Candidate for Student Representative to the Representative Assembly

LINDSAY CARLISLE

- **Doctoral Candidate**
- **University of Virginia**

Midlothian, VA

Candidate Statements:

What inspired you to apply for this position? (Limit 150 words.)

Throughout my professional experiences as a special educator, researcher, and teacher educator, I have found that effective communication is a key component to success in special education. This has motivated my personal research interests, which pertain to the critical role of communication in special education and the importance of supporting effective communication among students with (dis)abilities, the teachers who serve them, and the policies that impact their educational experiences. As I prepare to enter the third year of my Ph.D. program, I want to get involved as a student leader within CEC. Serving as student representative to the Representative Assembly Committee seems like a perfect fit with my personal interests and professional experiences, as I can partake in critical discussions centered upon issues related to the field, profession, and policy initiatives that impact all key stakeholders involved in the special education process.

What skill(s) and experience(s) do you have that would make you an effective voice for the student membership of CEC? (Limit 250 words.)

While leadership roles during my Ph.D. program have been limited to date, this does not reflect my leadership experience overall. As a special educator for seven years prior to pursuing my Ph.D., I served students with (dis)abilities in inclusive and self-contained classrooms across urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Additionally, I was co-chair for the special education department at one school, supporting colleagues in effectively fulfilling the numerous duties required of special educators. In addition to this wide range of professional experiences, I attended institutions of higher education with student bodies ranging from approximately 1,700 to 17,000 total students and have held leadership positions in student government (i.e., secretary of my undergraduate class) and my sorority, Gamma Sigma Sigma (i.e., Vice President). Further, I also have experience navigating the roles of professional special educator and graduate student simultaneously, as I pursued my master's degree during my fifth year of teaching. Lastly, as a first-generation college student myself, I co-developed a mentorship program for first-generation undergraduate students from low-income and/or marginalized racial/ethnic backgrounds that will begin in January 2022 and will focus on providing instruction in hidden curricula and career/academic paths, as well as hands-on research experience. As a leader, team member, colleague, and mentor across the aforementioned educational and professional experiences, I believe that I have not only developed the requisite leadership skills, but also bring diverse perspectives that will allow me to connect with and be an effective voice for a broad audience of the student membership of CEC.

Name one challenge you see facing students and/or new special education teachers today and one strategy for overcoming that challenge. (Limit 150 words.)

A major challenge that students and/or new special education teachers face is increased likelihood of attrition from the field resulting from compassion fatigue and burnout. Data indicates that special educators are more likely to leave the profession than their general education colleagues; however, narrowing down the reasons proves more difficult as factors contributing to attrition are numerous and varied. These include but are not limited to, external events within school communities that impact stress, lack of attention toward internal feelings and cues, low pay, lack of support/feelings of isolation, student behaviors and classroom management challenges, and so on. Importantly though, while wide-ranging, these factors are alterable. However, addressing teacher attrition must be a multifaceted endeavor comprising changes in policy, teacher education, and school communities. Fortunately, these are all avenues that are targeted in CEC's Representative Assembly Committee, which may be an effective way to work toward alleviating this issue.

What are the three most important things CEC can do to better support new special education teachers? (Limit 150 words.)

Some important ways that CEC can better support novice special educators is by identifying and promoting instruction, changes to policy, and professional communities that are focused on increasing cultural competency and the mental, emotional, and professional well-being of new teachers, as well as establish a formal network of CEC members that could volunteer as mentors. CEC members – including researchers and teacher educators in institutions of higher education, doctoral students, and expert/veteran teachers – could volunteer as mentors in school districts local to their places of residence (or virtually outside of their current residence). Not only would these mentorship opportunities provide critical support to novice special educators, but they could also be effective in establishing research-practice partnerships within a wide range of school communities throughout the United States. This provides an incentive for involvement among all stakeholders and could also push forward policy initiatives as collective communities of special educators are built.

When thinking about the impact of COVID-19 and long-standing social injustice and racial inequality, what is the most important thing you have learned about yourself as a teacher in the past year? (Limit 150 words.)

One thing that I learned is that, committing to the role of "teacher" is to commit to the role of lifelong learner. Despite various professional experiences as a special educator in urban, suburban, and rural schools, I recognize that as a White woman born and raised in a nation where racism is baked into its structure, implicit bias is inherent. However, this is not something to be ashamed or in denial of. Rather, it is something to recognize and confront, living an antiracist life and becoming an ally to historically marginalized and underserved populations. To that end, another important thing that has been brought to light is the importance of human connection. Confronting and ameliorating problems in classrooms, schools, the field, and society to create a more equitable space for everyone who exists in it can never be accomplished without a shared understanding of, and commitment to one another.

Leadership:

Volunteer Leadership Positions Held:

During my master's program at Longwood University (2017-2018) I was working full-time as a special education teacher in inclusive and self-contained math classrooms for grades 6, 7, and 8, as well as managing a caseload of 13 students with disabilities. Additionally, for the first two years of my Ph.D. program at the University of Virginia (UVA), I have taken anywhere from 12 to 18 credits (4-6 courses) each semester whilst teaching two courses, leading two research projects of my own, and supporting research projects that my advisor is leading. Thus, I have not taken on any volunteer leadership positions at either of these institutions. However, during my undergraduate program at Lebanon Valley College, I served on student government as secretary of my class (2008-2012), was Vice President of my sorority (Gamma Sigma Sigma; 2010-2011), was a Peer Mentor for incoming freshman students (2010-2012), as well as founded and led a TOMS Campus Club (2010-2012). While it has been some time since I last held a leadership position, I am no stranger to leading. I have now completed all coursework entering into the third year of my Ph.D. program at UVA, and as this has alleviated a great deal of time constraints to the schedule, I have been operating under over the past couple years. I would be honored to assume a leadership role within CEC at this time.

Special Education Experience:

I was a professional special educator for 7 years (2012-2019) serving students identified under almost every disability category including emotional disturbance, other health impairment, specific learning disabilities (reading, writing, and mathematics), autism, intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, and speech/language impairment. I primarily worked in self-contained and inclusive math classrooms at the middle school level; however, I have also been a private homeschool teacher, have taught inclusive seventh grade science classes, and classes related to social-emotional, work habits, and organization skill development. Currently, I am working toward my Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Special Education and have taught graduate level courses titled, Instruction and Collaboration in Special Education, and IEP & Transition Planning.

Highest Degree Information:

Ph.D., Education (concentration in Special Education), University of Virginia, anticipated 2023.

Diversity and Demographic Information:

Birth Year Range: 1980s

CEC defines diversity to include race, ethnicity, culture, language, age, (dis)abilities, family status/composition, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, geographic location, and country of origin. There is such a great range of individual

backgrounds and experiences that cannot be easily conveyed by answering simple demographic questions.

Given this definition, how do you describe your own diversity? (Limit 150 words.)

I am an Irish-Lithuanian White woman (pronouns: she/her/hers) who is a native English speaker and middle-class citizen of the United States. Also identifying as a first-generation college student with a (dis)ability (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD]), I grew up in southern New Jersey and currently reside in central Virginia.

