

Cynthia Baur, PhD

I bring 20 years' experience in health communication and health literacy strategic planning; project design and implementation; research and evaluation; and professional development. As a Board member, I would like to enhance the Center's work on Plain Writing Act implementation and monitoring in federal agencies. I also bring health literacy expertise and contacts. I am currently the Endowed Chair and Director of the Horowitz Center for Health Literacy, University of Maryland, College Park. From 1999-2006, I had senior communication positions at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I was CDC's Senior Official for the Plain Writing Act and main trainer for plain language and health literacy skills.

Lisa Chensvold

Director of Communications, International Executive Service Corps

When I mentioned to a colleague that I was interested in serving on the board of the Center for Plain Language, she laughed and said, "Well, that certainly suits you!" Around the office I am known as a jargon buster and acronym destroyer.

From the music and art that move us, to medical research and public health preparedness, to foreign aid, my career has been about taking highly technical and specialized material and making it meaningful and actionable for general audiences. My first career was as an aspiring academic, and I wrote for my fellow academics. I grew frustrated that academic research and writing is insular by design, and that frustration inspired me to transition into communications. I am now a passionate advocate for clear writing and plain language, especially when the content serves the public interest. I feel a deep and real obligation to explain how research and foreign assistance, funded with taxpayer dollars, not only have a positive impact on the world, but also are relevant to people's lives. I am prepared to put my passion and commitment to work on the board of the Center for Plain Language. Indeed, it would be an honor to serve.

Meghan Codd Walker

Meghan's approach to language reflects her numbers wizardry, insatiable curiosity, and bookworm nature. She believes there is a difference between good communications and effective communications—and clarity is at the heart of this division. Whether coaching corporate employees, improving content ecosystems, or refining verbal brands, Meghan uses empathy and plain language to build strong connections between companies and their audiences.

Ultimately, Meghan's knack for strategic communication helps clients understand—and unleash—the power of language. She has over a decade of professional writing experience and has provided precise, compelling content for organizations ranging from tech startups to global corporations. Before becoming an entrepreneur, Meghan served as a copywriter at Wachovia Securities and senior technical editor at Capital One.

Professional Highlights:

- Board Member, Center for Plain Language
- Co-Chair, ClearMark Awards, 2015 – 2017
- Appointed Member, International Plain Language Federation
- Member, Richmond Business Council, Greater Richmond Chamber
- Member, Workforce Development Committee, Greater Richmond Chamber
- Member, Plain Language Association International (PLAIN)
- Member, Clarity International
- Graduate, University of Virginia, bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature
- Certificate, University of Richmond, Adult Teaching

Why I want to serve:

I believe there's no reason that clear, audience-focused communication should be a niche — people should expect and demand to understand the content in their lives. And yet somehow we live in a culture that reveres business jargon and tolerates legalese. The Center for Plain Language has the power and presence to help reverse this trend, and I'm honored to lend my time and perspectives to the cause.

What I'd like to accomplish as a Board member:

As a member of the Board, I hope to help further share plain language both in my region (Central Virginia) and with my generation (Millennial/Gen X). I believe cultural shifts—including the rise of technology, increased commitment to transparency, and a renewed focus on authenticity—create a unique opportunity for plain language to step more fully into the limelight. I'd love to do whatever I can to expand plain language's influence and practice in the United States.

On a more micro level, as Communications Chair, I am working to foster ongoing, compelling messages from the Center. Ideally, I would also love to build a verbal branding guide that gives the same level of guidance for the Center's writing style and tone as the current visual branding guide provides for its logo use and design.

Andrea Doray

Why I want to serve

As both a provider of, and a consumer of, communication, I understand how essential plain language is for clarity, understanding, and meaning. As a former senior manager with Kleimann Communication Group on projects for IRS, HUD, and VBA, I gained a first-hand perspective of the benefits of clear communication. Because of this work, I've become a plain language advocate, writing about plain language in my award-winning newspaper column and on my blog. My advocacy has also led to mentoring with college students and young writers, and speaking engagements on adult literacy and plain language. As a freelance writer and contractor, I work with my clients every day to create clear and effective communication. I hold a Master's degree in communication from the University of Northern Colorado, where I was also a communication instructor, as well as a B.A. in English and journalism.

What I can bring to the Board

With my language and communication skills, my background in project management, and my sincere belief in the importance of plain language, I can contribute to the Center for Plain Language Board as both a strategist and a tactician, as well as a project or committee manager. I have led nonprofit organizations and have served on the boards of others. I believe I can make significant contributions to the Center for Plain Language in:

- digital content strategy,
- blog management,
- strategic planning, and
- project management.

Professional highlights

- 1st Place Award for Best Serious Column Writing, Colorado Press Association
- Current Board Member and former President, Writing for Peace
- Silver Medal Award Winner, American Advertising Federation
- Two-time President, Pikes Peak Advertising Federation
- Member, American Advertising Federation Public Relations Committee
- Member, American Advertising Federation Legislative Action Committee
- Gubernatorial appointee, President's Council for Physical Fitness

I would be honored to join the Board in this vital work. Thank you for your consideration.

Jeff Greer, PhD

Throughout my career, I've focused on making information findable, understandable, and useful. I was drawn to the Center because it outlined an approach that helped me do my work and advocate for it within my organization.

I've been on the board of the Center for three years. I've served as Executive Secretary, Recording Secretary and Chair of the Digital/Web Committee and ClearMark Awards Judging. This perspective has helped me learn about the Center's past, work on today's programs, and draft a vision for the future.

In short, we've done good work, but our work is not complete. In my current role as Vice Chair, I've drafted a plan for the future and how we can extend the Center's influence. Some of the ideas you'll hear more about are an expansion of our Report Card, a regional plan for engaging and supporting members, and a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Plain Writing Act.

However, none of this work will be possible without financial stability. As a board member of the Center, I'm committed to doing the necessary fundraising to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. I consider fundraising the primary responsibility of every board member to their organization.

I hope you support my candidacy for the board. Thank you for your hard work and your commitment to plain language.

Ryan H. James, Esq.

Writing in plain language was instilled in me in law school, and I haven't looked back since. You could say I learned of the importance of plain language at one of the birthplaces of this institution, where Joe Kimble taught—Cooley Law School.

Now, as a trial and appellate lawyer, writing is what I do for a living, and I put plain language into practice every day. In that regard, my ability to communicate my clients' arguments clearly has resulted in *real* benefits to them. But I want to take that a step further.

I believe in the power of plain language to change lives and society. As a board member of CPL, my commitment would be one of using the backing of this organization to bring plain language to local government. Laws need to be clearly understood, and I am committed to the idea of restyling our laws to lessen confusion and wasteful spending.

Melissa Kargiannakis

What I bring to the board & Why I want to join

- I have board experience, including internationally in Texas on the SXSWedu LaunchEDU Advisory Board for 3 years now
- I run my own ai-startup on plain language to help PLEs deliver it at scale, which also means I know financials and fundraising to tangibly help the board
- Canadian perspective & connections particularly in Toronto
- I will bring a fresh perspective to strategy, especially around the reflection on redefining the organization with membership benefits/awards balance
- I believe PL is a part of accessibility and can help shape this messaging
- I have 8 years of work experience in public health, health research, and health innovation including a Master's of Health Information Science with published research, so can help with new considerations of a health insurance report card
- I also took a non-profit board training course through the United Way back in 2011 where I also sat on the Neighbourhood Legal Services board

I want to join the Center for PL Board because I want to see plain language at scale with more companies using it and believe that this organization can continue to be a force for advocating for the benefits of plain language. I also can bring unique and useful skills.

Bio

Melissa Kargiannakis, MHIS, Founder & CEO of skritswap is improving information equity worldwide. skritswap is a Silicon-Valley Venture-Capital backed Canadian start-up offering any information at any reading level. With skritswap, Melissa was one of only four founders worldwide selected to participate in the Women's Startup Lab in California in 2016. Melissa was also one of only three Canadians to receive the Queen's Young Leaders Award from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2015. Her past experience includes Research Director overseeing all Academic Medical Research of ~120 physicians at more than 4 institutions, Studio Y Fellow at the MaRS Discovery District, the Ontario Public Service, and more.

Barbra Kingsley, PhD

I have over 20 years of experience as founder and principal partner of a woman-owned consulting firm that helps organizations align leadership and strategy around plain language. I couple my expertise as a group facilitator and information designer with strong project management—a skill set that allows my clients to achieve innovative and thoughtful solutions to pressing problems. I would bring these same skills to the Center for Plain Language to help it grow in strong and sustainable ways.

My two years of service as the Head Judge for the ClearMark Awards has given me unique insight into both the Center's strengths and opportunities for growth. I've observed a clear and compelling mission but a need for an equally clear strategy for achieving financial sustainability and cultural relevance over time. The following are the key areas where I would add significant value to the Board:

1. Developing a 3-5 year strategic plan and guiding the Board in implementing and tracking it annually.
2. Creating a short-term and long-term donor engagement plan.
3. Creating an arm of the Center to galvanize Congressional support for a regulatory plain language bill and to provide ongoing education about our work.

I am a collaborator and a thinker, but most importantly, I am a **doer**. I want to covert our collective passion into action and bring plain language firmly into our cultural and social narrative.

Ahava Leibtag

Thank you for the opportunity to apply to be a Board Member. I have been passionate about plain language since I was trained by Ginny Redish while I held a communications position in the government. But I had a personal experience with how important plain language is when I was 32 years old. At that time, I had my gallbladder removed because I was having pain after meals. It turns out that I had a different underlying condition that needed to be treated with more surgery. It took me a long time to find the right doctor and the right diagnosis—all while experiencing pain every day.

I don't know how many websites I combed through. How many different medical specialists' advice I sought. How much anxiety I suffered by not being able to find the information I needed to help me. As a content professional, I vowed that other people should not have to suffer—that we need to write content conversationally, in plain language, as though we are speaking to a frightened person on the other side of the screen. Especially when we are writing content that can confuse and anxiety.

Skip ahead 10 years, and I have a wonderful team of writers, editors and content strategists working at Aha Media Group. I always remind them that we help people make some of the most important decisions of their lives. Through clear writing, plain language and an understanding of how people use and search the web, we are truly helping those on the other side of the screen. Probably the only thing that causes people as much anxiety as their health is their money.

David Lipscomb, PhD

For the past few years, I've cheered the Center from the sidelines—or rather from the relative safety of Georgetown University, where I'm the Director of the [Writing Center](#). Sure, I've been lucky enough to work with members Kathryn Spivey and Jon Rubin when they visited my Georgetown classes and with a number of member agencies that have let my students complete plain writing projects for them. But I haven't helped with the core work of the Center, such as the Report Card and the ClearMark Awards. I'd like to do just that, which is why I'd love to serve on the Board. Besides my enthusiasm about the Center's work, I can bring to the Board the perspective of an academic who has also run his own [writing consulting firm](#) for 15 years; I've run writing workshops for hundreds of employees at Kellogg, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Partnership for Public Service, and dozens of other companies, agencies and nonprofits. At Georgetown, I created a [Professional Writing Center](#) that has already worked with Fannie Mae, GMMB, and others to hone their communications; and in the past few months, I've helped put together Georgetown's new [Summer Edge Academy](#) that will launch this summer with five courses, including my own ART of Communication. I would be honored to give some of my time, energy and expertise to the Center in the coming years.

Susan Luck, PhD

Susan Luck is a professor of Business Communication and Negotiation in the MBA School at Pfeiffer University. She began her career as a television writer and has spent more years than she cares to admit as a corporate communications coach and ghostwriter. Her book *Zen and the Art of Business Communication* received great reviews from the Journal of Project Management International.

She also serves as a mediator for NC Superior Court and as an arbitrator for FINRA, the financial industry's regulatory body, where she handles cases that involve communication aspects. Often, had either of the parties followed the PLA guidelines or had at least a conversation about the meaning of a block of prose, the situation would never had made it to arbitration. One reason she would like to serve on the Board is to have legitimacy in position to help influence HR and training departments to promote the Plain Language guidelines across all areas of business.