

Vision Statement for 2022 AUCD Board Nominees

Name of Candidate: Aliana I. Romero, AuD

Race/Ethnicity (voluntary): White/Hispanic

Disability status (voluntary): Family member of a person with a disability

AUCD Member Organization: University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development

Current Position (role and date range): Pediatric audiologist (August 2020- present)

Total Years Employed/Active in an AUCD Member Center or Program: 3 years at University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development (1 year as a LEND Trainee, 2 years as an employee)

My vision for the Association:

In addition to equitable access to supports and services, my vision for AUCD is to enhance the promotion of health equity and inclusion through healthcare delivery models designed to accommodate individuals with visible and invisible disabilities. A key element of systems-level change is identifying the immediate needs of the community, and access combined with continuity of health care is an issue that has captured my attention. For example, promoting access to healthcare for all starts in our own backyards. It begins with teaching and coaching primary care providers to consider the whole person, going beyond the simply treating the illness that brought them in for that particular visit. Physicians need to take the time to know the person they are responsible for, their abilities, their goals, and their desires. While primary care physicians have the necessary clinical training and skillset regarding preventative medicine, screenings, and acute illness, most physicians lack the knowledge of disability-specific care as well as knowledge of the physical barriers and physician barriers persons with disabilities face.

As another example, Medicaid services cover specialty care for children with developmental disabilities or chronic illness that require tertiary care. But on the child's 21st birthday, the necessary level of tertiary care may no longer be available because adult oriented physicians often do not have the training of pediatric specialists. This demonstrates a specific need to educate not only physicians, but also clinic staff, and patient access representatives regarding the barriers faced by the disability community. By doing so, we can create a positive healthcare experience and ultimately improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities and their caretakers. Additionally, an example of injustice towards persons with disabilities and their families was recently highlighted in The New York Times. Nonprofit hospital systems continue to implement strategies that are designed to coerce patients to pay for hospital-based services even if they meet criteria for free care based on income.

AUCD and its affiliate University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities are uniquely committed to advocate on behalf of these individuals and their

families toward the goal of eliminating health disparities in our nation. The deeply rooted extensions of this network ensure that as we teach future leaders and allies of the disability community, our vision can be perpetuated in the forthcoming years.

What I would like to accomplish on the Board:

I understand that, as an emerging leader, there is an element of learning having no prior experience as a board member. But I also understand that the core function of this position will be service to AUCD, its network, and the disability community at large. I want to dedicate myself to serve the needs of those underrepresented in the disability community. As a board member, I would like to develop a strategy and advocacy platform to provide continuity of care for children in transition to adulthood who need ongoing specialty care. Because, these children often have multiple comorbidities including physical and emotional conditions, their treatment plan goes beyond the traditional care that a typically developing child would require. Adult providers have little training in managing patients who have acquired chronic conditions in childhood. This can lead to mismanagement in the transfer of care and ultimately affect the quality of life of the patient and their caretakers. As an example strategy to help this transition period, the development of continuing education opportunities for adult providers targeted at the management of pediatric-acquired chronic conditions is a critical element in systems-change. I look forward to playing a larger role in the disability movement as a member of the Board and working as unit to develop this platform for those who are so often overlooked

How I have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate leadership in the network:

My first exposure to the very large world of disabilities, AUCD, and LEND began in 2019 when I completed a one-year externship in pediatric audiology at the Mailman Center. Upon graduation, I became a staff audiologist at the Mailman Center with clinical responsibilities. I have since become a clinical preceptor to guide and teach other doctoral students in the ways of pediatric audiology.

My precepting experience created an interest in further development of leadership skills. I completed the Emerging Transformational Leadership Program (ETLP) at the Mailman Center for young professionals in the community. And I was accepted to join the 2022-2023 AUCD Leadership Academy cohort. Both long-term programs are designed in such a way as to develop the skills necessary to transform systems of care and support to benefit persons with disabilities.

Most recently, I have become a member of the University of Miami Disability Network Alliance Employee Resource Group (DNA ERG) which offers a welcoming “home” for employees with all types of disabilities. In addition to providing a welcoming community, mission of the DNA ERG includes advocacy and education toward the entire University of Miami community. It is also a resource to guide eligible individuals, both staff and faculty, how to request accommodations in the workplace and to be a resource to university administration for information about disabilities. A primary goal of this ERG is to allow persons with disabilities to experience success in the workplace.

I will continue to be an ally beyond the halls of the University of Miami for persons with both visible and invisible disabilities and their families. My formal training is as a pediatric audiologist. But my experiences at the Mailman Center for Child

Development have taught me to look at the abilities of someone with a disability and serve the family unit as a whole. My experiences have also taught me that there is much to be done to improve quality of life for persons with disabilities.