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# 2A

## 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

#### **Strategic Plan Goal**

##### ***Continuous Improvement***

- **Goal 7.** The Commission's work is grounded in research, informed by the voices of practitioners and communities of interests, and supports continuous improvement in educator preparation and licensure.

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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 the Educator Preparation Student Liaison to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission). Applicants for the 2025-26 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 31, 2025.

The Commission received nine applications from individuals interested in the Educator Preparation Student Liaison position. Staff worked with Commissioners Christopher Davis, Bonnie Klatt and Monica Martinez to screen applications and interview finalists for consideration by the Executive Committee. Three finalists, listed below, were selected for an interview via Zoom. The essay of interest for each finalist is included in the Appendix. Commissioners Davis, Klatt and Martinez will recommend one candidate to the Executive Committee for appointment to the Educator Preparation Student Liaison position.

<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Educator Preparation Program</b>	<b>Credential Goal</b>
Jasmine Concha	University of California, Riverside	Single Subject-Social Science
Joseph Morrison	San Diego State University	Single Subject-Physics
Israel Spencer	Loyola Marymount University	Single Subject-Science

### 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**

Jasmine Concha

Joseph Morrison

Israel Spencer

As a current student enrolled in the University of California, Riverside's (UCR) Teacher Education Program, I am pursuing my Single Subject Teaching Credential in Social Science with an emphasis on Ethnic Studies. I was inspired to start my journey as an educator during my undergraduate studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). At UCSB, I completed my degrees in Psychological and Brain Sciences, Sociology, and Asian American Studies, with a minor in Educational Studies. While there, I developed a deep sense of purpose and a strong foundation in social justice work in education. These fields have equipped me with a critical understanding of how systems of power, identity, and education intersect, and they continue to inform my work as a future educator committed to equity and inclusion.

I am eager to serve as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison to the Commission. I view this position as an opportunity to advocate for not only myself but also all the other aspiring educators who are working to navigate the complexities of preparing to become educators. I see this position as a way to elevate student voices, especially those from historically underrepresented backgrounds, and to help ensure that state policies are grounded in equity and responsive to the lived experiences and realities of future educators.

I would bring to this role the perspective as a future teacher of color who came from a low-income background. As a multiracial student growing up in the education system, I dealt with my lived experiences of navigating an educational system in which I often felt unseen, which has shaped my commitment to create inclusive, culturally responsive, and student-centered teaching practices. As a future educator, I am passionate about creating classrooms where all students feel empowered to learn and be their authentic selves. This same drive compels me to advocate on behalf of all aspiring educators across California, whose diverse voices are essential to shaping responsive and effective teacher preparation programs. As I have worked alongside and been around aspiring educators, I have noticed how many of us share the same passion for justice, representation, and creating meaningful change through education.

Serving as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison would allow me to represent the views and experiences that I and others face as we are on our journey to become educators and help create change. I believe that policy decisions must be informed by the realities of the classroom and the challenges faced by students preparing to become teachers. From coursework and credential requirements to field placements and mentorship, our experiences offer vital insights into what is working well and where support is needed. The insights from future teachers of color are especially valuable as we often enter this work to serve our communities, yet we navigate institutional barriers, financial strain, and systems not built with our success in mind. As soon as we enter the teaching field, we experience high levels of stress,

burnout, and attrition at alarming rates. Although I have only been in my teaching program for about a month, I have heard from my peers and have experienced the struggles of trying to figure out full-time student teaching, coursework, and financial responsibilities, often without sufficient institutional support. These are some of the issues I hope to bring to light in Commission conversations, with a focus on creating solutions that support retention and success for all aspiring educators.

I am deeply committed to building equitable and sustainable pathways into the field of education. I believe that retaining and supporting teachers of color is not just about increasing representation in the field of education, but also transforming the conditions that make it difficult for many educators to prepare to enter the profession. When we address structural challenges like financial instability, lack of mentorship, and emotional burnout in the preparation to become educators, we are creating a healthier, more supportive environment for all educators.

Ultimately, I am applying to serve as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison because I believe that preparing future teachers is one of the most important investments we can make for California's future. I hope to bring my experiences, leadership, and deep commitment to equity into this role. It would be an honor to serve as a student voice on the Commission.

### **Why I Wish to Serve as the Education Preparation Student Liaison**

My pursuit of a career in education has been inextricably linked to a deep commitment to advancing equity within STEM disciplines. As a candidate for a single-subject teaching credential in physics, I have come to view science not merely as a body of knowledge to be transmitted, but as a socio-culturally embedded tool through which marginalized students can reclaim intellectual agency and cultivate pathways to academic and professional self-determination. Within the secondary classroom, I aspire to teach scientific principles such as Newtonian mechanics or electromagnetism while simultaneously nurturing students' critical consciousness, self-efficacy, and capacity for inquiry. My motivation for seeking the Educator Preparation Student Liaison role stems from a conviction that educational policy must be informed by the nuanced lived realities of those directly engaged in the credentialing pipeline. Student voice is not supplementary; it is foundational. The structures that shape credentialing must be aligned with the evolving needs of pre-service teachers, particularly those committed to serving historically under-resourced public schools. The liaison role provides a unique platform for translating policy into practice and promoting participatory advocacy.

Perseverance has constituted the primary vector in my academic trajectory. I began my postsecondary education at a community college, balancing the demands of full-time employment with the rigor of STEM coursework. This dual engagement cultivated within me an embodied understanding of time management, discipline, and resilience, qualities that continue to define my approach to professional preparation. My transition to a four-year institution marked not only an academic progression but also an intellectual awakening. Immersed in volunteer work and rigorous science education, I engaged with conceptual frameworks ranging from quantum mechanics to pedagogies of critical hope. These formative experiences clarified my vocation: to become a catalyst in the classroom. I seek not merely to transmit knowledge but to facilitate the transformation of potential energy, latent student talent, into kinetic engagement with both scientific content and civic agency. The labor of

perseverance, for me, has always been less about personal advancement than about preparing to be the kind of educator who enables others to transcend the constraints imposed upon them.

My orientation toward the liaison role is guided by a desire to integrate practitioner insight with systemic reform. Just as in physics, where perturbations to initial conditions can lead to dramatically divergent trajectories, minor adjustments in credentialing policies can yield disproportionately positive or adverse effects on candidate success and retention. I have witnessed how rigid assessments, while designed to ensure competency, may inadvertently act as gatekeepers rather than gateways.

As a liaison, I would serve as an interpreter between these systems and the individuals navigating them, providing feedback loops that elevate policy through grounded student insight. My aspiration to serve is not rooted in the accumulation of accolades but in a deliberate commitment to ethical leadership. I seek to participate in generative dialogue with the Commission, to act as a conduit for the aspirations, frustrations, and innovations emerging from within our educator preparation communities. The gravitational pull of the Commission's decisions reaches every classroom; my goal is to ensure that such gravity reflects the weight of collective student experience.

To serve in this capacity would not merely be an honor; it would be an extension of the very work I have dedicated myself to becoming excellent in, transformative, student-centered, and equity-driven education.

**Israel D. Spencer**

June 25, 2025

**Essay Title:** *2025-2026 Educator Preparation Student Liaison Application Essay*

As a male educator of color with over a decade of classroom experience across both public and private sectors, I understand firsthand the transformative power of representation, preparation, and purpose in education. Now, as a student in Loyola Marymount University's Master of Arts in Teaching and Credential Program, I am further driven to serve as the Educator Preparation Student Liaison to ensure that the voices of future educators, especially those from historically underrepresented backgrounds, are not just heard, but centered. I believe that teacher preparation programs should do more than certify educators; they should sustain them, reflect the communities they serve, and inspire a long-lasting commitment to equity and excellence. With a servant-leadership mindset and a fearless dedication to student and community needs, I am ready to be a voice at the table who advocates, bridges, and leads with integrity.

My journey in education began not just with a passion for teaching content, but with a drive to impact lives. Over the past decade, I've taught in diverse urban public schools and mission-driven independent schools. Both settings revealed unique challenges and opportunities for educational equity. In past years, serving as one of the few, or presently the only Black male faculty member, I immediately realized how important and impactful my presence was. Not only to students of color, but to all students learning in a world with deep historical and structural injustices.

In simplest terms, representation matters! When students can see themselves reflected in positions of authority, leadership, and intellectual engagement, it legitimizes their possibility and expands their sense of potential. Being a Black male educator, it is my responsibility to show students – especially those who look like me – that they too are invited into academic spaces, into scientific and mathematical fields, and into leadership positions. I also recognize the burden that underrepresentation carries, and the necessity to build systems of care that affirm, amplify, and continue our voices.

This is where DEI becomes a compass, and not a buzzword. Diversity provides depth to voices and perspectives. Equity gives everyone access to everything they need to thrive, not only survive. Inclusion ensures that those same voices are heard, valued, and amplified. Through my graduate studies and professional practice as a teacher-leader, I have always encouraged culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed teaching, and anti-bias training—both to benefit students, as well as to help prepare teachers with a social responsibility and justice perspective to enhance the trajectory of their careers.

As a New York Native and current resident of Los Angeles— both cities full of cultural diversity, stacked histories, along with systemic issues—I am convinced that putting forth my opinion and experience can create informed discourse and help develop positive change in the area. The city of Los Angeles, in many instances, is used as a microcosm for the state and even

the country. Due to the large population and diversity, what happens here—socially, politically, and economically—can help us understand broader trends or issues happening in the rest of the state or country. The insights that we are learning from our classrooms and our communities can inform bigger strategies that address the educational inequalities in our state. By advocating for our educators' and students lived experiences, I can help inform statewide programming and policy that is more culturally responsive, fair, and just.

I consider the role of Educator Preparation Student Liaison to be a means of raising student voices in this critical conversation. As a current graduate student, I identify with the hopes, anxieties, and aspirations of future educators. With the appointment of this position, I can serve as a bridge between shared lived experiences and the Commission's efforts to establish educator preparation standards. In addition, I bring with me a practical and reflective stance—both from classroom practice and leadership development—to inform policy discussions with grassroots intelligence.

As California continues to lead in innovation and diversity, the Commission's charge to educate the next generation of educators is more critical than ever. I believe that I can make a positive impact on this mission, not as a student and practitioner alone, but as a Black male teacher who feels the mandate of equity, the power of representation, and the possibility of transformational leadership. By taking on this role, I can help ensure that our preparation programs bring out the best in every prospective teacher and, as a result, every student across this state. It would be an honor to serve, to represent, and to speak for the voices of future teachers through this appointment.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.