

February 4th, 2019

President of the Board
Council for Exceptional Children
2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22202-3557

Dear Board Members, Employees, and Members of the Council for Exceptional Children:

Thank you for all of your hard work in producing yet another wonderful professional development experience via the CEC Conference that just finished in Indianapolis. I am writing, however, to inform you all of an aberration in the conference planning that created a shadow over an otherwise beautifully managed conference for the members of our *LGBT+ Caucus of Special Educators* and many other members with whom we talked.

Southern Nazarene University was a sponsor of the conference, and, as such, evidently provided the badge holders for all attendees. Instead of highlighting the CEC name and logo, the badge holders were printed with the logo of SNU, and this is the source of our concern. SNU is a university that has sought exemption from anti-discrimination laws so they can purposefully exclude, from both employment and as students, people who don't conform to their own narrowly-defined view of Christianity. They require adherence to a Lifestyle Covenant* from all applicants on the basis of which they can deny entry to anyone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (including the entire range of identities that are implied by these admittedly imprecise labels) or as anyone who practices a different religion, or as anyone who doesn't any practice any religion at all. We can't imagine that CEC would knowingly endorse such exclusionary practices through the acceptance of sponsorship dollars or in-kind services, but the prominence that SNU had by being on the chests of every attendee made it impossible to overlook CEC's relationship with them.

We are writing this letter as a support not only for those in our caucus but for all whom this incident has caused to feel disenfranchised by CEC for allowing SNU to replace the logo of CEC with their own, turning a badge holder that we normally wear with pride into a symbol of exclusion. The CEC name badge in the past has been a signal of unity towards the mission of serving the educational needs of people with disabilities, and it has been a signal of community with our colleagues throughout the host city when lodging, dining, or collaborating even outside the walls of the conference center during the week. We felt a connection to all who chose to turn their badge holders around (as you all may have noticed many who did so), to cover SNU's name with pins, or who had to forgo the use of their badge holders completely to avoid promoting a sponsor who seeks to maintain their own exclusionary identity at the expenses of the livelihoods and educations of others.

As a caucus, we want to make sure we are clearly communicating that we support SNU's right to maintain whatever identity they want, but as paying members of CEC and as paid registrants, we never again want to be in the position of having to choose between sharing our sense of community with other CEC members via the symbols we all share and promoting a sponsor that espouses such views as SNU. Could they continue to be a sponsor? We'd prefer not, but if they are to be a sponsor again, we implore you to avoid inserting them into the relationship that we all have with CEC as happened this year with the badge holders.

It is important to us that we not turn this unfortunate situation into a blame game or finger-pointing situation. In fact, we would be disappointed to hear of any resignations or sanctions against people who have otherwise dedicated themselves to supporting the work of CEC; this is an opportunity for growth and reflection, not of punishment. (As an aside I want to commend Renee Glasby and Jose Maquen to whom I spoke at the conference and who handled my concerns diplomatically, giving them the importance I believed they merited.) Rather, we want to suggest a few items that we think might be in the best interests of CEC in the long run. We would like to use this incident to strengthen our collaboration with conference leadership and to help us regain some of the trust we have had in CEC that we felt was damaged.

* Excerpt from SNU's "Lifestyle Covenant", accessed on February 4, 2019 at <http://snu.edu/Websites/snuokc/images/Student%20Development/2018-19%20Student%20Handbook-updated.pdf>, page 15.

4. We value sexual purity and the sanctity of Christian marriage; therefore, abstaining from sexual immorality (including, but not limited to, premarital or extramarital sex, other immoral sexual activity, and homosexual behavior) is expected; for the same reason, abstaining from viewing or possessing pornography is expected.

Goal #1: Strengthen the role of caucuses at the conference

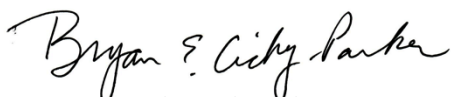
1. **Review the role of caucuses in the CEC organization.** We are aware that the caucuses don't carry any official weight in the decision making of CEC, but identity and the allocation of scarce resources (my favorite definition of the word *politics*) are becoming more entwined than they have been in the past, and now is the perfect time for CEC to review its policy on this.
2. **Take a proactive stance on allocating resources for the caucuses across CEC.** I've learned this past year in my role as chair of our caucus, that CEC doesn't seek input from caucuses about when and where they'd like their meetings. Time and space are allocated only upon the request of each caucus. Time and energy are limited everywhere but having coordination from CEC to maintain records of leadership, contact information, and to organize meetings would greatly help develop a consistent baseline experience across caucuses.
3. **Increase caucus presence in the Expo Center.** We would like for CEC to provide all caucuses at no cost one table (one per conference, not one per caucus) that they would all share in the expo center (prominently placed, not at the margins) at which we could meet people as they browse the exhibits. We envision it staffed by volunteers from across all caucuses who could help members find a group that they might connect with. When the leadership development committee members visited our caucus meeting on Friday (Kelly Grillo and Gloria Niles), they pointed out that what keeps members coming to the CEC Conference is the sense of belonging they gain from participating, and this could contribute to member retention and attendance in the long-run.
4. **Evaluate caucus offerings.** We would like to see CEC review the current roster of caucuses to identify any affinity groups that might be missing in order to proactively create community for those registrants. This again would serve to build their connections to CEC and to the conference.

Goal #2: Rebuild trust from this error

1. **Create a sponsorship approval process.** We believe that CEC should institute a policy of reviewing any future sponsors for their full participation in civil rights laws as they pertain to employment and education. This incident is a lesson learned and we think that a method of codifying this value in the form of a sponsorship evaluation should be put into place. We are envisioning a simple scan of the employment (or human resources) and admissions pages of any potentially sponsoring organization for language that purposefully excludes marginalized groups.
2. **Finally, we would like to propose that CEC add to its setup at registration an affirmation that everyone belongs at the annual conference.** We would like to see a banner on a retractable stand to be displayed prominently near the registration area throughout the conference (to be taken in and out for safe storage by CEC Staff and kept along by CEC across years) with a slogan to the effect of "Everyone is welcome at CEC!" CEC could design the display so that it fits into the overall look of the registration area. **The LGBT+ Caucus of Special Educators would be happy to pay for its purchase.**

Thank you for your attention and reflection on this matter. We, the members of this caucus, found this situation to be hurtful to us and, as members who care about all of our colleagues from diverse backgrounds and with diverse identities, we want this to be addressed with SOME positive and affirming action. We respectfully request an official response to this letter which will be shared with members of our caucus via our web page (www.cecglbtcaucus.org) and the leaders of any caucus or division that joins us by providing a letter of support.

Sincerely,



Bryan E. Cichy-Parker, Ph.D.
Chair of CEC's LGBT+ Caucus of Special Educators
cichyparker@PacificU.edu

From: Dee Berlinghoff tedpresident.2019@gmail.com
Subject: Re: CEC's association with a discriminatory sponsor
Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 at 6:25 AM
To: Cichy-Parker, Bryan E. cichyparker@pacificu.edu



Dear Brian,

Thank you for reaching out to TED with this information. I have forwarded it to the TED Presidential Line (as did Jackie Rodriguez), so it will be on our agenda for our meeting later this month.

Like you, I am confident CEC meant no ill-will and it was merely a lack of information allowing them to choose SNU as a sponsor.

Dee

On Tue, Feb 5, 2019 at 1:11 AM Cichy-Parker, Bryan E. <cichyparker@pacificu.edu> wrote:

Hello,

I'm Bryan Cichy-Parker, and I'm the chair of the LGBTQ+ Caucus of Special Educators from the Council for Exceptional Children's annual conference. Many of you who attended the conference this past week in Indianapolis are probably aware that the CEC's logo on the badge holders were replaced this year by a logo for SNU.edu. While I'm highly confident that CEC did not know this (and really hope that to be true), SNU is among 56 universities that have sought and been approved for an exemption from Title IX protections for their LGBTQ+ students and faculty. This allows SNU and others to legally discriminate against people in same-sex marriages and against anyone who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

You can see a copy of the letter that the president of SNU sent to the Office of Civil Rights with the U.S. Department of Education in November of 2015 requesting this exemption here: <https://www.campuspride.org/wp-content/uploads/southern-nazarene-university-request-11122015.pdf>

And you can find a report detailing how these exemptions put LGBTQ+ students and faculty at risk here: http://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Title_IX_Exemptions_Report.pdf


My caucus has written a formal letter that we will be sending to the CEC Board of Directors in the next day or two, and I have attached a copy of that letter here for your review. We are sending you this email to request a return email or letter of support from your caucus or division that CEC review their policies on how they choose sponsors along with the other requests we have outlined in our letter. I will be collecting these letters and emails of support and forwarding them along to the CEC board of directors with our letter.

Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and prompt action. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Bryan

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Dee Berlinghoff, Ph.D.
President, Teacher Education Division
Council for Exceptional Children
<https://tedcec.org/>

From: Jessica Rueter jrueter@uttyler.edu 
Subject: CEDS Support
Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 at 2:07 PM
To: cichyparker@pacificu.edu



Hi Dr. Cichy-Parker:

I am President of the Council for Educational Diagnostic Services (CEDS). As an organization that values diversity and inclusive assessment practices of all individuals, we support the LGBTQ Caucus and their four points in the February 4, 2019 letter. It is our hope that this was an oversight on behalf of CEC and that CEC continues to be a beacon of diversity and inclusion for all children and families.

Associate Professor of Special Education
Service-Learning Liaison, CETL
School of Education
University of Texas at Tyler
jrueter@uttyler.edu
<http://www.uttyler.edu/education/graduate/special-education.php>



Your Success. Our Passion.

From: Cooper,Justin T justin.cooper@louisville.edu

Subject: CEC's association with SNU

Date: Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 9:01 AM

To: cichyparker@pacificu.edu

Cc: Kim Rice kimricekim@gmail.com, Kimberly Vannest (kvannest@tamu.edu) kvannest@tamu.edu,

Gage,Nicholas A (gagenicholas@coe.ufl.edu) gagenicholas@coe.ufl.edu, Lauren Collins lcollins2@sdsu.edu, Cooper,Justin T justin.cooper@louisville.edu



Bryan-

I am writing to you on behalf, and with the full support of, the Executive Committee of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) to express our solidarity with the position of the LGBTQ+ Caucus of Special Educators as articulated in the letter dated February 4, 2019, addressed to the President of the Board of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). As CEC is a national organization dedicated to diversity, inclusivity, and to improving the lives and outcomes of persons who have often been marginalized by society, it is imperative that the leadership of the organization works to ensure that all organizations associated with CEC in any way have expressed and demonstrated the same values to which the membership of CEC hold all organization leaders accountable. While the Executive Committee of CCBD agrees with all aspects of the letter addressed to CEC leadership, we also would like to add that we believe a statement addressing the oversight of having SNU as a sponsor should be issued to the CEC membership by CEC leadership. Please let me know if there is anything else I can provide to assist you.

Best regards,

Justin

Justin T. Cooper, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Special Education
College of Education and Human Development
University of Louisville
502-852-2183
justin.cooper@louisville.edu

President of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD)



From: Dee Berlinghoff tedpresident.2019@gmail.com
Subject: Re: CEC's association with a discriminatory sponsor
Date: Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 9:08 AM
To: Cichy-Parker, Bryan E. cichyparker@pacificu.edu



Dear Brian,

Thank you for bringing this to the attention of the TED leadership. The TED Presidential Line has consulted on this matter, and on behalf of TED, we fully support your letter of concern to the CEC Board.

We are also forwarding your letter to our Diversity Caucus Chair, Mildred Boveda, in case she would like to comment as well.

Dee

On Tue, Feb 5, 2019 at 1:11 AM Cichy-Parker, Bryan E. <cichyparker@pacificu.edu> wrote:

Hello,

I'm Bryan Cichy-Parker, and I'm the chair of the LGBTQ+ Caucus of Special Educators from the Council for Exceptional Children's annual conference. Many of you who attended the conference this past week in Indianapolis are probably aware that the CEC's logo on the badge holders were replaced this year by a logo for SNU.edu. While I'm highly confident that CEC did not know this (and really hope that to be true), SNU is among 56 universities that have sought and been approved for an exemption from Title IX protections for their LGBTQ+ students and faculty. This allows SNU and others to legally discriminate against people in same-sex marriages and against anyone who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

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My caucus has written a formal letter that we will be sending to the CEC Board of Directors in the next day or two, and I have attached a copy of that letter here for your review. We are sending you this email to request a return email or letter of support from your caucus or division that CEC review their policies on how they choose sponsors along with the other requests we have outlined in our letter. I will be collecting these letters and emails of support and forwarding them along to the CEC board of directors with our letter.

Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and prompt action. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Bryan

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Dee Berlinghoff, Ph.D.
President, Teacher Education Division
Council for Exceptional Children
<https://tedcec.org/>



The voice and vision of special education

February 8, 2019

President of the Board
Council for Exceptional Children
2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 100
Arlington, VA 2202-3557

Dear Board Members:

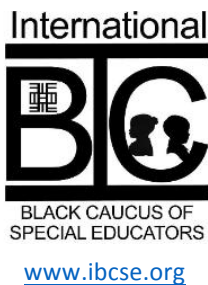
The DADD Diversity Committee is responsible for identifying and reviewing issues pertaining to diversity among (a) individuals with autism, intellectual disability and/or developmental disabilities, and (b) the professionals who serve these individuals. The Diversity Committee is also responsible for addressing identified concerns of the organization with regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It has recently come to the committee's attention that Southern Nazarene University, a sponsor of the 2019 CEC Conference whose logo appeared on the badge holders at the conference, is a university that has sought and been approved for an exemption from Title IX protections for their LGBTQ+ students and faculty. This, in turn, allows SNU to legally discriminate against people in same-sex marriages and against anyone who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

With this letter we state our full support of the LGBTQ+ Caucus of Special Educators in asking that CEC review their policies regarding future sponsors of the organization. We would like future sponsors to be vetted for their participation in civil rights laws as they pertain to employment and education. We further support the goals articulated by the LGBTQ+ Caucus of Special Educators in their letter of February 4, 2019 and ask that CEC emphasize their commitment in supporting all identities during the registration process.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter.

Elizabeth A. Harkins, Ed.D.
Diversity Committee Chair
Member-At-Large
Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities

harkinse@wpunj.edu



February 9, 2019

RE: LGBTQ+CSE concerns regarding SNU.edu

To Whom It May Concern:

Historically, religious establishments have been silent partners in the pervasive discrimination of the fundamental other. Often times the discrimination led to the denial of basic human rights and decent opportunities. For this reason and many unlisted, the International Black Caucus of Special Educators (IBCSE) endorses the LGBTQ+ Caucus of Special Educators concern and complaint regarding the Council of Exceptional Children choice to have the SNU.edu brand prominently displayed on each conference badge. As an organization (CEC) whose mission is entangled in acceptance, diversity and inclusion, the IBCSE find the CEC's collaboration with SNU.edu disappointing. Therefore, we stand with the LGBTQ+CSE and others who are voicing deep concerns.

Respectfully,

Larry C. Bryant, PhD

IBCSE President