



CEC 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION Candidate Biography

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Dr. Bradley Mills has dedicated the past 20 years to serving students with disabilities, supporting educators, and advancing the field of special education. His career began in West Virginia as a high school special education teacher before he relocated to North Carolina, where he spent nine years as a Behavior Support Teacher.

During his final two years in public education, Dr. Mills served as Special Education Department Chair, leading a team of 17 special education teachers and supporting programming and services for approximately 400 students. These experiences strengthened his commitment to effective educational practices, collaborative leadership, and positive outcomes for exceptional learners.

For the past eight years, Dr. Mills has served as an Associate Professor in the College of Education at Fayetteville State University, preparing the next generation of special educators. In 2022, he received Fayetteville State University's Professor of the Year Award, recognizing excellence in teaching, mentorship, and service. He is particularly passionate about strengthening partnerships between universities and school districts and supporting beginning educators as they enter the profession.

Dr. Mills has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to the Council for Exceptional Children through leadership at both the state and international levels. He served on the North Carolina CEC Executive Board for eight years, including terms as Treasurer, Vice President, President-Elect, President, and Past President. In these roles, he collaborated with educators, families, and stakeholders to advance professional learning, advocacy, and support for exceptional children and the professionals who serve them. For the past two years, he has also served on CEC's Finance and Audit Committee, contributing to the organization's fiscal stewardship and long-term sustainability.

Dr. Mills and his wife live in North Carolina with their two young sons. He enjoys spending time with family, coaching backyard soccer games, and teaching his puppy better manners.

Brad Mills, Ph.D.



**Associate Professor
of Special Education
Fayetteville State University**

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

Why do you want to run for the CEC Board of Directors and what is a goal that you have for the organization?

Working in education reminds me of the importance of supporting others while continuing to learn. Over the past 10 years, I have served the North Carolina CEC in key roles, including treasurer and president. These leadership experiences have deepened my commitment to special education and CEC's mission. Through this service, I have witnessed how CEC supports educators and advocates for students with exceptionalities statewide.

I am interested in serving on the CEC Board of Directors to continue learning in a leadership role and help the organization better support teachers and students in North Carolina. Serving at the state level enabled me to collaborate with educators from diverse settings and understand the challenges special educators face. Joining the Board would let me build on this experience and contribute to decisions that strengthen the organization long term.

One of my goals for CEC is to enhance support for special educators, especially early-career professionals. Retention and professional growth remain major challenges, and I believe CEC can address these by offering meaningful professional development and engagement opportunities. I am motivated to contribute my experience and continue advocating for educators and students through service on the Board.

What leadership experiences within CEC (student and/or local chapter, state/provincial unit, special interest divisions or state/provincial subdivision, CEC international committee/workgroup) have prepared you to lead in this capacity?

My leadership in the North Carolina CEC prepared me for governance by enabling me to support the organization from multiple perspectives while focusing on long-term impact rather than day-to-day operations. I served North Carolina CEC as treasurer, vice president, president-elect, president, and past president. These roles gave me strong organizational and planning skills, fiscal responsibility, and strategic decision-making skills.

As treasurer, I managed budgets and worked with the NC CEC board to make financial decisions with organizational priorities. As president and past president, I worked with the board to set goals, support committees, and ensure leadership continuity, while delegating operational tasks. These roles underscored the value of critical questioning, accountability, and mission-focused decisions.

In addition to my state level leadership, I currently serve on CEC's Finance and Audit Committee. This role has strengthened my understanding of national-level governance and of board members'

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS (cont'd)

responsibilities to ensure sound fiscal practices. I also serve as an at large board member for the NC Association of College Teacher Educators (NCACTE), which has broadened my experience working across organizations and collaborating with diverse stakeholders.

Together, these experiences have prepared me to serve thoughtfully and responsibly on CEC's Board of Directors, where I will help support governance, advance the organization's mission, and contribute to its long-term stability and growth.

Board members must engage in strategic thinking, advocacy, and collective decision-making. Describe a time you influenced change related to special education, equity, or inclusion. What was your role, and what did you learn from the experience?

One experience that reflects my approach to strategic thinking, advocacy, and collective decision-making occurred when I joined Fayetteville State University (FSU) eight years ago. At that time, our special education programs served only six students across three programs. This was despite a huge need for special education teachers in surrounding school districts. I met with the local Director of Special Education to better understand her challenges and how the university could be a stronger partner in addressing them. Their most pressing challenge was the shortage of licensed special education teachers, which directly affected the level of instruction for students with disabilities.

In response, my team and I reviewed district staffing data and enrollment data. We worked with university leadership to propose a strategic shift. We recommended pausing our advanced M.Ed. program and instead focusing on streamlining our MAT program to support individuals with existing degrees in earning licensure in special education. As part of that process, we also intentionally decided to transition the MAT program to an online format. This shift enabled us to reach future special educators from across the country, particularly those who could not commute to campus due to work, family, or geographic constraints.

Within two years, enrollment in the MAT program grew to 60 students, and the district has seen a reduction in vacant special education positions. This experience reinforced the importance of listening to community partners, using data to guide decisions, and expanding access through innovative program design to promote equity and long term impact.

CEC is committed to diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility. Discuss your commitment to DEIA.

My commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility stems from my work in special education and from my collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds. My experience has

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS (cont'd)

shown me that equity and inclusion require active listening, reflection, and action. Working in a variety of educational settings has increased my understanding of how systemic barriers, such as disability and access, impact outcomes.

Throughout my career, I have intentionally sought perspectives beyond my own, learning from those with different lived experiences. By connecting with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and talking with community partners, I have advocated for programmatic decisions that expand access for individuals who might otherwise be excluded. For me, accessibility is essential to inclusion, whether by removing physical barriers, rethinking program delivery, or ensuring professional learning is available across settings.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Years of CEC Membership: 10

Division Membership(s):

Teacher Education Division (TED)