

Announcing Emily Backes as the next Executive Director of the American Society of Criminology

Following a national search, led by search firm Sterling Martin and an ASC search committee, the Executive Board of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) is thrilled to announce Emily Backes as the next Executive Director of ASC!

Emily comes to ASC from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (National Academies) where she most recently served as Senior Program Director for Science and Technology Policy and Law. Her first day as Executive Director is Monday August 24, 2026.

President-Elect Rod Brunson describes Emily as “a proven, effective leader, vastly knowledgeable about crime and public safety matters, and a superb communicator,” and captured the sentiment of the entire Executive Board when he added “The ASC is very fortunate that she has come aboard at this pivotal moment. I look forward to working with her!”

Todd Clear, Chair of ASC’s Executive Director Search Committee, also enthusiastically endorsed the ASC Board’s unanimous decision to hire Emily as the organization’s next Executive Director: “We had a number of terrific candidates in the final rounds. After interviews, several would have been great for ASC. But Emily Backes rose to the very top—she brings everything we need right now. Can’t wait for her to start!”



In her fifteen years at the National Academies, Emily served as deputy board director for the Committee on Law and Justice (CLAJ) and Board on Children, Youth, and Families in the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, and as director of the Societal Experts Action Network, a network of leading individuals and institutions in social science fields that provided actionable responses to urgent policy questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In those roles, Emily worked at the intersection of science and policy, including designing and managing national initiatives that connect research to decision-making on topics such as crime and victimization, justice system reform, and community safety. Emily directed and edited study reports, including *Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice*:

Science, Practice, and Policy and *Decarcerating Correctional Facilities during COVID-19: Advancing Health, Equity, and Safety*, and she provided analytical and editorial assistance to National Academies projects on juvenile justice reform, policing, forensic science, illicit markets, adolescent development, early education, and science and human rights.

Emily received an M.A. and B.A. in history from the University of Missouri, specializing in U.S. human rights policy and international law, and a J.D. from the University of the District of Columbia. Through her legal training and her work at the National Academies, Emily has developed substantial expertise in criminology and justice policy. She also comes to the ASC with deep experience managing teams, working with Boards, committees, and volunteers. She brings a strong track record in strategic planning and financial management, and a clear commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As President Natasha Frost emphasized, “Emily Backes is exactly the person the ASC needs in the Executive Director role at this pivotal moment in its history.” adding “I look forward to working closely with her through the transition, and I’m very excited to see all that she will bring to the position over the next few years.”

Similarly, the ASC staff is committed to supporting a smooth transition and looks forward to working with Emily as she begins her tenure as Executive Director.

Please join us in warmly welcoming Emily as our next Executive Director!

The Executive Board of the ASC would like to offer our sincere thanks to the ad hoc search committee: Todd Clear (Chair, past President), Rod Brunson (President-Elect), Elsa Chen (past Executive Counselor) and Laura Dugan (past Vice President), and Claire Renzetti (Chair of the Long Range Planning Committee).