

Vision Statement for 2024 AUCD Board Nominees

Name of Candidate: Jairo E. Arana

Race/Ethnicity (voluntary): White Hispanic

Disability status (voluntary): Autism

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

Current Position (role and date range): Program Coordinator.
full-time since: 12/11/2017

Total Years Employed/Active in an AUCD Member Center or Program:
Seven (7) years

My vision for the Association:

My vision for the association is to build upon what we've succeeded on, learn from past mistakes – assumptions – ask ourselves: 'what's next?' and assist in the partnering of our local, state, and federal governments to address current and potential barriers for people with disabilities and seek ways to improve social determinants of health that affect all people from all diverse backgrounds and intersectional identities/life experiences.

What I would like to accomplish on the Board:

My goal is to better connect our LENDs, UCEDDs, and IDDRCs and develop a shared vision to alleviate future crises which may affect the healthcare of people with disabilities. I want to help us find future and emerging leaders with disabilities, mentor them, and include them in all aspects of leadership, research, and advocacy. I want to assist in the implementation of projects facilitated through our academic centers of higher education. It is important to create a more sustainable workforce, projects, and programs to better provide health equity, access to education, and elevate the roles of current self-advocates/advocates, emerging leaders, allies, and families in our network.

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

My leadership journey began a decade ago after a late diagnosis in level 1 autism, what at the time was referred to as Asperger's Syndrome before it was added into the Diagnostic Statistics Manual Five (DSM-V) in 2013. Referred by my local Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (University of Miami CARD), I applied to Mailman Center's Project SALT – Self-Advocate Leadership Training – program and learned about cross-disabilities and the history for justice and equity for people with disabilities. It was through this three-day intensive leadership program for people with disabilities by people

with disabilities that I went on to become a Project SALT Trainer, went on to do LEND, as our LEND's/UCEDD's first Self-Advocate Trainee. Hired full-time as Clinical Program Coordinator, here at the UM Mailman Center, on continued through our leadership pipeline and, together with my mentor, Shelly Baer, and three other members of AUCD network LENDs and UCEDDs, went on to develop our LEND Competencies for the Self-Advocate discipline. I was chair/co-chair, together with Michael Thornton, of our Peer Self-Advocate subcommittee group, what is now SAIL (Self-Advocates In LEND), under the LSDN. Five years after creating the subcommittee, I wanted to step aside and advocate for new leadership. I'm determined to find, nurture, and mentor future/emerging leaders. But it was during the COVID-19 pandemic that the inequities and injustices in healthcare really sank in. I volunteered myself to our LEND Team and Mailman leadership to assist in any way I could with administrative tasks relating to our grants/subgrants supplemental grant. I also shared my vaccine confidence story through social media and found other individuals with disabilities who shared their experience. It was also this public health crisis which further impacted my understanding of intersectionality and the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion not only in healthcare, but in all spaces/aspects of life and society.