union interests. Last year he served as a delegate to the **MTA's Annual Meeting** as well as the **NEA Representative Assembly** in Portland, Oregon. Through his advocacy and educational endeavors, Diallo strives to dismantle systemic barriers and promote positive social and economic change in education.

### **Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?**

As an educator in Randolph and a strong union advocate, I am seeking opportunities to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee. My keen interest in policy has led me onto the path of Policy Studies @ UMASS Boston and the knowledge and insight that I've gained as a Political Action Liaison and a delegate to the Representative Assembly with the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the National Educators Association would serve the committee well as we engage

**Name:** Kohinur Khyum

### ***Short Biography***

I am a Ph.D. student in Global Inclusion and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where my research focuses on forced marriage in South Asian culture. Before beginning my doctoral studies, I worked as a journalist in Bangladesh and the United States. My work centers on feminism, social justice, media, and gender equality. I have written for leading publications including Dhaka Tribune, The Independent Bangladesh, Prothom Alo, and Ms. Magazine (California, USA).



I hold a second master's degree in Magazine, Newspaper, and Online Journalism from Syracuse University. My writing covers LGBTQ+ and women's issues, child rights, crime, health, freedom of speech, secularism, and human rights.

In recognition of my work, I received the 2021 Change Champion Award from Population Matters (UK) for my feminist article on being child-free. I was also awarded the UNICEF Meena Media Award 2021 for investigative reporting on child sexual abuse in madrasas.

### ***Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

I would like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee because I want to work on issues that directly affect graduate workers' everyday lives. My focus will be on three main areas: improving healthcare benefits, increasing awareness of university resources, and addressing food affordability.

As a graduate student, I have seen how difficult it can be to navigate healthcare systems and access basic needs while managing academic responsibilities. I want to advocate for better healthcare coverage and make sure students are aware of the resources that already exist but are often hard to access due to a lack of information. Food affordability is another important issue, and I would like to support efforts that make it easier for students to access affordable and healthy food options.

My background in journalism has shaped how I approach these issues. I care about transparency and clear communication, and I want to make sure information about policies, benefits, and resources is shared in a way that is accessible and easy to understand for all students.

I am also interested in building stronger connections between GEO and other student organizations. I believe collaboration can help amplify student voices and create a more supportive and inclusive campus environment.

**Name:** Dominic Offei

***Short Biography***

Dominic Offei is a PhD candidate in Global Governance and Human Security at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. His academic and professional work focuses on regional security studies, human security, and peacebuilding. Dominic has over ten years of experience in both governmental and non-governmental sectors, including working as a teaching and research assistant. He is a certified mediator and a member of UMass Boston's Beacon-to-Beacon Campus Mediation program, the Africa Scholars Forum, and the Pan-African Graduate Students Association (PAGSA). Dominic holds three master's degrees: in Conflict Resolution from UMass Boston, in Governance and Regional Integration from the African Union's Pan African University in Cameroon, and in International Relations from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Currently, Dominic serves as a center fellow and research assistant at the Center for Peace, Democracy, and Development, UMass Boston, where he supports research and programming focused on sustainable peace and inclusive governance.



***Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

Dear Colleagues, I am seeking to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee to strengthen our collective voice, promote fairness, and ensure that every graduate employee at UMass Boston is valued and supported. As a Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant in the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance, I have witnessed the critical contribution, dedication, and resilience graduate workers bring to teaching, research, and service. My goal is to ensure this dedication is matched with equity, respect, and meaningful representation. My career has been built on advancing inclusive participation, negotiation, dialogue, and dignity in complex institutional settings. With over a decade of experience advancing peace, policy advocacy, and governance initiatives across Africa and the United States, I bring a strong record of advocacy, service, and collaboration. I have managed programs that empower communities, build institutional partnerships, and promote inclusive decision-making—skills that align directly with the mission of the GEO Organizing Committee. At the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement in Boston, I worked on policies to strengthen inclusion and community engagement. My roles with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding and Ghana's National Commission on Small Arms further deepened my commitment to advocacy, dialogue, and accountability—all principles central to effective union work. As a prospective member of the GEO Organizing Committee, I aim to focus on these priority areas.

1. Empowerment through engagement, ensuring that we build stronger links between graduate employees, departments, and GEO to ensure transparent communication and shared ownership of union goals.
2. Promoting equity and well-being among GEO members, focusing on fair wages, workload balance, healthcare, and professional respect, especially for international and first-generation students.
3. Community and solidarity by creating opportunities for inclusive participation and fair representation.

I believe that a strong union is built on shared purpose and collective action. By serving on the GEO Organizing Committee, I will work to advance policies and practices that improve our working conditions, protect our rights, and affirm our value as essential contributors to the university's mission. Together, we can build a stronger, more equitable UMass Boston.

**Name:** Will Ryan

***Short Biography***

My name is Will Ryan and I am a second-year Master's student in applied economics. My focus is currently in macroeconomics and the impact to labor of technological change in the workplace. I am originally from the rolling hills of the Connecticut River Valley, specifically Springfield, Massachusetts. I attended the Isenberg School of Management at UMass Amherst and gained a Bachelor's degree in finance, as well as minors in economics and environmental science. Before coming to UMass Boston for my Master's, I worked at the intersection of finance and agriculture in Enfield, Connecticut for two years and at the intersection of accounting and environmental management in Corvallis, Oregon for two years. I live in Cambridge, Massachusetts and in my free time you can find me biking or running along the esplanade!



***Why would I like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

Organizing, specifically related to climate change, anti-war action, and free speech on campus, has been a formative part of my life. I would be honored to bring my experience with these issues to the initiatives of the GEO Organizing Committee. Further, a substantial part of my Master's curriculum is rooted in labor economics. I am acutely aware of the struggles facing the United States workforce, which have wrought extreme levels of inequality and a deterioration of worker bargaining power. These impacts are inter-sectional and escalate depending on race, gender, and experience. Graduate workers are becoming increasingly marginalized as campuses in the United States become more influenced by their donors, rather than their students. There is certainly a corporatization of the university occurring throughout the country that needs to be organized against. Unfortunately, UMass Boston is not an exception to this national trend, as exemplified by budget cuts in my own department that have led to graduate student funding shortages. As a teaching assistant, I am aware of the critical role that graduate workers provide for students and professors on campus. Our office hours provide a crucial, safe intermediary space to voice concerns, discuss real-world applications of course topics, and critically think outside of the classroom. Our grading efforts allow professors more time to prepare course material, conduct research, and pursue their own academic interest. This raises the level of academic performance on campus. Graduate research assistants are also invaluable for upholding the strong reputation that UMass Boston has gained as an R1 University, classifying it as one of the top-tier research universities in the country for students from a diverse range of socio

economic backgrounds. I am proud to attend a university with such a classification and would work to foster an environment that allows it to stay that way. This means advocating for increased graduate student benefits, access to funding, and access to technology on campus. Being a part of the GEO Organizing Committee would be a true privilege and one that I would take very seriously. Please consider nominating me! Thank you!

**Name:** Anu Sharma

### ***Short Biography***

I am a Ph.D. candidate in Chemical Biology at UMass Boston, expected to graduate in May 2027. My research focuses on peptide-NRP1 interactions using surface plasmon resonance to advance cancer therapeutics. Beyond the lab, I am passionate about science education, I teach General Chemistry, Introduction to Chemistry, and Analytical Instrumentation, mentoring 5+ undergraduate researchers in experimental design and scientific communication. As an international scholar and member of the ACS Younger Chemists Committee, I bring cross cultural perspectives and commitment to inclusive STEM communities. I've presented research at ACS and regional conferences, and my work has contributed to 5 publications with 90+ citations. I believe graduate student leadership should bridge research excellence with community building, ensuring every voice especially from underrepresented backgrounds is heard and supported.



### ***Why would you like to serve on the GEO Organizing Committee?***

Graduate school is transformative, but it demands more than academic rigor it requires community, advocacy, and genuine support. I'm running for the GEO Organizing Committee because I believe our union's strength lies in amplifying graduate student voices and ensuring equitable working conditions for all. As a Ph.D. candidate and Teaching Assistant, I've experienced firsthand the balancing act between research demands, teaching responsibilities, and financial stability. Through my roles mentoring undergraduates and instructing multiple courses, I've also witnessed how support systems or lack thereof directly impact graduate student wellbeing and retention, particularly for international and first-generation scholars.

### ***What I bring to this role:***

***Advocacy & Communication:*** My scientific writing and presentation experience (ACS Fall 2025, NSCRC, CSM Poster Presentations) translates directly to articulating graduate student concerns clearly and compellingly to administration and external stakeholders.

***Inclusive Leadership:*** As an international scholar and active member of the ACS Younger Chemists Committee, I understand the unique challenges facing diverse student populations. I'm committed to ensuring GEO initiatives center equity and accessibility.

***Cross-functional Collaboration:*** My research integrates biophysical, computational, and analytical approaches; my teaching spans multiple courses and student populations. I excel at building bridges across departments and perspectives.

***Actionable Focus:*** I want to prioritize three areas:

1. ***Transparent Advocacy:*** Better communication of GEO's wins and ongoing negotiations
2. ***Support for Teaching & Research Balance:*** Resources and workshops addressing graduate student burnout
3. ***Inclusive Community:*** Programs that strengthen bonds between graduate students across programs and backgrounds

The GEO isn't just a union it's our collective voice. I'm running because I believe in its power to shape the graduate experience we deserve: rigorous, supported, and equitable. I'm ready to listen, advocate fiercely, and work collaboratively to make that a reality.