

From Our Presidential Candidates

As we approach another SECA election we'll be sharing our Presidential candidate's answers to several interview questions over the coming weeks. The election will begin August 17th and end on September 30th of this year. The person elected will assume the office of President-Elect January 2021. During these next few weeks we hope you'll take the opportunity to get to know each of these highly qualified candidates. Take a look at all candidate information at <https://www.seca.info/presidentelect>.

This week candidates answer the question: Please describe your leadership style and the qualities you possess that will enable you to work effectively with such a diverse group of volunteers, staff and elected officers.



Kristina Ellis, Oklahoma

Kristina is a multi-talented leader consistently recognized for success in planning and operational improvements. She has experience in policy development and staff management procedures positively impacting overall morale and productivity.

Education:

2020—University of Oklahoma, Tulsa	2005—University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond
Master of Science, Public Administration	Bachelor of Science

Highlights:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- National Head Start Association
- OK Head Start Directors Association-Conference Co-Chair 2016
- Oklahoma Association for the Education of Young Children-Previous Board President
- Conference Planning - SECA, Tulsa
- Tulsa Early Childhood Association-Previous Board President
- Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma Volunteer
- NAEYC Public Policy Forum
- OK Policy Summer Institute
- Reading Partners Volunteer
- Regularly serves as presenter or committee member for diverse national, state, and community conversations

I have extensive experience leading diverse volunteers, staff, and elected officers as Past President of OKAEYC and Tulsa Chapter of OKAEYC. In addition to my various board and committee experience I Co-Chaired the Region VI Head Start Conference, Chaired the OKAEYC conference, and served on several conference committees including SECA and International Infant Toddler Conferences (vendors, speakers, special events, etc.). With over 20 years of management experience, I have gained knowledge in strategic planning and execution, process and performance improvements, budgeting, data collection and analysis, public speaking and facilitation, and project and staff management. I use these skills in my day to day functions at work and when serving my community.

My leadership style can be summed up by four descriptors: collaborative, passionate, resourceful, and encouraging.

Collaborative: Leading is not just up or down, sometimes I must lead from the side to ensure all voices are heard.

Passionate: I am enthusiastic about early childhood issues, organizational advancement and care for all early childhood professionals, children, and families. I view early childhood professionals as a whole entity, not dividing us as childcare, primary school or higher education.

Resourceful: I use my networking skills and willingness to investigate resources to improve practices and engage with all stakeholders including potential funders. Follow up and follow through have proven to be a strong suit for me

Kristina Ellis answer continued...

and I dedicate adequate time to projects and leadership.

Encouraging: I hope to inspire others, letting them know I have confidence in their ability to complete tasks. I want all individuals to feel important and to believe they are capable members of the board, management, and organization under my leadership.

In summary, I strive to be warm and genuine in my approach while still maintaining a leadership stance that enables people to respect and listen to each other.



Judy Whitesell, South Carolina

As an experienced leader, I am excited to offer myself as a candidate for SECA President. I've been an active member for 25 years and served on the SECA board for 6 years. Given the opportunity, I look forward to working with the current board of directors to grow our organization, provide opportunities for our members and advocate for our children.

Education:

1981—University of South Carolina Master of Education	1978—University of South Carolina Bachelor of Arts, Education
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Highlights:

- Taught early childhood classes in public school for most of her 40 year career. Also has taught 17 years in the early childhood department at a local technical school.
- Served on the SCECA board of directors for 24 years in leadership roles including President, and most recently as the conference meeting planner for the last 9 years.
- Volunteers each summer to repair homes of low-income families in SC to make them warmer, drier, and safer and mentors new teachers to give encouragement and resources.
- Outstanding SECA Member, 2019
- SCECA—Rosemary Althouse Higher Education Award, 2010
- National Board Certification, 2002-2012 & 2012-2022
- SCECA Service Award recipient, 2001
- SECA Mentoring Award, 1998
- Conference Planning - SECA, South Carolina

As most of us know, there are varied leadership models that have advantages and disadvantages which ultimately drive businesses or organizations. It seems the most productive would be to blend those advantages to create a model that serves SECA best.

*I believe the SECA President must first review our past and collaborate with the board to formulate a vision for our future. We have a strong history but our future will be determined by what and how we focus our energy and resources.

*The SECA President must lead our organization, being proactive with a strategic platform. I would work collaboratively with the board of directors representing the membership of our 14 states with 2 additional members to assure diversity to create such. Our responsibility is to balance the uniqueness of each state's concerns while searching for commonalities that SECA should address.

*The SECA President will ascertain each representatives' strengths and interests to form commissions. Knowing that no one person can do it all, the commissions will build the agenda and be responsible for its progress. As President, I would be an ex officio member of each, not to micromanage, but to be aware of actions and how it enhances other commissions.

*The SECA board members are predominately volunteers, recognizing we have other responsibilities including employment and family. Even those who have the best intentions can have situations arise that prevents them from giving SECA their full attention at times. Communication is extremely important! It's imperative to listen, communicate clearly, understand and value each other. If that means re-assignment or asking others to assist, then as a leader, I'll make that happen. I appreciate this process and will use it to work effectively. As SECA President, I will have the time and commitment to keep us moving forward!