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**The University of Arizona**

Dear AUCCCD Board and Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to run for a position to serve on the board and help support the work of this organization. As a new director at University of Arizona CAPS (December 2021), I have already found this group to be vital to my success. I have also enjoyed the opportunity to connect with a Director mentor (Dr. Sobel), and this has helped me tremendously with the stress and isolation you can sometimes feel in a director role.

I was drawn to the opportunity to run for a board position, in part, because I have benefitted so much from this group already and want to give back in any way that I can. I first discovered the world of University Counseling Centers during my second year of graduate school when I served as an Extern at Cal State Fullerton. I caught the “bug” for university counseling and have focused most of my career in the world of higher education. I completed my doctoral internship at Towson University where I grew my passion for social justice and advocacy work. During my postdoctoral fellowship at Loyola University Maryland I had the opportunity to grow this passion and develop new skills at navigating University politics. My clinical focus was working with the LGBTQ+ community and what started as a postdoc grew into staff psychologist position, and eventually transitioned to the first ever LGBTQ+ Coordinator of LGBTQ Resources & Support at Loyola. It was in this role that I began to appreciate the nuances and complexities of mental health in Higher Education and grew my skills in advocacy, public health, outreach and prevention. I remember my then Director (Dr. Jason Parcover) suggesting that I may be “cut out” for counseling center leadership, which I quickly laughed off and swore that this would not be my career path. However, by serving in a role to support LGBTQ+ students, I quickly realized that if I wanted to help make systemic changes, I would need to serve in a leadership role. Once I made this decision things moved very quickly. I landed an assistant director position at University of Arizona in September 2019. I can’t remember being more scared about any previous role, and as it turns out, I moved into the role right before the COVID-19 pandemic. I discovered that I had a gift for big picture thinking, selling ideas, and developing and supervising others. As the pandemic continued I moved into an Associate role, and upon Dr. Matchett-Morris’ retirement I was given the opportunity to serve as director. This series of events was unexpected but it’s been a wild and fulfilling ride!

As I stepped in my director role, I quickly learned how complex and difficult this work can be. CAPS was not immune to the “Great Resignation” and better supporting our staff became a

matter of survival. As students continued to isolate, ensuring easy access to quality care was more important than ever. Faced with a shrinking staff and increased demand we were forced to develop new service delivery strategies and have since implemented a hybrid of stepped care and urgent care models. As work conditions improved and positions have been filled, we have found that the time is right for innovations in university mental health – we have even managed to grow our staff numbers from 40 to 70. Recently, CAPS has engaged in a strategic planning process. A major pillar of that plan is community engagement. We believe that more involvement in the University Counseling world at state and national levels will help us find success as we strive to collectively solve the university mental health “problem”. Finding community along the way is a welcomed bonus, and I feel inspired to do my part and help facilitate a community of support.

I find the values, mission, and strategic objectives of AUCCCD is very much aligned with my own values and career goals, and I believe a formal connection with this organization will be an important step in my own career development. As a new director I am absolutely amazed by the collective talent of this organization – there are even times I am “star struck”, and I’m so grateful to work alongside folx who have helped inspire and challenge me in this work. My professional interests include Public Health and Wellness, data informed mental health advocacy, LGBTQ mental health, staff mental health and wellness, and social justice. I have also invested heavily into my own development as a leader and have completed the Dare to Lead training offered by Brené Brown’s organization. This training has helped equip me with skills that I believe would enhance our collective work as an organization. I aspire to operate as a servant leader and should I be selected for this role, I believe I can offer not the perspective of an early career director, but also the perspective of a large university counseling center. I also desire to get more involved in social justice and advocacy at this level, and bring the perspective of a queer person who has worked in several different types of institutions including public state universities of various sizes and a private religious university. I look forward to hearing from you, thank you for your consideration!