

SPECIAL ELECTION



CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

VICE PRESIDENT OF REGIONAL AFFAIRS CANDIDATES



Benjamin Blevins
Grossmont College
Region X



Jacob Couch
American River College
Region II

VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS CANDIDATES



Brianna Ross
Irvine Valley College
Region VIII



Kyle Schmidt
Pasadena City College
Region VII

Benjamin Blevins

for

Vice President of Regional Affairs

I. After reviewing the job description for the position, what student activities and special skills qualify you for the position and why are you running for this position?

- I. VPRA is one of the most essential positions within SSCCC as they help the RADs and Regions fulfill their true purpose, representing students. I was recently elected as Student Trustee of my Governing Board and as Regional Affairs Director for my Region, Region X. I have also served as the Vice Chair of Region X, in that position I have picked up the skills needed to give back to my fellow students, I'm running for VPRA in order to make real, long lasting change for our fellow students.

II. What statewide issues are you most interested in or most concerned about and why?

- I. Basic needs, all students should be entitled to the resources they deserve, such as online textbooks, internet, laptops, and all things necessary to complete their studies. COVID-19 has changed the structure of our education system, as student leaders it is our job to make sure that our students have what they need to succeed.
- II. The need for overnight parking for students who live in their cars, creating a safe space that students can focus more on their education rather than starvation. With this, creating a plan that also meets physiological needs for students facing housing insecurities to fix inequity gaps.

III. What would your first three priorities be if you are elected and why?

- I. To create standing transition reports for Regions to make resignations and vacancies easier for Regions and for the new officers. Coming from a resignation heavy Region, it is important for incoming officers to understand what is expected of them as they enter these positions.
- II. Full activation of all college ASOs across the state, we can all agree that the student voice is heard more loudly when all colleges participate, that's why I would make activating all inactive colleges one of my biggest priorities. As a RAD, full activation of all nine of my region's colleges is one of the biggest priorities to increase student involvement and the student voice. RAD's are essential for lifting the student voice and as VPRA I promise to support all RAD's and Regional Officers.
- III. The creation of institutional memory within all of our Regions. Institutional memory is the very bedrock of any successful organization and as VPRA I would create the framework and foundation for successful implementation of institutional memory policy. As RAD, it is my duty to build the memory in order for our region to continue after we're gone, and as your VPRA, I will do exactly that so that we can insure for years to come that the student voice will not be neglected.

Join me on our journey at www.benforvptra.com!



Jacob Couch

Education

A.A., POLITICAL SCIENCE CANDIDATE

American River College

Cumulative GPA 3.955

Major GPA 4.0

Relevant coursework:

- Introduction to Government: CA
- Public Speaking
- Anthropology
- Advanced Computational and Critical Thinking

Work Experience

STRATEGIC EDUCATION SERVICES

Intern | April 2020 - Present

Monitored hearings and prepared written reports on the deliberations of the State Longitudinal Data System Implementation Committee.

CORFFEE STONE LAW CORPORATION

Intern & Assistant | October 2018 - January 2019

Responsibilities included opening and closing the office, conducting client intake interviews, updating case files, basic accounting duties, coordinating and executing company marketing strategies, as well as various other tasks that supported office operations.

Persisting Issues

While the SSSCC has improved tremendously over the last few years, there are a few problems that persist. One, as made apparent by the current makeup of the incumbent executive board, is diversity among board members. Generally the SSSCC has been cognizant of ethnic diversity, but executive officers of regional and statewide boards have tended to come from the centers of jurisdictions indicating that the SSSCC hasn't found an effective way to maximize its reach and influence. Additionally, I have encountered many Associated Student Organizations (ASOs) that are hesitant to participate in SSSCC activities indicating that ASOs have needs or desires not currently being addressed by the SSSCC.

Plans if Elected

If elected I plan on using my company marketing experience to extend the reach and influence of the SSSCC to the farthest corners of California. While doing so, I will work to establish pathways for our leaders from boarder colleges to attain roles in regional and statewide shared governance. This will also give me the connections needed understand and address concerns from local ASOs as well.

Why me?

My experiences heading marketing operations at Corffee Stone Law Corporation and promoting participation amongst colleges in Region II have given me the tools I need to ensure the SSSCC not only incorporates the voice of students from all 115 colleges, but the students themselves. My diverse set of experiences also allow me to develop intuitive ways to address issues often not seen by my colleagues. Finally, I'd like to say that simply because someone else is from a boarder college, doesn't mean they would be better at promoting participation from those schools than I. I have already developed knowledge on the issue and devised ways to address it as well. If I can convince businesses to have a small business represent them over a large law firm with a simple letter, then I can convince ASOs to coordinate with the SSSCC because it will amplify both of our voices and further their students' leadership careers.

Leadership Experience

STUDENT SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Vice Chair | Region II | October 2019 - Present

Encouraged regional participation to ensure student voice was heard when making policy. Worked with representatives of local ASOs to restructure the region's governing documents. Lobbied for bills affecting CCC students. Worked to promote institutional memory within through the development of packets for incoming members of the Region II Delegate Assembly. Authored resolutions regarding mental health services and rapid rehousing initiatives.

AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY

Director of Legislative Affairs | September 2019 - Present

Represented the American River College Associated Student Body to local, state, and federal officials. Organized a lobbying trip in conjunction with the other Los Rios Community College District schools. Performed an overhaul of the governing documents. Ensured student opinions were heard in the renegotiation of American River College's food service contract. Helped develop a course informing teachers of open educational resources to reduce the cost of learning materials for students. Currently working to establish a scholarship for students facing basic needs issues and to organize an advocacy event titled "Get Involved, Get Relief" in which students get involved legislation and in turn receive aid.



BRIANNA ROSS

CANDIDATE FOR VPC

Irvine Valley College • Environmental Policy Major
Associated Students of Irvine Valley College President
Legislative Affairs Director for Region VIII

QUALIFICATIONS

As Legislative Affairs Director for Region VIII, I have taken up many tasks that have contributed to both my understanding of the function of the SSCCC and my skills pertaining to consistent communication among colleges. I revamped the Legislative Priorities document as well as created and enhanced flyers when the vacancy for VPC occurred. While I aided in Region VIII delegate outreach, I also played a critical role in reaching out and maintaining and reactivating Region IV when both the RAD and LAD positions were vacant.

STATEWIDE ISSUE

The statewide issue I am most concerned about is access to technology. As someone who did not have WiFi until middle school, let alone a functioning laptop until senior year of high school, I understand the fundamental role that technology plays in a student's education. This is especially concerning in the wake of COVID-19 as some students were forced to discontinue their college programs because it was simply not feasible for them. It is more important than ever for colleges to provide access to laptops and WiFi.

PRIORITIES IF ELECTED

- **Facilitate Regional Communications:** I would work closely with the Vice President of Regional Affairs and fellow SSCCC executives to aid communications in regions with officer vacancies. These regions need special attention to ensure that communication is consistent in the reactivation and verification process.
- **Increase CO Retention:** I plan to take on a more prominent role in increasing Communication Officer retention. I will provide training for new and current COs regarding minute taking, the creation of newsletters, and how to successfully chair their own regional Communications Committees.
- **Enhance Region Web Pages:** I will work closely with regional officers across the state to keep region web pages up-to-date and accessibility (ADA) compliant. Having accurate information available to Student Body Associations and prospective delegates is especially important in keeping regions active.



KYLE SCHMIDT

Vice President of Communications

REPRESENTING

Pasadena City College

1. After reviewing the job description for the position, what student activities and special skills qualify you for the position and why are you running for this position?

The Vice President of Communications role requires clear and concise articulation on matters of SSCCC communications and discussions. It also requires outreach and collaboration with the different regions and their respective communications officers. As a leader and a member, both in student government and off, I have learned how to deal with faculty and students, mediating conflict, and create cohesion to the benefit of all. Through the running of two separate student operations, I have learned the difficult to acquire art of compromise: the ability to see the situation in an almost diametrically opposed light and find a mutually beneficial solution. However, in student government, I was able to see the other side of this struggle; as Chief Justice I came to see the immense power that a few simple words could hold in the collegiate sphere. Lastly, through my 5 years of public speaking and debate, I have learned how to respond in reactive situations; moreover, I learned how to choose my words accordingly in any environment. Whether through the editing of student governance documents or through the meticulous nature of case creation and delivery, I am certain of my ability to respond in situations promptly, expediently, and comprehensively.

2. What statewide issues are you most interested in or most concerned about and why?

The issue that I am most concerned about is the under-allocation of resources to students who have been rendered unemployed by the COVID-19 crisis. The COVID-19 block grant allocates funding towards numerous programs geared towards underrepresented minorities; however, it left out a crucial subset of the population: work-study recipients. These individuals are one of the most vulnerable student groups, and despite all of the provisions that the block grant provides, this population is left out of the conversation. With many students out of work, colleges are not able to provide employment opportunities and articulation agreements with businesses to keep promising students enrolled and prospering. This rising equity issue is one of the largest dilemmas to face students and administrators in the post-COVID world; there is no rectification these compounding harms.

3. What would your first three priorities be if you are elected and why?

a. My first priority would be to unite SSCCC through expanded communication and understanding of the diverse needs and abilities of the community colleges throughout California. This under-articulation of student concerns from throughout the state need be addressed and magnified to a larger audience than it is as-of-now. Only when we understand the situations of each respective region can we launch a campaign to combat the issues prevalent throughout the state, bringing together our previously disparate comrades.

b. My second priority would be to empower the regional communications officers through trainings and informational sessions. I hope to bring the regions to equal communicative levels and provide standards for discourse between the regions. This in turn would serve to streamline statewide policies and improve discourse between regions by reinvigorating previously ineffective communicative practices and collaborative discourse standards.

c. My third priority would be to expand the scope and availability of board information to the regions, allowing for increased interaction between the regions and their representatives on the statewide board. The goal would be to further connect the regions and the statewide organization in their manner of discourse, creating a synergistic viewpoint of the political atmosphere and our place in it to enact change.