

Executive Interview: Meet Your New President, Diane Sevening, EdD, LAC, MAC

By Jessica Gleason, JD, NAADAC Deputy Director

At the close of NAADAC's 2018 Annual Conference in October, Diane Sevening, EdD, LAC, MAC started her two-year term as NAADAC's President. Currently an Assistant Professor in the Addiction Counseling and Prevention Department at the University of South Dakota School of Health Sciences, Dr. Sevening has over 35 years of teaching experience and ten years of clinical experience in the addiction profession. She serves as a member of the South Dakota Board of Addiction and Prevention Professionals (BAPP), Treasurer of the International Coalition for Addiction Studies Education (INCASE), and member of the National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission (NASAC) Board of Commissioners. As a clinician, Sevening spent seven years as the Prevention and Treatment Coordinator at the University of South Dakota's Student Health Services, two years as a Clinical Supervisor for the University of South Dakota Counseling Center, and one year as a family therapist at St. Luke's Addiction Center in Sioux City, Iowa.

A NAADAC member since 1999, Sevening previously served as Regional Vice-President for the NAADAC North Central Region and Chair of the Student Committee. As NAADAC Student Committee Chair, she was vital in the implementation of the NAADAC William L. White Student Scholarship Award in 2015. Sevening has presented at numerous NAADAC events, trainings, and conferences.

Jessica Gleason, NAADAC Deputy Director, sat down with Sevening to discuss her new role as NAADAC President.

GLEASON: Why did you decide to go into the addiction profession? How did you get started?

SEVENING: There is a history of alcohol use disorder in my family. While growing up, we made many geographic moves and often times lived



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with grandparents and other relatives. I came to the realization that not everyone lives like this, so decided it was my responsibility to create a better life for me and others like me and make a difference. There were many mentors in my life who saw potential in me and encouraged me to pursue higher education. My first interests were to become a teacher of elementary students or a high school English teacher. These studies were not satisfying to me, but I then heard about the University of South Dakota that offered a Bachelor's degree in Addiction Studies. It was there that I found my niche.

GLEASON: How did you become involved with NAADAC and decide to pursue a role in NAADAC's leadership?

SEVENING: In one of my classes, we discussed how can we make a difference as addiction professionals. The NAADAC Advocacy in Action conference was coming up and four students decided they were going to attend. NAADAC was so welcoming, encouraging, and supportive of our interests. These fabulous four students decided to create a student organization on campus and as a result, I was approached at a later NAADAC conference to consider becoming the NAADAC student chair. During this same time, it was such an honor to be voted in as the South Dakota (SD) President of Chemical Dependency Association and with the support of the state Director of the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, South Dakota became an affiliate of NAADAC. This then led to me being voted in as NAADAC Regional Vice President for the North Central Region.

GLEASON: What motivated you to run for NAADAC President?

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SEVENING: Several of my friends, mentors, colleagues, and students encouraged me to consider the possibility of running for NAADAC President. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I was capable of taking on this role, and I initially laughed it off. They were persistent in reminding me about making a difference. Now it was a personal challenge to put my actions where my mouth is and I decided to take a chance.

GLEASON: How would you describe your leadership style?

SEVENING: My leadership style is democratic or participative. My belief is that we all work as a team and with input and feedback from each member of the team, success happens.

GLEASON: What is first on your agenda as you settle into your new role?

SEVENING: First on my agenda as NAADAC President is advocating for the addiction profession at the national, state, and local levels to address the workforce shortages.

GLEASON: What other goals do you hope to achieve during your term as NAADAC President? Is there an initiative you are excited to tackle during your presidency?

SEVENING: Addiction professionals need to be recognized and respected for the knowledge and special skill sets they possess. It is my hope to assist in creating a standardized credential that is recognized by all other health care providers. An initiative that is exciting to me and that I plan to tackle is to inspire students to pursue the addiction profession as a career choice. Colleges and universities need to market addiction studies as a viable degree with endless opportunities for job placement.

GLEASON: What are you hearing from members as their biggest concerns and challenges for the industry today and how can NAADAC support them?

SEVENING: Many members have expressed that they are unable to find qualified addiction professionals to work in remote areas. They have also indicated it is difficult to find qualified addiction professionals who are willing to provide treatment to diverse populations, such as ethnic groups, LGBTQ, homeless, disabled, veterans, and incarcerated populations. Another major concern is portability of credentials. Credentialing standards vary from state to state, which makes it difficult for an addiction professional to make a lateral move to a different state. Some states require a Master's degree for licensure, while other states require a Bachelor's degree for licensure. The testing requirements also vary. Some states require the IC&RC exam and other states require the NCC AP exam.

I would have to say that the biggest issue I hear about is low pay for the addiction professionals who are addressing the number one public health problem in the nation. NAADAC is very aware of these concerns

and challenges and has incorporated the Minority Fellowship Program for Master's level students who plan to work with diverse groups or minority populations to receive funding for their last year of graduate studies in an addiction-related field.

In addition, NAADAC continues to advocate for the addiction profession in regard to both standardizing credentialing and increasing the recognition and pay that those in the addiction profession receive.

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GLEASON: What do you feel are one or two of the biggest challenges facing new addiction counselors today, and do you have any advice for overcoming these challenges?

SEVENING: The biggest challenge facing new addiction counselors today is being able to afford the high cost of living with the low pay scale. Sometimes the long work hours can also be a detriment and a deterrent for inspiring young people to become addiction counselors. Advocating for equal pay of addiction counselors in comparison to other professionals in the behavioral healthcare profession on the national, state, and local levels is necessary. New addiction counselors need incentives that compliment their passion for wanting to help people move into recovery. This is such a

challenging and rewarding profession, and with higher education comes the knowledge and skills needed to provide evidence-based practices and the best individualized care possible.

GLEASON: Why is NAADAC membership important for addiction professionals?

SEVENING: NAADAC membership provides a wealth of benefits and resources specifically for addiction professionals. Currently NAADAC offers over 150 CEs of ongoing and archived webinars that address contemporary issues by renowned presenters – all of which can be accessed for free by members. Members also receive a subscription to the quarterly NAADAC magazine, *Advances in Addiction & Recovery*, professional and student liability insurance at an affordable price, discounted rates for attendance at national and regional conferences, and national representation for legislative issues, just to name a few of the many benefits. NAADAC membership also provides opportunities for professional growth, leadership, and continuous updates on the latest issues through the electronic e-blasts and NAADAC news. NAADAC cares about its members and will provide the best service available in helping us make a difference.



*Jessica Gleason, JD, is the Deputy Director of NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. In this role, she assists the Executive Director in managing and leading the association and oversees the day to day operations and activities of the communications, marketing, public relations, exhibits and ad sales, training, and professional development departments. In addition, she assists the Executive Director in managing NAADAC's government relations activities, sponsor recruitment and coordination, grant writing and programming, and other special projects. Gleason also serves as Managing Editor of NAADAC's quarterly magazine, *Advances in Addiction & Recovery*. She joined NAADAC in October 2013 and was Director of Communications from January 2014 to November 2018.*