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## Action

### *Executive Committee*

#### Educator Preparation Student Liaison

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**Executive Summary:** This agenda item presents possible appointees for an Educator Preparation Student Liaison to the Commission.

**Recommended Action:** That the Executive Committee select and appoint an Educator Preparation Student Liaison to the Commission.

**Presenter:** Hai Jue Theriault, Program Analyst, Executive Office

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## Educator Preparation Student Liaison

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### Introduction

This agenda item provides information about the application and selection process for an Educator Preparation Student Liaison to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission). Applicants for the 2023-24 term will be presented for possible appointment by the Executive Committee.

### Background

Section 201 of the Commission's Policy Manual allows for the appointment of a student enrolled in an educator preparation program to serve as a liaison to the Commission for one year beginning on October 1 of the year of appointment. The Educator Preparation Student Liaison will represent the views and experiences of students to the Commission.

### Application Process

The application and instructions regarding the application process were circulated to the public, education partners, and deans and directors of Commission-approved educator preparation programs at institutions of higher education and local education agencies through email. An announcement that applications were being accepted for the liaison position was also posted on the Commission's website. Interested parties were instructed to submit the application, verification of current enrollment in an educator preparation program, and an essay of interest to the attention of the Executive Office. The final filing date to submit applications was July 28, 2023.

The Commission received eight applications from individuals interested in the Educator Preparation Student Liaison position. Staff worked with Commissioners Danette Brown, Jose Cardenas, and Susan Heredia to screen applications and interview finalists for consideration by the Executive Committee. Five finalists, listed below, were selected for an interview via Zoom. The essay of interest for each finalist is included in the Appendix. Commissioners Brown, Cardenas, and Heredia will recommend one candidate to the Executive Committee for appointment as Educator Preparation Student Liaison.

Applicant Name	Educator Preparation Program	Credential Goal
Ronnie Cravens	University of San Diego	Single Subject-English
Saul Herrera	University of the Pacific	Single Subject-Mathematics
Lindsay Kerr	San Francisco State University	Special Education-Visual Impairment
Maria Leyson	California State University, East Bay	Administrative Services
Ronald Wicks	Pepperdine University	Multiple Subject

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Executive Committee select and appoint an Educator Preparation Student Liaison to the Commission.

## **Appendix**

### **Essay of Interest from Finalists**

Ronnie Cravens

Saul Herrera

Lindsay Kerr

Maria Leyson

Ronald Wicks

Ronnie Cravens

### Educator Preparation Student Liaison Application

I wish to serve as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison for the Commission on Teacher Credentialing due to my passion and genuine curiosity surrounding the education system, my determination to be a catalyst of change in the lives of others through education, and my diverse experiences throughout my educational journey that has molded me to become a change agent in the field of education.

From my understanding the Commission on Teacher Credentialing is an independent agency of state government responsible for developing program standards and accrediting educator credential preparation programs, issuing credentials and permits for service in California's public schools, and educator disciplinary actions. I believe in the vision of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, that all of California's students, preschool through grade 12, are inspired and prepared to achieve their highest potential by well prepared and exceptionally qualified educators. I would like to assist the commission in their mission to ensure integrity, relevance, and high quality in the preparation, certification, and discipline of the educators who serve all of California's diverse students. I am interested in learning more about system wide efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain teachers, counselors, and school leaders for schools and communities. I am also curious to learn more about the budget allocated to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the allocation of the \$30,125 budget. Moreover I am looking forward to learning more about the efforts taken in tackling focus areas and goals for Educator Preparation & Advancement specifically item #3 Diverse educators.

My first hand experience with educational inequity fuels my determination to become the educator I needed growing up. My hopes are to pay it forward to the next generation of students that I am fortunate enough to teach. I aspire to become an educator that students can identify with and relate to. I want students to view me as a resource and an advocate for their success. Black teachers are acutely underrepresented in the workforce. Recent national statistics for teacher diversity shows Black teachers make up 7% of the public school workforce and despite efforts to diversify the teaching workforce, the percentage of Black teachers has dropped in the last 20 years. I was not fortunate enough to have a black educator aside from strength and conditioning my senior year. Cassandra Hart, an associate professor of education policy at University of California, Davis in 2018, used data from Project Star to explore the long-run impact of having a Black teacher as a Black student. Research found Black students who were exposed to Black teachers by third grade were 13% more likely to enroll in college. If kids had two Black teachers by third grade the likelihood of college enrollment jumped to 32%. Hart and her colleagues call this the role-model effect. Hart stated "One possibility is that there may be role-model benefits, so having a Black teacher in front of the class, being a subject-matter expert, might act as a role model and increase children's long-term aspirations for themselves". A commitment to increasing diversity in the classroom is not just a personal goal of mine, it is critical to the overall success of students as a whole.

I am blessed to be a first-generation college student who was determined to overcome adversity to pursue higher education. I say this proudly because without education my life

journey could have easily taken me down a completely different path like many of my peers. Growing up in a low income single mother household due to the murder of my father and the abandonment of my brother's father shortly after, forced me to mature as the man of the household and taught me the definition of sacrifice. Despite her adverse circumstance my mom raised 2 black men that would go on to attend top ranked universities; breaking the cycle of not attending college. For as long as I can remember my mother instilled the importance of education within me. She drilled this into my head by using the real life examples of herself and our family members that had yet to attend college. I was also fortunate to have a daycare provider in elementary school that molded my passion to learn by teaching me African American history and how my ancestors ran, fought, and died for me to have the privilege to learn. After learning my history I simply could not comprehend how or why any black person would take their education for granted. From that moment on, I made the resolve that going to college wasn't an option and that I would become the first person in my family to attend college. In 7th grade I discovered that a full ride scholarship funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation existed. From that day forward I was determined to out work my peers and create a diversified portfolio unlike any other student from my graduating cohort. Over the span of 5 years I joined multiple student and community service organizations, became a 3 sport athlete, lived in Italy for a month and became bilingual, worked 2 seasonal jobs, and enrolled in every advanced placement and dual credit course that my school offered. In the end the fruits of my labor paid off and I received the Gates Millennium Scholarship and chose to attend San Diego State University to study International Business with an Emphasis in Italian and Western Europe. My brother is currently a senior at the University of Missouri studying Business. Something that troubles me till this day is the fact that despite the bonds shared with my friends and countless hours spent together, the devastating reality was that apart from recruited athletes most if not all of my peers did not attend college, let alone take the necessary steps to apply. This is my motivation to pursue a career and become a change agent within the field of education.

During my undergraduate career at San Diego State University I became very interested and involved in shared governance, student advocacy, and leadership through Associated Students (AS). Through AS I was able to seek out opportunities to grow as a leader, advocate on behalf of my fellow students from marginalized communities, and learn about the multiple facets of a collegiate institution. Through Associated Students I was able to attend events geared towards bridging the gap of educational inequity such as the 2018 National Conference on Race and Ethnicity, and EdTrust West 2019. Most importantly, I was able to advocate on behalf of the 35,000 students of San Diego State at both the university and state level. AS is a 501C3 non profit organization that operates on an approximately 31.8 million dollar budget. At the end of my freshman year I ran a campaign and was elected by the students within the College of Arts and Letters to serve as College of Arts and Letters Representative and I interviewed and was appointed to sit on the Financial Affairs Committee during my sophomore year. The following year I was elected by the student body to serve as the Vice President of University Affairs. Through my experiences with Associated Students I became very familiar with Robert's rules from my experiences attending various board, committee, councils, and commission meetings as either chair, voting member, non voting member, or public comment.

As Representative of the College of Art and Letters (CAL) I was responsible for reporting on the activities and programs within the College of Arts & Letters to the University Council. I was also responsible for sharing information learned at university council and allocating funds to the student organizations within CAL in order to support programming, academics, and world cultivating experiences on and off campus at SDSU. As a member of Financial Affairs Committee I was able to oversee the allocation of the 31.8 million dollar budget and help create the annual budget for the nine facilities and various programs of Associated Students. Serving as Vice President of University Affairs I was employed as one of the five executive officers that forms the Board of Directors for AS. Alongside my responsibilities as a member of the board of directors I was also a designated member of all boards, commissions, councils, organizations and committees of AS. My main duties were serving as the chair of the Academic Affairs Council, University Affairs Board, and University Council. I was also responsible for meeting 1 on 1 bi monthly or monthly with the provost, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the director of admissions, chair of the university senate and the deans from the 7 different colleges and the dean of the library. My role was to ask critical questions and gather information from these various campus leaders in order to formulate a report to share and inform the student body through the various boards, councils, committees, and commissions within Associated Students. I also had the privilege of traveling to CSU Long Beach to attend The California State Student Association (CSSA) meeting. CSSA represents the over 482,000 students of the CSU and is composed of representatives from each of the 23 CSU campus student government organizations (AS). Due to my experiences within AS and CSSA I believe I am equipped with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking necessary to serve as Educator Preparation Student Liaison.

My beliefs fall in line with the commission's belief that effective educators recognize, respect, and amplify each student's strengths, experiences, and background as assets for teaching and learning. Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations. Also in line with the commission, I believe that effective school leaders identify, analyze, and minimize personal bias, understand how policies and historical practices create and maintain institutional bias, and enact leadership practices that address and monitor institutional-level inequity. For these exact reasons I am applying for the student liaison position. I want to utilize my unique and diverse perspective to advocate on behalf of teacher candidates and advise the commission on the issues, concerns, and barriers of future educators.

My goal and my purpose as a future educator and first generation college student whose life was drastically impacted by a unique opportunity to pursue higher education, is to help others overcome advantageous circumstances and bridge the gap of educational equity. A step to accomplishing my goal starts with improving policies and systems impacting both students and educators by centering empathy, diversity, equity, and inclusion in my work. Following the completion of my master's program, I plan on furthering my path in the field of education by pursuing my doctoral studies in educational leadership or educational policy to continue my mission to serve as a catalyst for positive change for our future leaders.

### Why I wish to serve as Educator Preparation Student Liaison

As a middle and high school student, I wanted nothing more than to finish school, leave, and never have it cross my mind after graduation. I would even, half-jokingly, tell my friends and family that I would love a career that could take me as far away from schools as physically and figuratively possible. Now, I am about to start my last year at the University of the Pacific in less than two months, hoping to graduate with my teaching credential to teach math in underrepresented communities in my hometown of Stockton, California. They say that you learn a lot of new things about yourself in college, and I did not believe that. I went into college with my old high school mentality. Get in, get out, get paid. And since my first year was on Zoom, I had that very closed mindset that year. I only took classes that my major required and took no more than what was on my four-year plan. To make a long story short, I picked up a teaching credential, switched my major from Civil Engineering to Mathematics, and went all in with the hope that I could promote STEM to the future generations of the Central Valley. Were my parents happy? No, but I was. I love Stockton; every time I leave the city, I always make sure to take a hat, shirt, or jersey that references the town. I am proud to be a Stocktonian, the city gave me the opportunity to attend an extraordinary four-year institution, and I want to repay that debt. And what better way to do so than to help struggling students like I once was.

I currently serve as the lead liaison for the MESA (Math, Engineering, Science, Achievement) center in Stockton, visiting different schools every day of the week, helping students with their various MESA projects, providing them with materials, and, most importantly, showing them that STEM can be fun. I report to my boss what students and advisors have to say, and then, as a team, we do our best to put their recommendations into effect. Whether that be new competition guidelines, t-shirt designs, material requests, and this list goes on forever. I love my job, so I would love to be an Educator Preparation Student Liaison. I can do what I already love doing on a much larger scale. After all, this is why I want to teach. I do not care about the money, the commute, or anything else. I want to help students. That is the bottom line. I have been in numerous classrooms, and I see them neglected. I see teachers give up on their students, and I proceed to ask myself, why are you even teaching if you are not going to give it your all? I am tired of students being pawns in the American Education System with no voice and having to deal with countless issues. Material shortage, inept teachers, outdated amenities, or whatever it may be. All students have bright futures, and it is our job as educators to help them obtain that, but again and again, I see their voices not being heard. Please allow me to change that. Thank you.



Lindsay Kerr

When studying to teach students with visual impairments there are many diverse perspectives that I bring to the CTC. One of the perspectives that I bring is that I completed my undergraduate degree at Long Beach State (CSULB) in Liberal Studies, while working in the Bob Murphy Access Center (BMAC) with visually Impaired students. BMAC is CSULB's students with disabilities program. Another perspective that I bring is that I plan to impact the next generation of students with visual impairments, while also living with a visual impairment myself. Lastly, I understand the challenges faced by persons with disabilities when completing the additional requirements to obtain a credential.

As I completed my undergraduate degree, I worked at BMAC in the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) center. AIM center's responsibility is to provide accessibility support to the overall CSULB community. My responsibilities were to teach screen reading and screen magnification software. Through these interactions I learned a lot about the challenges faced by my fellow classmates. A college in which I was hearing students face challenges was the college of education because the leadership in this college could not fathom how a visually impaired student could teach sighted students. If I were chosen to represent the CTC, I would put together a presentation to show how teachers with visual impairments, like Brian Quintana, a middle school teacher and Cayte Mendez, a kindergarten teacher, teach sighted students across the country.

As a person with low vision, there have been many challenges and successes that I have faced while embarking on my journey to impact the next generation of students. One of the challenges I faced was competing with my sighted classmates in courses in the STEM areas. To overcome these challenges, I used several strategies such as tactile graphics, manipulatives, and an independent study. Although I was able to successfully get through these courses, I would use my time as CTC student representative to demonstrate the many tools that can be employed to include students with visual impairments in STEM areas.

As many teacher candidates must complete standardized exams to obtain their credential, many of them do not have to complete these exams with accommodations like I have. I am grateful to have the opportunity to take my exams with accommodations; however, taking my exams in this way means that I am required to have access to hardcopy braille, a screen reader, and a scribe. The problem with this setup is that I do not have access to my answers at my fingertips, rather I have to ask my scribe for confirmation of each answer. Not only is confirming multiple choice questions a challenge, but using a screen reader to write short answers I do not have the ability to use braille output to check for spelling and grammar errors. If I had the opportunity to be the CTC student representative, I would demonstrate how braille is equally as important for a visually impaired student, as print is for a sighted student.

Maria Leyson

### 2023-2024 Educator Preparation Student Liaison Application Essay

As Educator Preparation Student Liaison, I can provide first-hand accounts and testimonies from aspiring and practicing educators, whose stories can help guide the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. My role in education is threefold: I am a classroom teacher, a student pursuing a preliminary administrative services credential, and a doctoral candidate in the social justice in education program at California State University, East Bay. I wish to serve as Educator Preparation Student Liaison because I can provide the views and experiences of students from multiple positionalities and perspectives. As a classroom teacher, I can speak to the experiences of preservice teachers and the challenges in retaining educators in this era of the pandemic. As a student pursuing an administrative services credential, I can speak to the experiences of educators navigating the credentialing system and our desire to further support and serve our school communities beyond the classroom. As a doctoral candidate, part of my research is focused on teacher preservice and ties to policy, specifically in the arenas of Special Education and bilingual education. As Educator Preparation Student Liaison, I can provide insight into the connection between educator preparation, induction, and real-life practice in schools.

Additionally, I am a teacher of color at a Title I school with a large BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) population, many of whom come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. I am also a student of color in a social justice centered educator preparation and doctoral program. As part of my multiple positionalities as both an educator and student of color, I can speak to the relationship between educator preparation and school communities of color in the state of California. Most importantly, I can speak to the systemic needs of preservice educators who will serve California's diverse student population. As an educator of color and a student of color, I can share my experiences and the experiences of my colleagues and classmates (and, by extension, our respective school communities), to help guide the members of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing in the decision making process.

Finally, I wish to serve as Educator Preparation Student Liaison to learn how to navigate and better advocate for students, both preservice educators and in our TK-12 population. In this role, I can advise and provide the stories and experiences of students to the Commission, and I can also use my experience as Student Liaison to support the administrators and advisors at my school site, district, and university. As Student Liaison, I can support both the Commission and my local agencies in creating and strengthening systems that will translate into greater support for our students and families.

Ronald Wicks

I want to serve as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison because I want to be a helpful contributor to the process and functioning of the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing. As a student majoring in Political Science and concurrently obtaining a multi-subject Teaching Credential in addition to a Conflict Management Certificate from Pepperdine Law School, I plan to bring my knowledge from all of these fields to the position of Educator Preparation Student Liaison for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. This opportunity resonates with my passion for education, my commitment to making a positive impact in the field, and my desire to be an advocate for aspiring educators. Serving as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison would allow me to combine my knowledge of political processes with my dedication to advancing teacher preparation programs, ensuring that the voices and needs of my peers are heard and addressed. I am eager to contribute to the development of policies and practices that enhance the quality of teacher education in California, and I believe that my academic background, leadership skills, and work experience make me an ideal candidate for this role. I will bring my service commitment as well as my personal concerns regarding the teacher shortage, lack of diversity in the teaching profession, and clinical experiences preparing future teachers for classrooms with multifaceted student backgrounds.

My Triple A (AAA) student service commitment, which encompasses Availability, Adaptability, and Advocacy, has been a guiding principle in my various roles at Pepperdine University, such as serving as a Freshmen Class Senator in the Student Government Association (SGA), representing SGA for the London Program, working as a Resident Assistant, and working in the Office of Admissions as the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion intern. I firmly believe that this acronym will be pivotal in my role as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison. Availability is paramount, as I must be accessible to both students in teacher preparation programs and members of the commission. To confidently and effectively represent my peers, I will immerse myself in understanding current policies and initiatives within the California Teaching Credential program, while also actively listening to and addressing the concerns of all parties involved, ensuring the inclusion of diverse voices. Adaptability is crucial, given that I will collaborate with a team of accomplished individuals holding diverse views and perspectives. By embracing new outlooks and remaining open-minded to the ideas brought to the table, I can enrich discussions and foster positive outcomes for the commission. Finally, advocacy stands as the cornerstone of my service commitment. As the bridge between the student body and administration, my role as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison requires advocacy. I will be at the forefront of witnessing changes on both ends of the spectrum. As a liaison and student in a teacher preparation program, I will have the opportunity to convey student ideas and concerns to the commission. By advocating directly for students, I can dismantle the invisible barriers that hinder access to necessary resources, facilitating the collaboration between students in need and commission members capable of providing support. I anticipate working with various universities across California that offer teacher preparation programs, listening attentively to student accolades and concerns, and bringing them to the commission to aid in the formulation of policies that will positively impact teacher credential programs.

One of the motivations driving my application for this position is to gain deeper insights into the proactive measures being implemented by California to address the pressing challenge of the teacher shortage. An article from EdSource states that nearly 1 in 5 classes are taught by unqualified teachers- meaning California students are learning from adults who have not completed the courses, clinical hours, or tests for a credential to teach in the state. The teacher shortage in California presents a critical issue that demands attention and action. With a growing student population, retiring educators, and challenges in recruitment and retention, the shortage hampers educational quality and equity. Serving on the commission will provide an opportunity to deepen my understanding of the complex factors contributing to the shortage. Through engagement with stakeholders and firsthand exposure to knowledge on various teacher preparation programs, I can gain insights into the challenges faced by aspiring educators, identify barriers to entry into the profession, and explore innovative solutions. I believe my perspective as a current teacher education student and as a liaison can contribute to the commission's efforts in shaping legislation that addresses the shortage by promoting teacher recruitment, improving retention strategies, fostering diverse pathways to certification, and creating supportive environments for educators. By actively participating in these discussions, I can help formulate effective policies to increase the number of qualified and motivated teachers in California, positively impacting the education landscape and student success statewide.

This brings me to my passion for fostering diversity within the teaching profession. During high school, I was confronted with a disconcerting statistic: only 2% of teachers nationwide are Black males. As an aspiring Black male educator, this statistic troubled me, motivating me to conduct two research projects at Pepperdine investigating the underlying causes of this underrepresentation. The findings shed light on the inherent challenges that hinder accessibility to teaching credentials for Black males and other marginalized individuals. It is evident that students of color, often hailing from low-income or first-generation backgrounds, face formidable barriers when confronted with a credentialing process that involves multiple tests, extensive clinical experiences, and the potential of exceeding the standard four-year undergraduate trajectory. The teaching profession, frequently associated with overwhelming workloads and inadequate compensation, fails to resonate with these students. Moreover, those who do embark on the teaching journey encounter difficulties arising from administrative expectations, curriculum limitations, and a general lack of resources, resulting in high turnover rates. I strongly believe that we must transform the prevailing negative perception of the teaching profession into a positive one. To initiate this transformative process, we must reimagine and reshape teacher education programs to cater to the needs of underserved college students from low-income backgrounds. Collaborating with the commission, I want to further explore this realm and contribute to innovative strategies within the credentialing process that foster increased diversity within the teaching profession.

Furthermore, I am keen to dive into an additional area of interest in collaboration with the commission, which revolves around content and clinical experiences. During the previous semester, I completed my first clinical experience at Malibu Elementary School, where I had the privilege of observing and assisting a 1st-grade classroom. This opportunity exposed me to a wealth of knowledge encompassing the administrative facets of public education and the

unique classroom dynamics within the Malibu area. Since my university is situated in close proximity to Malibu and Calabasas, the majority of my forthcoming clinical experiences will take place in these cities. While I am grateful for the invaluable lessons and insights I gain from working in these public schools, I often contemplate the potential limitations of applying the skills and knowledge I acquire in these more affluent communities to my hometown of Carson, California. The schools in Carson predominantly fall under Title I and cater to students from diverse backgrounds, characterized by contrasting household dynamics, support systems, and life experiences. Recognizing that each school and student is unique, and understanding that as an educator, I must adapt to different environments and classrooms throughout my career, I believe it would be advantageous to introduce programs that afford students in teacher education programs the opportunity to learn from teachers hailing from diverse school backgrounds. Such initiatives would ensure that the next generation of educators possesses firsthand experience and guidance from current teachers who work in a wide range of school settings, fostering a more comprehensive and adaptable approach to teaching.

I look forward to the possibility of collaborating with a diverse team of accomplished individuals who possess varying backgrounds in the field of education. My passion lies in leveraging my personal experiences, along with the perspectives of fellow teacher candidates, to contribute to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing's discussions on the accessibility of the credentialing process for both traditional and nontraditional students in higher education. This opportunity to work closely with the commission will provide me with a wealth of knowledge spanning the entire spectrum of education, from early childhood to higher education. Such exposure will not only enhance my preparation for a future career as an educator but also enable me to explore different areas within the field that I may wish to delve into further through research or practical involvement. Ultimately, my long-term aspiration is to assume roles that drive the development and implementation of impactful education policies, fostering innovation and positive transformations within our education system. As the Educator Preparation Student Liaison, I am eager to gain insight into the policy creation process for teaching credentials, understand how public input shapes policymaking, and champion the inclusion of student voices in the formulation of credentialing standards.