

Item 5b - K. Covarrubias Application; K. Covarrubias CV

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PEC Commissioner Application
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Public Ethics Commission Application

Contact Information

Name Kevin Covarrubias

Address [REDACTED]
Oakland, CA 94606

Phone [REDACTED]

Evening Phone [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Please answer the following questions

Are you an Oakland resident? Yes

Years of residency in Oakland 20

Your City Council District District 2

List any City of Oakland Boards or Commissions (including this Commission) on which you currently or have previously served: N/A

Do you attest that you already have or will attend a PEC meeting before your final interview with the Commission? Yes

If you said yes to the previous question, please let us know what date you attended or will attend. November 8, 2023

Are you currently employed by the City of Oakland or do you have any direct and substantial financial interest in any work, business, or official action by the City? No

Are you currently or are you planning to run for elective office in Oakland? No

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Are you currently or are you planning to
endorse, support or oppose an Oakland
candidate or ballot measure?

Are you currently or are you planning to
work on behalf of an Oakland candidate
or ballot measure?

Are you a registered Oakland lobbyist? No

Are you required to register as a
lobbyist? No

Do you receive compensation from an
Oakland lobbyist? No

Do you receive gifts from an Oakland
lobbyist? No

List any languages other than English
that you speak fluently. Mandarin, Spanish

How did you hear about this vacancy? Newspaper article

Which newspaper? The Oaklandside

Supplemental Questions

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1. Why do you want to serve on the Public Ethics Commission?

As someone deeply committed to education, mentorship, and ethical practices, I am particularly drawn to the mission of the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) in ensuring that Oakland's government is transparent, honest, and accountable. My unique blend of experiences in educational consulting, political science, and multicultural research has prepared me to make meaningful contributions to the Commission's work.

At InGenius Prep, Scholar Launch, and Oakland Promise, I have honed skills in educational guidance and youth mentorship, working alongside former admissions officers and mentors. My work has always been underpinned by a strong commitment to ethics and integrity, values I believe are critical to the work of the PEC. Further, I specialize in helping students from diverse backgrounds, and I have a nuanced understanding of systemic inequities, being a first-generation college graduate from East Oakland and the son of immigrants myself - insights that would allow me to consider issues before the Commission from a well-rounded perspective.

With advanced degrees in Political Science (Columbia) and Chinese Linguistics and Literature (San Francisco State University), and having completed a research thesis on Sino-Latin American relations that I was invited to present at the American Association of Public Opinion Research's 2022 Young Public Opinion Stars Competition, I possess the analytical skills necessary to scrutinize documents, laws, and policies critically. These academic experiences have also equipped me with strong communication skills, both written and oral, crucial for presenting findings and collaborating effectively within a commission setting.

Moreover, as an Oakland native (Oakland Technical High School '14) and current resident, I have a vested interest in ensuring that our city government operates with the highest ethical standards. Having gained knowledge of Oakland local politics through my past internships with Congresswoman Barbara Lee (2015), former Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf's 2014 campaign, and former Assemblymember Rob Bonta (2013), I am familiar with the context in which the Commission operates within the broader community, and I believe my background aligns closely with the desired skills and abilities for a Commissioner.

I am eager to bring my expertise in mentorship, multicultural understanding, and policy analysis to the Public Ethics Commission. I am committed to upholding the values of fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity, and I look forward to the possibility of serving my community in this impactful role.

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2. What skills and experience will you bring to the Commission? (Include any governmental experience, activities with civic and business organizations, neighborhood groups, or any other experience that would contribute to your effectiveness as a Commissioner.)

I bring a multidisciplinary skill set to the Public Ethics Commission, with experience in educational consulting, political science, and multicultural research. My roles as a Senior Counselor at InGenius Prep and a Research Practicum Interviewer for Scholar Launch have equipped me with strong analytical, organizational, and communication skills-key competencies for any effective Commissioner. My interactions with former admissions officers from elite educational institutions like Harvard, Yale, and UC Berkeley have enhanced my understanding of complex regulatory frameworks, honing my ability to scrutinize and interpret rules, laws, and policies critically.

Furthermore, my academic background offers a solid foundation for making well-informed, objective decisions. I hold a MA in Political Science from Columbia University, with concentrations in International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Quantitative Methods in R Programming (i.e. advanced regression analysis). This academic grounding positions me to comprehend the intricacies of government ethics and policy analysis at a nuanced and data-driven level.

As a Mentor for Oakland Promise (OP) Scholars and a community participant in Oakland, I have been actively involved in mentoring a Guatemalan OP Scholar starting his first semester at Laney College. This local engagement has provided me with insights into the needs of the Oakland community, strengthening my ability to listen to public input, assess community requirements, and make effective decisions aligned with the Commission's goals.

My experience extends globally as well, with a focus on Sino-Taiwanese-Latin American relations having participated in the US Department of State's 2022 Critical Language Scholarship Program at the National Cheng Kung University in Tainan, Taiwan. This gives me a unique vantage point on issues of ethics and transparency, informed by global perspectives. This is particularly relevant given Oakland's diverse, multicultural community, and I believe this international experience will add a unique layer to the Commission's work.

Lastly, my proficiency in multiple languages, including Mandarin and English, and my ongoing efforts to further my heritage proficiency in Spanish, underscore my commitment to multicultural fluency - a skill that can assist the Commission in engaging effectively with Oakland's diverse communities.

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3. What issues, projects, or goals would you like to pursue while serving on the Commission?

During my tenure on the Public Ethics Commission, I would like to focus on several key issues, projects, and goals that align with both my professional background and the pressing needs of the Oakland community.

Firstly, I'd aim to establish a robust educational outreach program targeted at high school and college students. Given my background in educational consulting and mentorship, I believe it's crucial to educate the younger generation about the importance of ethics, transparency, and civic engagement. This would include workshops, seminars, and possibly an annual Ethics Day event to encourage active participation from students and young adults in governance matters.

Secondly, transparency in campaign financing is an area that requires continuous vigilance. I would advocate for regular audits and comprehensive reports that are easily accessible to the public. Utilizing my skills in data analysis and policy interpretation, I aim to contribute to developing more streamlined and transparent mechanisms for monitoring campaign contributions and expenditures.

Additionally, I would like to explore avenues for enhanced citizen participation in Commission activities. Whether through town halls, online forums, or partnerships with neighborhood groups, increasing public input can enrich the Commission's work and make it more reflective of Oakland's diverse community. Given my previous involvement in civic organizations and my cultural-linguistic expertise in Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, I could bring unique perspectives on how to engage diverse community groups effectively.

I would also champion the need for greater ethical training among city officials and staff. This could include the creation of a comprehensive ethical training module, if not already created, that not only meets legal requirements but also addresses real-world scenarios, thereby cultivating a culture of ethical decision-making within city government.

Lastly, with cybersecurity being a growing concern across all sectors, including the City of Oakland given the recent ransomware attack, I'd advocate for a review and further strengthening of digital ethics and security protocols within Oakland's city government. Having worked on college admissions candidacy building efforts tailored toward our cybersecurity-interested students, I have gained exposure to industry trends via educational resources like the Wall Street Journal Pro's Cybersecurity column, TryHackMe, and Cybrary. Further, as I have discussed with my students the connections that exist between artificial intelligence, data science, and cybersecurity, I am confident in my ability to communicate and collaborate with cybersecurity contractors for the City of Oakland.

By focusing on these areas, I hope to contribute to strengthening the Public Ethics Commission's role as an effective watchdog and educational

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resource, ensuring that Oakland's governance remains transparent, ethical, and inclusive.

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4. What do you think are the City's most pressing ethics, campaign finance, or transparency challenges?

In my view, Oakland faces several critical challenges in the areas of ethics, campaign finance, and transparency, each with its own set of complexities.

Firstly, on the ethics front, the risk of corruption and conflicts of interest in city government remains a pressing concern. While the Public Ethics Commission serves as a watchdog, there is a need for continuous ethical training and monitoring to ensure city officials and employees act in the best interests of the public. Given my extensive background in political science and governance, I have a keen understanding of how ethical lapses can undermine public trust, such as when a former city building inspector, Thomas Espinosa, was fined \$309,600 by the Public Ethics Commission for accepting bribes from property owners and failing to report his own income and property ownership.

Secondly, in the realm of campaign finance, dark money and undisclosed contributions continue to plague the system. The source and allocation of campaign funds are often not as transparent as they should be, allowing for undue influence over elected officials. Utilizing my skills in data analysis and leveraging resources like Open Secrets, I would propose the development of real-time tracking tools and regular audits to make the campaign finance system more transparent and accountable.

Transparency, or the lack thereof, is another significant issue. Despite technological advances, there's a gap in the efficient dissemination of important public records and proceedings. Governmental opacity can lead to skepticism and can marginalize those who do not have easy access to digital platforms. Drawing from my experience in educational consulting, I see an opportunity to develop user-friendly educational resources that demystify governmental processes, thus making them more accessible to the average citizen. For instance, I'd be happy to collaborate with the Public Ethics Commission to create a series of short Instagram Reels or TikTok videos that explain the structure and functions of city government, such as the roles of the Mayor, City Council, the City Administrator, and various departments and commissions (including the Public Ethics Commission, of course).

Additionally, there may be a lack of engagement and understanding between the Commission and various community groups, from East Oakland to Rockridge. For effective governance, it's imperative that the Commission understands the unique ethical and transparency challenges faced by different communities in Oakland. Leveraging my experience in community-building and multicultural research, I aim to foster a more inclusive approach to tackling these challenges.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, I must mention that the city needs to be vigilant against the growing threat of cyber attacks, which could compromise ethical and transparent governance. Especially considering the emerging trend of AI-infused malicious cybersecurity threats like WormGPT and FraudGPT, ensuring the integrity and security of digital

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platforms used for public engagement and information dissemination is paramount.

In sum, addressing these challenges requires a multi-disciplinary approach that combines rigorous ethical training, technological solutions, community engagement, and robust oversight mechanisms. I believe my diverse skill set and experiences can contribute effectively to addressing these issues.

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5. What else would you like the subcommittee to know as your application is considered?

In addition to my skills and experiences that align closely with the responsibilities and aims of the Public Ethics Commission, I would like the subcommittee to know that I am deeply committed to the principle of public service. As a native of Oakland and a mentor to youth in the community, I have a vested interest in ensuring that our city's governance is as transparent, ethical, and equitable as possible.

I bring a unique multidisciplinary perspective to the table. My background in political science, Chinese linguistics, and educational consulting allows me to approach problems from various angles. I believe that a well-rounded approach is crucial when dealing with complex ethical issues, as it helps us to better understand the various stakeholders involved and the potential impact of our decisions.

Moreover, I'm committed to lifelong learning and adapting to new challenges. This adaptability is particularly vital in the ever-changing landscape of ethics and governance. As we move increasingly towards a digital society, ensuring the integrity and security of our public digital platforms is essential.

Furthermore, I've proven my ability to collaborate effectively across different sectors and communities. Through my work in college admissions consulting and research on Sino-Taiwanese-Latin American relations, I have built networks that can provide diverse perspectives on ethical governance. Engaging various communities within Oakland can only serve to make the Commission's work more inclusive and effective.

Lastly, I consider this role not just as a responsibility but also as an opportunity for personal growth. Serving on the Commission would provide me with the invaluable experience of working closely with professionals who share my commitment to ethical governance. I see it as a platform for shared learning and making a meaningful difference in the community.

I am excited about the possibility of contributing to the Public Ethics Commission and furthering its mission to make Oakland's government as open, honest, fair, and trustworthy as possible. Thank you for considering my application.

Please provide two references

Reference 1

Name

Christopher Brown

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Address

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
New Haven, CT 06511

Phone

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

Reference 2

Name

Megan Bailey

Address

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
New Haven, CT 06511

Phone

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

Submit your resume

Upload your resume

<https://www.formstack.com/admin/download/file/15387254890>

Sign and submit application

Signature

[REDACTED]

Date/Time

Oct 23, 2023



Kevin Covarrubias

Educator, Chinese Language Analyst

Kevin Covarrubias (柯凱文), M.A., is a multilingual educator and quantitative social science specialist with expertise in educational consulting and international business. Fluent in Mandarin and native in Spanish, he currently serves as a Senior Counselor at InGenius Prep. Notable achievements include completing the 2022 State Department's CLS Program in Taiwan and Columbia University's 2016 Summer Business Chinese Program at the Shanghai Jiaotong University, where he also interned for Guan Pu Real Estate, LLC (Shanghai).

Contact

Phone

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

Address

Oakland, CA 94606

Education

MA in Political Science
Columbia University

MA in Chinese
San Francisco State University

BA in Government
Claremont McKenna College

Critical Language Scholarship (CLS)
National Cheng Kung University (Taiwan)

Columbia Business Intern Program
Shanghai Jiaotong University (China)

Expertise

- Educational Consulting
- Project Management (Trello)
- R Programming (Coding)
- Quantitative Research Methods
- Sales
- Property Management, Real Estate
- Public Speaking

Language

English (Native)

Spanish (Native)

Chinese (ACTFL OPI Advanced Mid)

Experience

September 2022 - Present

InGenius Prep | Remote

Senior Counselor

- *College Admissions Advising:* Provide weekly strategic guidance to 12 high school seniors and transfer applicants on college search and personal statement development.
- *Resume and Community Involvement Coaching:* Conduct bi-weekly sessions with 13 students in grades 9-11 to enhance resume quality and community engagement.
- *AI Policy Development:* Authored a comprehensive report on AI essay detection tools such as ZeroGPT and Copyleaks, influencing company policy on emerging AI technologies like GPT-4 and BingChat.
- *Sales and Client Acquisition:* Led 7 presale calls to successfully onboard potential student clients and their families, serving as their dedicated Admissions Coach.
- *Educational Webinars:* Delivered 15-minute presentation to 15+ students on candidacy development for aspiring political science and international relations majors, receiving positive feedback for actionable insights.
- *Application Counseling Bootcamp:* Co-led 5-day bootcamp for 18 students, focusing on personal statement and University of California (UC) essays. Conducted individual 15-minute consultations and presented on essay strategies, including the importance of a "turn" in personal statements and key considerations for the UC essays.

April 2023 - Present

Scholar Launch | Remote

Research Practicum Interviewer

- *Student Interviews & Counseling:* Conducted 65+ interviews of 15-30 minutes each with students applying for diverse research programs in fields such as AI, aerospace engineering, and political economy. Provided targeted advice on research proposal development and skill acquisition (e.g. Python, statistical analysis).
- *Program Guidance:* Act as a resource for applicants by answering queries about program specifics, including length, homework expectations, and research paper publication timelines.

August 2021 - May 2022

Columbia University | New York, NY

Research Assistant

- *Data Collection & Analysis:* Assembled a cross-national dataset of expatriate voting records under the supervision of Dr. Chiara Superti and PhD student Beatrice Bonini.
- *Multilingual Research:* Utilized native-level Spanish language skills to cross-reference electoral data from official sources and liaise with electoral institutes in multiple countries.
- *Technical Skill Development:* Acquiring proficiency in R programming for data analysis, focusing on techniques relevant to the study's objectives.

References

Available Upon Request