



What thrill it is to be sitting down to write this message! It is with great pride that I am representing our community of counselors in Virginia as your President. I am inheriting a wonderful legacy of leadership and it is with much gratitude that I acknowledge Ms. Linda Grubba, our Immediate Past-President, for all of her hard work, initiatives, and the positive recognition the Virginia Counselors Association (VCA) received this past year for its leadership, service, and advocacy efforts. I anticipate my Presidential year to be as active and productive as the last! My intention is to continue to leverage our Strategic Plan for **all** counselors and promote our mission through our many professional development events across Virginia.

In many ways, I contribute my development as a leader to the wonderful people at VCA and the opportunities that they and the Virginia Counselors Association Foundation (VCAF) provided to graduate students and professionals looking to further their professional identity and involvement. As a doctoral student, I took advantage of applying to VCA's Leadership Academy and VCAF's Pete Warren Fellowship. I attended and presented at many VCA Conventions as a way to learn, explore, and connect. As a result, I have the utmost respect for VCA and the counselors that make up this community. I feel it is my responsibility to contribute to its positive growth and give back--the way VCA has given to me. So, thank you for giving me this opportunity.

I'll admit, as I move into this new role, there are large questions that keep me up at night: How can VCA become a more culturally responsive association? How can we work towards inclusion and equity for all the diverse counselors we represent and hope to represent? How can VCA use its power and position in the community to empower voices that are not often heard? Certainly, these questions can only be answered together.

Like all ethical counselors, I continue to challenge myself to grow as culturally competent professional. But, what happens when professional counselors are called to leadership? That striving to be ethical and culturally competent doesn't just go away! No! If anything, it's amplified! (...I would even argue that every counselor is a leader in their community through their presence in service and advocacy). So, as we move into new and exciting year, I hope we are able to give thanks and highlight the amazing work that is already being done by our members---as well as shine a light on those we have yet to recognize or notice!

I look forward to hearing from you all and seeing you at the Convention in November!

Warmly,

Monica