

ARCA 2018

Student and Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Award Winners

Student Award

The 2018 ARCA Student of the Year Award recognizes students for their outstanding contributions, academic achievements, and commitment to the rehabilitation counseling profession.

Master's Student of the Year

The 2018 ARCA Master's Student of the Year Award goes to Ms. Rigel Piñón. Ms. Piñón is her final year in the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling program at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and will be graduating in May. Ms. Piñón has been an outstanding student considering her numerous employment, leadership and advocacy, and volunteer activities. Rigel has been around persons with disabilities began at age 7 since her mom became totally blind. Rigel learned at a young age how to be a caregiver and has assisted help her mother in her duties as the president of the local National Federation for the Blind. This has given Rigel numerous rich experiences as she has immersed herself in the world of persons who are blind or visually impaired. She has moderated conferences, presented at them, demonstrated assistive devices for persons who are newly blind, and participates in every single fundraiser to raise money for the Federation. Rigel volunteers with children who are adopted, neglected, or in harm's way as a Court-Appointed Special-Advocates (CASA) and testifies on their behalf in court when necessary. Ms. Piñón has also volunteered as a job coach and later educational coach with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) rehabilitation services. Because of her exemplary work, TWC hired her as an educational coach working one-on-one with college students by going to their classes and taking notes. Ms. Pinon has learned that nine of her 20 students made the honor roll at their college. Her students are comprised of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, blind, and intellectual disabilities. Ms. Piñón has worked as a research assistant since 2017 and has two first author peer-reviewed publications. Last September she was awarded the graduate research paper of the year by the International Academy of Life Care Planners in St. Louis. She aspires to obtain her Ph.D. in our field and has applied for admission to UTRGV's doctoral program this fall.

Special Awards

Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year



The ARCA Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Award recognizes an outstanding individual who has contributed to improving the lives of persons with disabilities, and in doing so, has made a substantial contribution to the practice of rehabilitation counseling.

The 2018 ARCA Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Award goes to Dr. Rose Angelocci. is a highly productive and effective counselor, consultant, trainer, supervisor, and advocate for persons with disabilities, with a definite focus on those with vision loss. For many years she worked at the Training, Resource, and Assistive Technology Center (TRAC), a service agency that is a joint partnership between the University of New Orleans and Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS), the State VR agency in Louisiana. She provided direct services for many LRS clients who were referred to TRAC for vocational evaluation, career counseling, or specific vocational training. The latter specialized programs included intensive instruction in (a) assistive technology; (b) Braille; and (c) entrepreneurship and small-business development. In addition, she designed and operated two separate residential programs on campus to provide independent living and community mobility skills training: one program for adult clients who recently acquired vision loss and a summer program for blind high school students about to transition to higher education or employment after graduation. After becoming blind during her senior year of high school, Rose earned a 4.0 GPA for both her Bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Services and her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. While working as a professional rehabilitation counselor, she continued her studies and completed her Ph.D. in Counselor Education. She maintains several credentials, including her CRC and Louisiana Licensed Professional Counselor.

ARCA is proud to present the 2018 Student and Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Awards to these deserving individuals!