



**A Message from Daniel A. Balva, Ph. D., LMHC, NCC, CRC  
President, American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (2023-2024)**

Dear ARCA Members,

I hope this correspondence finds each of you safe and well. It is with great pride, humility, and honor that I introduce myself as your current President of the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA), a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). It has been a privilege to work alongside our Past-President, Dr. Valerie Dixon, this past year, as her passion and dedication to rehabilitation counseling and ARCA, her consistent advocacy for rehabilitation counselors, and her continuous training of the incoming generations of rehabilitation counselors have been most inspirational. I would like to thank and acknowledge her for all she has done, and all she continues to do. I would also like to share my sincere appreciation to our outgoing ARCA Executive Board Members and Regional Representatives for their ongoing contributions to ARCA. As we enter this new term, I'd like to ask that you kindly join me in giving a warm welcome to our incoming ARCA Board Members and Regional Representatives.

Thanks to the tireless dedication of leaders of the Disability Rights Movement and Disability Pride Movement, disability advocates, and impassioned rehabilitation counselor educators and advocates, significant progress has been made in recent decades to advance disability justice and advocacy for persons with disabilities. However, as we are well-aware, just because there have been advancements does not by any means signify that we, as a profession, country, or society are where we need to be. Accessibility, ableism, bias—both implicit and explicit, and gaps in knowledge and understanding among fellow mental health professionals and community leaders surrounding disabilities, continue to be ever-present. Not to mention, the COVID-19 pandemic and its ongoing impact and effects have further highlighted disparities in equity and accessibility.

Well, this is where we come in.

As rehabilitation counselors, educators, students, and professionals, we have a responsibility to:

- Use our skillset to ensure fellow colleagues provide authentic, culturally responsive, and disability affirming care for clients and individuals within the community,
- Do our part to address ableism in classroom settings by teaching and modeling disability affirming practices within education and clinical practice—both for colleagues and the future generation of counseling professionals, and
- Ensure that disability is highlighted in every possible discussion related to intersectionality.

Rehabilitation counselors, educators, and students are already taxed with numerous tasks and responsibilities, so I recognize that this is a lot to ask from each of us. However, who better than our ARCA membership to continue years of meaningful advocacy to help advance the counseling profession in a direction that is more equitable, inclusive, and disability affirming?

This term will focus on disability education, rehabilitation counseling awareness, and amplifying the important work of disability advocates—both nationally and abroad. My hope is for ARCA to increase rehabilitation counseling unity while also fostering greater cross-divisional collaboration to ensure disability specific topics and advocacy are being incorporated in programming across the American Counseling Association (ACA) and its associated divisions.

Throughout the upcoming year, your Executive Board and I will work tirelessly to help bring us as a division closer to achieving these goals. However, there is strength in numbers, and we can greatly benefit from the experience, dedication, and value that each ARCA member offers. We encourage our members to get more involved in our Division, other divisions, and fellow rehabilitation counseling organizations, because you each have something special to offer our profession.

I hope that we, together, as a Division can accomplish the many goals we have set for this year in order to advance our endeared profession and ensure that the counseling profession is doing all it can to better serve persons with disabilities. As we embark on this journey, please do not hesitate to email me throughout this upcoming year with ideas, questions, concerns, or ways in which I can be of service to you. I will do my best to support you.

Harriet Tubman said, "Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world." I look forward to reaching for the stars with each of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Balva". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

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Daniel Balva (He/Him), Ph.D., LMHC, NCC, CRC  
ARCA President, 2023-2024

