

50 YEARS

A 50th Anniversary Celebration Week Event

2026

PAU Stars Awards!

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 10, 2026



HOSTED BY THE OFFICE OF STUDENT SUCCESS

AWARD DESCRIPTIONS



Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)

The Excellence in DEIB Award is presented to a student who is a passionate advocate for other members of the PAU community and uses their voice and actions to support civil discourse, challenges systemic barriers, and promotes meaningful change on campus while respecting differences of opinion. This student takes the lead in organizing events, facilitates dialogues, and develops innovative programs that raise awareness, celebrates diversity, and fosters more welcoming, inclusive environments. Beyond just talking about DEIB, this student's inclusive behaviors educate and motivate others while serving as a transformative leader and role model. Their excellence reflects deep empathy, demonstrates an unwavering moral compass and steadfast commitment to creating a more just, equitable, and inclusive world. This student's efforts inspire others to join the movement towards greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Excellence in Service

The Excellence in Service Award is presented to a student who goes above and beyond their academic responsibilities to actively contribute to their campus community. This student demonstrates a deep commitment toward creating positive impact through their involvement in extracurricular activities, volunteer work, leadership roles, and other forms of service. They may serve as an officer in a student organization, coordinate campus-wide events and initiatives, mentor students in earlier years of study or organize community service projects. This student proactively seeks out opportunities to support their peers, faculty, and staff, and is recognized by the university community for their dedication, initiative, and making a positive difference in others' lives. This student uses their talents, skills, and leisure time to enrich the experiences of others and strengthen the fabric of the university. They are a role model for engaged, socially-conscious citizenship and leave a lasting legacy of service that inspires others to follow in their footsteps.

Excellence in Research

The Excellence in Research Award is presented to a student who exhibits an insatiable intellectual curiosity, a keen analytical mind, and a dedication to advancing knowledge through rigorous, innovative scholarship. This student consistently produces high-quality, impactful research that makes meaningful contributions to their field, demonstrating advanced skills in areas such as research design, data analysis, and sophisticated communication of findings. Faculty and peers recognize this student as a burgeoning scholar who is poised for continued success in graduate studies and research-oriented careers. Their excellence in research reflects their intellectual prowess, scholarly work ethic, and passion for expanding human understanding.

Excellence in Clinical Work

The Excellence in Clinical Work Award is presented to a student who demonstrates exceptional skills, knowledge, and commitment in the applied, hands-on components of their academic program. This student consistently exhibits mastery of the technical and interpersonal competencies required for their field, including expert clinical reasoning, adept problem-solving, and excellent rapport building. Beyond meeting requirements, this student proactively seeks additional learning opportunities, takes initiative to assist others, and continuously strives to improve their clinical skills. Faculty, supervisors, and peers recognize this student as an exemplary clinician-in-training who is well-prepared for future professional success.

Outstanding Student

The value of the year for 2025 - 2026 at Palo Alto University is Innovation. According to the university's value statement, innovation is described as “ways to create new pathways for learning, knowledge development, understanding and solutions that propel discovery and foster innovation for the advancement of the field and the well-being of those we serve.” The recipient of this award aligns with and represents PAU’s values and mission by listening and learning from others to collaboratively develop new concepts and ideas. An outstanding student has demonstrated a combination of service, leadership, including diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in support of PAU’s values.

The Koopman Award

The Koopman Award is bestowed upon a student in the PsyD program, whose dissertation exemplifies exceptional research in the field of Psychology. This award is named in honor of Dr. Cheryl Koopman. Dr. Koopman was a cherished teacher and mentor who made significant contributions to the understanding of stress and health in the social and political context. Her dedication as a dissertation mentor and her impact on countless students and trainees are commemorated through this award.

The Tondow Award

The Tondow Award is presented to a student in the PhD program, whose dissertation exemplifies exceptional research in the field of Psychology. This award is given in honor of Dr. Murray Tondow, a revered psychologist, former PAU faculty member, and the visionary behind several psychological assessment and technology companies. Dr. Tondow was a pioneer in leveraging technology in education, psychology, and counseling.

Student Organization of the Year

The Student Organization of the Year is awarded to the student-led club or organization chapter that has represented PAU's value of the year (2025 - 2026 Innovation) and has met or exceeded expectations for a student organization at PAU. This award's recipient has made an effort to actively recruit and maintain participation amongst its members by hosting at least one event to educate and raise awareness throughout the PAU community about a topic related to their mission and values.

DEAN'S LIST



ALEXANDER CHARLES
DE MATOS

BROOKE GIBBINS

CLAUDIA NAVARRO

DEAN SCARBOROUGH

EDGAR WILFREDO DIAZ

EIGER CLARA WREN

ELIJAH ROWAN

BENDINER

GISELA DIAZ

JADE HUYNH

JOHANNA S. AREVALO

MELISSA DANIELS

OLTA GREMI

RAHAF MAKRAI

SALVADOR J. PENA GILL

SHANAY STARLENE

DORSEY-SMALL

SHERRY DAVIS

VIRIDIANA GLORIA

ARREDONDO

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY & BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGY AWARDEES



Excellence in Clinical Work

Edgar Diaz

Salvador Pena Gill

Dean Scarborough

Outstanding Student in Business Psychology

Becky Salgado

Outstanding Student in Psychology

Gisela Diaz

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

EDGAR DIAZ



Through his field experience with Solano County Behavioral Health's Children's Partnership program, Edgar has demonstrated exceptional compassion, professionalism, and dedication in supporting children and families facing severe emotional, behavioral, and psychological challenges.

Providing a trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach and advocacy for marginalized youth reflects the values and ideals of Clinical Service Excellence. In the fall Edgar will continue his education as he enters PAU's Master of Social Work graduate program.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

SALVADOR PENA GILL



Through his dedicated work as a Registered Behavior Technician with Trumpet Behavioral Health, Salvador has demonstrated exceptional compassion, professionalism, and dedication in supporting children and teens facing developmental and behavioral challenges. By providing evidence-based, one-on-one interventions and advocating for personalized care, Salvador reflects the values and ideals of Clinical Service Excellence. I am also pleased to note that Salvador is committed to his continued growth as a future leader in the mental health and human services field.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

DEAN SCARBOROUGH



Through his dedicated work with San Joaquin County's Substance Abuse Services, Dean has demonstrated exceptional compassion, professionalism, and commitment in supporting individuals and families facing the complex challenges of addiction and recovery. By providing a trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach and tireless advocacy for his clients, Dean truly reflects the values and ideals of Clinical Service Excellence. I am also proud to acknowledge the vital role he plays in helping members of our community reclaim their lives and achieve lasting self-sufficiency. In the fall Dean will continue his education as he enters PAU's Master of Social Work graduate program.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT IN BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGY

BECKY SALGADO



Becky's unwavering commitment to excellence and remarkable ability to engage with complex topics have distinguished her among her peers. She is an excellent student and made a positive contribution in all of her Business Psychology classes and to the Department. She achieved this excellence while working full-time and supporting her family. It is also important to note that Becky is a United States Army Combat veteran and represents both her country and the University with distinction.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT IN PSYCHOLOGY

GISELA DIAZ



Gisela's unwavering commitment to excellence and remarkable ability to engage with complex topics have distinguished her among her peers. She is an excellent student and made a positive contribution in her Psychology classes and to the Department. In addition to her academic excellence, Gisela served as a highly skilled Staff Development Trainer at Solano County Health and Social Services, where she applied adult learning theory to expertly prepare new specialists for critical programs such as CalWORKS, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal. In the fall Gisela will continue her education as she enters PAU's Master of Social Work graduate program.

MASTERS IN CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING



Excellence in Service

Mayra Mendez

Excellence in Research

Eleni Stoggiani

Flavia Calliari-Damasio

Excellence in Clinical Work

Theo Ma

NeTonya Grant

Elvie Tomacder

Andrea Maayeh

Outstanding Student

Julio Jalate Gonzalez

Roque Neto

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Ta'Neisha Thomas

Jackson Brady

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

MAYRA MENDEZ



Nominated by Dr Regina Moro, Mayra has served as President of our PAU chapter of CSI this year, and she has led with professionalism, steadiness, and grace. In this role, she has scheduled and led monthly executive committee meetings, provided oversight for the organization, helped ensure we meet our responsibilities to the larger CSI parent organization, and worked collaboratively with Chanel to maintain compliance with PAU requirements. I am especially impressed by Mayra's leadership because she has done all of this while also completing her clinical internship training, which requires tremendous time and energy. Because of her commitment, we have been able to host several meaningful events throughout the year, and her leadership has made a real difference for our chapter.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

ELENI STOGGIANI



Nominated by Dr. Shreya Vaishnav, Eleni has already made a meaningful mark in the research world through two impressive accomplishments. She received an ACA mini grant for her project, “Mindfulness and Acceptance for Stress Relief: Supporting Immigrant Women’s Mental Health,” which offers virtual workshops integrating mindfulness and ACT-based strategies to help immigrant women manage stress, build resilience, and strengthen psychological flexibility. Just as importantly, her work creates a supportive space that reduces isolation while honoring cultural identity and lived experience. Eleni also developed a sole-authored proposal which was accepted for presentation at our regional conference this fall on “Somatic-Based Interventions for Immigration-Related Anxiety.” Developing and submitting a conference proposal as a master’s student is impressive; doing so as a sole author speaks to Eleni’s drive, motivation, and deep passion for research.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

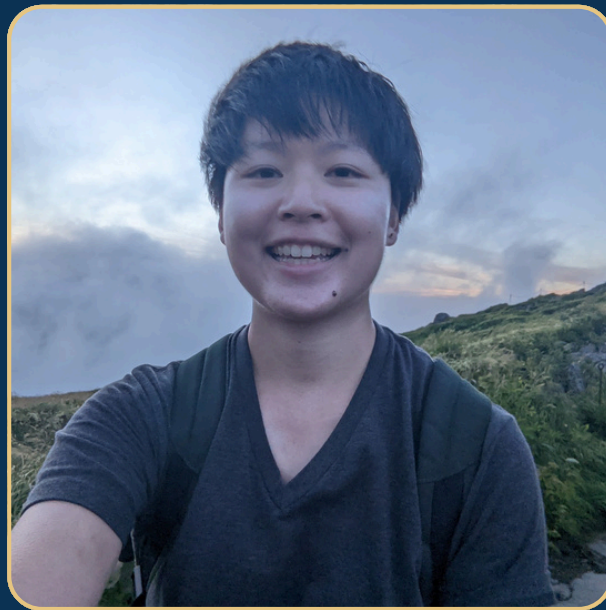
FLAVIA CALLIARI-DAMASIO



Flavia is receiving the Excellence in Research Award in recognition of her initiative, dedication, and commitment to meaningful scholarly work. She has partnered with a professor at Stanford University on neurodiversity-focused research and has enrolled in a 0.5-unit independent study with her nominator, Dr. Vaishnav, for each of the last three quarters to support and deepen that work. What stands out most is that Flavia sought out this research opportunity on her own and has remained driven, motivated, and fully engaged in cutting-edge scholarship. Her curiosity, persistence, and commitment to neurodiversity-focused research make her incredibly deserving of this recognition.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

THEO MA



Nominated by Dr. Susan Branco; Theo is receiving this award in recognition of their exceptional clinical growth, commitment to culturally responsive care, and meaningful service to Spanish-speaking clients. Theo intentionally chose to participate in the Spanish-language practicum and internship courses, even though Spanish is not Theo's primary language, so they could continue serving Spanish-speaking clients at their site and in their future career. Their work in the school system has exceeded what we typically expect of counselors-in-training, particularly through their use of play-based and trauma-informed counseling skills that genuinely connect with student clients. Across their video case presentations, Theo demonstrated deep attunement, clinical maturity, and culturally competent care. Our class benefited immensely from Theo's participation, feedback, consultation, and clinical acumen, and is very deserving of this recognition.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

NETONYA GRANT



Nominated by Mike Shook - NeTonya is receiving this award in recognition of her exceptional balance of clinical humility and clinical excellence. Her nominator has worked with her since the fall semester and described being deeply impressed by the way she builds strong therapeutic alliances in a challenging clinical setting, including with walk-in clients. NeTonya was described as an “interpersonal ninja,” able to connect with warmth, curiosity, and skill. Despite bringing robust lived experience to her work, she approaches clients with a beginner’s mind and a respectful “not-knowing” stance, which deepens her therapeutic presence. She can be kind, playful, and serious whenever the moment calls for it, with both clients and peers, and she is already doing profoundly meaningful therapeutic work.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

ELVIE TOMACDER



Nominated Aaron Henderson - Elvie is receiving this award in recognition of the intentionality, insight, and commitment to growth she brings to her clinical work. Her nominator described her as a student who embodies the core values of the counseling profession through strong self-awareness, multicultural awareness, and reflective practice. Elvie approaches clients with openness, respect, and cultural humility, while creating developmentally appropriate, engaging, and supportive therapeutic spaces for children and adolescents. She actively seeks feedback, challenges herself to continue growing, and offers peers thoughtful, specific, and constructive consultation that supports both skill development and confidence. Her presence elevates those around her, and her dedication to ethical, culturally responsive care makes her highly deserving of this recognition.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

ANDREA MAAYEH



Nominator Aaron Henderson; Andrea Maayeh is receiving this award in recognition of the depth of skill, presence, and clinical maturity she brings to her work as a PAU counseling student. Andrea demonstrates strong clinical intuition, recognizing important underlying dynamics while remaining appropriately curious, open, and client-centered. She brings genuine passion to supporting clients and creates space for growth, dignity, and meaningful change. Andrea also has a meaningful impact within the learning community as a steady and supportive peer who generously shares resources, affirms the strengths of others, and offers thoughtful challenges that deepen reflection and development. Andrea's ability to balance empathy with clinical rigor reflects maturity beyond her training level, and she beautifully embodies the values of the counseling profession and PAU.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

JULIO JALATE GONZALEZ



Julio is receiving this award in recognition of the presence, intentionality, and resilience he brings to his development as a counseling student. His nominator, Dr. Jorge Lopez, had the privilege of working closely with him and described being deeply impressed by the thoughtfulness he brings to his roles as a group co-facilitator and individual counselor in class. Julio approaches this work with genuine care and does not take the responsibility lightly. Throughout his time at PAU, he has navigated unique circumstances and logistical challenges with remarkable grace, while remaining consistently engaged in his learning. His commitment to showing up authentically, reflecting on his growth, and staying present in the work makes him an exemplary student and very deserving of this recognition.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

ROQUE NETO



Nominator Dr. Rachel Jacoby - Roque is receiving this award in recognition of his consistent excellence as a student and his meaningful engagement with the PAU community. As he approaches the end of the program, Roque has continued to stand out both academically and as a leader among his peers. His contributions have extended beyond the classroom through his thoughtful blogging about his experiences and his generous volunteer engagement with the university in a variety of ways. Roque's steady leadership, academic commitment, and willingness to give back make him highly deserving of this recognition

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

TA'NEISHA THOMAS



Nominated by Dr. Darlene Chen and Dr. Sara Al-Khedairy - Ta'Neisha Thomas is receiving this award in recognition of her outstanding work as a Teaching Assistant specifically in Counseling Skills during Fall 2025 and Spring 2026. Her nominators shared that the class simply would not have been the same without her. Ta'Neisha brought an impressive combination of authenticity, passion, and natural teaching instinct that students immediately connected with. During class activities, she consistently offered thoughtful, constructive feedback grounded in her own internship and clinical experience, which students deeply appreciated. Final evaluations highlighted her active involvement, supportive insights, and modeling of authenticity, with one student noting that they could clearly feel her engagement and investment in their learning. Ta'Neisha was an exceptional TA, and she is deeply deserving of this recognition.

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

JACKSON BRADY



In honor of Jackson receiving this award, I'd like to present the official and completely objective list of the Top Reasons Jackson Brady is the Best Teaching Assistant. 1) He has mastered the art of the email follow-up. Not the annoying follow-up. The gentle, supportive, "just bumping this to the top of your inbox" follow-up that somehow makes you feel grateful instead of guilty.; 2) He can turn a random five-minute conversation into a forty-five-minute discussion with me about topics no one saw coming; 3) He willingly records ridiculous podcasts for fun. #elevatorpitch; 4) He shows up to class with enough enthusiasm to make a 6:00 p.m. Thursday night class feel like the main event of the week; 5) He is genuinely funny. Not "counselor funny." Actually funny.; 6) He treats students like future colleagues. He sees potential in them before they see it in themselves. 7) He loves his mom; And the number one reason Jackson Brady is the best teaching assistant...He makes everyone around him better. Better teachers. Better counselors. Better supervisors. Better humans. His generosity, enthusiasm, humor, and authenticity create the kind of learning environment people remember long after the class is over. Jackson, thank you for your time, your heart, your humor, your endless email bumps, and your unwavering commitment to students. This award could not have gone to a more deserving person.

MASTERS OF SOCIAL WORK



Excellence in Service

Phyllis Wong

Suzanne Da Silva

Faith Michael

Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

Rocio Hernandez

Excellence in Clinical Work

Enri Rodriguez

Adam Pelavin

Outstanding Student

Max Dang

Lindsay Navarro

Abel Martin-Vargas

Victoria Pierce

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

PHYLLIS WONG



Phyllis Wong consistently goes above and beyond academic duties to support the program mission to foster community. Phyllis demonstrates great attention to detail, high levels of engagement, and consistent support for program activities.

The result has been a positive impact on programmatic events and a enriched and more connected experience for fellow students.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

SUZANNE DA SILVA



Suzanne's commitment to service is reflected in the active role she has as a contributor to the learning environment and engagement with her classmates. She demonstrates a deep-seated drive to connect with the social work profession and support a learning community for fellow students.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

FAITH MICHAEL



Faith Michael's recognized for the proactive approach to community impact, evidenced by the support and voice she provides for fellow students. Faith serves as a Student Representative for the cohort and has been a dedicated volunteer and leader who engages with peers and faculty alike. Faith's initiative in seeking out opportunities to make a positive difference has made her a highly respected figure within the social work community.

EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

ROCIO HERNANDEZ



Rocio Hernandez has a steadfast commitment to creating a more just and equitable world and uses a highly reflective approach to her work to acknowledge the lived experience of her clients.

Rocio embraces the social justice lens and promotes social work values in being culturally responsive, acting with humility, operating with understanding, and being an advocate.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

ENRI RODRIGUEZ



Enri Rodriguez is someone who is always chasing perfection and deserves recognition for the continued growth and goal setting after putting in the time and energy. Enri's background in early childhood behavioral health provides a firm foundation for an expanding skillset in direct client work and already has the next goal in mind.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

ADAM PELAVIN



Adam Pelavin is an exemplary clinician-in-training, demonstrating both an aptitude for learning and feedback as evidenced by supervisors and faculty. Adam has excelled at building rapport with students and continues to advance his skills while working at One Life Counseling as one of the only first year graduate students in their program.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

MAX DANG



Max has distinguished himself as an outstanding student through his dedication and commitment to social work values: service and impact. His nomination reflects a student who has successfully applied learning and experience to achieve results in the classroom and at internship.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

LINDSAY NAVARRO



Lindsay Navarro is an outstanding student who approaches learning inside and outside the classroom with a high degree of empathy and engagement. Lindsay demonstrates great care and thought and her presence adds to any learning environment and beyond.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

ABEL MARTIN-VARGAS



Abel Martin-Vargas maintains excellence in his clinical responsibilities while also engaging in the classroom to make him a role model for integrated excellence.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

VICTORIA PIERCE



Victoria Pierce is being recognized for the combination of traits that allow for excellence as a student: service, support, engagement, and leadership. As a Student Representative for the cohort Victoria has embraced learning while fostering a community with fellow students.

MASTERS IN PSYCHOLOGY



Excellence in Research

Arjun Bharat

Outstanding Student

Isabel Taggart

Audrey Hazlewood

Aaijah Love

Jaye Catron

Abigail Shamelashvili

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

ARJUN BHARAT



Shirin Aghakhani nominated Arjun Bharat for the Excellence in Research Award for his strong work ethic, initiative, and meaningful contributions to research within the Children & Adolescent Psychotherapy and Technology (CAPT) Lab. Arjun has been involved with the lab since before officially joining PAU, which speaks to his genuine interest in research. Arjun has worked on numerous projects related to digital interventions, conversational agents, and mental health. Arjun is someone who consistently shows up and puts in high quality work. He is a strong writer, detail-oriented, and thoughtful in the way he approaches research tasks. What really stands out is how proactive and supportive he is. He is often the first to volunteer his time to help others with their projects and is always willing to step in wherever needed. Arjun consistently contributes to a collaborative and positive lab environment. He is reliable, engaged, and clearly committed to growing as a researcher. His dedication, strong research abilities, and willingness to support others make him very deserving of this recognition, and he is clearly just getting started as he prepares to enter PAU's PhD program! Congratulations Arjun!

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

ISABEL TAGGART



Dr. Blanca Pineda nominated Isabel Taggart for and is receiving this award for her excellent work in the Evidence-Based Digital Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities and Principles of Multimedia Learning for Product Design courses. Her work showed her dedication to learning about the use and design of digital tools for mental health and critical insight into the benefits and challenges of using digital technologies. Her research focused on the role of digital technologies in the management of chronic pain, and psychoeducation to understand the myths and misunderstood presentations of anxiety and depression. Isabel made meaningful contributions and constantly elevated our discourse during class discussions. In addition to completing the PhD track, she also completed the Tech and Mental Health track. She will be starting the PhD program at PAU during the Fall quarter. She is an excellent student. Congratulations Isabel!

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

AUDREY HAZLEWOOD



Dr. Blanca Pineda nominated Audrey Hazlewood and is receiving this award for her excellent work in the Evidence-Based Digital Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities and Principles of Multimedia Learning for Product Design courses. Her work consistently showed her commitment to learning about the use and design of digital tools for mental health and critical insight into the benefits and challenges of using digital technologies. Her research focused on how digital technologies can be used in the treatment of ADHD, and the design of psychoeducation about ADHD in women. Audrey contributed valuable insight during our discussions and collaborated well with others during class. In addition to completing the PhD track, she also completed the Tech and Mental Health track. She will be starting the PhD program at PAU during the Fall quarter. She is an excellent student and very deserving of this award.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

AAIJAH LOVE



Dr. Blanca Pineda nominated Aaijah Love and is receiving this award for her consistent excellent work in the Technology & Mental Health for Children & Adolescents course. Her work shows thoughtfulness and critical insight about the benefits and challenges of Behavioral Intervention Technologies (BITs) for children. She goes above and beyond of what is required of the assignments showing her commitment to learning about effective ways to use digital technologies to help improve children's mental health, while also showing exceptional understanding of the many challenges and ethical considerations about using Behavioral Intervention Technologies (BITs). She is an excellent student and is very deserving of this award.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

JAYE CATRON



Shirin Aghakhani nominated Jaye Catron and is receiving the Outstanding Student Award for her consistent engagement, curiosity, and positive impact on the learning environment at PAU. Jaye is a very dedicated student who comes to class prepared and is consistently engaged in discussions. She brings a genuine curiosity into the classroom and is not afraid to ask thoughtful questions or dig deeper into the material. What really stands out is how engaged she is in the learning process both inside and outside the classroom. She often shares articles or ideas she has come across, and her contributions consistently add something new to the conversation. She also brings a unique energy to class, often sharing interesting, and sometimes unexpected, facts about topics she is curious about, which makes the learning environment more engaging and enjoyable. Jaye is also very supportive of her peers and plays an important role in creating a collaborative and inclusive space. She listens to others, builds on their ideas, and helps create an environment where people feel comfortable participating. Overall, Jaye's curiosity, initiative, and the energy she brings to class make her very deserving of the outstanding student award.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

ABIGAIL SHAMELASHVILI



Dr. Blanca Pineda nominated Abigail Shamelashvili and is receiving this award for her excellent work in the Evidence-Based Digital Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities and Principles of Multimedia Learning for Product Design courses.

Her work showed her commitment to learning about evidence-based digital mental health interventions and resources and deepening her understanding of the benefits and challenges of using digital technologies. Her research focused on how procrastination is connected to emotional regulation, and digital interventions for multiple sclerosis. Abby made meaningful contributions during class discussions. In addition to completing the Tech and Mental Health track, she completed the Evidence Based Internet Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities Certificate through CONCEPT, and the Google UX Design Professional Certificate through Coursera, showing her commitment to the tech and mental health field.

PHD IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION & SUPERVISION



**Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and
Belonging**

Maggie Tsai

Excellence in Service

Priscilla Miranda-Sanchez

Excellence in Research

Melanie Espinueva

Jen Kiehl

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Alexa Miller

Outstanding Student

Chitra Thummarukudy

EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

MAGGIE TSAI



Maggie has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to expanding access to culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services for the Mandarin-speaking community. Through her leadership in developing the Mandarin-speaking eClinic and her contributions to the Mandarin Bilingual Certificate, she has worked to address systemic barriers to care while creating meaningful pathways for future bilingual counselors.

Beyond these formal initiatives, Maggie consistently invests her time and energy in supporting students through language concordance practice, mock counseling and supervision experiences, and efforts to build sustainable communities of support. Her work reflects a deep belief that language, culture, and belonging matter in mental health care. Through her advocacy, vision, and dedication, Maggie is helping create a more inclusive counseling profession and a stronger sense of belonging for both clients and counselors alike.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

PRISCILLA MIRANDA-SANCHEZ



Priscilla has made an extraordinary impact through her commitment to improving the student experience and strengthening the systems that support our community. She has taken the time to develop a deep understanding of the MA program, its faculty, and the needs of students, bringing both curiosity and initiative to every project she undertakes.

Through her work on the advising course shell and MyPAU portal project, she has consistently approached challenges with creativity, collaboration, and a student-centered perspective. Her thoughtful contributions often happen behind the scenes, but their impact is felt by students and faculty alike. Priscilla's dedication to service, innovation, and continuous improvement exemplifies the very best of our community.

Personally, Priscilla is the most enthusiastic doc student I've ever met. She's the one you actually want to have a Monday morning meeting with. She's an incredible counselor, mom, student, and friend. Watching her grow into her counselor educator identity this year has been one of my highlights.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

MELANIE ESPINUEVA



Melanie is a dedicated and collaborative research partner whose work consistently reflects thoughtfulness, intellectual curiosity, and a deep commitment to social justice. Through her contributions to the Adoptee Consciousness Model, she has brought valuable insight into the intersections of oppression, diversity, identity development, and resilience among transracial adoptees. What stands out most is her genuine dedication to understanding the communities she studies. Rather than relying solely on existing knowledge, Melanie actively immerses herself in learning about the lived experiences of transracial adoptees to ensure her work is informed, respectful, and meaningful. Her commitment to scholarship, advocacy, and collaborative inquiry makes her an invaluable colleague and a deserving recipient of this recognition.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

JEN KIEHL



Jen approaches research with curiosity, creativity, and a willingness to explore questions that matter. Jen has no fears in stepping outside of the box to help explore work she feels passionate about! Her work reflects both intellectual rigor and a genuine commitment to advancing knowledge in ways that can positively impact the counseling profession. Jen consistently brings enthusiasm, thoughtful inquiry, and a fresh perspective to her scholarship, demonstrating that meaningful research often begins with the courage to ask new questions and challenge conventional thinking. Her passion for discovery and dedication to scholarly excellence make her highly deserving of this recognition.

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

ALEXA MILLER



Alexa's presence has genuinely transformed the learning environment for both students and faculty. She brings an authenticity, warmth, and professionalism to every interaction that helps students feel supported, challenged, and deeply engaged in their learning. Whether co-facilitating class discussions, providing thoughtful and constructive feedback, or collaborating with site supervisors, Alexa consistently shows up as her genuine self and creates meaningful connections with those around her. She has set a remarkable standard for what it means to be both an effective educator and a trusted mentor. Her dedication, generosity, and commitment to student growth have enriched the course experience in countless ways, and her continued involvement has been truly invaluable.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

CHITRA THUMMARUKUDY



Quite simply, Chitra has DONE THE WORK. Throughout the year, she has consistently gone above and beyond in service, scholarship, leadership, and mentorship. She has volunteered her time to support lectures, contributed to the CACREP site visit process, and stepped into the important role of Student Editor for JCPS. As a scholar, Chitra has been deeply engaged in research, collaborating across multiple projects while also taking initiative as a leader. She is first author on both a book chapter and a research manuscript currently under review, received a departmental research grant focused on caregiver collaboration and youth mental health, and has begun mentoring master's students through the research process. Beyond the university, she serves as Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee for the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling, demonstrating a commitment to advancing youth mental health at a broader level. Chitra's dedication, leadership, productivity, and generosity make her an exceptional representative of our profession and a truly deserving recipient of this award. She is also the loveliest human you ever met, makes very delicious treats, and is endlessly supportive of those around her.

PHD IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY



Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Alyan (Yan) Layug

Excellence in Service

Sachita Pokhrel

Excellence in Research

Matthew Hollander

Jennifer Davis

Kinsey Glanz

Tani Polansky

Adriana Savetti

Qimin Liu

Excellence in Clinical Work

Richa Patel

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Tala Khatcherian

Lane Bellmont-Olson

Grace Yang

Daniel Dorsky

Outstanding Student

Naomi Edwards

The Tandow Award

Jas Chok

EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

ALYAN (YAN) LAYUG



Yan exemplifies commitments to social justice and structural competency in their leadership roles in several organizations serving underserved populations. Yan is one of the cofounders and facilitators of Brokada Healing Collective, a collective healing online space for Filipinx Americans rooted in Filipinx cultural values, where Yan co-facilitates healing circles for Filipinx men (a role Yan does NOT get paid for or practicum credit for and is purely based out of wanting to give back to his communities). Furthermore, Yan is one of the student leaders for the PAU organization PEACE and has facilitated events dedicated to supporting marginalized populations including a care-kit drive for the International Rescue Center, making care-kits for Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI)'s domestic violence shelter, and facilitating an event on immigrant rights advocacy. Yan also interned at county-level mental health agencies in Solano County, truly highlighting how he practices what he preaches for social justice.

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

SACHITA POKHREL



Sachita holds two positions on campus currently, student assistant at the office of faculty success and 2nd year PhD representative. This allows her to work with various departments across the campus and gives her opportunity to get to know faculty, staff, and students within and outside of her program. Through these roles, she remains in close contact with departments like the Grants Office, Center for Teaching and Learning, and the President's Office. Since joining PAU a year ago, President Dey and Sachita have worked closely together in various projects and initiatives including her present involvement in President Dey's Model Task Force. Sachita has a vested interest in the future of PAU and it shows through how involved she is with her program and the PAU community at large. Her commitment to the university is exceptional, and we are proud to have her as part of our community.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

MATTHEW HOLLANDER



Matt conducted mixed-effects models that tested the interactive effects of MIND diet and physical activity on cognition across time, controlling for age and education in older adults. He found that they both have significant unique predictive effects and interactions. Older adults with low MIND diet consumption may benefit most from increased activity. His research supports flexible lifestyle interventions for healthy cognitive aging. His dissertation was well written, included sophisticated statistical analyses, and has important clinical implications about lifestyle factors as protective against declines in cognition due to aging. He has already published some of his work in this area. This topic has also been recently covered in CNN, and so his research is very timely.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

JENNIFER DAVIS



Jennifer's dissertation is THE best work I have mentored in my 18 year career. She did an original study that used meta-analysis to identify nutrient deficiencies in restrictive eating disorders and used that data to introduce reasons for neurocognitive deficits in eating disorder patients. Her study was ambitious, innovative, and has the potential to expand the field of eating disorder treatment by incorporating neuropsychology and cognitive rehabilitation. Jennifer spearheaded the project from start-to-finish, leading fellow students through outstanding project management. She learned meta-analysis and produced a manuscript that will be submitted for publication. Her work was simply outstanding!

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

KINSEY GLANZ



Kinsey Glanz has served as co-lab manager for the Early Intervention Lab and has taken initiative to bolster our lab's functioning in several ways. First, she helped organize and deliver orientation for new students coming into the lab and very quickly got them up to speed and ready to assume active roles in the lab. Second, she has organized and scheduled our lab's ongoing training curriculum (readings, videos, clinical trainings), which is pivotal for leveling-up competency across lab members. Finally, she conducted an extensive hard copy data file review to identify a subset of research participants who are bereaved parents, data which will be reflected in four (4) posters from our lab being presented in upcoming months, as well as at least two dissertation projects from our lab. Kinsey is highly deserving of formal recognition for these efforts.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

TANI POLANSKY



Tani's ambitious, original data collection dissertation focused on religious coping with post-October 7th 2023 anti-semitism. He produced an extremely comprehensive literature review, recruited a large and diverse Jewish sample, utilized an innovative set of measures, thoroughly analyzed and interrogated his data, and wrote a responsible, integrative discussion that was grounded in the literature and generated important research and clinical implications. He presented parts of this project at APA last summer and it has the potential to support multiple publications. Tani's work on this project reflects an exceptional amount of effort and growth and deserves this recognition.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

ADRIANA SAVETTIERE



I am thrilled to recommend Adriana Savettiere for the Excellence in Research Award. Over the past year, she has made exceptional contribution to the field of dementia research. With two first-authored publications and one second-authored publication as well as 2 presentations international conferences (just in the past year!), she has demonstrated an insatiable intellectual curiosity and a commitment to advancing knowledge in neuropsychology and cognitive aging. Her rigorous research design and adept data analysis showcase her keen analytical mind, while her ability to communicate complex findings effectively well highlights her advanced skills for a trainee at her stage. Faculty and peers alike recognize her as a superstar with immense potential for success as a clinical neuropsychologist. Adriana embodies the qualities that this award celebrates: intellectual curiosity, a strong work ethic, and a passion for neuropsychology, all of which make her truly deserving of this award.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

QIMIN LIU



Qimin is a thoughtful and talented researcher. For her dissertation, she gathered data to compare Chinese Americans and White Americans preferences regarding aspects of psychotherapy using conjoint analysis (a sophisticated analytical technique from market research), for which she obtained a grant from Sawtooth Software. In addition, given her strong interest in AI, she learned prompt engineering to develop an AI chatbot that helps clinical students develop a more empathic communication style and conducted a project to test this chatbot, which she presented at ABCT. Furthermore, she has a first-author paper in the prestigious Journal of Affective Disorders describing cultural differences in suicidality and depression. I hope she is strongly considered for this award.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

RICHA PATEL



Richa has demonstrated excellence in clinical work throughout her time at Palo Alto University. She has consistently carried multiple practica since the start of her training, allowing her to develop a strong integration of clinical knowledge across diverse patient populations, including pediatric, adult, and older adult settings, within hospital-based, outpatient, and private practice environments. This breadth of experience is reflected in her thoughtful case conceptualization and consistently high level of professionalism across clinical contexts. She approaches each case with careful attention to cognitive, medical, and psychosocial factors, producing nuanced, well-integrated assessments that reflect advanced clinical reasoning. In addition to her strengths in neuropsychological assessment, Richa has developed meaningful experience providing therapeutic support within neuropsychology contexts, including delivering feedback, supporting patient and family adjustment, and integrating brief, targeted interventions to address emotional and behavioral needs. She is highly skilled in selecting and administering neuropsychological measures, interpreting complex data, and translating findings into clear, meaningful recommendations for patients and referral sources. Richa also establishes strong rapport with individuals across diverse backgrounds, including working effectively with interpreters to provide culturally responsive care. Beyond her formal responsibilities, she actively seeks out additional learning opportunities, welcomes feedback, and consistently demonstrates initiative in supporting both patients and team members. Richa is widely regarded by supervisors and peers as a thoughtful, reliable, and highly capable clinician-in-training whose genuine commitment, strong work ethic, and clinical skill set distinguish her as exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of professional development.

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

TALA KHATCHERIAN



Tala has served as a teaching assistant for 4 courses thus far throughout their time at PAU (once for cross-cultural psychology, once for clinical interviewing, and twice for P&P 1). I have had the privilege of witnessing Tala deliver constructive, growth-oriented, and professional feedback to younger students in the program (even in difficult situations that some faculty members would find challenging to navigate). Tala has proactively sought consultation from me in the past to explore how to cultivate their own teaching pedagogy and to design ways of scaffolding support for students to improve their internalization of course material. Tala's combination of centering student strengths and existing expertise, providing growth-directed feedback, and interpersonal warmth make them highly deserving of this award. Tala has also been intentional in not just using TA positions as a source of income, but also as a professional development opportunity for their future career path.

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

LANE BELLMONT-OLSON



Lane has served as a TA for the Cognitive Bases of Behavior and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy I courses. In both roles, they have consistently supported students at varying skill levels whether by helping students develop their academic writing through thoughtful discussion and detailed feedback, refining their clinical and diagnostic skills, or guiding them through the development of their professional identities through ongoing peer mentorship opportunities. Lane is an indispensable member of the classroom and prides themselves on prioritizing the collaborative engagement of students to ensure they meet personal academic goals and professional competencies within a welcoming learning environment. Their feedback on clinical case vignettes and case conceptualizations was impressively thorough and uniquely tailored to each individual student, allowing student perspectives to shine while ensuring growth. This dedication did not go unnoticed—student evaluations highlighted their impact, with comments such as: Engaging, efficient, helpful not just getting her job done, but getting it done well, and “Lane is amazing! She is extremely helpful and gives wonderful advice. She will be an amazing professor!”

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

GRACE YANG



Grace has TA'd for me several times. She is a warm, supportive, and welcoming presence. She has a natural attention to detail that comes through in her respectful, scaffolded verbal/written feedback. Grace never hesitates to dive into course material; she's brought in valuable materials and easily engages students in meaningful discussions, especially around diversity, inclusivity, and advocacy. Grace always makes herself available to help with student needs, communicates with faculty to ensure student success, and finds meaningful ways to connect course material with other PAU activities such as BAPIC, research lab matches, and club-related events. Grace's clear love of learning and dedication to her professional activities are admirable and inspiring. Even when treated disrespectfully by upset students, she maintains a kind, compassionate stance and focuses on the student's best interest. She is very deserving of recognition for her unwavering efforts to help her fellow students in any way she can.

TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR

DANIEL DORSKY



Daniel exemplifies the spirit of the Teaching Assistant of the Year award. He has TAed for multiple classes during his time at PAU and offers 1:1 tutoring for the Clinical Oral Exams.. As a TA, Daniel consistently goes above and beyond expectations, helping the professor with last-minute tasks, trouble-shooting Canvas problems, giving guest lectures, and sharing his own experiences. In Clinical Interviewing class, he consistently stayed after class to provide additional mentoring to first-year students. Their words speak for themselves: “His guidance, support, and compassion have had a lasting impact on me, and I will carry them with me moving forward.” “What stood out most was his ability to both challenge and support us at the same time - he pushed us to think more deeply, reflect more honestly, and engage more fully, all while recognizing our individual strengths. His belief in each of us was clear, and that confidence not only shaped our growth, but also helped us begin to believe more in ourselves.” “It was clear he enjoys the work he does and that joy was infectious.” I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award!

OUTSTANDING STUDENT

NAOMI EDWARDS



Naomi Edwards is a fourth-year Clinical Psychology PhD student who has completed the neuropsychology emphasis. Her clinical training spans the lifespan, with experiences assessing patients from 18 months through 90 years old across neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative populations. Her most recent practicum placement has been at the Palo Alto VA in the Neuropsychological Assessment and Intervention Clinic, providing neuropsychological assessments to medically complex veterans with psychiatric comorbidities. Alongside her doctoral training, Naomi has worked as a licensed therapist in an integrated pediatric primary care setting, providing evidence-based treatment to children, adolescents, and families. Her dissertation research, of which will be submitted for publication soon, focuses on biological and environmental factors that shape the development of adolescent impulsivity, with particular attention to how parental executive functioning and adolescent chronotype shape developmental trajectories over time. Additionally, she has served as a teaching assistant for multiple courses throughout her time at PAU and holds the position of the PhD Advisory Board Student Representative for her cohort. Naomi will begin her APA-accredited predoctoral internship in neuropsychology at Harvard Medical School, at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, this summer.

THE TONDOW AWARD

JAS CHOK



I am pleased to congratulate Jas Chok for the Tondow Award in recognition of her innovative research on aging, cognition, and health. Her dissertation examined the interactive effects of age, near vision acuity, and depressive symptom severity on subjective and objective memory, as well as frailty in older adults, with results underscoring the importance of considering sensory and affective factors in cognitive assessment. This work builds on her prior study investigating vision and web-based memory performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, where she presented as first author at the 2023 American Psychological Association Annual Meeting and received the APA Student Assessment Community Student Poster Award for Divisions 5 (Quantitative and Qualitative Methods), 12 (Assessment Psychology Section), and 40 (Clinical Neuropsychology). Her research is timely and impactful, with important implications for remote neuropsychological assessment and supporting more integrated, biopsychosocial approaches to identifying and treating at-risk older adults. Her work is well-positioned to yield multiple peer-reviewed publications and meaningfully advance the field.

PAU-STANFORD PSYD CONSORTIUM



Excellence in Promoting Belonging

Colin Takahashi

Excellence in Service

Shae Wolfe

Excellence in Clinical Work

Jacqueline Shanley

Daisy Manriquez

Paul Insley

Yujia Liang

Isabel (Izzy) Eichenbaum

Mina Caraccio

Alexa (Lexi) Scher

Outstanding Student

Rachel Van Boxtel

The Koopman Award

Liza Johnson

EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING BELONGING

COLIN TAKAHASHI



Colin's contributions through the PsyD Consortium Student Advisory Board have been outstanding. He consistently makes himself available to help students find their place within the program, going above and beyond to ensure every individual feels welcomed and valued. Through his dedication on the Student Advisory Board, he coordinates faculty course consultations focused on cultural humility and competence, mentoring fellow students in reshaping lectures, readings, and classroom discussions to create more inclusive learning environments for all. He also serves as a liaison between Consortium leadership and students and oversees the onboarding and training of new board members.

His dedication to belonging extends to the national stage. Colin serves on the American Psychological Association's Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, advancing equity for LGBTQ+ populations across the field. He is also a recipient of the APA Minority Fellowship Program's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Fellowship, a highly prestigious national honor recognizing his dedication to serving underrepresented communities and his potential to become a leader in the field.

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EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

SHAE WOLFE



As Student Council Co-President, Shae advocated tirelessly for students, organized community events, and devoted significant time to PsyD admissions, helping welcome the next generation into the program. She also served as a TA in the PsyD program, supporting a learning psychotherapy course and providing individualized feedback to emerging clinicians, recognized for fostering an inclusive learning environment that balances rigor with cultural humility.

Shae's commitment to equity runs deep. Through the PAU First-Generation Task Force, she assessed resources and advocated for first-generation students and through the Consortium Service Project, she has consulted with faculty to embed culturally responsive pedagogy across the curriculum.

Her service extends beyond campus on the weekends, when she volunteers with Front Door Communities in San Jose, running a free clothing boutique for unhoused individuals that fosters confidence, autonomy, and community. Shae has also just been named an APA Minority Fellow, a prestigious national honor recognizing her dedication to underrepresented communities and her promise as a future leader in the field.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

JACQUELINE SHANLEY



At Stanford Positive Care, Jacqui has taken on complex, challenging cases, delivering evidence-based treatment while coordinating care across Infectious Diseases and Primary Care, advocating fiercely for her patients throughout. Patient feedback has been nothing short of outstanding.

Her second supervisor describes her as one of the most talented, dependable, and intellectually sophisticated trainees they have supervised, with clinical insight and maturity far beyond her years of training. She has co-led a DBT skills group where her presence is described as calming and deeply attuned to group dynamics, her supervisor noting she functions more like staff than a trainee. Her ADHD assessment work has been called exemplary, and since joining the IOP graduate group as co-facilitator, staff have repeatedly offered unsolicited praise of her warmth and professionalism. As a supervisee, Jacqui approaches every interaction with humility, curiosity, and steady calm. She integrates feedback immediately, balances autonomy with consultation beautifully, and is, by every measure, one of the strongest trainees her clinic has seen.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

DAISY MANRIQUEZ



Daisy brings a rare combination of intelligence, tenacity, and professionalism to every aspect of her clinical work, qualities that are remarkable in any trainee, but especially notable at this stage of her training. Her insight, clinical instincts, and depth of skill consistently surpass those of far more advanced peers, reflecting a natural aptitude for this work that cannot be taught.

What sets Daisy apart is not only her intellectual capacity, but the wholeness of her clinical approach. She is bilingual, culturally informed, and trauma-sensitive, bringing flexibility and genuine attunement to each therapeutic relationship. She does not shy away from difficulty or complexity. Daisy embraces the most high-risk, high-needs, and multifaceted cases with confidence, compassion, and unwavering dedication to the individuals she serves.

Her patients are fortunate to have her and she is not a trainee to be overlooked!

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

PAUL INSLEY



Paul works in a high-acuity community mental health setting serving LGBTQIA2S+ communities and individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS, many of whom present with complex, co-occurring conditions. Within this demanding environment, he demonstrates clinical sophistication well beyond his level of training. Paul skillfully integrates multiple theoretical frameworks including psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, minority stress, and cultural humility models, reflecting both flexibility and depth of clinical thinking.

Paul is distinguished not only by his clinical skill, but by his initiative. He co-facilitates an ACT and mindfulness-based group, developed a conceptualization worksheet to support peer learning, and consistently seeks out growth opportunities rather than waiting for them to arrive.

He builds strong therapeutic alliances, incorporates feedback readily, and navigates complex and unanticipated challenges with professionalism and client-centered care. His integrity, generosity, and collaborative spirit make him a valued member of the interdisciplinary team.

Paul Insley exemplifies what it means to be a dedicated, thoughtful, and exceptional clinician in training.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

YUJIA LIANG



Yujia hit the ground running from day one, demonstrating skills comparable to those of an advanced fourth or fifth year student. She has shown impressive ability to adapt to the unique demands of neuropsychological evaluation, where clinical interviews require rapid, thorough symptom gathering for differential diagnosis. She is superb at collecting high-quality data while ensuring patients feel genuinely heard.

Her technical abilities are equally outstanding. Yujia follows exacting standardization procedures with accuracy and completes full test batteries with speed and efficiency rivaling her supervisor's 20-plus years of expertise. She translates that data into sophisticated case conceptualizations, integrating multiple variables into well-reasoned differential diagnoses.

In supervision and among peers, Yujia is engaged, generous, and fearless in her willingness to learn. She recently volunteered to cover a fellow student's caseload during a family emergency, a gesture that speaks to her character as much as her competence. Her supervisor considers her among the top one percent of practicum students ever trained.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

ISABEL (IZZY) EICHENBAUM



Isabel (Izzy) Eichenbaum is an exceptionally dedicated and compassionate third-year doctoral candidate whose outstanding clinical service is most evident in the meaningful impact she has in her work with patients. At the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, she provides culturally sensitive, responsive, and trauma-informed care to a diverse population, and patients benefit greatly from their work with her.

Izzy possesses natural empathy, warmth, and a strong ability to build trusting therapeutic relationships. She consistently goes above and beyond in her clinical work, taking initiative to enhance her effectiveness by learning new therapies, engaging with relevant literature, and seeking out resources to best support those she serves. Her patients consistently express appreciation for her care, and this positive impact is evident in reviews of her sessions.

Izzy demonstrates advanced skill in case conceptualization and thoughtfully tailors evidence-based treatments to each individual. Her passion for patient care, combined with her reliability, ethical integrity, and collaborative spirit, has earned her high praise from patients, staff, and peers alike.

Izzy's clinical work, deep commitment to her patients' well-being, and dedication to continued learning and growth make her highly deserving of the Award for Clinical Excellence. She was also nominated for this same award last year by another clinical supervisor, underscoring her consistent excellence and impact."

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

MINA CARACCIO



Mina is an exceptionally advanced emerging clinician whose clinical maturity and sophistication far exceed expectations for her level of training. She brings a warm, grounded, and deeply attuned presence that fosters strong therapeutic alliances and supports meaningful, often challenging emotional work, resulting in strong patient engagement and progress.

Mina demonstrates notable strength in relational practice, skillfully navigating rupture and repair, maintaining clear boundaries, and using countertransference with sophistication to inform her clinical understanding. She is highly proactive in her development and demonstrates exceptional initiative, reliability, and capacity in her clinical work. In addition to her individual caseload, she co-leads both a DBT skills group and a Race-Based Stress/Trauma and Empowerment (RBSTE) group. In her RBSTE work, she shows strong cultural humility and attunement to power dynamics while creating space for deep affect related to racialized trauma and systemic oppression.

Mina is a highly collaborative team member whose nuanced case conceptualizations, thoughtful clinical risks, and deep engagement in the therapeutic process translate into meaningful clinical impact.

EXCELLENCE IN CLINICAL WORK

ALEXA (LEXI) SCHER



Lexi has been described as an exceptional practicum student who consistently seeks out as many clinical opportunities as possible and regularly goes above and beyond typical expectations for a trainee at her level. She is often the first to volunteer for projects or emerging clinical needs and demonstrates remarkable dedication, initiative, and enthusiasm in all aspects of her work.

Across training experiences, Lexi has shown tremendous clinical growth driven by her strong commitment to learning and patient care. Supervisors consistently highlight her outstanding clinical skills and exceptional rapport-building with patients and families. She quickly establishes trusting therapeutic relationships and brings genuine warmth, professionalism, and enthusiasm to every clinical interaction.

Lexi works effectively with a wide range of individuals and is able to shift seamlessly between working with young children, adolescents, parents, and interdisciplinary colleagues. Her flexibility, maturity, and strong interpersonal skills make her an invaluable member of any clinical team.

Her supervisors describe supervising her as “a gift,” reflecting the depth of her clinical strengths, collaborative spirit, and positive impact on those around her. Lexi’s dedication, growth, and excellence make her highly deserving of this award.”

THE KOOPMAN AWARD

LIZA JOHNSON



Liza's dissertation nomination is driven by her exceptional initiative, innovative study design, and the transformative clinical potential of her work. Her dissertation, "Virtual Reality Adaptation of Neuropsychological Assessment to Detect Early Changes in Mild Cognitive Impairment," examines the biological validity of Virtual Reality cognitive assessments for early detection of memory and visuospatial deficits in older adults with and without mild cognitive impairment. She contributed to the design, planning, cognitive assessment, data collection, and data analyses of this comprehensive study.

Liza showed outstanding leadership in spearheading an interdisciplinary project that bridges cognitive and clinical neuropsychology with emerging VR technology. She designed VR cognitive assessments and related outcome measures from scratch and conceptualized a robust study design comparing VR-based tools with traditional assessments. The VR tasks were tailored to replicate real-world memory challenges, enhancing ecological validity while precisely capturing visuospatial and memory deficits. Her analytical approach integrated feasibility, adherence, and quantitative and qualitative behavioral metrics, strengthening the validity of VR as a diagnostic tool.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR



PROMOTING EQUITY & ADVOCATING FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (PEACE)



PAGES has been integral in providing support and community for queer students at PAU during this challenging time in American and international politics. They have been arguably the most active student organization in championing marginalized voices during this period of fear and uncertainty, and they are well-deserving of the Student Organization of the Year Award.

After having fallen inactive, 2nd year PAU students revived PAGES in time to provide support for LGBTQ students and other PAU community members in this critical time while LGBTQ rights are under attack in the federal government. In addition to hosting events to support queer PAU community members, PAGES is marching in SF Pride, helping students experience Pride and representing PAU in a strong statement of LGBTQ affirmation against rising public hate. This group best represents the PAU highlighted value of the year - Equity & Inclusion.

STUDENT EMPLOYEES



PAU faculty and staff are grateful for the additional support from our student employees. We would like to take a moment to recognize the hard work they do, while balancing school work and clinical training. Thank you to all of our Teaching Assistants and Student Assistants!



Thank You

Thank you for attending the 7th annual PAU Stars ceremony and joining us in celebrating the students who were recognized this evening.

Congratulations to all of the awardees! Your dedication to the fields of psychology, counseling, and social work has been thoroughly demonstrated, and is honorable.

**PAU
STARS AWARDS**