

# Citizen Science Board Application

**Name:**

Michael Bennett

**Organization Affiliation (if applicable):**

formerly Astronomical Society of the Pacific

**Role (if applicable):**

Retired

**One paragraph background on relevant experience and skills:**

I believe my unusual combination of skills and work experience can help me make valuable contributions to the growth and success of CSA. My childhood interest in astronomy led to a high-school job as an usher at the California Academy of Science's Morrison Planetarium in San Francisco. I didn't quite realize it then, but my lifelong career in science education and communications had begun. Over the years I became a planetarium lecturer and programmer and began to understand the importance of engaging people in science without using jargon or talking down to them. Following college and a stint as a computer programmer, I became Director of Education at Spitz Laboratories, a maker of small planetariums for schools and smaller science museums, where I became interested in the use of planetariums in formal education, eventually writing my Master's thesis on that subject. During a long career digression into high-tech marketing, advertising, and public relations, I learned how to work within and manage large complex business organizations (while, I admit, continuing to teach astronomy part-time at local community colleges). In the mid-90s I returned to science education and joined the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, a science-oriented non-profit, becoming Executive Director in 2001. I co-wrote and served as PI on 3 large NSF grants centered on professional development of science educators (both formal and informal), served as co-PI for Education/Public Outreach on a very large 20-year NASA subcontract, and worked on several other significant NSF and NASA E/PO projects. As ASP Executive Director I drove a major strategic planning effort, beginning the process of positioning the ASP as a leader in advancing science literacy through astronomy. I was also successful in dramatically improving the ASP's private fund-raising efforts. Since my retirement I have become increasingly aware of the growing importance and impact of the citizen science movement, and its potential for advancing scientific research and public support for science. I look forward to using my experience to help guide the CSA as it continues to expand its role in the growth of the citizen science movement.

**The CSA would like to build a board that represents a range of backgrounds. Please note your affiliation or experience with the following (Check all that apply.):**

- Business
- College or University
- Non-profit

**The following lists experience or expertise that are particularly desirable for new board members to have. Please indicate if you have experience with the following (Check all that apply.):**

- Development/fundraising
- Financial management
- Organizational governance

**The CSA board would like to build capacity in the following areas: Development/fundraising, financial management, and organizational governance. With these in mind, what skills and what types of experience would you bring to the CSA board? (500 words or less):**

Please see Background statement

**What is your vision for how CSA should serve the citizen science community? (500 words or less):**

Richard Feynman—the Nobel Prize winning physicist—once said “science is the best method we have for not fooling ourselves.” The growth of citizen science activities over the over the past several years has demonstrated its enormous potential to help advance and expand scholarly scientific research, as well as to advance public interest, knowledge, and engagement in science. But how can the CSA best contribute to the advancement of citizen science? As a relatively young organization in this rapidly growing and changing environment, the CSA faces many challenges including managing growth, organizational development, governance, financial stability, relevance, and long-term impact. In the years to come, the CSA can and should play a major worldwide role in the growth of citizen science by enhancing communications between CS practitioners—both professional researchers and volunteer scientists, by identifying, illuminating, supporting, and disseminating best practices, by leveraging its efforts through strategic alliances and partnerships with other organizations and institutions, and by increasing public awareness of the societal value of scientific research.