

NAADAC's New President Kirk Bowden Discusses Key Priorities

By Jessica Gleason, Director of Communications



At the close of NAADAC's Annual Conference & 40th Anniversary Celebration in late September, Kirk Bowden, PhD, was handed the reins of the NAADAC Presidency. Bowden brings to NAADAC a wealth of experience not only in addictions counseling, but also in the hot topics of addictions education, credentialing, and licensing. Bowden is an Approved Clinical Supervisor and is certified as a Licensed Professional Counselor and Licensed Independent Substance Abuse Counselor by the state of Arizona, as a National Certified Counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) and as a Master Addiction Counselor by the NBCC and NAADAC. Bowden is currently the Faculty Chair of the Department of Addiction and Substance Use Disorder Program at Rio Salado College in Tempe, AZ, and Director of the Addiction Counseling Program at Ottawa University. He serves as a Commissioner on the National Addictions Studies Accreditation Commission (NASAC), a Board member of the International Coalition for Addiction Studies Education (INCASE), and on the Editorial

Board of the Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse (AMERSA) Substance Abuse Journal, the International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, and NAADAC's Advances in Addiction & Recovery magazine. No stranger to awards, Dr. Bowden has been the recipient of the American Counseling Association (ACA) Fellows Award, the ACA Counselor Educator Advocacy Award, NAADAC's President's Award, and Addiction Professional Advocate of the Year from the Arizona Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (AzAADAC). The Managing Editor was able to catch up with Bowden to learn about his thoughts and plans for NAADAC during his two-year term.

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

Bowden: I joined NAADAC in 1992, around the same time I became an addictions educator. I got active in leadership fairly quickly, being first appointed NAADAC's Continuing Education Auditor for the state of Arizona, and moving through positions, including President, at AzAADAC, NAADAC's Arizona affiliate. I started thinking about national leadership while working as the President of INCASE, a professional organization of professors, teachers, professionals, and programs specializing in addictions studies. In this capacity, I ended up on a SAMHSA committee working with Cynthia Moreno Tuohy and Donald Osborn to create standardized addictions studies coursework and a career ladder for the addictions profession. At the urging of SAMHSA and this committee, INCASE and NAADAC joined forces to create NASAC, a higher education accreditation body to assess all levels of higher education academic programs in addiction studies, of which I was appointed Chair. I continued doing national work with NAADAC as the Regional Vice-President for the Southwest and then ran for President.

Q What motivated you to run for NAADAC President?

Bowden: One of the main reasons I ran for national office was a growing concern about the need to protect our field as a legitimate specialization. More and more it felt as if other behavioral health professionals were encroaching on the addictions profession and claiming addictions as their territory even though they did not have addiction-specific training or education.

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

Bowden: I have two major initiatives I am passionate about. First is a continue push for nationwide state-specific tiered licensure for addiction counselors. The health care environment is changing rapidly and many new issues stemming from the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) need to be dealt with. One of these issues is that moving forward, largely who receives reimbursements will be up to third-party providers, most of whom require counselors to have a master's degree and a license in order to receive direct reimbursement. On one hand, this highlights the need for state licensure at the master's level so people within the addictions field can be qualified to receive direct reimbursement at the independent level. On the other hand, this also shows how critical it is to have a tiered licensure system that allows for addiction counselors at other levels to move up the career ladder to that independent master's level and still receive reasonable compensation. We need to protect all addiction professionals, ranging from those at the licensed, independent level to those coming into the field at the peer support level.

The second major initiative is a continued push for increased membership in NAADAC. NAADAC has experienced tremendous growth in the past couple of years and it is important to thank the NAADAC staff and President Bob Richards for this recent progress. However, I strongly believe membership is still critical for NAADAC and for the survival of the addiction profession. NAADAC needs members to be able to move forward with important causes for the profession and have influence on state and national legislation, and the addiction profession in general.

Q How can NAADAC help push forward state-specific tiered licensing?

Bowden: Licensing is a state-specific issue that must be dealt with by state leaders in the addiction profession. As a national organization, NAADAC can provide states with guidance, consultation, and technical assistance. We can help leaders open the door to licensing discussions with their state legislators, provide tools to help bring licensing into the public discourse, and provide verbiage and model licensing rules that follow the SAMHSA's recommendations. NAADAC can also connect leaders with people in other states working on similar issues and help keep the issue of state licensing in the national eye. NAADAC leaders have already provided assistance, both in person and from a far, in Indiana, South Dakota, Washington State, and California. For example, NAADAC spoke out against a California licensing bill that we considered exclusive and harmful to the profession and is currently working with our California affiliate to develop an inclusive licensing bill that protects all addiction professionals in California, not just those at the top tier or credentialed by a particular credentialing body.

Q You have substantial experience with state licensure issues, including serving as Chair of the Arizona's behavioral health licensing and disciplinary board, and Chair of its Substance Abuse Counselor and Professional Counselor Credentialing Committees. In 2004, you helped write the academic requirements for counselor licensure when Arizona's behavioral licensing law was enacted, changing voluntary certification to mandatory licensure. How will this experience contribute to your efforts as NAADAC President?



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Mariel Hemingway
Actress

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Saturday Keynote Speakers



Jeffrey Kottler, Ph.D.
California State University, Fullerton



Richard S. Balkin, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi

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Bowden: I think my experience with licensing and credentials will be a significant benefit. My more than ten years on Arizona's licensing board and work on licensure in other states has showed me the range of issues that needs to be considered when creating both a licensure movement within a state and writing the actual licensure regulations themselves. I hope to serve as a resource for our state affiliates and work with the NAADAC staff to develop even more useful tools to help with the professionalization of addiction counseling and protection of its specialized role among behavioral health professions.

Q Why is NAADAC membership important for addiction professionals?

Bowden: NAADAC membership is part of being a professional in our specialized field. If you are an addictions professional, you should be a part of the only national membership organization specifically for addictions professionals. NAADAC's members are what gives it the power and voice to advocate on the behalf of the profession. The U.S. Government estimates that there are over 85,000 addiction professionals working in the United States today. As Bob Richards once said, "We are the few, advocating for the many." Increased membership allows us to have a stronger and louder voice—to ensure that addiction counseling stays an independent field and isn't absorbed into the other areas of behavioral health, to ensure that addiction professionals receive parity and proper compensation, and ensure that our young professionals have the resources and means to continue in this honored profession.

Q What is NAADAC doing to increase its membership?

Bowden: NAADAC's revitalized Membership Committee is currently strategizing new ways to retain current members and recruit new members, including expanding our successful March to Membership Drive in the Spring to include recruitment events around the country. Specifically, I believe we need to work on student recruitment and increasing our student members' involvement with NAADAC, in the hopes that such involvement will continue as the students move forward in their careers. The addiction profession is aging and we need new members to revitalize our workforce and ensure continuing quality care for those with substance use disorders. Our Membership Chair, Margaret Smith, and our Student Committee Chair, Diane Sevening, are both addiction educators who hope to use their many contacts at colleges and universities with addictions programs around the country to help with these recruitment efforts. My experience in addictions education will also help tremendously with this goal and I hope to use my relationships with educators to increase student membership, chapters, and involvement in NAADAC.

Q What role do RVPs and State Affiliates have in membership recruitment?

Bowden: Membership recruitment is a year round effort and the NAADAC staff does a tremendous job. However, RVP and State affiliate participation is vital to NAADAC's membership effort. We need more participation by affiliates in our recruitment efforts, including calling members when it's time for membership renewals to encourage reenrollment, promoting national efforts, like our March to Membership drive, and creating state-wide recruitment activities.

Q How would you describe your leadership style?

Bowden: I envision my leadership style being much like a head football coach. While a head coach oversees the team, it is the assistant coaches who actually coach the team. Each assistant coach has specific assignments and goals and run their designated areas. The head coach orchestrates and make sure everything fits together seamlessly. My intention is to have Regional Vice-Presidents work with their state affiliate presidents who in turn oversee their own state organizations. I think state affiliates need to be making the decisions within their own states, with RVPs assisting with and coordinating state efforts under their jurisdictions. I'm here to assist and rally the whole team. And what a team it is!



Jessica Gleason is the Director of Communications for NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals. She is the Managing Editor for Advances in Addiction & Recovery and compiles NAADAC's two ePublications, the bi-weekly Addiction & Recovery eNews and weekly Professional eUpdate. She is also responsible for the NAADAC website's content, social media, and communications. Gleason holds a Juris Doctorate from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, MA and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.