ESEQUIEL “ZEKE” BARRERA: Candidate Statement for CSHEMA Board of Trustees Election 2024

Candidate Name: Esequiel “Zeke” Barrera

Candidate’s Current Professional Role: Research Safety Director, Office for the Vice President of Research, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

Please describe your professional experience relevant to the Board of Trustees position.

For over 20 years, I have been involved with CSHEMA as a task force/committee volunteer, past safety award winner, annual conference presenter and EH&S mentor. In 2023, I finished a three-year term on the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science Board leader (SACNAS.org) or member of: the Membership, Financial, Audit, Executive Search, Conference Code of Conduct, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committees. Helped SACNAS (non-profit, STEM, DEI focused gateway for aspiring scientists to begin and transition into STEM academia and related professional careers (like EH&S). Most challenging was transition from in person conference to virtual platform and back during and after COVID. Last year, the SACNAS Board and staff planned and executed the celebration of the 50th SACNAS conference anniversary in Portland, Oregon. The conference was done in person with great success. Highest numbers of conference: attendees, exhibition booths, undergrad and graduate student science poster presentations and mentoring opportunities.

Please describe your CSHEMA experience, involvement and leadership involvement.

Involvement and volunteering are important. For more than two decades, we (team under my leadership or I) have been fortunate to present, every other year, a topic of interest at the annual CSHEMA conference based on our workplace experiences. We love to share, discuss, learn, and pay it forward! Two personal highlights are the receipt of two Distinguished National Safety Awards offered jointly by CSHEMA and the National Safety Council. The 2003 award involved the discovery and demonstration of a fire hazard associated with circulating water baths, laboratory practices, and the subsequent remedy strategies to reduce this risk. The 2006 award outlined the use of GPS technology for EH&S inventory programs, calculation metrics of total research, teaching and administrative areas and report generation required for the university’s accreditation process and safety compliance overview. I thank CSHEMA for creating a welcoming place for professionals to display their various contributions to the EH&S field. From serving on CSHEMA’s Government Relations, DEI task force, Board Nominations Committee, and the numerous discussion groups, I feel fortunate to develop lasting friendships among colleagues and individuals entering the EHS field.

Please state your goals for CSHEMA while serving on the Board of Trustees.

Goal 1: Continue to promote the welcoming CSHEMA environment where EH&S professionals and students can discuss and bring difference perspectives to help solve universal safety challenges facing academia and medical center work/service environments.

Goal 2: Financial stability to allow CSHEMA to grow in membership, services, and organization.
Goal 3: CSHEMA has professionals, students, supporters, and peers that bring the strength of diversity from their backgrounds to a forum where we all can benefit. Native people, immigrants and entrepreneurs built an independent, market-driven nation to value life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To these core values, the Environmental Health and Safety field and CSHEMA must be the voice of reason guiding the union between the safe environment culture and the competitive research enterprise. Plenty of challenges will be introduced to the CSHEMA leadership, staff, BoT and membership to understand, discuss and voice an opinion on a national, state and local level.