AARC President’s Message

Hello wonderful people!
Welcome to our 51st year as the assessment and research division of the American Counseling Association.

We will be starting out our year together in Fort Lauderdale for an exciting National Assessment and Research Conference hosted by Elizabeth Villares and the folks at Florida Atlantic University. In response to member feedback and conference attendee demand, we are launching a trial run at 2 full days of conference which is good timing when considering that we have received a record number of proposals for this year’s conference. This is will be an opportunity for you to receive more CEUs at the same great rate, while having even more opportunities for networking and collaboration with likeminded folks. With this in mind, I invite you to come early, stay late, be engaged.

Your new Executive Committee is already working hard promoting the impact of existing programs and developing new ones that increase member engagement. The EC agenda that was established in March will be actionable by September and I believe you will find it to be consistent with a commitment to not only deepen our footprint within the counseling profession, but blaze new trails. We have a number of standing committees

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2016 AARC National Assessment and Research Conference  
September 9-10, 2016  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Registration: To register, visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/AARC2016. After completing the survey monkey form, you are prompted to proceed to make registration payment at the AARC website. When you arrive to the AARC website be sure to SIGN IN to your member account before proceeding. The link is in the upper left hand corner. The only way to receive membership pricing (which is lower) is to sign-in to your account first! Member log-in is your email address and password is your ACA member number. If you are unable to log-in, contact me for assistance. Dr. Elizabeth Prosek (email below) can troubleshoot your account and make corrections before you proceed to payment. If you are a presenter at the conference, be prepared to provide a 50-word bio during the registration process. This bio will be printed in the program. Hopefully my use of yellow highlighting and exclamation points brought your attention to the importance of logging into your AARC account on the website before payment.

The Early Bird registration (Ends August 1, 2016)                     Regular Registration (August 2 - Sept 10, 2016)  
Members: $165.00            Members: $205.00  
Non-Members: $205.00         Non-Members: $245.00  
Students/Retirees: $85.00    Students/Retirees: $125.00  
Non-Member Students/Retirees: $125.00 Non-Member Students/Retirees: $165.00

Hotel Reservations: Rooms at the B Ocean Resort start at $139.00 per night (double rooms). For hotel room group booking, please visit this link: https://res.windsurfercrs.com/ibe/details.aspx?propertyid=14266&nights=1&checkin=09/04/2016&group=1609AARCAS. You may also contact B Ocean Resort for reservations at 1-866-990-6826, be sure to mention your association with AARC to receive the reduced room rate. Remember, this year's conference is two full days of sessions, all day Friday and Saturday.

Questions about the conference? Contact Dr. Elizabeth Villares at evillare@fau.edu.

Questions about your AARC website account? Contact Dr. Philip Gnilka at pbgnilka@vcu.edu.
Every since I took an undergraduate research class as a sophomore, I thought doing research was not for me. The long lectures in research methods and short answer tests turned me off to the idea of research at the moment. Validity? Reliability? What does this all mean? It was like learning a new language. Taking various tests in a research methods class was another story. Is research just short answer tests and long lectures? No, but this is what I thought at the time. All the terms and ways of doing things seemed overwhelming.

I kept this mindset of disliking research and seeing it as unattainable to me until I transferred to another school and took another research-based class as a senior seminar. I was really nervous it would be like the last but keep an open mind. The class was structured with the ability to research any topic of your choosing. This was both exciting and overwhelming. As I went through the process of picking a topic, choosing a research method, and collecting data, I found it was really empowering. It showed me the rewards and the excitement involved in conducting research, and I could do it on my own. The hardest thing for me was choosing a topic given I was so passionate about multiple subjects. In the end, I chose to do a comparative case.
**Student Perspectives Column - continued**

study comparing the life of two serial killers. I loved to read, so this was a good fit for me as a researcher. I enjoyed pouring hours and hours into reading about their lives. This interest in reading and “doing research” was the turning point leading to my newfound interest in research.

After I completed my research into which graduate schools I wanted to attend, and getting into different programs, I still wanted more research in my academic life. While research was not a requirement of my master’s program in Mental Health Counseling, I still wanted the experience. Given my interest in Ph.D. programs, I knew research would be a big focus. I took the first opportunity and was picked to be on a research team with six other students under two professors researching trauma and posttraumatic growth. I soon realized that having mentors to guide a new graduate student through the process of research is the most important part of doing research as a master’s student. Both professors were patient and willing to answer our questions. We all had many questions and came from so many different backgrounds. Some did a lot of research before, and some did none at all and some, like me, were kind of in between. We started where everyone did and did a literature review seeing what is out there and what is needed. Once we found the literature and chose a topic that was not really out there already, we got to work on the IRB. Through this process, I learned another important part of research, which is teamwork. I learned how we could be most powerful by working together. No matter what research you do someone else will somehow be involved. Once our IRB was approved, our survey went live, and we are now waiting to finish collecting our data. I am so excited to see where this process takes us next.

**AARC President’s Message - continued**

that have shifted to new leadership and have also invested our members to start new initiatives. Among these include welcoming a new Chair to the Research Committee, establishing an Assessment Committee, developing the Emerging Leaders Program, expanding the role of the Member-at-Large for Membership, adoption of the AARC Standards for Multicultural Research, and collaborating with ALGBTIC to develop conjoint competencies for assessment and research. To name a few!

I am also incredibly proud to report that AARC is currently the home of two great journals that are increasingly influencing the counseling profession. The 2015 impact factor ratings were released last month and revealed that our journal, *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, has the largest impact factor of any counseling journal. Kudos to the editor Paul Peluso and the MECD editorial board members! Also, *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation* has also continued to develop, but needs your support by accessing the articles online and citing CORE articles in your publication efforts.

Finally, I would like to welcome and congratulate the newest members of our EC and division. Dr. Donna Sheperis and Philip Gnilka are extraordinary folks with so many incredible attributes that are sure to serve the membership well. As for our new members, they, along with you, are our future and I look forward to hearing about the many great opportunities that emerge from linking and networking. As always, I am thrilled that you have decided to choose AARC membership and hope that we can find a way for you to be as involved as you want to and ultimately, call us your home division. We have plenty of opportunities for your personality, skills, and interests to shine through, so please let me know if you have an idea for an initiative, program, or project.
Assessment seldom makes the list of favorite courses among graduate counseling students. Frequently, students dread the course and delay taking it until the end of their degree plan. Faculty assigned to teach the course struggle to engage students in the content and to help students see the merits of assessment in the counseling process. Experiential methods offer instructors a meaningful way to deliver content and achieve specific learning objectives while involving students. Atmosphere of the course, developmental fit, and a variety of experiences are a few factors for instructors to reflect on as they integrate experiential methods when teaching an assessment course.

The atmosphere is an important consideration when implementing experiential activities in the assessment course. The classroom needs to have an atmosphere in which students can explore and experience assessments and feel comfortable and supported while doing so by both the instructor and classmates. Acknowledging and normalizing student anxiety or indifference about assessment and experiential learning in the first class session can be a starting place for instructors to set a supportive tone and create a safe learning environment. Some students will excel in the course and can grow impatient or frustrated with peers that need another example. It is important for instructors to address this as it can influence the vulnerability required of students in participating in experiential

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learning activities. Instructors can remind students that in addition to learning course content, students can practice their non-verbal communication that conveys core conditions, patience, and understanding for classmates who may need an alternative explanation to grasp a concept.

A second consideration of for instructors is selecting experiential activities that are developmentally appropriate. There are two ways in which instructors can think about developmentally appropriate experiences for students in the assessment course. First, instructors can consider where the assessment course is located in the degree plan in an effort to understand what assessment course content would likely be familiar to students from a previous course. For example, in some programs students take the research course prior to the assessment course and are acquainted with concepts like mean, median, and mode. Conversely, instructors can also see what content would not be covered in other courses and would be unfamiliar to students in an assessment course. Second, instructors can consider the developmental needs of students when selecting which assessments to introduce and when. Assessments can be selected for when they coincide with the course topic or chapter or they can be selected for students to have particular experiences in the class schedule. It can be helpful to start the course with assessments that are relatively short and quick to score like the Beck Depression Inventory and have students administer and score assessments that increase in length, number of constructs and scales, and with greater complexity, like the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Inventory, as the semester progresses.

Variety is the final consideration for course instructors. It is beneficial for students to experience different types of assessments with variations in intended populations, constructs, formats, administration, and scoring. For constructs, it is helpful for instructors to have students become familiar with assessments they are likely to experience regardless of their degree plan. Suicide and substance abuse assessments would be useful for students to learn about regardless of their counseling setting or specialization. It is also worthwhile for the course to include some assessments that are intended for particular populations or degree plans, like an assessment for couples entering pre-marital counseling. Instructors should also consider including formal and informal assessments in the course. Checklists like the Personal Problems Checklist and rating scales like the Outcome Rating Scale are frequently overlooked as meaningful assessment measures. Students also gain valuable experience from seeing or experiencing hand-scored assessment results like the Novaco Anger Scale and Provocation Inventory as well as computer generated profiles from the Strong Interest Inventory. Aside from the experience, having a wide variety of assessments also generates discussion on ethical practice, competence, and reviewing state licensing rules and regulations.

Frieda Fromm-Reichmann remarked, “The patient needs an experience, not an explanation.” The quote speaks to counseling, but can be aptly applied to teaching as well. Instead of learning about assessment through textbooks, PowerPoints, and lectures, experiential learning affords students the opportunity to learn assessment by experience. Students’ experiences in administering, scoring, and interpreting assessments throughout the semester can generate a familiarity and comfort with assessments that will linger past the end of the course.
About AARC

The mission of AARC is to promote and recognize scholarship, professionalism, leadership, and excellence in the development and use of assessment and diagnostic techniques in counseling.

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Call for Submissions

If you have any information related to the activities of AARC members that you think should be highlighted, we want to hear from you! Please submit a Microsoft Word file with a writing style that is consistent with the APA 6th edition style.

Student Perspectives Section
Submissions should highlight issues related to the process of research proposal development; topics related to research design, dissertation writing, and presentation of research; perspectives on assessment use among counselors, particularly related to training and professional development in using assessment measures; experiences with finding funding support and writing small grants; as well as locating and participating in professional development activities related to the AARC mission. Submissions should range between 500-800 words and clearly indicate a student-based perspective on the topic featured.

Test Review Section
Submissions should highlight an assessment instrument that would be useful to counselors or counselor educators. Submissions should range between 2 to 4 pages.

AARC Newsnotes

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Student Perspectives Editor
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Test Review Editor
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