

Palo Alto University ^{1975 - 2025} 50 YEARS

PAU STARS AWARDS

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 11, 2025



HOSTED BY THE DEPARTMENT 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 2024 - 2025 at Palo Alto University is Equity and Inclusion. According to the university's value statement, compassion is described as “leaning into our humanity as we consider our interactions and connections with one another, those we serve and the field that we support”. The recipient of this award aligns with and represents PAU’s values and mission by exemplifying a collaborative approach and care for others with kindness and understanding. 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 (2024 - 2025 Equity & Inclusion) 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.

AWARDEES

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BS)

Excellence in Service *E. Jaye Catron, Vonya Shumate, Patricia Torio*

Outstanding Student *Sara Macias*

MASTER OF ARTS (MA)

Excellence in Service..... *Carolyn Decker, Bridgett Johnson*

Excellence in Research..... *Sasha Sosnovskaya*

Excellence in Clinical Work..... *Jose Ramirez, Vanessa Cruz*

Outstanding Student..... *Erin McBride*

Teaching Assistant of the Year,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,, *Philip Hampel, Safa Faheem, Meagan VanDenmark*

MASTER OF SCIENCE (MS)

Excellence in Research *Tyrique Patterson*

Outstanding Student *Jessica Mitchell, Tyrique Patterson, Shweta Kumari*

Teaching Assistant of the Year *Rafael Zuleta Miranda*

AWARDEES

PsyD CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Excellence in Promoting Belonging *Anthony Flores*

Excellence in Research *Audrey Evers*

Excellence in Clinical Work *Jessica Burgess, Kendall Gedeon, Michelle Hull, Colin Takahashi, Rachel van Boxtel, Tanera Van Giggelen, Shae Wolfe*

Outstanding Student *Annemarie Jagielo*

The Koopman Award *Mackenzie Odier*

PhD CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Excellence in Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)..... *Francesco Yepez-Coello*

Excellence in Research.....*Mariel Alano, Maya Wong, Josephine Sanchez, Robert Hickson, Hua (Poppy) Huo, Daniel Baldini*

Excellence in Clinical Work..... *Mythili Ananthasayan*

Outstanding Student..... *Madison Wright, Ashlynn Steinbaugh, Alexandra Rousseau*

Teaching Assistant of the Year..... *Raquel Borg, Hanna Young, Mona Midani*

The Tondow Award..... *Alondra Serrano*

PhD COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION

Outstanding Student..... *Jennifer Kiehl*

Teaching Assistant of the Year *Laura Rea, Marcella Rojas*

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BS) AWARDEES

Excellence in Service

E. Jaye Catron

Excellence in Service

Vonya Shumate

Excellence in Service

Patricia Torio

Outstanding Student

Sara Macias

Excellence in Service

E. Jaye Catron



Jaye demonstrated her commitment to working as a HelpLine Specialist with the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI). She enhanced her skills by becoming a Certified NAMI HelpLine Specialist. She went on to achieve certifications in both Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid through the National Council for Mental Wellbeing. Jaye also worked to support the neurodivergent community. As a Freelance Virtual Assistant for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs, she applied psychology-informed strategies to create ADHD-friendly schedules and personalized organizational systems, promoting improved time management, reduced stress, and increased productivity. She collaborated with clients to develop content strategies aligned with their unique needs and goals, utilizing research, analysis, and communication skills to enhance engagement and effectiveness. Overall, her work fostered a structured and supportive environment for neurodivergent clients.

Excellence in Service

Vonya Shumate



We formally recognize the important contribution of Vonya Shumate as an Outstanding Undergraduate Student in providing Excellence in Service to the community. In her work with youths, she integrated evidence-based practices with cultural competence in creating meaningful change that resonated within the spirit of her students and the school system in which she worked. Vonya bridged social systems to foster community, support, and resilience. Her exceptional service to multilingual, neurodivergent, and marginalized youth makes her an ideal candidate for a Palo Alto University Undergraduate Achievement Award.

Excellence in Service

Patricia Torio



We formally recognize the important contribution of Patricia Torio as an Outstanding Undergraduate in Providing Service to the Community as a Registered Behavior Technician at Trumpet Behavioral Health. In her work, she provided ABA therapy to children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder while also creating a fun and engaging environment. Patricia implemented interventions such as DTT (Discrete Trial Training), naturalistic environment teaching, modeling, chaining, shaping, task analysis, and more. She also used American Sign Language (ASL) and speech therapy to help non-verbal children communicate their wants and needs.

Outstanding Student

Sara Macias



We formally recognize the exceptional accomplishments of Sara Macia during her time as an undergraduate at Palo Alto University from 2023 to 2025. Her 4.0 GPA, unwavering commitment to excellence, and remarkable ability to engage with complex psychological topics have distinguished her among peers. Sara consistently demonstrates a passion for learning, contributing significantly to classroom discussions and collaborative projects. Her analytical skills and creativity in problem-solving have not only enriched their own educational journey but have also inspired fellow students. During her time at PAU, Sara secured an internship at the Stanford Brain Stimulation Lab. She assisted with prepping for pre- and post-MRI scans and EEG readings on patients participating in the Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation studies for OCD, depression, bipolar, and borderline personality disorder.

MASTER OF ARTS (MA) AWARDEES

Excellence in Service

Carolyn Decker

Bridgett Johnson

Excellence in Research

Sasha Sosnovskaya

Excellence in Clinical Work

Jose Ramirez

Vanessa Cruz

Outstanding Student

Erin McBride

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Philip Hampel

Safa Faheem

Meagan Vandenmark

Excellence in Service

Carolyn Decker



Bridgett Johnson



Carolyn and Bridgett are serving as the co-Presidents for our PAU chapter of CSI this year. We have been impressed with their ability to jointly run our monthly leadership meetings, be mindful of our responsibilities to the larger organization and work collaboratively with The Department of Student Success to ensure we are in compliance with PAU requirements. We have been able to host several events throughout the year due to their commitment to their leadership roles.

Excellence in Research

Sasha Sosnovskaya



Sasha is an outstanding student in many ways. Related to research, during her first quarter in the program she jumped in to work on a project that was funded by the Provost's Strategic Initiative Grant program. She took the vision that Drs. Branco and Moro had and fully executed by building an asynchronous self-compassion course which will be available for all students at PAU once we receive IRB approval. Sasha has an amazing ability to work independently but know when to seek consultation from faculty for guidance. Additionally, Sasha was the driving force behind the Critical Adoption Studies Research Lab and CLIN 619 Teaching Lab. She built the lab spaces and is the coordinator for the CASRL research volunteers and research plan. Further, she is volunteering to co-lead research on the impact of AI skills training for couples counseling. She has an insatiable curiosity for knowledge, efficiency, and organization all embedded in equity and inclusive principles. She is truly an All Start MA student.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Jose Ramirez



Not only is Jose respected by his peers for his knowledge, professionalism, and superb clinical skills, but he has also been recognized professionally as a recipient of CalMHSA's Project Cultivate. This program aims to help county behavioral health employees earn a mental health degree and strengthen the mental health workforce in underserved areas, especially rural counties, like Colusa County. A big part of his work is providing services to Spanish speaking clients who would otherwise struggle to access care. I have no doubt that he is going to be a leader in his local community and represent the counseling profession well.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Vanessa Cruz



Vanessa is one of the strongest students that I have had in recent years, both as a student but also from a clinical perspective. She offers great clinical perspective and insight, while also remaining open and receptive to feedback and the ongoing learning process. Through her internship site, she is also a recipient of the California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI); Behavioral Health Scholarship Program.

Outstanding Student

Erin McBride



We enthusiastically present Erin with the Outstanding Student award in recognition of her exceptional dedication as a graduate student in the Counseling program. Erin embodies the qualities of an outstanding learner—she is open-minded, diligent, and deeply introspective, consistently seeking growth both academically and personally. What truly sets her apart is her passion for research as a counseling practitioner. Despite being at the MA level, she has voluntarily contributed to faculty research labs—a rare and commendable commitment that demonstrates her intellectual curiosity and professional initiative. Her desire to continue engaging in research after graduation further highlights her dedication to advancing the counseling field through research. Erin is not only an exemplary student but also a future leader in counseling who bridges practice with scholarly inquiry.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Philip Hampel



With the polish of a seasoned educator and the fresh perspective of a current master's student, Philip Hampel redefines and raises the standard for Teaching Assistants at Palo Alto University. What sets Philip apart is his rare combination of prior doctoral-level academic achievement, teaching excellence, and genuine commitment to student success—all while pursuing his own master's education. Despite being a peer to the students he serves, Philip brings the insight and authority of someone with two completed doctorates. His personalized approach transforms assignments from mere evaluations to meaningful development opportunities. Philip transcends the traditional TA role—he is an exemplary educator whose prior doctoral-level expertise, authentic investment in student growth, and exceptional leadership make him the definitive choice for Teaching Assistant of the Year.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Safa Faheem



Safa Faheem has been an outstanding Teaching Assistant who has helped expand and strengthen the Sexual Issues in Counseling course. This is not an easy course to teach — it demands sensitivity, depth, and the ability to navigate complex, often vulnerable conversations — and Safa has done so with exceptional skill and care. They have developed and delivered thoughtful lectures on diverse sexuality topics, actively participated in fishbowl demonstrations, and consistently shared valuable clinical insights that deepen students' understanding. Safa also co-led a powerful session on LGBTQ issues in counseling, bringing critical nuance and real-world relevance to the classroom. Their professionalism, knowledge, and steady presence have made a significant impact on the course and the students, and they are truly deserving of recognition as Teaching Assistant of the Year.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Meagan VanDenmark



We cannot speak highly enough about Meg! She started this year as Dr. Jacoby's TA, and was simply outstanding. As Dr. Jacoby went onto Maternity Leave, Meg transitioned into helping other faculty with tasks such as course development and residency planning.

PhD COUNSELOR EDUCATION AND SUPERVISION AWARDEES

Outstanding Student

Jennifer Kiehl

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Laura Rea, Marcella Rojas

Outstanding Student

Jennifer Kiehl



Jen is an exceptional doctoral student and CES Fellow. She has shown commitment to her cohort, classes, fellowship, and extracurricular activities. Jen exemplifies "a collaborative approach and care for others with kindness and understanding" and "demonstrated a combination of service, leadership, including diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in support of PAU's values."

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Laura Rea



I enthusiastically nominate Laura Rea for this recognition. She is warm, engaging, and consistently thoughtful in her interactions with both students and faculty. Students appreciate her clear, supportive feedback and the way she manages the learning space with accessibility and care at the forefront. Her ability to reflect on students' growth and how it shapes their learning experience speaks to her readiness for teaching and leadership roles. Laura's professionalism, thoughtfulness, and relational strengths make her an invaluable presence in our program.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Marcella Rojas



Marcella Rojas is a thoughtful, creative, and committed educator who consistently centers the developmental needs of MA students in her teaching. Her intentional use of engaging, non-lecture-based strategies—such as a recent expressive arts activity—demonstrates a deep understanding of how adults learn. She is an outstanding facilitator: clear, organized, and deeply attuned to both content and classroom dynamics. She skillfully integrates clinical examples to enhance student understanding while maintaining strong professional boundaries. Her commitment to cultural humility is evident in both her teaching approach and the inclusive learning environment she fosters. She brings heart, clarity, and dedication to every class she leads. We are thrilled to have her in our community!

MASTER OF SCIENCE (MS) AWARDEES

Excellence in Research

Tyrique Patterson

Outstanding Student

Jessica Mitchell, Tyrique Patterson, Shweta Kumari

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Rafael Zuleta Miranda

Excellence in Research

Tyrique Patterson



Tyrique Patterson has fully immersed himself in research during his time in the MS program. His fruitful collaborations with Dr. Bunge have led to multiple publication and presentation collaborations. He had the honor of being the only student accepted to work in Dr. Bunge's lab in the coming year, which was well-deserved given his determination and focus.

Outstanding Student Tyrique Patterson



Tyrique Patterson demonstrates exceptional leadership, service, and academic achievement. He consistently creates positive community in the program and often advises other students on navigating key aspects of the program. Tyrique makes the most of all academic opportunities, ranging from attending optional academic enrichment activities to diving headfirst into research. He is attentive to DEIB issues and experiences and strives to create a more socially just and inclusive psychology.

Outstanding Student

Jessica Mitchell



Jessica Mitchell has been a consistent delight to have taught and support to her peers and should be recognized at PAU stars for her compassion, understanding, curiosity, and humility.

Outstanding Student

Shweta Kumari



Shweta Kumari brings an ethic of care and compassionate leadership to her role in the program. She combines a focus on academic excellence with genuine kindness and ability to create community in her cohort and in the MS program more broadly. She is deeply empathic and emotionally attuned, and we are excited to see her bloom in her clinical work.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Rafael Zuleta Miranda



Rafael Zuleta Miranda has been an amazing TA and has shown an incredible command of the course content and is very knowledgeable in the realm of statistics and research methods. He has always been available to the students to answer any questions in a clear and concise manner. He should be recognized as a PAU Stars as not only the Teaching Assistant of the Year, but overall a hard worker who always puts his fellow students first.

Rafael Zuleta Miranda, although a PhD student with PAU, has been an exemplary TA over the past year. He has been a consistent presence to the MS students and should be recognized at PAU stars as he always leads with kindness, intelligence and expertise.

PhD CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AWARDEES

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

Francesco Yepez-Coello

Excellence in Research

*Mariel Alano, Maya Wong, Josephine Sanchez, Robert Hickson, Hua
(Poppy) Huo, Daniel Baldini*

Excellence in Clinical Work

Mythili Ananthasayan

Outstanding Student

*Madison Wright, Ashlynn Steinbaugh, Shirin Aghakhani, Alexandra
Rousseau*

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Raquel Borg, Hanna Young, Mona Midani

Tondow Award

Alondra Serrano

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

Francesco Yepez-Coello



Francesco has shown drive and initiative in spearheading and collaborating on multiple projects in his research lab, with particular interests in integrating cultural responsiveness into risk assessment and management work. Francesco is first author on a peer-reviewed article on how to use the Cultural Assessment for Risk of Suicide (CARS) to detect suicide risk in marginalized patients, and on a book chapter on the psychology of terrorism. He has also led efforts to train licensed clinicians in best practices for integrating culture into risk assessment and management, and gave a presentation on culturally responsive suicide risk assessment at WPA. He further developed his presentation into a workshop that he will present with other lab members in the Suicide Research Symposium and at APA's National Conference. Francesco's passion for expanding access to mental healthcare shows throughout his work, and his dissertation. He collaborated with PAU faculty to translate the CARS into Spanish and is conducting an acceptability study of the measure.

Excellence in Research

Mariel Alano



Mariel conducted the first known study on the mental health and help-seeking experiences of transgender Filipino Americans. Her proposal was incredibly well researched and written, and her passion for understanding experiences and providing affirmative care at this identity intersection is clear. She was motivated by personal experiences as a Filipino American who has a transgender sibling to do a deep dive into cultural factors that shape the mental health experiences of trans Filipino people. Her deep passion for this topic is clear in the quality of the work she has conducted. Her proposal was incredibly well-researched and written. She recruited and interviewed nine trans Filipino Americans. Her interviews were incredibly rich, and qualitative data led to the identification of 19 subthemes nested in the four following principal themes: Family, Culture, and Identity; Visibility, Safety, and Discrimination; Navigating Intersectional Identities; and Mental Health, Coping, and Resilience. Throughout her data analysis and discussion, she was thoughtful and attentive to the cultural experiences of her participants, and her findings provide important visibility and deeper understanding for an under-represented, intersectionally minoritized population.

Excellence in Research

Maya Wong



Maya was so keen to explore healing-centered engagement (HCE), a framework conceptualized to build on trauma-informed approaches to better offer people of color a means to engage with their collectivism, strength, and cultural practices for healing from racial trauma. Delphi polls are traditionally conducted with academics and subject matter experts, and Maya flipped this on its head to accurately recognize that the 'experts' of racial trauma were regular people in the community. Over multiple iterations, her community experts used HCE to generate culturally aligned therapeutic practices and clinical approaches, and these approaches were much deeper and richer than traditional approaches to treating racial trauma. I see this work as moving the field forward in important ways, and of centering non-academic community voices and ideas in the development of novel and important therapeutic approaches.

Excellence in Research

Josephine Sanchez



Josephine's work and growth in the process of doing it exemplifies all that we strive to teach at PAU. This is an original data collection study in an understudied population and will be an impactful contribution to the literature.

Excellence in Research

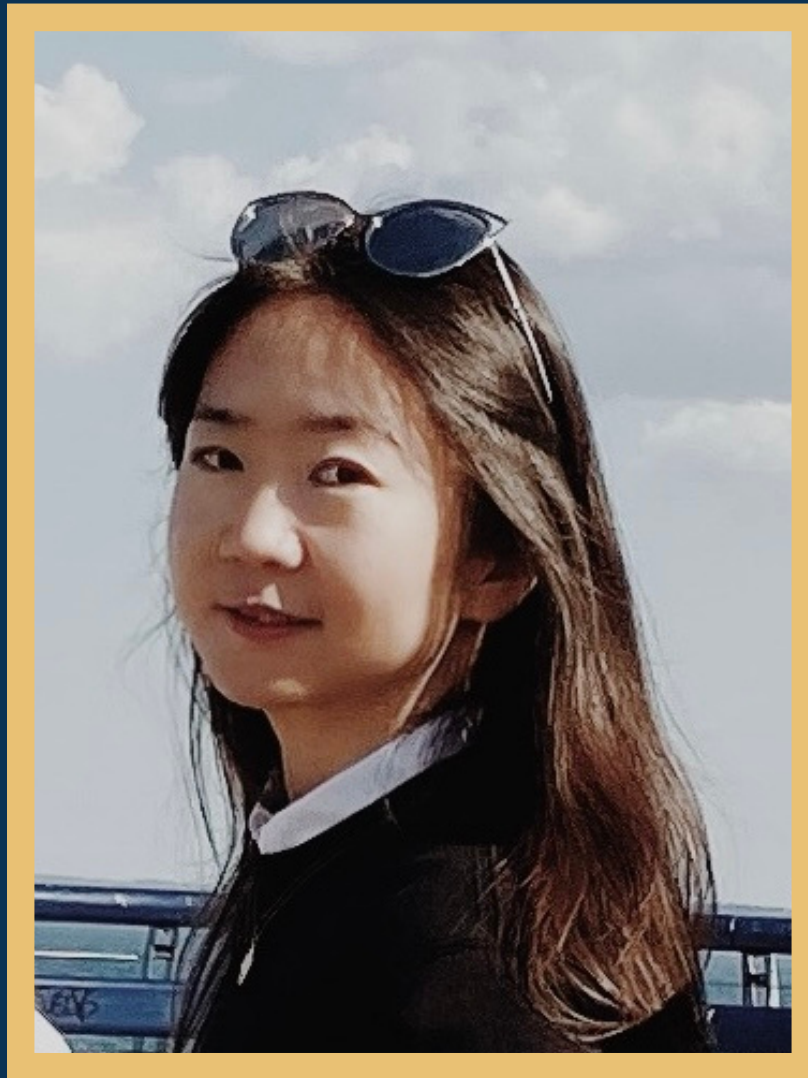
Robert Hickson



Bobby is an exceptional and driven student who acquired a strong foundation in scientific research. I have been consistently impressed by his ability to initiate and manage multiple projects with remarkable efficiency. He has independently navigated a large multisite dataset (Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development, ABCD), developed complex statistical models, mastered neuroimaging data analysis, and has taken the lead on manuscript development—all while advancing his dissertation. It should be stated that Bobby has consistently demonstrated excellence in research and maintains a high level of research productivity. Although he is in the early stages of his research career, he has already contributed to several high impacted peer-reviewed publications, both as a first author and co-author. His outstanding work was recognized by the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) with the Trainee Professional Development Award in 2024 and by the International Neuropsychology Society (INS) with the SLC Research Award in 2025. Based on his most recent work, Bobby has submitted a manuscript entitled: Using Bayesian Logistic Regression to Assess Functional Connectivity of Large-Scale Brain Networks Associated with Anxiety from Social Situations in Early Adolescence. Notably, Bobby conducts innovative, impactful, and clinically relevant research.

Excellence in Research

Hua (Poppy) Huo



I strongly recommend Poppy to receive the Award for Excellence in Research. Poppy's research focuses on strength-based and culturally relevant coping with acculturative stress among Asian Americans and immigrants. Impressively, she recently published an article titled "Barriers to Mental Health Help-Seeking among Asian American Adolescents: A Systematic Review" in the Asian American Journal of Psychology, a top-tier journal in Asian American mental health. Her dissertation examined culturally specific coping (i.e., forbearance) as moderating factors for the association between acculturative stress, depression, and post-migration growth among Chinese immigrants. She transformed part of her dissertation work into a poster proposal and was accepted to present at APA 2025. In addition, she has provided valuable professional services, including serving as a conference reviewer for the American Psychological Association Convention Division 45 (APA 2025). She has served as an ad hoc reviewer for two peer-reviewed journals—Frontiers in Psychology and Journal of Adult Development.

Excellence in Research

Daniel Baldini



Daniel is an exceptional student and dedicated to his research training. He sought out a volunteer position in my research lab as a student in the Master's of Psychology program, volunteering on multiple posters for national and international conferences in his first year. Within a year, he was co-authoring multiple manuscripts, and now as an advanced graduate student, he is pursuing the challenging two-manuscript dissertation - while first authoring another manuscript for publication, which involved the development of a new embedded validity indicator for neuropsychological assessment (the Reliable Letter-Number Sequencing Span; Baldini et al., 2024). Further, he has first-authored multiple grant proposal applications, with aims of advancing literature on embedded validity indicators in the new WAIS-5. He is the most productive and proactive research lab student I have trained in 13 years at PAU, and he is the most deserving student of this award.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Mythili Ananthasayan



Mythilli Ananthasayan has shown outstanding skill and commitment in her clinical work in both her practicum at La Selva and in the Early Intervention Lab at PAU. Across these settings, she has exhibited strong general clinical skills and an ability to adapt evidence-based practices to fit a given client's presenting problems, readiness, world views, and identities. Mythili is particularly effective in working with high acuity clients who have experienced trauma and loss; she is grounded, able to think on her feet, and skilled in balancing stabilization skills with strategies for change. Mythilli shows a high degree of cultural humility and awareness of the roles that minority stress and systemic contextual factors play in clients' presentations and response to treatment. She is self-reflective, uses supervision extremely well, and models transparency and receptivity for other students. Mythili's clients, fellow trainees, and supervisors have benefited from her compassion, skill, and collaboration.

Outstanding Student

Madison Wright



Madison presents with a diverse and rich array of clinical and research experiences. Madison sought out research opportunities at her externship with the UCSF Epilepsy Center and she has presented her research on epilepsy and neuropsychology at the annual conferences for INS, AACN, and HNS. From this collaboration, she developed an outstanding dissertation project on the clinical utility of visuospatial memory tests in lateralizing seizures and detecting mesial temporal sclerosis in unilateral temporal lobe epilepsy. Madison also gave an impressive grand rounds presentation at the NAN conference. Her proposal was one of only three selected and she was the only student presenter. Beyond her research, she was even awarded the university's student mentorship award for her peer support and the work she has done with the student success office. She matched with her top site for internship and has gained experience in various neuropsychology specialty settings, including neuropsychological evaluations with Spanish-speaking patients, neurodegenerative diseases, and pre-surgical evaluations for epilepsy, brain tumor, and DBS. She has recently accepted a postdoctoral position at UCLA.

Outstanding Student Ashlynn Steinbaugh



Ashlynn has been an exceptional trainee in every possible way. She has TA'd for many classes, organized several research studies within my lab, co-authored and first-authored multiple empirical manuscripts, and excelled with exceptional grades in all of her coursework. On top of that, she volunteers service in multiple university, local, and national organizations. Her PCAF evaluations have consistently and universally been glowing, and shower her with praise of her ability to built rapport, demonstrate empathy, and cultivate insight into her evaluations. Overall, Ashlynn has exceeded every aspect of her training in clinical psychology, and she is a role model for peers and future trainees.

Outstanding Student Shirin Aghakhani



Shirin exemplifies the very best of what it means to be an outstanding student at PAU. She is a force of nature, embodying leadership, dedication, and academic excellence in everything she does. Her three-study dissertation reflects her deep commitment to advancing knowledge, but her impact extends far beyond research. Shirin is known for her unwavering involvement in campus. She has served as an instructor and TA for multiple courses and has always prioritized student learning and mentorship. She consistently takes on leadership roles that elevate the PAU community, often spearheading initiatives, advocating fiercely for students, and stepping up wherever she is needed. Whether organizing events, mentoring peers, or collaborating with faculty and staff. She doesn't just represent PAU's values, she strengthens and embodies them, setting the bar for what it means to lead, inspire, and make a lasting impact within the PAU community.

Outstanding Student

Alexandra Rousseau



Alexandra Rousseau, MD, MS, is a student in the PhD program who has demonstrated excellence worthy of the Outstanding Student Award. Alex's background is unique, as she worked as pediatrician prior to her time at PAU, where she is in both the neuropsychology and pediatric areas of emphasis. Alex's research background includes co-authorship of 9 peer-reviewed articles, with 2 additional under review. She has also co-authored 11 presentations and has been invited to present for 3 community education events. Alex is fluent in English, French, Spanish, and German which she applies in her research and her clinical work. She is currently the Advocacy Chair for the Student Committee of the American Academy of Pediatric Neuropsychology (AAPdN) and the Elected Student Represent Representative for the National Association of Neuropsychology (NAN). Alex also serves as the Elected Member at Large for the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee for AAPdN.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Raquel Borg



Raquel is highly engaged in both facilitating discussions and encouraging critical thinking. She excels at breaking down complex topics, using relevant examples to enhance student comprehension, and reinforcing material through structured discussions. She goes beyond standard TA responsibilities by proactively identifying areas where students need additional support. Her problem-solving skills are another strength that sets her apart. She has been instrumental in troubleshooting technical issues in both R and SPSS, assisting students in interpreting statistical outputs, and explaining coding structures in an accessible way. Her ability to simplify challenging concepts and provide step-by-step guidance ensures that students not only understand the material but also feel confident applying it. Her dedication to fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment has made her a TA that students greatly appreciate and respect. Students absolutely love working with her and are excited when she is chosen to be a TA for a class.

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Hanna Young



Hanna has served as a TA for Cognitive Bases of Behavior, Clinical Interviewing and is currently TAing for Social and Personality Psychology and History and Systems. In each of these roles, she has consistently supported students at all levels—whether by helping them develop their clinical style and writing through thoughtful discussion and detailed feedback, refining their diagnostic skills, clarifying institutional procedures and timelines, or guiding them through the creation of presentations, among other responsibilities. Hanna is an indispensable part of all the classes; working tirelessly to support students and ensure they had a strong grasp of the material. Her feedback on clinical case vignettes was impressively thorough, enabling students to sharpen both their clinical writing and diagnostic acuity. This dedication did not go unnoticed—student evaluations highlighted her impact, with comments such as: “...best TA this quarter”, “My favorite TA of all time”, “Hanna is such a great TA both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. She helped me calm down about many classes and is so open and honest. She did a great job explaining to us about our presentation and helped us perfect it!”

Teaching Assistant of the Year

Mona Midani



Mona is a phenomenal TA and is incredibly supportive of students. Mona has TAd for me several times for the stats and research methods courses and has always been a top TA. Students have found her to be incredibly helpful navigating difficult courses. Her ability to convey complex concepts stands out among TAs I have worked with. Most importantly she knows how to engage with challenges students may experience in ways that facilitate their learning.

The Tondow Award

Alondra Serrano



This project was done independently on a very difficult to reach population (family members of undocumented Latine immigrants) - during a very politically sensitive time. Her project gave marginalized community an outlet to share their experiences, and she converted those experiences to science. It was a quantitative and qualitative mixed method design, with the result of a theoretical model for understanding undocumented families' experiences within the complexities of their relationships and mental health. Alondra is a fluent bilingual first generation college student, who did an absolutely outstanding job with this project, from beginning to end. She was a Stats TA AND Psychopathology I TA, and has shone in absolutely every aspect of her training. She shined as a PhD student, and did so humbly. She's definitely deserving of our dissertation award.

STANFORD PsyD CONSORTIUM AWARDEES

Excellence in Promoting Belonging

Anthony Flores

Excellence in Research

Audrey Evers

Excellence in Clinical Work

*Jessica Burgess, Kendall Gedeon, Michelle Hull, Colin Takahashi,
Rachel Van Boxtel, Tanera Van Giggelen, Shae Wolfe*

Outstanding Student

Annemarie Jagielo

Koopman Award

Mackenzie Odier

Excellence in Promoting Belonging

Anthony Flores



Anthony Flores, MS, 3rd year doctoral candidate, embodies the spirit of true belonging. As an APA Minority Fellow, his impact extends beyond the many formal roles he holds, including service on the DEI Committee at the Bay Area Psychological Association, the Chinese Progressive Association, PAU's Latinx Task Force, and the PsyD Consortium Student Advisory Board. Just as important are the intentional and heartfelt ways he fosters community. Anthony lives his values through everyday actions that build trust, affirm identity, and bring people together. One of the most powerful examples of his commitment is his tradition of creating handmade, personalized birthday cards for every member of his 30-person cohort. These cards reflected not only his creativity but a deep desire to ensure that everyone felt seen, valued, and included. This quiet act of care became a defining tradition in his cohort and a model of intentional community building. Whether organizing cultural events, amplifying student voices, or offering kind words at the right moment, Anthony's efforts are grounded in empathy, thoughtfulness, and a genuine commitment to others. He reminds us that belonging grows from consistent acts of care. He is profoundly deserving of the PAU STARS Excellence in Promoting Belonging Award.

Excellence in Research

Audrey Evers



Audrey Evers, MS, is an outstanding 3rd year doctoral candidate whose scholarly productivity and research leadership are exceptional. She is the author or co-author of seven peer-reviewed publications (published or under review), including five as first author, and has presented her work at ten national and international conferences. She also submitted a competitive NIMH F31 grant application focused on identifying psychological predictors and mechanisms of response to psilocybin for depression. Audrey also plays a vital role as a teaching assistant for our Statistics and Research Methods sequence, where she shares her passion for research and supports students in developing strong foundational skills. Her ability to make complex concepts accessible and ignite intellectual curiosity is consistently praised. In addition to her research and teaching, Audrey has contributed to the field as a peer reviewer for two academic journals, further demonstrating her engagement with the broader scientific community and her ability to critically evaluate emerging scholarship. Audrey's remarkable scholarship and dedication to scientific mentorship make her a truly deserving nominee for the PAU STARS Research Excellence Award and a rising leader in clinical psychology.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Jessica Burgess



Jessica Burgess, MS, a third-year doctoral candidate, was nominated for the PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work by their practicum supervisor in recognition of their outstanding clinical skill, deep dedication, and remarkable growth. Jess joined Bay Area Trauma Recovery Clinical Services with a strong foundation in diagnosing PTSD and guiding clients through grounding and coping strategies essential for early-stage trauma work. From that foundation, Jess has continually pushed themselves to expand their clinical range, immersing themselves in a variety of modalities to address entrenched trauma symptoms and facilitate meaningful healing. Jess collaborates thoughtfully with clients, using empathic, well-formulated case conceptualizations to select interventions tailored to everyone's needs. They bring courage and clinical creativity to their work, willing to try new approaches and explore challenging material with their clients in a way that deepens insight and strengthens the therapeutic alliance. Jess is not only clinically astute but also deeply compassionate. Their presence in the therapy room is warm, grounded, and attuned. She meets clients with authenticity and care, and the results of her work are clear: her clients feel supported, understood, and empowered. Jess exemplifies what it means to be a trauma-informed, client-centered clinician and this honor is well-deserved.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Kendall Gedeon



Kendall Gedeon, MS, a third-year doctoral candidate, was nominated for a PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work in recognition of her consistently high-level performance, strong clinical insight, and professional maturity. Kendall operates well beyond her expected level of training, demonstrating advanced skill in individual and group therapy, psychological assessment, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Her clinical interventions are thoughtful and effective, grounded in a strong understanding of theory and tailored to each client. Kendall's work is consistently timely, thorough, and well-documented, her clinical notes are meticulous and reflect both clarity and depth. She is open to feedback, highly self-aware, and actively engaged in her own growth as a clinician. Kendall has received outstanding feedback from both staff and clients. In particular, one client offered especially effusive praise for her care, describing her as warm, attentive, and deeply impactful. She brings a grounded and approachable presence to the therapy room, forming strong therapeutic alliances with ease. Kendall also demonstrates excellent judgment, functioning independently while readily seeking consultation when appropriate. Her professionalism, insight, and approachable demeanor make her a joy to supervise and a trusted member of any clinical team. She is richly deserving of this recognition.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Michelle Hull



Michelle Hull, MS, a fourth-year doctoral candidate, was nominated for the PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work by both her primary and supplemental practicum supervisors. Michelle has proven to be an exceptional practicum student, consistently demonstrating a deep commitment to her patients and to the therapeutic process. Michelle's enthusiasm for learning is matched by her clinical maturity and genuine care for her clients. She approaches each session with a keen desire to deepen her understanding, asking thoughtful, advanced questions that reflect her commitment to growth. Her ability to attend to both her patients' needs and her own internal processes during therapy is a rare skill that contributes to building strong, trusting relationships. In addition to her clinical acumen, Michelle brings a balance of intellectual rigor and heartfelt empathy to her work, making her an outstanding clinician in the making. She has earned praise from both her supervisors and colleagues for her dedication, compassion, and ability to foster healing in her clients. Michelle's combination of clinical excellence and emotional insight make her a joy to supervise and highly deserving of this recognition.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Colin Takahashi



Colin Takahashi, MMFT, was nominated for the PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work by three of his clinical supervisors across his primary and supplemental practica, a powerful endorsement of their outstanding clinical capabilities. Notably, Colin was also nominated for this same award last year, underscoring his consistently excellent clinical performance. This year, Colin continues to perform well beyond what is typical for his level of training. One supervisor described him as "one of the most talented clinicians I have ever worked with." They bring advanced clinical insight, professionalism, and relational depth to their work. They also thoughtfully integrate systemic context, identity, and intersectionality into case formulations, especially in their work with clients impacted by institutional harm. Their ability to form strong therapeutic alliances, synthesize complex information, and contribute meaningfully in fast-paced, interdisciplinary settings has earned praise from colleagues. Colin is also a collaborative and trusted leader who is a joy to work with. They regularly initiate care coordination, facilitates referrals, and generously mentor peers with less experience. His sense of humor, warmth, and grounded presence foster trust and connection with both clients and colleagues. There is no doubt that Colin has earned this distinction.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Rachel Van Boxtel



Rachel Van Boxtel, MS, a third-year doctoral candidate, was nominated for the PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work with glowing endorsements by from three separate clinical supervisors across her primary and supplemental practica. Nominated last year as well, this is Rachel's second consecutive nomination, a testament to her ongoing commitment to excellence and evolution as a clinician. Rachel consistently demonstrates clinical skills well beyond her training level. In her externship at the San Francisco VA, Rachel handled a high-risk suicidal Veteran with remarkable skill and confidence. She collaborated with the multidisciplinary team, maintained thorough documentation, and skillfully managed the case, including navigating lethal means safety and ensuring ongoing care. Her calm and effective response in a critical situation earned praise from the entire clinical team. Rachel's clinical maturity, cultural humility, and warmth make her an exceptional clinician. She consistently goes above and beyond for her clients, demonstrating clinical creativity and deep empathy. Rachel is a star clinician who supervisors report being grateful to work with. Her case conceptualization skills, clinical skills, cultural humility, and warmth are all assets that deserve recognition.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Tanera Van Giggelen



Tanera van Diggelen, MS, a fourth-year doctoral candidate, was nominated for the PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work by her primary clinical supervisor. Notably, Tanera was also recognized with a nomination for this award last year, further highlighting her ongoing development and consistent high-level performance as a clinician. Tanera demonstrates an impressive command of evidence-based treatments, particularly in the realm of eating disorders. Throughout her rotation in the Eating Disorder IOP, she consistently brought research to the table, linking the work being done with current literature. Her insightful contributions to discussions on exposure therapy and related research were invaluable to the team, showcasing her deep understanding of clinical theory and practice. In addition to her academic rigor, Tanera is highly innovative in her approach to treatment. She introduced a new intervention to a group session that was particularly effective in helping withdrawn and anxious patients feel more comfortable and open. This intervention has proven successful and will likely be incorporated into future practices, thanks to Tanera's initiative and creativity. Tanera's clinical expertise, collaborative spirit, and commitment to growth make her an outstanding clinician. Her work has had a profound impact on her patients, and she is well-positioned for a successful career, especially in the field of eating disorders.

Excellence in Clinical Work

Shae Wolfe



Shae Wolfe, a second-year doctoral student, was nominated for the PAU STARS Award for Excellence in Clinical Work by three of her clinical supervisors across both her primary and supplemental practica, a strong and enthusiastic endorsement of her impact across settings. What most distinguishes Shae is the deeply human quality she brings to her clinical work. Her warmth, sincerity, humor, and grounded presence create a uniquely safe and connected space for clients. This authentic style not only enhances therapeutic relationships but also strengthens group cohesion and fosters trust among peers and colleagues. Over the course of the year, Shae has demonstrated impressive clinical growth, integrating feedback quickly and skillfully applying a wide range of interventions—including psychodynamic approaches, DBT, ACT, CBT, and MI. Her sessions are thoughtful and responsive, marked by a strong sense of attunement and clinical intention. Shae works with a diverse and often high-risk client population, building strong alliances and navigating complexity with cultural humility, ethical sensitivity, and professionalism well beyond her training level. She collaborates effectively across disciplines, contributes actively in supervision, and produces thoughtful, culturally informed assessments. Shae's relational strengths, clinical insight, and deep commitment to inclusive, client-centered care make her richly deserving of this recognition.

Outstanding Student

Annemarie Jagielo



Annemarie Jagielo, MS, a fourth-year doctoral candidate, is highly deserving of the PAU Outstanding Overall Student Award. She exemplifies excellence across all domains of professional psychology: clinician, researcher, educator, and community advocate. Her clinical skills are well above her station and her interprofessional collaboration and communication is gold standard. Despite her extensive training in evidence-based treatments, Annemarie actively seeks out additional resources to deepen her understanding of complex conditions and ensure she is using the most effective protocols for each client's needs. Throughout her time in the Consortium, Annemarie has developed a stellar research program in cancer survivorship, resulting in 18 peer-reviewed publications (4 first-authored) and 27 professional presentations. In recognition of her scholarly impact, she received the 2024 STARS Excellence in Research Award. She is also a generous citizen, having served as a TA for multiple courses and as a student assistant to the DCT office, supporting key programmatic efforts such as admissions, orientation, and graduation. Nationally, she serves on the Student Membership Committee for ABCT and as a Campus Representative for APA Division 38. As one supervisor summed it up, "If Annemarie were a superlative, she would be 'best all-around.'"

The Koopman Award

Mackenzie Odier



Dissertation Title "The Lifetime Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on the Duration and Chronicity of Homelessness"

Student Organizations

Asian Pacific American Student Association (APASA)

Association of Neuropsychology Students and Trainees (ANST)

Association of Traumatic Stress Studies (ATSS)

Behavioral Intervention Technologies (BITs)

Coalition for Disability Advocacy and Education (CDAE)

Diaspora - PAU Organization for Black Mental Health

Geek Culture Club (GCC)

Graduate Student Association for Psychedelic Studies (GSAPS)

Palo Alto University Latino Student Organization (PULSO)

Psychological Association for Gender Expression and Sexuality (PAGES)

Student Association of Gerontological Enrichment (SAGE)

Student Veteran Organization (SVO)

Union of International Students (UNITS)

Student Organization of the Year

Psychological Association for Gender Expression and Sexuality (PAGES)



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.

*If you wish to celebrate with PAGES, please join them at the San Francisco Pride Parade on Sunday, June 29, 2025 as they walk to represent Palo Alto University! **RSVP HERE**.*

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!



SURVEY

Each year, the Department of Student Success at Palo Alto University look forward to creating and hosting the PAU Stars Awards Ceremony. To help us grow in planning the event, we kindly ask that you complete a survey that will provide us with your thoughts on the event.

Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

IN-PERSON ATTENDEES



ZOOM ATTENDEES



Thank You

Thank you for attending the 6th annual PAU Stars ceremony, and for joining us in celebrating the students who were recognized this evening.

Congratulations to all of the awardees! Your dedication to the field of psychology has been thoroughly demonstrated, and is honorable.

**PAU
STARS AWARDS**