

Louisiana Lagniappe



LOUISIANA COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

 ACAC • LAOC • LACES • LACGS • LAMCD
 LAMFC • LASERVIC • LCCA • LCDA • LCSJ
 LMCA • LMHCA • LSCA • PLCA • SAIGELA

LCA Election Integrity

Vicki Guilbeau, PhD, LPC-S, NCC,
NCSC, CCTP, LCA President 2024-25

Valuing integrity in elections, your LCA leaders have endeavored to commit to the continued monitoring of our election procedures. Our recent exploration into the workings of our voting processes revealed that LCA is prepared for a fair and forthright election in the fall. Voters will link to the voting module via their member login through the conference app or website member portal. Once a vote has been cast via a particular login, that login cannot be utilized for another vote. It has been confirmed that each membership connects to only one email address to allow for only one vote per membership during the election process. ESX, the LCA website/app provider, has an auditing process in place to authenticate the election.

Please confirm your preparedness to vote by ensuring future access to your ballot through confirmation that your member login is viable. Voting will open Monday, September 29, and close Monday, October 6, in an effort to announce the results during the 2025 LCA Conference. Further election information is available in this newsletter.

Note that our LCA elections will continue to be exclusively online. During the election, please vote and encourage two (or more peers) to vote. Let us have the grandest voter turnout in the history of LCA. 🗳️

See page 14 to
Meet the LCA
Presidential
Candidates!



Presidential Perspective...

Dear LCA Members and Conference Attendees,

It is an honor to serve as your incoming President of the Louisiana Counseling Association. As we step into this new year together, I am inspired by the dedication, compassion, and resilience that define our profession. Together, we have the opportunity to create a community centered on support, wellness, and empathy—both for our clients and for one another. My hope is to foster connections, encourage professional growth, and prioritize the well-being of our members as we continue the important work of serving individuals, families, and communities across Louisiana.

I am especially excited to welcome you to our upcoming LCA Annual Conference, which will be held October 5-7, 2025, at the Crowne Plaza Executive Center in Baton Rouge! This year, we will be utilizing the conference app to streamline communication, provide session details, and enhance your experience. To ensure adequate space and seating, please register early for your individual workshops.

Our divisions will also host specialized tracks during the in-person conference, allowing you to easily find sessions tailored to your clinical focus and areas of interest. Additionally, our Pre-Conference Workshops will be hosted online on September 20, 2025, providing convenient, in-depth learning opportunities prior to the main event.

(Presidential Perspective, continued on page 2)



This issue's features ...



- Mini Minutes from the last LCA Board Meeting. Turn to page 3.
- Election Update from Dr. Vicki Guilbeau, Past LCA President on page 1.
- Farewell Message from outgoing LCA president on this page.
- New By-Laws Committee takes the field and asks for new members. See Tony's article on page 3.
- Dr. Quintin Gustin, Contributing Lagniappe Editor concludes his two part series on the work of Marsha Linehan. See on page 5. Take a look for yourself!
- Get to know your new LCA Leadership! See the photo of those who attended the August Board meeting on page 6. Look for them at the fall conference and find out what you can do in LCA! Complete roster on page 22.
- Division Presidents share what their divisions have planned for the coming Fall Conference! See pages 7 through 13.
- STILL considering becoming more active in YOUR professional Association? See Vinetta's article on page 13
- Meet the candidates for LCA President Elect-Elect, pages 14 to 21.
- Deadline for next newsletter on page 23.
- Remember the passing of counseling advocates, LCA Members and those dear to them. For details see note on page 23 in the Thoughts and Prayers section, please.

Presidential Perspective, continued from page 1

As we embark on this year together, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of collaboration and connection that makes LCA such a unique and supportive organization. Whether you are a seasoned counselor, a new professional, or a graduate student, your voice and presence matter. I look forward to working alongside you, supporting your professional journey, and celebrating the meaningful work you do each day. Together, we will continue to build a culture of empathy, wellness, and growth within our growing counseling community.

Warmly,

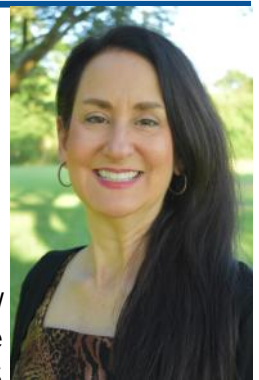
Krystal Vaughn, Ph.D., LPC-S

President, Louisiana Counseling Association

Outgoing President Farewell...

Sweet Goodbye

Vicki Guilbeau, PhD, LPC-S,
NCC, NCSC, CCTP, LCA Immediate
Past President



I bid a sweet goodbye as I send my heartfelt gratitude to you for giving me the opportunity to serve as the 2024-25 Louisiana Counseling Association President. My experience has been a fruitful and diligent venture supported by a wonderful team of professionals. Thank you to the LCA staff, leaders, and volunteer members who have bolstered efforts to the benefit of our organization. Those staff, board, and involved members are the champions of LCA!

During 2024-25, LCA has continued traditional events such as the annual conference to provide worthy professional engagement, ongoing CEU events to educate and serve its members, and interactive board meetings to safeguard the viability of LCA. We have made forward progress on bylaws updates and strategic humanitarian goals through continued committee work. LCA has added the valuable new staff positions of Advocacy Specialist and Conference Staff Assistant. Further, the LCA website has a new ad-

(Outgoing Presidential Farewell, continued on page 3)



LCA Board Mini Minutes

Diane Austin, LCA Executive Director

The LCA 2025-2026 Executive Board held its first meeting Friday August 1 at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The meeting was called to order by Dr. Krystal Vaughn, 2025-26 President of LCA. Following Board introductions, the board addressed a full agenda of business items.

- Austin White, LCA Business Manager, gave the End of the Year financial report for 2024-2025 fiscal year showing a deficit of \$27, 013.00.
- Mr. White discussed the need for all divisions to officially be a non-profit organization. Mr. White indicated that he would help division obtain this determination.
- Dr. Kelle Falterman, Finance Chair, introduced the proposed budget for 2025-26. The budget will be presented at the general session/ business meeting at the conference.
- Dr. Vaughn announced that a change in the ACA Travel regulations currently found in the Policy Manual was needed. This was referred to the Bylaws/Policy Committee chaired by Kimberly Koll and Anthony Williams.
- Possible Conflict of Interest Situations: Dr. Vaughn initiated a discussion concerning the need for a policy governing the possibility of a staff member also serving as a division president. After discussion, this was also referred to the Bylaws/Policy Committee to bring a policy to the Board at the next meeting.
- At the final meeting of the 2024-25 Board, the GR Committee introduced a White Paper on Life Coaching vs. Professional Counseling. That board posted the white paper to the LCA website and asked for member input. The members' comments were discussed. Dr. Christian Dean will take this information to the GR Committee. The final copy of the white paper will be brought to the Board for a vote at the next meeting.

(Mini-Minutes continued on page 4)

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Outgoing Presidential Farewell, continues from page 2

dition to highlight our *Year In Review* under the *Who We Are* section. Close to my heart, LCA members have supported my endeavors to grow our membership, to improve communication with one another, and to strengthen our legislative front.

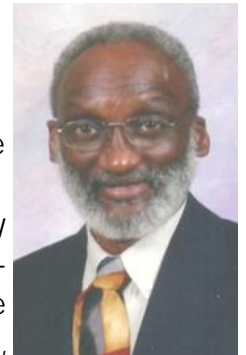
Thank you for believing in me. Please remember that I continue in service to you currently as LCA Immediate Past President and beyond as your professional colleague. Contact me if I may assist you in any way. I look forward to seeing you at LCA Conference 2025!

Peace & Love,

Vicki Guilbeau, LCA President 2024-25 


By-Laws Committee Is Looking For You!

Anthony Williams, By-Laws Committee



LCA has appointed Dr. Kimberly Koll and Anthony J. Williams as co-chairs of the By-Laws Committee. We will be assisted by Dr. Joey Pistorius, LCA Parliamentarian, to update the By-Laws for LCA.

As most organizations periodically review and update their By-Laws, we are glad to assist LCA in this important work. The committee will work on this diligently until all aspects of the by-laws have been reviewed and if necessary, updated. Our work will also include the policy and procedures manual as well.

If you have an interest in clear, inclusive policies and would be interested in learning more about our Association, or serving on this committee, please reach out to either me (tony4897@aol.com) or Dr. Koll (kimberly@crimsoncardinalcounseling.com). You can complete the interest form on the Community Bulletin Board on LCA website. The forms allow the members to indicate up to three committees. We'd like to have you join the By-Laws Committee! Any LCA members who are interested in serving on this committee can complete the interest form on the LCA website. It is posted on the Community Bulletin Board. 

Mini-Minutes of LCA Board Meeting, continued from page 3

- Elnora Vicks, President of LCCA, was elected to serve as Division Representative on the Administrative Council.
- Dr. Vaughn indicated that there were expressed concerns over the viability of several divisions. Concerns were expressed that certain divisions were not meeting the needs of their members nor meeting their responsibilities to LCA as found in the LCA Bylaws and Policy Manual. Following discussion, it was decided that an ad hoc committee would be formed to initiate the process of a possible dissolution of those divisions. Dr. Joseph Pistorius, President Elect (2026-27) was appointed to chair this committee.

Following several reports and announcements, Dr. Vaughn adjourned the meeting. ∞



2025 LCA Fall Conference

Cultivating Empathy: Empowering Clients & Counselors

- October 5-7, 2025 Crowne Plaza Hotel, Baton Rouge, LA <https://www.lacounseling.org/lca/Registration.asp>
- Pre-Conference: Sat., September 27 <https://www.lacounseling.org/lca/Registration.asp>
- No on-site registration table this year!!

LPC Board Nominations

Diane Austin, LCA Executive Director



One of the responsibilities given to LCA by the Louisiana Mental Health Law is the opportunity to offer nominees to the LA Governor, from which to appoint members to the LPC Board of Examiners. During 2025 we will have three such positions to fill.

All three of the positions will be for Counselor Educators. The Louisiana Counseling Association is opening nominations for the 2025-26 LPC Board. There are three position for Counselor Educator, which must be filled during 2025-26. Any member of LCA may nominate a candidate. However, an individual may not nominate themselves.

A candidate for the LPC Board nomination must meet the following initial requirements:

- 5 years experience as an LPC
- Membership in good standing in LCA
- Active participation in LCA or serving in a leadership role in a Division or on the LCA Executive Board

Active participation is defined as participation in Divisional workshops or activities; participation in the LCA annual conference (regular attendance, presenting).

This is your opportunity to recommend someone you know who will advocate for LPCs. Thank you for taking the time to help shape the direction of the LPC Board as that is determined by the members of the board!

Secure in advance the permission of the colleague you wish to nominate for possible appointment to the LPC Board. Submit the following information the LCA office by email lca_austin@bellsouth.net, or by mail to 353 Leo Shreveport, LA 71105: The individual's name and contact information including their primary worksite, address and phone number. By submitting your name as the nominator, you attest that your nominee is qualified to serve on the board by meeting the qualifications and agreed to serve on the board if selected by the governor.

The deadline for all nominations is October 1. ∞





Marsha Linehan's Assumptions Revisited

Quintin Gustin, PhD, Contributing Editor,
Lagniappe Committee

In the last edition of the *Louisiana Lagniappe*, the first three of seven assumptions about clients, made by Marsha Linehan, were discussed. As most of you are aware, Linehan originally developed Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) as a treatment program for people who suffer from Borderline Personality Disorder. However, other counselors began using DBT for a variety of other issues. Research has demonstrated efficacy for many problems, including suicidal and self-harmful behaviors, PTSD, substance use disorders, ADHD, major depression, including treatment resistant and chronic depression, binge eating disorder, and bulimia nervosa.

The first of Linehan's three assumptions are restated below and are followed by the remaining four of her seven assumptions.

Assumption #1: *People are doing the best they can.*

Assumption #2: *People want to improve.*

Assumption #3: *Although people are doing the best they can, if they are suffering, they need to try harder and be even more motivated to change.*

And now, the last four assumptions serve as a "How-to" guide for the first three.

Assumption #4: *People may have not caused all their own problems, but they have to solve them anyway.* This strikes at the heart of the matter. Each of us is responsible for solving our own problems. This is the only way true solutions can be discovered. With regard to our clients, this can certainly happen with the help of a counselor; yet, even with a counselor's help, the individual, at some point, must take responsibility for personal change.

Assumption #5: *New behaviors have to be learned in all relevant contexts.* New behaviors developed to help solve a specific problem must be generalized to other

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settings and situations in order to successfully address problems in other contexts. Otherwise, the client would be required to learn a new behavior for each new problem that arises.

Assumption #6: *All behaviors (actions, thoughts, emotions) are caused.* This speaks to the fact that there is always a cause for problematic or dysfunctional behaviors, and this is true even if the client is unaware of the cause(s). Here Linehan is asserting that to adequately solve problems, we must be prepared to address the root causes. This fits with Linehan's use of Chain Analysis.

Assumption #7: *Figuring out and changing the causes of behavior is a more effective way to change than judging and blaming.* This statement is at the level of a truism. Judging and blaming does nothing but take the responsibility from the client to address his or her own change. Clearly, this makes true change and a successful outcome unlikely. ∞

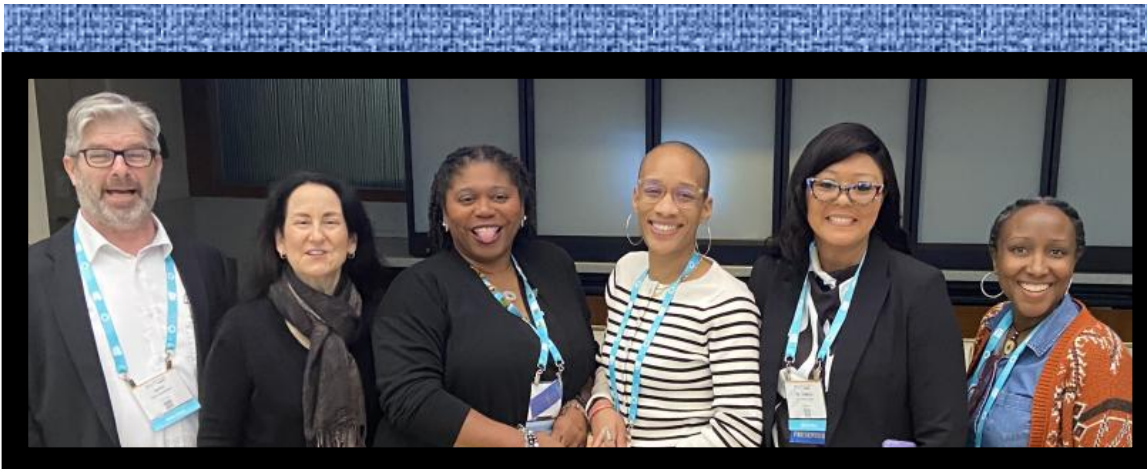


Shallene Joseph, former LCDA President, LCA Social Media Specialist with two past LCA Presidents, Dr. Vicki Guilbeau, immediate past president, and Dr. Rashunda Miller Reed, the president who proceeded her in office. This picture was taken at the recent ACA Conference and shared by Dr. Miller Reed.

You will find the names of these “worker bees” on page 22 of this newsletter: Front Row L to R: Dr. Jackie Matte, proxy for LAMCD President; Dannielle Cole Thomas, LSCA Chair; Jocelyn Brown, Strategic Planning; Dr. Michelle Lafitte, LCSJ President; Michelle de la Paz, LACES President; Anthony Williams, Bylaws Co-Chair; Dr. Joey Pistorius, LCA President Elect-Elect; Dr. Sarah Stillwell, SAIGE-LA President; Ramon Zalaya, LCA Digital Media Specialist; Nikki Lee, Co-Chair of the People’s Committee; Dr. Christine Ebrahim, ACACL President; Dr. Deatrice Green, Co-Chair PLPC Billing Review;



Debbie Lang, LMGCA President; Elnora Vicks, LCCA President; Andrew Wiggins, LASERVIC President-Elect; Vinetta Frie, Newsletter Editor; A’rean Williams, LCA Social Media Specialist; Staci Whiteside, Awards Chair; Vicki Guilbeau, Immediate Past LCA President; Dr. Krystal Vaughn, LCA President, Diane Austin, LCA Executive Director; Dr. Kelle Falterman, LCA President Elect; Dr. Christian Dean, Advocacy Specialist; and Austin White, LVA Business Manager. *Photo taken by Gery Frie, at the New Orleans Baptist Seminary. LCA Board Meeting August 1, 2025.*



LCA members at the ACA Convention L to R: Dr. Keith Wilkerson, Dr. Vicki Guilbeau, Carrie Davidson, Jocelyn Brown, Dr. Teneka Gash, and Dr. Rashunda Miller Reed.

Division President Reports



Sparkling Fresh Ideas!

Dr. Christine Ebrahim,
ACAC-L President

Greetings from the Louisiana Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling (ACAC-L)! I am excited to be serving as the 2025-2026 President and am looking forward to this year's LCA conference, where we will have several conference track presentations that should be of interest to our members. Presentations include a 2-part presentation by Dr. LeAnne Steen and Mariah Gale, BA both from Loyola University New Orleans entitled *Expressive Play Therapy for Children and Adolescents: Drama, Movement, Art*. Dr. Deatrice Green from Southeastern and Keisha Green, PLPC (doctoral student at Holy Cross) will present *Play with Purpose: Diagnostically Driven Pop Culture Interventions*. And finally, Dr. Laura Fazio-Griffith and Michele Worthington, B.A. both from Southeastern will present *Children and Adolescents Impacted by Trauma: Empowerment Through a Gestalt Play Therapy*. Thank you so much to these presenters for taking their time to share their knowledge and expertise with us!

This year, we are committed to providing dynamic continuing education opportunities designed to inspire, inform, and equip you with tools you can put into practice with clients, whether you are working in an agency, private practice or school setting. Beyond learning, we are also dedicated to creating meaningful networking opportunities, because connecting with others who share your passion can spark fresh ideas and lasting collaborations.

Finally, if you've ever thought about getting more involved in ACAC-L, now is the perfect time! Our board has several open positions. If you are interested in joining our board or contributing in other ways, please email me at acaclouisiana@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing

from you! Let's make this year one of growth, connection, and impact!



No report from LAAOC, Louisiana Association of Addiction & Offender Counselors



Excellence Drives LACES Forward

Dr. Michelle M. de la Paz, LACES President

The LACES board is thrilled to connect with you as we kick off another exciting year full of opportunities for professional growth and collaboration! LACES is committed to providing a wide range of resources to support your development and engagement in our field. This year, we are offering both virtual and in-person events, including our Supervisor & Supervisee Connection, Lunch and Learn CEU opportunities, and various Professional Networking activities. These events are designed to foster meaningful connections, support your practice, and offer valuable learning experiences.

We also look forward to continuing our tradition of spotlighting exceptional leaders in our field. At the annual LCA Conference, we will celebrate those who are shaping the future of counseling through our Awards Luncheon. It is a time to honor the outstanding supervisors and educators who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the profession.

Board Nominations for 2025-2026

In March, we will open the call for nominations for our 2025-2026 board positions. We are looking for passionate members to fill roles such as President-Elect, Secretary, Member-at-Large, Counselor Educator. This is a wonderful opportunity to get involved in the leadership of LACES, where you can contribute to the growth of our association while gaining valuable service and networking experience. If you are interested in becoming part of our team or want more information about the election

(Division President Reports, continued on page 8)

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process, please reach out to Dr. Dottie Martin at domartin@uhcno.edu.

Supervision Connection

LACES is excited to host our Fifth Annual Virtual Supervision Connection on Wednesday, April 2nd, from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm via Zoom. This event offers a unique opportunity to connect Board Approved Supervisors (LPC-S) with graduate students and post-graduate supervisees (PLPC). Supervisors interested in participating can register using the link provided here: [Supervision Connection Registration](#). Additionally, we'll host an in-person version at the 2025 LCA Conference. For questions or further details, please contact Dr. Michelle Wade at michelle.wade.lcpc@gmail.com.

Lunch and Learn Series

LACES is pleased to continue offering our monthly Lunch and Learn series, providing enriching opportunities to earn CEUs while learning from our community of experts. Our 2025 series is already underway with a diverse range of topics. Be sure to look out for our monthly flyers and registration links. Upcoming sessions are scheduled for: March 14, April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12, November 14, and December 12. For questions or further details, please contact Dr. Heather Olivier at holivier@selu.edu.

Call for Professional Networking

We are always looking for ways to help our members connect and collaborate. Supervisors, faculty members, new supervisors, new faculty, and doctoral students are encouraged to volunteer and assist the board in these efforts. If you're interested in getting involved or want to learn more, please contact Dr. Michelle de la Paz at delapazcounseling@gmail.com.

Call for Awards Nominations

In April, we will open nominations for our annual LACES Awards, recognizing outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to counselor education and supervision. These awards celebrate excellence in clinical supervision, counselor education, and impactful research. We encourage you to nominate a colleague who embodies these qualities. The awards categories include:

- Clinical Supervisor of the Year Award
- Supervisor Award: Multiple Specialty Areas
- Counselor Educator of the Year Award

- Rising Counselor Educator Award
- Prospective Counselor Educator Award

For more information about award nominations, please contact Dr. Dottie Martin at domartin@uhcno.edu.

As we continue to build a strong and supportive community of professionals in Louisiana, I am continually inspired by the dedication and passion you bring to our field. Together, we shape the future of counseling and strengthen the profession for years to come. I encourage you to stay engaged with LACES, contribute your expertise, and be a part of the ongoing growth of our community. Look out for upcoming calls for nominations, awards, opportunities to learn, and ways to connect with your colleagues and supervisors through continued education and networking.

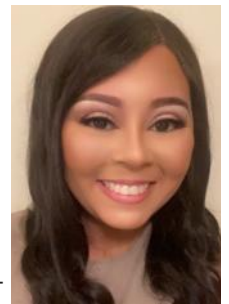


No report from LACGS, Louisiana Association of Counseling Graduate Students



United in Diversity — Together in Differences, United in Purpose!

*Teneka Gash, PhD, PLPC, RSW,
LAMCD President*



I bring you greetings from The Louisiana Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (LAMCD). The mission is to promote a greater understanding and broader awareness of culturally diverse populations. LAMCD strives to eliminate barriers and foster interest in culturally sensitive counseling, keeping our membership mindful of the state of current multicultural affairs in Louisiana.

As President of the Louisiana Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development, it is important to continue to gear attention towards Multiculturalism. "United in Diversity! Together in Differences, United in Purpose. As we venture into the opportunities that the remainder of 2025 holds, let us remain united in our pursuit of knowledge, personal growth, and community betterment. The strength of LCA lies in the collective efforts of each member, and together, we can achieve greatness!

(Division President Reports, continued on page 9)

LAMCD became nationally recognized by AMCD in 2022 and hopeful to continue making strides in bridging the gap while engaging in collaborative efforts. LAMCD will participate in the LCA Division Mixer on Sunday, October 5, 2025 at 5PM. It will be a great opportunity to increase membership, cultivate relationships, network, gain insight and for participants to meet the executive board and members.

The Executive Board would like to extend gratitude towards each presenter who will share their contributions during the 2025 LCA Conference, in representation of the LAMCD Track:

- ♦ "Wellness Redefined! Unlocking your Full Potential!"
- ♦ "The Silent Departure: Navigating Death and Grief through a Multicultural Lens"
- ♦ "Building Empathy and Empowerment: Strengthening the Client-Counselor Partnership"

We look forward to continuing to make connections with each of you and witnessing the continued success and growth of our LCA community. If you are interested in joining LAMCD to promote increased knowledge in multiculturalism, please reach out to our designated email: LAMCDivision@gmail.com, as your participation is highly valuable.



Get Involved with LAMFC!

Christian J. Dean, Ph.D., LPC-S, LMFT-S, NCC, LAMFC President

I'm excited to announce some of the new initiatives that the LAMFC board will be taking on this fiscal year.

- ⇒ LMFT CEU training events quarterly. We are planning on a quarterly LMFT CEU event and we need your help. Remember, if you present, you get 3 CEUs for every 1 hour of the presentation per the LPC Board/MFTAC rules. Therefore, if you present a 1-hour CEU on AAMFT ethics, you have your LMFT Ethics CEUs (all 3) for the renewal period! How about that! Send me

Article continues in next column

an e-mail (growthcounseling@cs.com) if you are interested in presenting on topics that would qualify for the LMFT CEU. We may also look to do joint LMFT/LPC trainings.

- ⇒ Election time! If you are interested in serving on the LAMFC Board along with myself and some of the other board members (found listed below), then reach out and let me know. This is the first step in our call for nominations. We will also follow up with an e-mail to LAMFC members. Deadline for nominations is October 1, 2025.
- ⇒ Increase LMFT CEU presentations at LCA conference. Those of us that work with couples, marriages, and families would benefit tremendously from more opportunities for LMFT CEUs during the LCA conference. Please consider submitting proposals for the 2026 conference, to include pre-conference workshops. You can pair up with others to do the presentation together! There is strength in numbers and working together, we can help our members and all those LMFTs out there (along with LPCs, LCSWs, and LACs that want more training in these areas).

Our current board members include: Past President- Sonja Smith Polley, PhD, LPC-S, NCC; Secretary- Rickia Bolden, PhD, LPC-S, NCC; Treasurer- Donnie Underwood, LPC-S, LMFT; Member-at-Large- Catharine Swain, LMFT-S; and second Member-at-Large- Terri Campesta, LMFT, LPC.

I look forward to working with LAMFC to help strengthen our organization, providing excellent continuing education opportunities, and exploring creative ways of helping our communities.

(Division President Reports, continued on page 10)



Hoping to see you at the LCA conference in October, 2025!



Visit Us At The Fall Conference! Dr. Kelle Falterman, LASERVIC President

Hello members from the members of the Louisiana Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (LASERVIC)! The 2025 LCA Conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Baton Rouge from October 5th to 7th. We have a LASERVIC board meeting scheduled for Sunday, October 5th at 8:00 am in the Levee room. Please join us to give your input to our board about ways our division can better serve its members.

The Prayer Service will be held on Monday, October 6th from 6:55 am-7:55 am. We will discuss the use of spirituality and religion in the healing of grief during our prayer service and will earn 1.0 CEUs for attending.

Our LASERVIC luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday, October 7th, from 11:45 am-1:30 pm in the Levee room. The speaker for the luncheon will be Dr. Tasha Levert. Her presentation is on the importance of religion and spirituality in wellness and stress and will earn us 1.5 CEUs. Please consider attending this year's luncheon.

Lastly, there are three presentations at conference that are being offered through LASERVIC. Look for the designation on the app and in the program. I look forward to seeing you at conference!



No report submitted from LCCA, *Louisiana College Counselors Association*.



No report submitted from LCDA, *Louisiana Career Development Association*.



Hello From LCSJ!

Michelle Lafitte, LCSJ President



As we gear up for our annual conference, we're thrilled to reconnect with familiar faces and welcome new ones into our community. This year, we're continuing our tradition by participating in the Division Mixer—be sure to stop by, say hello, and enter our raffle for a chance to win some fantastic prizes!

During LCA Conference, we're excited to announce our first-ever Division Luncheon! Whether you're a current member of SJ or simply interested in learning more, we warmly invite you to join us. You can add the luncheon to your conference registration, or—new this year—attend the luncheon as a standalone event. Feel free to bring a colleague, student, or friend along! It will take place on October 7, 2025, at 11:45 AM.

We're working on securing a dynamic speaker who will address topics you've told us matter most to you. Plus, you'll have the opportunity to meet our incoming President, Dr. Joelle Nixon, and learn how you can get involved with the executive board.

Keep an eye out for an upcoming email with more details. We can't wait to see you soon!



Greetings from LAMGC

Debbie Lang, LPC-S, NCC, NCSC,
LMGCA President



This fall newsletter aims to focus on the LAMGCA presentations for the LCA Fall Conference, October 5 through October 7, 2025.

I hope this message finds you well and inspired for the year ahead. As we embark on another chapter together, our focus remains on strengthening LAMGCA membership and supporting you in every step of your professional journey.

I am delighted to invite you to our upcoming executive board meeting, which will take place on Sunday, October 5, 2025, in the Creole Queen room from 8:00 am to 11:00 am. We extend a warm welcome to all LAMGCA

(Division President Reports, continued on page 11)

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members. Please join us for a light continental breakfast to start the day, connect with colleagues, and share your ideas as we chart the path forward. We'll be reflecting on long-term goals, reviewing performance metrics, and evaluating both risks and opportunities that lie ahead for our division.

You'll also have a chance to meet fellow members who aspire to leadership roles. This year, we are excited to introduce the nominees for president-elect and vice president-elect—come get to know those who may help lead us in the future.

Stop by and pick up a military duck and coin as a token of our appreciation for your support as members during the division mixer.

Each year, we are also honored to hear from three of our outstanding members. This year, our presenters are Deborah Allsbrook, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, who will be at a roundtable talking about "The Weight of War: Moral decisions through the perspectives of Combat Veterans of the Gulf War, Operation Freedom, and Operation Iraq"; Christopher Dean, PhD, LPC-S, LMFT-S, NCC, LCA Advocacy Specialist, presenting "Counselor Advocacy: U.S. Armed Forces and Veterans Administration," and introducing Pamela Shultz, PLPC, NCC, with "Military Substance Abuse and Co-occurring Disorder." If you currently serve military clients or wish to expand your practice to include them, these sessions promise valuable insights. Our division lunch is on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, in the Mississippi room. Join us in exploring "The Life of Military Working Dogs." Military working dogs play a crucial role in the Army, assisting soldiers in various tasks. We welcome the handlers from Ft Polk and their canine to delve into their unique role.

In closing, I appreciate all our members and look forward to hearing your input moving forward.



Article continues in next column



Happy Fall, Y'all!!

Join Us for an Impactful Year!

A'Rean Williams, PLPC, LMHCA President

It is a true honor to serve as President for the 2025–2026 term. My journey through the counseling profession has shaped my deep commitment to advocacy, mentorship, and professional development, core values I bring with intention and enthusiasm into this leadership role.



As President, one of my primary goals is to strengthen LMHCA's presence in policy discussions at the state level. I will work closely with our legislative team to ensure that the voices of mental health counselors are heard and respected in conversations around licensure, clinical supervision, reimbursement, and equitable access to care.

Equally important is expanding access to meaningful professional development. Counselors across Louisiana, whether working in schools, private practice, or community agencies, deserve ongoing opportunities to grow. I aim to offer high-quality, accessible training that reflects both current needs and emerging trends in our field.

I am also deeply committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within LMHCA. Our association should reflect the rich diversity of the communities we serve. That means elevating underrepresented voices and ensuring our programming supports cultural responsiveness and belonging.

Lastly, I want LMHCA to feel like a true professional home. That means creating space for connection, collaboration, and conversation across regions, specialties, and career stages. Whether you're just starting or have decades of experience, you are an essential part of this community.

Serving as President is not only a responsibility, it is a privilege. I bring a unique perspective as a PLPC, and a genuine desire to make this year impactful, inclusive, and empowering for all of us. I look forward to learning with you, growing alongside you, and moving our profession forward together.



(Division President Reports, continued on page 12)



Charting the Course with LSCA

Danielle Cole Thomas, EdS, LPC,
NCC, LSCA Chair

Hello everyone! My name is Danielle Thomas, and I'm excited and honored to serve as Chair of the Louisiana School Counselor Association. Our board met this summer to collaborate, and we're energized and ready to support and empower school counselors across the state. We are committed to assist you with navigating change, motivating students, and continuing to strengthen our amazing profession.

This year, LSCA is sponsoring two virtual pre-conference sessions September 27th. Join us at 9 a.m. as we take a closer look into the NIET Counselor Rubric. Participants will learn strategies to assist with improving their comprehensive counseling programs and be able to utilize data to advocate for themselves and students. At 10:45 a.m., participants will engage in learning how cultural competence plays a critical role in school counseling, from environment to student well-being. These sessions will be in addition to sessions and seminars during the main conference.

We're thrilled to welcome Ebonee Magee-Dorsey, Assistant Chair of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Board of Directors, as the speaker for our division luncheon. During this special event, we'll also recognize our School Counselor of the Year nominees and winners. Beyond the conference, LSCA will offer virtual continuing education opportunities and create spaces for counselors to connect, collaborate, and build community.

For current members, we will hold an election for the following upcoming vacancy: Director of Bylaws & Policies. If you're not a member yet, I encourage you to join our division and be a part of the exciting work ahead. We're stronger together, and I can't wait to see what we accomplish as we lead with impact this year!



Article continues in next column

No report from PLCA, Provisional Licensed Counselor Association.



SAIGE-LA: A Year of Advocacy, Action, and Affirming Care

Sarah Stillwell, PhD, LPC-S, NCC,
SAIGE-LA President



The Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex & Gender Expansive Identities – Louisiana (SAIGE-LA) is thrilled to share our vision for the year ahead, rooted in equity, empowerment, and community care. As we continue to grow our presence within the Louisiana Counseling Association, our focus remains clear: to uplift LGBTQ+ communities through affirming counseling practices, systemic advocacy, and professional development.

This year, SAIGE-LA is organizing our programming around four quarterly themes:

Q1: Advocacy – We kicked off the year by centering conversations around affirming care and systemic change, including a powerful webinar on creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth.

Q2: Legislation – Our upcoming webinar will explore how current policies impact LGBTQ+ clients and counselors, and how we can advocate effectively within legislative systems.

Q3: Community Engagement – We'll highlight grassroots efforts and inclusive outreach strategies that strengthen our connection to the communities we serve.

Q4: Wellness Initiatives – We'll close the year by focusing on counselor well-being, with tools and practices to sustain ourselves while supporting others.


In addition to our quarterly webinars, SAIGE-LA is proud to launch a statewide Resource List Project. This initiative will create region-specific referral lists of affirming providers and services for LGBTQ+ individuals across

(Division President Reports, continued on page 13)

Louisiana. Each Member-at-Large will lead the development of their area's list, ensuring that care is accessible, culturally responsive, and community-informed.

Other exciting goals for this year include:

- 🌐 Building out our SAIGE-LA website to serve as a hub for resources, events, and advocacy updates
- 📄 Completing our official rebranding with the national SAIGE division to reflect our evolving mission and identity
- 🌿 Hosting a Counselor Wellness Retreat in the Spring, offering space for rest, reflection, and reconnection

We're energized by the momentum and grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with counselors across the state. Whether you're a longtime member or newly curious, we invite you to join us in building a more affirming Louisiana—one conversation, one connection, and one courageous act at a time. 



**Don't miss out this year!!
Registration fees increase on
9/30! Register now:**

<https://www.lacounseling.org/lca/registration.asp>

**Download the conference app!
Register for the sessions you would
like to attend.**

What Are You Waiting For ... Part Two!

Vinetta Frie, Lagniappe Editor




This summer, I jumped into AI with both feet! I became well acquainted with ChatGPT and reimagined, reduced, and revised the Open Education Resource for the College Success Skills Class I teach at Baton Rouge Community College. Together we collaborated and crafted a document less than half the length with 4 less chapters without sacrificing the essence of the course.

One week into the course, the students are more engaged than I have seen them. It reminds me of the good old days in LCA. When my children were small and we stuffed the conference bags the day before the conference started. Or when Vicky Claflin, then editor of the Louisiana Lagniappe asked me to work with her on the newsletter. Or my then supervisor, Curt Schafer approved travel for all who were interested to attend the LCA Fall Conference. And I was bit by the LCA "bug."

If you are part of LCA leadership, or any professional, civic, fraternal, etc. organization, there was probably a moment, an individual, who invited you to join in. At the time, like when I told Vicky I would help with the newsletter, I could not imagine how that answer would touch the lives of so many in our profession.

In this issue, many division presidents shared what their groups are doing at this year's Fall Conference. If anything sounds interesting to you, make note of it on your Conference App. Have you ever attended the Division Mixer which grew out of a project from a LCA Leadership Mentoring Institute Grad! It is a great way to meet live people doing amazing things to elevate the work that is our passion and better serve the clients we are also committed to serve.

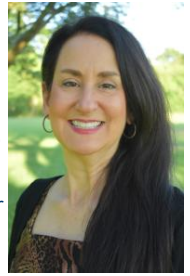
The lessons I have learned in my long association with LCA have shaped the person, the counselor, and the educator I have become. Working with ChatGPT, I understood the reframing and reinforcing techniques it used to help me think through the project I was working on. The techniques it used to help we consider even more deeply the pedagogy I was trying to support. My counseling background allowed me to recognize the psychology and counseling underpinnings of our "conversations." It was like working on a committee where everyone shows up prepared, ready to work, and on the same page. I can recall many such moments like that, sitting in Executive Board Meetings, at a LASERVIC Prayer Breakfast, or just visiting with someone at lunchtime that I did not know before.


The LCA Fall Conference is more than a place to earn a lot of CE's in a few days. It could be the very best gift you give yourself. It might not inspire you to wade into a different level of digital literacy, but you just might be surprised. 



LCA Presidential Candidate Bios and Platforms

*Vicki Guilbeau, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, NCSC, CCTP, LCA President 2024-25,
Nominations Chair*



Voting is our responsibility as professional leaders through personal membership in our flagship state counseling organization. Please exercise your right and privilege to participate in our upcoming online election for LCA President 2028-29. As LCA Immediate Past President, I am honored to announce the three outstanding and worthy candidates for our presidential election to open later this fall on Monday, September 29, and to close on Monday, October 6. Through their bios and questionnaire responses shared next in alphabetical order, learn about the candidates: Dr. Teneka Gash, Dr. Dustin Reed, and Dr. Wendy Rock. 

Dr. Teneka Gash

is a Counselor Educator at the University of Holy Cross in the Counseling and Behavioral Sciences Department.

Work & Certifications:

She is a provisionally licensed counselor in Louisiana and a registered social worker. Dr. Gash holds a Professional School Counselor Ancillary Certificate, certifications in teletherapy, CPR/AED, and training in trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. She provides counseling services to individuals and families with Positive Transformations Health Services and her interests include ethics, multiculturalism, trauma, self-care, grief, cancer and suicide prevention. Dr. Gash is dedicated to collaborating with counselors to enhance the profession.

Leadership: Dr. Gash is the president of the Louisiana Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, LAMCD, Elementary VP for the Louisiana School Counseling Association, LSCA, Co-Lead Mentor for the Leadership, Development and Mentor Institute, Co-Chair for the Professional Development Committee and Southern Region Representative for the Provisional Licensed Counselors Association. In addition to continuing as LAMCD President, Dr. Gash is Assistant Director of Ethics in LSCA.

(Dr. Gash, continued on page 15)



Dr. Dustin Herbert Reed

is a Ph.D. graduate concentrated in Counselor Education and Supervision (CACREP accredited) of The University of Holy Cross, New Orleans.

Work & Certifications: He is a Part-Time Assistant Professor for National University's Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program and an Online Adjunct Instructor the University of West Alabama with the Counseling Programs (School and CMHC). He is a Licensed Independent Mental Health Practitioner (LIMHP) in Nebraska. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the state of Louisiana. Further, he is a Board Certified Telemental Health Provider (BC-TMH), Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), and a National Certified Counselor (NCC). Also he is a certified instructor of Enhanced Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate (ALICE) active shooter preparedness training. He is the current Treasurer for the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA). Dr. Reed served as a mentor for the National Board for Certified Counselors' (NBCC) Minority Fellowship Program and a scholarship reviewer/proposal/grant reviewer for multiple associations in counseling (ACA, ACES, ARCA, SACES, NBCC). Dr. Reed has served as

(Dr. Reed, continued on page 15)



Dr. Wendy Davidson Rock


is a licensed professional counselor, board-approved supervisor, nationally certified counselor, and nationally certified

school counselor with over three decades of experience as a school counselor, counselor educator, behavioral health professional, and K-12 educator. She currently serves as a Lead Professional Learning Specialist at Hatching Results, where she supports school counselors nationwide. She is a passionate advocate for equity and student success.

Leadership: Dr. Rock has held numerous leadership roles, including past president of the Louisiana School Counselor Association, chair of the ASCA Ethics Committee, and co-chair of the ASCA Position Statement Committee.


Advocacy: Her advocacy efforts have led to lasting policy changes in Louisiana, including protecting school counselor mandates, modernizing certification pathways, and advancing the professional identity of school counselors.

Honors: She has received multiple honors, including the LCA Presidential Award (2021) and Advocacy Awards from both LCA and LSCA.


Focus: A published scholar and frequent conference presenter, Dr. Rock's work centers on ethical practice, systemic change, and counselor leadership. 



Dr. Teneka Gash's Bio, continued

Memberships: She is a member of Louisiana Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, LACES; Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, SACES; and Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, ACES. Dr. Gash is the founder of Dr. G's Empowerment Circle and member of Thrive on the Bayou, Junior League of Baton Rouge, National Association of University Women in Lafayette, and Iota Eta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated. 

Dr. Dustin Reed's Bio, continued

the Mid-Western Representative for ARCA, a Past-Associate Editor for NBCC's *The Professional Counselor*, and a Past-President of the Louisiana Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (LASERVIC) and is the current President Elect, a division of the Louisiana Counseling Association. 



**Reconnect with the friends
and colleagues you only see once a
year at the LCA Fall Conference!
Have YOU registered yet??**

Conversation with the candidates...

Candidates' LCA Vision

Vicki Guilbeau, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, NCSC, CCTP,
LCA President 2024-25, Nominations Chair



This year, we have THREE great candidates who seek to become servant leaders in LCA. Take a look at their bios that begin on page 14. This article shares the candidates' goals and visions should you choose to elect one of them. We will start the conversation alphabetically...

Prompt 1: Elaborate how your background and qualifications have brought you to your decision to first become an LCA member, and now seek this leadership position.



Dr. Gash: During membership in LCA, I have provided meaningful contributions to LCA by serving as President of LAMCD, Elementary VP of LSCA, Poster Session Judge, Archives Committee and transitioning into a new term as Assistant Director of Ethics for LSCA. I have served on various executive boards, committees and as a Conference Volunteer since 2019. I have provided mentorship to members of LCA, have also presented at LCA Conference with conference participants. As a member of the Leadership, Development and Mentoring Institute led by Dr. Christine Ebrahim, I serve as a Co-Lead Mentor—Mentoring 13 members of LCA and Co-Chair of the Professional Development Committee. I hosted the Division Mixer for the 2023 and 2024 LCA Conference to allow conference participants to gain insight, cultivate relationships and join LCA Divisions. I will host the 2025 Division Mixer. My desire is to complete the task of hosting the Division Mixer and frontline the event for years to come.

During membership of LCA, I have provided meaningful contributions to LCA by serving as President of LAMCD, Elementary VP of LSCA, Poster Session Judge, Archives Committee and transitioning into a new term as Assistant Director of Ethics for LSCA. I have served on various executive boards, committees and as a Conference Volunteer

(Candidates' LCA Vision, continued on page 16)

Candidate's LCA Vision, continued from page 15

since 2019. I have provided mentorship to members of LCA, have also presented at LCA Conference with conference participants.

As a member of the Leadership, Development and Mentoring Institute led by Dr. Christine Ebrahim, I serve as a Co-Lead Mentor—Mentoring 13 members of LCA and Co-Chair of the Professional Development Committee. I hosted the Division Mixer for the 2023 and 2024 LCA Conference to allow conference participants to gain insight, cultivate relationships and join LCA Divisions. I will host the 2025 Division Mixer. My desire is to complete the task of hosting the Division Mixer and frontline the event for years to come.



Dr. Reed: Beginning in my masters program (2011- 2013) at LSU's Health Sciences Center Department of Counseling I was introduced to LCA. I gave a presentation at LCA back then with a professor and another graduate student in September of 2013. That was the first experience of leadership in the counseling field that gave me the drive to later join ACA. I knew going into the Masters degree program back then that I wanted to be a leader in the field and seek a Ph.D. I later joined the LCA when I started my Ph.D. program at The University of Holy Cross New Orleans (2014).

During my time there I was a Doctoral Teaching Assistant to Dr. Tommy Fonseca. He got me involved in LASERVIC. I served in a number of leadership positions with LASERVIC, including Graduate Student Representative, Member-At-Large, President (for a two year term), and am currently President Elect again for LASERVIC.

In addition to my leadership in LCA, I have also and currently do serve in leadership roles. I am the current American Rehabilitation Counseling Treasurer (2023-2026). I have also served a 3-year term as the association's Mid-Western Representative. I have served on the Editorial Board for NBCC's The Professional Counselor as a Blind Reviewer (2017-2021) and an Associate Editor (2021-2022); I have served as a Minority Fellowship Program Mentor (2023-2024) for NBCCF and Scholarship reviewer

for the same program with NBCCF (Master, Doctoral, and Professional levels) and other scholarship and awards (ARCA), a grant scholarship and conference proposal reviewer for SACES, a conference proposal reviewer for ACA and ACES.

Further, in addition to this service I have been teaching students in counseling since I began as a doctoral teaching assistant to Dr. Fonseca in 2014. I have also mentored and currently mentor students from various backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, ages, races, and ability statuses. In my current positions I teach Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling specialty students. Between being a Part-Time Assistant Professor for National University and an Online Adjunct Instructor for the University of West Alabama, I currently teach over 12 different courses in counseling. I have also taught students in Marriage and Family Counseling, Addictions Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy, Academic Affairs Counseling, Human Services Counseling (undergraduate), and Psychology (undergraduate). For service to the profession, I have been awarded various honors, including from the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association and the National Board for Certified Counselors in appreciation of my work to the counseling profession.

In addition to the service and teaching above, I have also served on committees in my university roles, including currently as a member of the Part-Time Faculty Advisory Committee, CACREP Accreditation committees, Faculty Senate, Academic Affairs, and a President's Council for Diversity. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in good standing in Louisiana, an Licensed Independent Mental Health Practitioner (LIMHP) in Nebraska (the same equivalent as an LPC-S in Louisiana), a National Certified Counselor, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, a Board Certified Telemental Health Provider (BC-TMH) only about 1,700 people hold this credential world-wide, and a national certified instructor of an Active Shooter Response Management protocol known as Enhanced ALICE.

I have published on various topics (in international and national publications), presented dozens of times at national conferences and international, including ACA in 2025.

(Candidates' LCA Vision, continued on page 17)

Article continues in next column

Last, but not least, I have volunteered at a LCA conference in the past to further my service to the association and the members.

To circle back, my aim going into my masters program was to be a leader in the field. I have taken every step of the way with a purpose to be a servant leader in an attempt to help people learn to help themselves. I wish to continue that service with LCA as a future president of the association. Thank you for your consideration in helping me to continue to be a servant leader.



Dr. Rock: My journey with the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) began with the strong encouragement I received during my graduate studies at the University of Texas at Austin to join professional organizations. Early on, I recognized the value of such affiliations—particularly the opportunity to network, grow professionally, and strengthen my counseling identity. Upon graduation, there was no question that I would become a member of my state counseling association, and I'm so grateful that I did.

LCA became a place of support, mentorship, and encouragement—an organization that believed in me before I fully believed in myself. I have been fortunate to be recognized for my contributions, beginning with being named the Louisiana School Counselor Association (LSCA) High School Counselor of the Year. That same year, I was approached to run for LSCA president. The award nomination and that "tap on the shoulder" gave me the courage to say yes to leadership, and I was honored to serve as LSCA president in 2008. That experience opened the door to statewide advocacy and deepened my commitment to serving the profession.

Since then, my leadership path has expanded to include chairing the ASCA Ethics Committee, co-chairing the ASCA Position Statements Committee, serving on the LSCA board in multiple capacities, and contributing nationally through editorial work and counselor education networks. These experiences have refined my understanding of what our profession needs and inspired me to give back at a broader level. After 17 years of professional and

personal growth since serving as LSCA president, now feels like the right time to pursue the presidency of LCA.

My view of LCA has evolved with my career. I have witnessed its unique strength in uniting diverse divisions under one umbrella—something not every state has been able to maintain. I believe in the power of that unity. I want to help ensure we continue fostering that collaboration and pride in our shared mission.

As president, I will bring a vision focused on advocacy, member engagement, professional development, and inclusion. I'm especially passionate about enhancing the quality and relevance of our annual conference and increasing member involvement through meaningful, responsive programming. I believe LCA needs a leader who not only understands the work ahead in today's challenging social and political environment but who also enjoys the work of leading—and I do.

My leadership is grounded in the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, veracity, justice, and fidelity. I am guided by a personal commitment to honesty, transparency, and equity of voice. I strive to create spaces where all feel seen, heard, and valued.

I'm not running for president because I have all the answers, but because I've been shaped and inspired by the leaders who came before me—and I'm ready to do the same for others.

Prompt 2: To maintain the integrity and economic stability of LCA and counseling as a viable profession, what initiatives would you undertake to educate the public and the Legislature about the importance of LCA?



Dr. Reed: To maintain the integrity and economic stability of LCA and counseling as a viable profession, I would like to undertake an awareness campaign to help the public understand the difference between counseling and other mental health professions.

Recently, when I attended and presented at the Law and Ethics Conference in Counseling for my 10th year, I attended a presentation concerning this very subject. I

(Candidates' LCA Vision, continued on page 18)

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Candidates' LCA Vision, continued from page 17

am currently attempting to make this distinction known to everyone I come across, including students, administrators of universities, and people I meet in person. One awareness campaign could be through volunteers offering to speak to people about counseling and the differences at various venues (i.e., school meetings, town halls, and writing to legislators to help them advocate for the differentiation of laws related to counselors). I believe if people at various levels begin to better grasp who we are and what we do versus who we are not and what we do not do, then counseling will become more recognized over-time and not be subsumed into other laws lumping everyone together as a Social Worker, Therapist, Licensed Mental Health Professional. I have seen this trend growing, and it definitely needs to be addressed.



Dr. Rock: Educating the public and policymakers about the critical role of counselors—and the organization that supports them—is essential to maintaining the viability of our profession. I've seen firsthand the impact of showing up, speaking out, and doing so with clarity and collaboration.

I've testified before the Louisiana House Appropriations Committee, the House Education Committee, and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and I've met with national Senators and Representatives during ASCA's Leadership Development Institute. Each time, I had guidance, training, and support—and I asked for help when I needed it. These experiences taught me that effective advocacy doesn't mean going it alone; it means showing up prepared, amplifying our shared message, and building bridges with those who need to understand our work.

There is still a wide gap in public understanding of the counseling profession—especially in school counseling, which is too often misunderstood or mischaracterized. In today's climate, we face additional challenges: accusations of being “woke,” efforts to dismantle DEI initiatives, and harmful rhetoric suggesting that counselors are pushing personal agendas rather than providing professional

support. These misperceptions are not only demoralizing—they are dangerous. We must meet them head-on through intentional, ongoing education of both the public and our policymakers.

I believe that direct communication—especially face-to-face—is the most effective channel. When we can engage legislators in conversation, we create opportunities to hear their concerns and address misconceptions. But advocacy must be multilayered. We need a coordinated media strategy, public awareness campaigns, and opportunities for virtual engagement—especially for members who cannot attend Capitol Day in person. I'd also like to explore new ways for our members to share their stories with the public through op-eds, testimonials, and social media campaigns.

We are stronger when we stand together—not only within our divisions but alongside our colleagues in education, mental health, and social services. Coalition-building across disciplines helps us speak with a unified voice, especially on issues like access to care, school safety, and mental health funding.

Above all, advocacy must reflect the diversity of our profession. Every LCA division leader deserves a seat at the table, access to clear advocacy messaging, and the tools to engage in this work. Equity of voice isn't a tagline—it's a value that should be embedded in everything we do.

LCA has a strong foundation in advocacy. As president, I would build on that foundation—honoring the wins behind us, preparing for the challenges ahead, and ensuring every member sees themselves as a vital part of this work.



Dr. Gash: In order to maintain the integrity and economic stability of the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA) and the counseling profession as a whole, initiatives will be undertaken to educate the public and Louisiana State Legislature about the importance of the LCA. As a member of Chi Sigma Iota International, I serve on the Leadership and Professional Advocacy Committee. In this role, I have met with Capitol Associations regarding upcoming hearing dates for Counseling

(Candidates' LCA Vision, continued on page 19)

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Candidates' LCA Vision, continued from page 17

Compact bills that are currently being considered in state legislatures. Membership in Chi Sigma Iota provides individuals with the opportunity to gain information and communicate concerns related to the current rules of the Compact. Maintaining integrity, mentorship, student engagement, public and legislative education, and the promotion of initiatives are all part of my vision for the LCA.

Prompt 3: As LCA President of 15 diverse divisions, provide a few short and long term plans for LCA addressing the needs of the diverse divisions to ensure that each feels their collective voice is heard.



Dr. Rock: Equity of voice is central to my leadership philosophy. As president, I would work to ensure that all 15 LCA divisions—not just the larger or more established ones—feel seen, heard, and supported. For me, equity of voice means creating intentional opportunities for all perspectives to be included, including voices across race, ethnicity, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, licensure status, and professional role.

To assess whether each division feels heard and valued, I believe we must go beyond informal conversations and conduct regular, inclusive feedback efforts—such as anonymous membership surveys and structured leadership listening sessions. These tools can illuminate both the strengths and the pain points across divisions, and guide responsive, transparent action.

In my experience, some divisions, such as the Louisiana Mental Health Counselors Association (LMHCA), have felt more empowered—especially when it comes to legislative advocacy, which is often tied to licensure. Meanwhile, divisions like the Louisiana School Counselor Association (LSCA)—which often has the largest or second-largest membership—have sometimes felt overlooked, particularly in educational advocacy spaces. Advocacy through the Political Action Committee (PAC), for example, is largely centered on issues relevant to LPCs. While this advocacy is critical, it should not come at the expense of other counseling professionals whose policy concerns

live outside the mental health landscape.

That said, my goal is not to overcorrect in one direction but to recognize that my perspective is shaped by my experience in LSCA. I am committed to approaching all divisions with curiosity and care—asking questions, not assuming, and working to understand the unique needs of each.

In the short term, I would:

- ◆ Host division leader roundtables to foster community and shared learning across specialties.
- ◆ Launch anonymous surveys to gather broad-based feedback about whether members feel represented and supported.
- ◆ Initiate open forums and leadership listening sessions to make space for candid, constructive dialogue.
- ◆ Support interdivisional professional development, such as collaborative webinars and podcasts, in addition to co-hosted sessions at the annual conference.

In the long term, I would:

- ◆ Prioritize membership growth and leadership development within smaller divisions to increase their visibility and sustainability.
- ◆ Examine existing LCA structures and procedures to determine whether formal changes are needed to ensure fair representation.
- ◆ Explore how advocacy resources—especially those tied to the PAC—can be more equitably aligned with the needs of all divisions, not only those focused on licensure.

We are stronger together. While other states have fractured, Louisiana has remained unified under the LCA umbrella. That unity must be protected—not through sameness, but by affirming the unique value each division brings to the whole. As president, I will work every day to ensure that unity is not symbolic, but substantive.

(Candidates' LCA Vision, continued on page 20)

Article continues in next column



Dr. Reed: From my experience with LCA, it is definitely colored with diversity. One short-term goal I would like to see is for the 15 divisions to have a collaboration event (whether at conference or outside of the conference). What I mean by this is something like a career fair or job fair. In this event each division could have representatives present that would be available for members to talk with and share information about the division. This idea stems from the exhibition halls I have experienced at conference. To make this a feasible option for everyone, I think this is something that could be accomplished either virtually (through Zoom or Trade Wing type platform) and/or in person. I believe if an event like this was held each year or twice a year, more visibility to the different divisions could be accomplished. I do know that some divisions have gatherings outside of conferences in similar fashion (i.e. the LACES division with supervisor/supervisee mixers). From an economic perspective as well, as a long-term goal, I would like to work with the different division leaders to help them figure out strategies to fund raise for their divisions through brainstorming activities that could benefit their outreach and the communities in which they serve. Another long-term goal is to aim to have more to offer students from the LCA. This was part of the conversation and initiatives we began working on when I volunteered on the membership committee.



Dr. Gash: As LCA President of 15 diverse divisions, I have a number of short- and long-term goals to ensure that we are effectively addressing the needs of our diverse membership.

One major focus is on advocacy. I want to make sure that each division feels heard and that their concerns are being addressed by the LCA as a whole. This will involve establishing and implementing short- and long-term goals within each division, as well as supporting initiatives that promote collaboration and a sense of community among our members.

I will also prioritize the support of LAMCD, the People's Committee, and the Professional Development Committee. These organizations are essential to our mission of promoting diversity and inclusion in the counseling profession. I believe that by working together, we can create a more welcoming and equitable environment for all counselors.

It is also important to me that the LCA continues to be a leader in multiculturalism. I will work to establish mentorship programs, offer meaningful opportunities for engagement, and recognize the contributions of all cultures. By embracing diversity, we can foster innovation and create a more vibrant and inclusive counseling profession.

Finally, I will develop a continuum of Presidential initiatives that will be carried out from year to year. This will help us to ensure that our goals are being met and that we are making progress in addressing the needs of our diverse membership.

I am excited to work with you all to make the LCA a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization.

Article continues in next column

The LCA Luncheon will be the first event of the Fall Conference! Break bread with us in October!



Prompt 4: During your membership, what is one meaningful contribution you have made to LCA or the LCA Board, specifically.



Dr. Reed: While I loved all the endeavors I have had in my roles in LCA, I truly loved my volunteer experiences. I volunteered at a previous conference to help guide people to seating at different presentations. I also assisted my colleague, Dr. Rashunda Miller Reed with the membership committee responsibilities (August 2021-2022), alongside a former student of mine when I worked for Walden University. Those experiences

gave me a sense of purpose and comradery different from the elected leadership roles and duties. Being that I began volunteering at a young age with the Spinabifida Organization's Camp friendship as a camp counselor, volunteering at Children's Hospital, and tutoring classmates and others, I have always loved to volunteer.



Dr. Rock: One of my most meaningful contributions to LCA has been my sustained and strategic advocacy on behalf of school counselors—work that has directly shaped policy, protected professional identity, and built coalitions across disciplines.

As a newly elected LSCA president, I quickly found myself in the deep end when the salary supplement for National Certified School Counselors (NCSCs) was threatened. I leaned heavily on research, sought guidance from trusted colleagues, and collaborated with professionals across roles—including school social workers and psychologists. Together, we testified before the House Appropriations Committee. When the governor later issued a line-item veto, I worked with the LCA president to send a letter to every school board and superintendent, citing a legal opinion from the state attorney general stating that districts were still required to pay the supplement. Many still honor that payment today.


That experience set the tone for my advocacy moving forward. I later testified before the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to preserve the state's mandate requiring school counselors in schools—highlighting the harm its removal would cause to students. Our coalition met directly with the board member behind the proposed change and built a lasting relationship with the state superintendent. The school counselor mandate remains intact.

I also played a key role in improving pathways to certification for school counselors, collaborating with the certification office and BESE to create a more flexible process for clinical mental health counseling graduates. Additionally, I advocated for the formal title change from "guidance counselor" to "school counselor" by helping secure legislative sponsorship, working with our lobbyist, and testifying before the House Education Committee. The new title is now codified in Louisiana law.

These efforts reflect my commitment to protecting and elevating the identity of school counselors. Even my scholarly research aligns with this focus, centering professional identity and advocacy.

Beyond policy work, I am equally proud of my mentorship. I served as a mentor to two emerging leaders in the inaugural LCA Leadership Academy cohort and have supervised numerous PLPCs who have since achieved licensure. Supporting others on their journey into leadership or licensure has been one of my greatest contributions—and greatest honors.



Dr. Gash: During membership of LCA, I have provided meaningful contributions to LCA by serving as President of LAMCD, Elementary VP of LSCA, Poster Session Judge, Archives Committee and transitioning into a new term as Assistant Director of Ethics for LSCA. I have served on various executive boards, committees and as a Conference Volunteer since 2019. I have provided mentorship to members of LCA, have also presented at LCA Conference with conference participants. As a member of the Leadership, Development and Mentoring Institute led by Dr. Christine Ebrahim, I serve as a Co-Lead Mentor —Mentoring 13 members of LCA and Co-Chair of the Professional Development Committee. I hosted the Division Mixer for the 2023 and 2024 LCA Conference to allow conference participants to gain insight, cultivate relationships and join LCA Divisions. I will host the 2025 Division Mixer. My desire is to complete the task of hosting the Division Mixer and frontline the event for years to come. 



Division Mixer 2024

Andy Wiggins and Kelle Falterman at the LASERVIC table welcoming LCAers!



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With Heartfelt Thoughts and Prayers



✧ Dr. Joseph Pistorius,
LCA President Elect-Elect, lost his mother this past August.
Please hold him and his family in your heart at this time.

✧ KyNisha Murphy, LCA member and Doctorial student
recently lost her husband. Please hold her and her family in
your heart at this time, also.

✧ This fall marks the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.
Please mark this milestone in a way that is meaningful to you
as you remember all the LCA members and their families who
were and are still impacted.

✧ Please remember all LCA Members and their loved ones
whose passing has not been reported to us. Their loss is no
less important than any mentioned here by name.*

*Help us honor members facing serious illness, loss, or a recent passing. Please share details with Diane@lcala.com or Vinetta @ lcanews@outlook.com. ePhotos are welcome — they help us all remember.

Help YOUR Division Get A Larger Conference Rebate!

Vinetta Frie, Lagniappe Editor

The annual fall conference strengthens us in two ways: professional development and fiscal health. When the conference makes a profit, LCA shares it 75/25 with the divisions. That 25% is distributed based on how many members from each division register and indicate their primary division on the registration form.

The more members your division has attending — and marking your division as primary — the larger your rebate. This practice has allowed many divisions to offer services without raising dues. So when you register, remember to list your primary division! ☞



Louisiana Lagniappe

The *Louisiana Lagniappe* is the newsletter of the Louisiana Counseling Association (LCA). LCA is the state branch of the American Counseling Association (ACA). LCA unites professional counselors from diverse work settings to promote advocacy, collaboration, and networking among its membership for the good of Louisiana's multi-generational clients.

LAGNIAPPE TEAM

Your newsletter is the result of the following editorial team: Diane Austin, Dr. Quintin Gustin, Dr. Christine Ebrahim and Dr. Vicki Guilbeau and Vinetta Frie, Publication Chair.

SUBMISSIONS

Send all submissions to newsletter editor, Vinetta Frie via her e-mail address: lcanews@outlook.com. Please include the word *Lagniappe* in the subject line. Electronic submission of photographs via e-mail as a .jpeg or .png file *is preferred*.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

SUBMISSION

DEADLINE:

October 17, 2025

The theme of the next issue is the the fall conference and outcome of the LCA presidential election.

