

Hello AUCCCD!

I am just wrapping up a 2-year term on the AUCCCD board, and am running a second time to continue my service to this organization.

I have been a member of AUCCCD since 2016, and prior to that was a part of ACCCS while I was the Clinical Director at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Like many of us, I never planned to be a Director. However, circumstances aligned for me to take on the role of Co-Director and then Interim Director at UW-Madison – and I found I really enjoyed the challenge and complexity of the job. During the early phase of the pandemic, I had the opportunity to reset my path and priorities, and I realized that the complicated, sticky, meaningful, hard work of being a Director was something I continued to feel drawn to do. Since 2020 I've been the Director of Counseling & Psychological Services at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo, CA. I am grateful to live on the Central Coast of California and work at a mid-sized (22,000) state school with a team of professionals who care deeply about supporting students and one another.

As a social worker, I tend to look at things from a systems perspective, considering a person within the context of their environment. Thinking holistically about students, staff, colleagues, administrators, and other stakeholders allows us to be inclusive, relevant, and better able to impact our communities effectively. I have been able to bring this approach to Board meetings and responsibilities and hope to continue to offer my perspective in this space for the good of the organization and its members. I also recognize my identity and privilege as white person. I seek to notice and dismantle systems of oppression that are embedded in cultures and institutions - considering ways to use my voice to promote social justice and inclusion, and to also intentionally step back to make space for all voices to be heard and valued.

Besides attending to the complex systems and individual aspects of mental health within a university context, one of the best parts of my role is finding community with other Directors here in California, and across the country. Because the Director role is not easy or straightforward, AUCCCD has helped me feel connected to others doing similar work – offering opportunities to consult about a difficult personnel issue, crowdsource information about a new trend, or find validation in a listserv thread. I have also been involved in AUCCCD as a member of the Board, as the chair of the Membership Committee, as a mentor, and as a member of the Bylaws and Director Development Committees. In the past year, the Membership Committee has enacted several initiatives to reduce financial barriers for Minority-Serving Institutions (including Hispanic Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, among other designations) and community colleges to join AUCCCD. We are also working on developing useful materials to easily share the benefits of membership in this association.

My hope is that AUCCCD will be a place where every member finds belonging and support for their work as a Counseling Center Director, and where we collectively advocate for sustainable, effective pathways to address college student mental health.

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