

CAAAYC Candidate Statement for Secretary Jessica Brennan, PhD

Educational Background

I have a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's in infant mental health, and a PhD in psychology. I attended Mills College in Oakland for my BA and MA and then moved to the United Kingdom for my doctoral work.

Professional Experiences

I currently work as a Professor of Child Development at Modesto Junior College. Prior to this I did a postdoctoral appointment at the University of Delaware where I provided general clinical supervision to practitioners through the US, Europe, and Australia who were implementing an attachment based intervention with high-risk families (the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up).

Early Childhood Organization Participation and/or Involvement with AEYC

I have been a member of the Society for Research in Child Development, the Society for Emotions and Attachment Studies, and the Society for Perinatal and Infant Psychology for approximately 10 years. I have served as an adhoc reviewer on each of their journals through the years as well.

I joined NAEYC in Spring of 2019. I then joined Central Region AEYC's board in September of 2019 and became the State Director. Since joining the CAAEYC's board, I have volunteered on the Professional Development committee (2020) and the Nominations and Elections committee (2021-present).

Leadership Experience

At my current college I am heavily involved in service, not only as a member of academic senate and the curriculum committee, but also as a co-chair for two college wide committees and one committee in my department. But, the leadership experience that I remember most fondly was when I served as a member of the organizing committee for the International Attachment Conference in July of 2017. The reason this remains such a proud accomplishment is that it is one that I completed during the last 6 months of my doctorate – I was writing my dissertation, teaching 5 sections of undergraduate psychology classes, and travelling bi-weekly to London (2 hours from my home) to be a part of the organizing committee. Additionally, I was the only “student” on the committee – a fact that no one, apart from the lead, realized until the actual conference occurred. The pride that I felt seeing that event come together, run smoothly, and receive so much positive feedback is something that has not yet been matched. It is also a memory I pull up when I'm feeling overwhelmed by all I have on my plate – I not only did that, I did it well, so other things will work out too.

Diversity and Inclusion Experience

As a professor at a community college, I work with an extremely diverse population of students, staff, and faculty. I understand the responsibility that I have to see my students and ensure they feel respected, represented, and included in my classroom. I've had an interest in developing my understanding of diversity and inclusion since college where I served as the Diversity Chair for our student government and attended workshops and trainings on helping understand the experiences of students of color. I continue to attend workshops, trainings, book groups, and all discussions that I can to not only continue learning, but also learn how to share my knowledge with my students.

A recent area of interest has been regarding the disproportionate impact of race on maternal mortality outcomes during birth. I have incorporated a section in my Growth and Development class to discuss these outcomes when we discuss birth and have tasked my students with creating some type of media to share the information – flyer, podcast, video, etc.

Contributions to CAAEYC

I believe that my skills that have been developed as a professor lend themselves well to a position on the executive board of CAAEYC. I have exceptional organizational skills, excellent time management abilities, and a strong understanding of the needs of our membership that will all serve me well as the secretary of the board. Additionally, I believe that my interest in diversity, commitment to lifelong learning, and awareness of the need for advocacy for early childhood professionals will allow me to contribute to the executive board as a whole.

Vision for CAAEYC

During my time serving on the board as a state director for the last three and a half years, I appreciated watching the organization navigate exceedingly difficult times with skill and ease. I look forward to continuing my participation with the board as we have a chance to use what we have learned through these times and consider how we can create expanded relationships with our members. I look forward to continuing to support members through all of the changes happening to early care and education in California and creating relationships with K-12 schools following the new TK-3 credentialing.