



Commencement Ceremony
Miami Campus

October 4, 2024



Program

Salutation

Aperture

Dr. Sharrie R. Dean

Message from the Student Council President

Ms. Kaya Frallicciardi

Message from the President

Dr. Nelson E. Soto

Musical Interlude

by the Doral Academy Elementary School Choir

Introduction of the Commencement Speaker

by the Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dr. Antonio E. Puente

Message from the Commencement Speaker

Dr. Nelson L. Adams, III

Diploma Presentation

Closing



To the Families and Loved Ones of the Graduates

We recognize the love and support that our families and loved ones have provided to us throughout the academic journey that we complete today.

Our achievements are the fruit of mutual work and effort. Love is appreciated through love. Just to say “Thank You” is not enough.

We want to dedicate this great moment, our Graduation,
to all of you.



CARLOS ALBIZU-MIRANDA, Ph.D.

Founder and First President

Albizu University

Dr. Carlos Albizu was a pioneering and visionary man who dedicated his life to improving the well-being of Puerto Rico. Dr. Albizu labored to improve the mental health services offered to his fellow countrymen, while providing opportunities for Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics to complete a program of study in higher education which was not available at the time.

Dr. Albizu was born on September 16, 1920 in the city of Ponce, Puerto Rico. In 1943, he earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Puerto Rico with a concentration in psychology and history. As there was no graduate program in the field of psychology on the island, he decided to attend the University of Minnesota to begin his graduate studies in clinical psychology. After a year, due to financial reasons and to the lack of financial aid programs available to minorities, he returned to Puerto Rico to work and so postponed completing his doctoral studies. In September of 1950, Dr. Albizu secured a teaching assistant position and moved to Purdue University, where he earned a master's degree in experimental psychology in 1951, and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology in 1953. His doctoral dissertation focused on the relationship between social class factors and test performance.

Dr. Albizu joined the faculty in the Psychology Department of the University of Puerto Rico where he attained the rank of full professor, retiring in 1975 after 22 years of service.



Upon returning to Puerto Rico, Dr. Albizu felt great concern about the lack of opportunities for students on the island to engage in graduate studies in the field of psychology. He fervently believed that the training acquired abroad did not provide psychology students with the skills needed for an effective and culturally-sensitive intervention with Hispanic populations. He therefore founded the Puerto Rico Institute of Psychology in 1966, which became the first psychology graduate program in Puerto Rico, and the first school of professional psychology in the United States and its territories.

Dr. Albizu was not only a visionary but also a man with great courage. After ten short years, Dr. Albizu foresaw the same needs in South Florida where the increasing influx of Caribbean and Latin American immigrants created a critical need to provide culturally-sensitive mental health services for this population.

He thus established the Miami Institute of Psychology in 1980 to extend the benefit of graduate psychology programs that were sensitive to cultural ethnic issues in the continental United States. In January 2000, the university in Miami and the university in Puerto Rico (along with one university center) were renamed Carlos Albizu University in honor of its founder and is now known as Albizu University.

Dr. Albizu passed away in 1984, but his legacy of excellence in mental health and education continues to contribute significantly to the social and economic development of the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States, through the culturally sensitive professional training offered at the campuses in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Miami, Florida.



History

Albizu University (AU) is a private, nonprofit, specialized university-level institution offering bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology, business, education, exceptional student education, counseling, teaching English to speakers of other languages, and speech and language pathology. Additionally, AU awards a graduate certificate in applied behavior analysis, and doctoral degrees in psychology and human services. Albizu University has campuses in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Miami, Florida, and an extension center in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico.

The origin of Albizu University dates back to the year 1966, when the Puerto Rico campus, originally known as the Caribbean Center for Advanced Studies, was founded with the specific objective of offering a Master of Science degree in clinical psychology. At that time, there were very few mental health professionals on the Island and most received their professional education outside of Puerto Rico.

Upon completion of those studies, returning mental health professionals were confronted with the necessity of adapting their training to Puerto Rican socio-cultural realities. The Caribbean Center for Advanced Studies was established by Dr. Carlos Albizu, a renowned Puerto Rican psychologist, in response to the need for culturally sensitive professional training. Starting in 1972, the Puerto Rico campus began offering doctoral degrees (Ph.D. and Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology), thus becoming the first university offering culturally sensitive doctoral training in clinical psychology in Puerto Rico.

Dr. Albizu devoted his life to the training and formation of multiculturally competent psychologists on the island of Puerto Rico as well as on the mainland. Albizu University continues in this tradition of cultural sensitivity and is today an educational institution whose programs of study and research are founded, both in theory and practice, on our multicultural heritage.

Through the founding of the Miami campus in 1980, Albizu University responds to the need in the continental United States for graduate psychology programs sensitive to cultural and ethnic issues. Through the academic offerings at both campuses, AU provides professional training that is relevant and responsive to the educational needs of the communities served and to the needs of culturally sensitive research, thereby contributing to the development of the professions of psychology, business, education, counseling, human services, and speech and language pathology.



Historical Overview of the Academic Costume Code

The origins of academic dress date back to the 12th and 13th centuries, when universities were taking form. The ordinary dress of the scholar, whether student or teacher, was the dress of a cleric. With few exceptions, the medieval scholar had taken at least minor orders, made certain vows, and perhaps been tonsured. Long gowns were worn and may have been necessary for warmth in unheated buildings. Hoods seem to have served to cover the tonsured head until superseded for that purpose by the skull cap.

A statute of the University of Coimbra in 1321 required that all “Doctors, Licentiatees, and Bachelors” wear gowns. In England, in the second half of the 14th century, the statutes of certain colleges forbade “excess in apparel” and prescribed the wearing of a long gown. In the days of Henry VIII of England, Oxford and Cambridge first began prescribing a definite academic dress and made it a matter of university control even to the extent of its minor details.

The assignment of colors to signify certain faculties was to be a much later development, and one which was to be standardized only in the United States in the late 19th century. White taken from the white fur trimming of the Oxford and Cambridge B.A. hoods, was assigned to arts and letters. Red, one of the traditional colors of the church, went to theology. Green, the color of medieval herbs, was adopted for medicine, and olive, because it was so close to green, was given to pharmacy. Golden yellow, standing for the wealth which scientific research has produced, was assigned to the sciences.

European institutions have always had great diversity in their specifications of academic dress and this has been a source of confusion. In contrast, American colleges and universities opted for a definite system that all might follow. A significant contribution to the development of this system was made by Gardner Cotrell Leonard of Albany, New York. Mr. Leonard designed gowns for his class at Williams College in 1887 and had them made by Cotrell and Leonard, a firm established by his family in Albany, New York. He was greatly interested in the subject and following the publication of an article by him on academic dress in 1893, he was invited to work with an Intercollegiate Commission made up of representatives of leading institutions to establish a suitable system of academic apparel.

The Commission met at Columbia University in 1895 and adopted a code of academic dress, which besides regulating the cut and style and materials of the gowns, prescribed the colors which were to represent the different fields of learning.



In 1932 the American Council on Education authorized the appointment of a committee “to determine whether revision and completion of the academic code adopted by the conference of the colleges and universities in 1895 is desirable at this time, and, if so, to draft a revised code and present a plan for submitting the code to the consideration of the institutional members of the Council.”

The committee reviewed the situation through correspondence and conference and approved a code for academic costumes that has been in effect since that year. A Committee on Academic Costumes and Ceremonies, appointed by the American Council on Education in 1959, again reviewed the costume code and made several changes.

In 1986, the committee updated the code and added a sentence clarifying the use of the color dark blue for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

“Historical Overview of the Academic Costume Code,” Eugene Sullivan, American Council on Education, reprinted with permission from American Universities and Colleges, 15th Edition © 1997 Walter de Gruyter, Inc.



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Kaya Frallicciardi



Commencement Speaker



Nelson L. Adams, M.D., FACOG

Nelson L. Adams, M.D., a native of Miami, Florida, and a product of its public-school system, is a medical leader passionately committed to eliminating racial and ethnic inequity in health. An exceptional achiever, earning high recognition scholastically and among medical peers, Dr. Adams is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the Honorary Doctor of Laws.

An esteemed alumnus of Howard University, Dr. Adams has been recognized in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*. He earned his medical degree at Meharry Medical College in 1978 and completed his four-year residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Emory University in 1982. Prior to returning home to Miami, Dr. Adams practiced in Mobile, Alabama for three years. Additionally, Dr. Adams holds a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

A board-certified Obstetrician-Gynecologist, Dr. Adams has a vibrant and challenging practice in North Miami-Dade County. He was the first African American Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the first African American Chief of Staff of North Shore Medical Center. In 1992, he founded the Maternal Child Health Initiative (MCHI), an award-winning model for providing care to at-risk, low-income, pregnant women. The highly successful MCHI utilized a multi-tiered intervention that addressed the psychological, social, and medical needs of expectant mothers. He has served as the Chairman of the Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Jackson North Medical Center for several years.

Today, Dr. Adams serves as immediate past President of the Medical Staff (Chief of Staff) at Jackson North Medical Center. He is the Founder of Metro-Miami OB/GYN Associates, P.A. Additionally, he chairs the Board of Directors of the Sunshine State Health Plan.

Throughout his fruitful career, Dr. Adams' leadership and community service has reached academic, religious, fraternal, and charitable



institutions. He is a member of the prestigious Orange Bowl Committee, Meharry Medical College (Chairman), and Trustee emeritus at Barry University. He is an active member of the board of the Miami Foundation and of the Health Foundation of South Florida. Additionally, he served as Clinical Professor in the Department of OB/GYN of the College of Medicine of Florida International University (2010-2018). He currently hosts a weekly Radio Talk Show—Health Talk on Gospel AM1490 WMBM. He served on the Florida International University’s Foundation Board for 10 years and as Vice Chairman for two of them. He also served as founding Chair for the Florida International University’s Center for Leadership – Alumnus, ’09. He has served on the boards of Bethune Cookman University, Barry University, the Children’s Trust, is the past Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Greater Miami Region of the National Conference of Christian and Jews now (Mosaic Miami), and on the board of the Miami Art Museum, now (PAMM). He is also a proud member of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity—the “Boulé”, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and Alpha Omega Alpha honor medical society. In 2023 he was awarded the H. T. Smith Lifetime Achievement Award by the M-D Chamber of Commerce; and in 2024, he received the United Homecare, Claude Pepper - Thelma Gibson Community Service Award; the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Healthcare Heroes, Equitable Advisors Lifetime Achievement Award; and the EWF Stirrup Entrepreneurship and Community Service Award. Additionally, he is a beloved and active member of the historic St. John Baptist Church where he serves as an Associate Minister and Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the church’s Community Development Corporation.

Dr. Adams has served on the board of directors of the Dade County Medical Association (DCMA) and is a past President of the DCMA. After several years on the board of Trustees of the National Medical Association he subsequently served as the 107th National President representing their nearly 40,000 African American physicians and the patients that they serve.

Dr. Adams is the son of the late Naomi A. Adams and the late Nelson L. Adams, both of whom were educators in the Miami-Dade County School system. Dr. Adams is married to Effie Jones Adams, and they are the proud parents of Victoria and Nelson. Sustained by family ties and guided by spiritual values, Dr. Adams abides by the motto: “To whom much is given, much is required.”



2023-2024

Bachelor of Science in Psychology

Aidaly Alazo
Francisco Almagro
Alondra Alvarado
Esty Amar
Ana Boccalato Moura
Maria Jose Correa
Yuiceses Caceres
Dayana Cuevas Borgese
Gladimar Figueroa Diaz
Hector Garcia Lezcano
Miriam Guerra Monteagudo
Rachel Gonzalez Perez
Yerkis Hernandez
Annia Leiva
Yarisleidys Lugo Nunez
Nayla Martin Martinez
Eduardo Ordonez
Bertha Maria Perez Munoz
Yoana Rodriguez Hernandez *Distinguished Bachelor Award Recipient*
Aileen Sanchez
Diana R. Santos
Sandra Teuntor
Ahmed Urbizo
Sissi Varela Alvarez
Monica Vazquez Figueroa
Jennifer Vilas Alfayate

***Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in
Applied Behavior Analysis***

Jennifer Alvarez
Camila Camacho
Karla Colina Fernandez
Melitza Horta
Maria Teresa Mendez Torres
Kenia Perez



Luz Helena Rodriguez
Yirian Vilma Rodriguez Fustes
Isabella Romero
Deynis Columbie Roque
Yanaika Sanchez
Eleanet Torres Ocana
Rosabel Valdes Peguero

Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education

Luciene Lavilla *Distinguished Bachelor Award Recipient*
Renee Montgomery
Angeline Serrano

Master in Business Administration Healthcare Management

Darryl D. Chaves Guzman *Distinguished Bachelor Award Recipient*
Anylizauri Davila Soto
Caroline Quinones Matos

Master of Science in Exceptional Student Education

Eneida Maria Aguilera Perez
Edmund Castillo *Distinguished Bachelor Award Recipient*
Maria Elena Corea
Daylin Fernandez
Aliette Garcia Casanova
Patricia de la Caridad Gonzalez Rodriguez
Osneidi Caridad Lama Torres
Karla Perdomo
Marianela Rosales
Mara K. Sanchez

Master of Science in Speech and Language Pathology

Sahily Acosta
Ivy Andueza
Carolina Arias
Katherine Barraloga
Savannah Beach
Jessica Nichole Cameron
Jennifer Camacho
Dayari Carbonell



Juliana Cardona
Sharyk Castillo
Adriana Maria Cauneac
Tanzania Zakiyyah Christian
Danielle Christina Cilien *Distinguished Bachelor Award Recipient*
Michelle Marie De La Cruz

Keila Dominguez
Gabriela Espinosa
Rachel S. Estyl
Milvia Roxana Garcia
Sasha Garrido Rojas
Layra Gonzalez
Anaibis Masia
Rosanna Matus
Ariel Montano
Xena Moreira
Rebeca Violeta Nechifor Sabau
Isabella Osorio
Lorena Quesada
Katlyn Rine
Aracelis Rodriguez
Ingrid Roman
Damian Ruiz Hernandez
Ada Santiago
Kesley Rebecca Smith
Jenny Soarez Williams
Rebecca Maria Somarriba
Claude Vazquez
Catalina Wissinger

Master of Science in TESOL

Christian L. Quiñones Torres
Lisha L. Sola Baez

Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Christopher R. Castaneda *Distinguished Master Award Recipient (Campus)*
Luz N. Astacio Rohena *Distinguished Master Award Recipient (Online)*
Hurgens M. Dorcinvil



Danays Jaime
Ingrid Morfi
Stephanie M. Rosa Donato
Noelia Salva Polanco

*Master of Science in Psychology with a Major in
Mental Health Counseling*

Rocio Angelica Abreu
Rachel Acosta Mena
Camila Alberto Munoz
Sheyla Yohani Avila
Lashell Baker
Jenny Alexandra Bernal
Susana Ines Brugues Seleme
Laura Caballero Carrasco
Juan Jose Castillo Perez
Dayanni Cayon
Michelle Marie Compres
Jadiye Concepcion
Ailen De La Vega
Angelica Cruz Serrano
Alba Roselin Diaz Alonso
Maria Jose Diaz Colina
Montserrat Dominguez
Kristen Nicole Douglas
Brande Estime
Katerine Estrada
Solange Delacaridad Florido
Rachel Fontaine
Zakita B. Fulmore-Bain
Carlos A. Garcia De La Torre
Michelle D. Feliberti
Jean Paul Gilmour
Natalia Giannini
Sasha Alexandra Gonzalez
Erika Valdes Gonzalez
Lauren Gutierrez Garcia
Cynthia Hernandez



Yinet Labrada
Eileen J. Lagos
Lorena Landa
Liz Mary Lopez
Shakira Maceda
Maria I. Martinez
Yuleisis Mendez Travieso
Lida Morales Cepero
Sabrina Naranjo
Kiana Nieves Perez
Lisandra Ortega Fong
Odalys Ortega
Patricia O. Pedroso
Karina M. Perez Ruiz
Katherine D. Piedra Puig
Beatriz Ramirez Cardenas
Stephanie Rivas
Mariam Rivero Suarez
Ayremis Rodriguez
Claudia Rodriguez
Liliana Rodriguez
Iara Sant Anna Rondon
Anisley Rubie
Gabriel Harak Rubio Figueroa
Anibel L. Saenz
Eliane Sanchez
Ailadys Sordo
Bernardina Florencia Valdes
Stephanie Veledo
Glenda Verdecia
William Garret Wicks
Cristhiel Zuniga

***Master of Science in Psychology with a Major in
Marriage and Family Therapy***

Eduardo J. Bustillo
Barbara Mercedes Pazos
David V. Nascimento



Yenil Natalie Lopez

Suzel Ramos

Patricia A. Serrano *Distinguished Master Award Recipient*

Master of Science in Psychology with a major in School Counseling

Myrna Lopez

Ailadys Sordo

***Master of Science in Psychology with a Dual Major in Mental Health
Counseling and School Counseling***

Damaris Disla

Yelina Ortiz

Master of Science in General Psychology

Adi Maroko-Afek

Enasha Anglade

Sussy Arencibia

Chabely Artabe Valdes

Sarah Btresh

Carolina Jayde Cardelle

Nicole Cheuk Wai Liu

Mery Cruz Guzman

Melany De Amorim

Evelyn de la Cruz

Daniele De Leone

Glenda Maria Escandell

Imane Fadili

Kaya Sage Frallicciardi

Christina Hernandez

Christina Loisel

Anet Martinez Tacoron

Nicole Martinez

Diana Myles

Holfania Esmeralda Nogueira

Daniel L. O'Brien

Maggie Elias Pacios

Peyton Emily Polk

Esther Ranero Carrazana

Maria F. Reiter



Ciara Michelle Rejuste
Carlos Rocha Pena
Jorge Javier Rodriguez Martinez
Dayna Johnson Roth
Daniela Salinas
Yuslaine Serrano Gutierrez
Dianna Spence
Pedro Antonio Tomeu
Elizabeth Ann Twaits
Jaylin Marie Vidal
Mei-Ling Villafana Abraham
Adriana Zamora Medina

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

Stephany Aguiar
Jorge Alcina *Distinguished Doctor Award Recipient*
Yasmin Arias
Brielle Eileen Barbagello
Leelan Bhagwandeem
Fabiana V. Bracho
Brian K. Dashner
Tanee R. Deans
Andres A. Duarte
Julissa M. Fonseca
Alecia V. Golden
Damaris Gonzalez Crane
Anabel Jabiles
Stacy C. Jimenez
Silvia M. Lugo
Ydsia N. Quintero Ferrer
Stephanie Remedios
Linda Rios Guevara
Katiarina Selena Rodriguez
Neyda Victorero

Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services

Gibson Aristide
Yisel Fernandez



Riad Gatte

Nadine Greene

Hannah Nicole Karolewicz *Distinguished Doctor Award Recipient*

Chineze Martinez

Nathalie N. Morales

Joan Elizabeth Pugh



2024 Distinguished Award Recipients

The Distinguished Award Recipients exemplify our values of excellence in academics and commitment to social responsibility. They are selected by the program faculty.



Yoana Rodriguez, B.S.

2024 Distinguished Bachelor of Science in Psychology Award Recipient

Yoana Rodriguez joined Albizu University in Summer 2022. Born and raised in Cuba, Yoana was surrounded by a loving family and supportive community. From an early age, she exhibited discipline and a drive for academic excellence, always striving for the best grades.

At 16, Yoana emigrated to the United States. She recalls her first two years being particularly challenging as she adjusted to life away from her family and friends and faced the language barrier, speaking no English at the time. Nevertheless, she persevered, excelling in her studies and graduating with outstanding grades.

After exploring her interests, Yoana found her passion for psychology at Albizu University. She was nominated for this award by her professors, who commended her high academic standards, rigorous work ethic, and dedication to the field. Looking ahead, Yoana plans to pursue a master's degree with the goal of becoming a Licensed Mental Health Counselor.

Reflecting on her journey, Yoana shares, "Every single achievement during my years of study is dedicated to my grandma. She was always the one pushing me to be a better and more dedicated student, to finish what I started, and to never give up on my dreams."

Lucienne Lavilla, B.A.

2024 Distinguished Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education Award Recipient

Lucienne Lavilla is committed to continuing her career in education, specifically at the elementary school level. The journey has been both rewarding and demanding, as she has had to balance full-time work with the rigorous demands of full-time study. Despite moments when the challenges felt overwhelming, her unwavering focus on the ultimate goal kept her motivated and resilient. The vision of making a positive impact in the lives of young students served as a constant source of inspiration, driving Lucienne to persevere through every obstacle and moving her toward success in this program.



Lucienne would like to take a moment to express her heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Dean and the finance department. Their support was instrumental in this journey; they went above and beyond to help her secure a scholarship that alleviated the financial responsibilities associated with her education. This assistance not only made it possible for her to concentrate fully on the coursework, but also reinforced her belief in the importance of community and support systems within the educational landscape. She is truly thankful for their contributions and commitment to her success, and she is looking forward to applying the skills and knowledge gained to inspire and educate the next generation of learners.

Darryl D. Chaves Guzman, M.B.A.

2024 Distinguished Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Management Award Recipient

Darryl D. Chaves Guzman is from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. He is an Optometry candidate in the Inter American University of Puerto Rico (IAUPR) School of Optometry, class of 2028. In addition to his academic pursuits, he is a proud husband and father to a 4-month-old son, who was born on the last day of his master's program, April 20, 2024. His wife has been his greatest support, encouraging him through the challenges of balancing family life and studies.

Throughout his master's program, time management was his greatest challenge. He was a full-time student while also working full-time, studying for the Graduate Record Examination, and shadowing an optometrist during his final semester. Despite these challenges, he completed the MBA with determination and perseverance.

Looking to the future, he aspires to become a licensed optometrist and ultimately fulfill his dream of opening his own optical clinic. He is committed to advancing his career, contributing to the field of optometry and eventually be of service to the community as a healthcare provider.

Edmund Castillo, M.S.

2024 Distinguished Master of Science in Exceptional Student Education Award Recipient



Edmund Castillo is driven by a passion for fostering learning and positively impacting students' lives. His studies have primarily focused on special education and behavioral analysis, leading him to pursue the coursework necessary to become a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Edmund's coursework has given him a compact and foundational understanding of behavior, data collection methods, and intervention strategies. Additionally, hands-on experiences through fieldwork have allowed him to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

Despite his enthusiasm, he encountered challenges along the way. Balancing rigorous coursework with part-time jobs and personal commitments, tested his time management skills and resilience. In his first semester, he struggled to adapt to the demands of a master's program, leading to moments of self-doubt. However, seeking support from faculty and peers made a significant difference, teaching him the importance of community and collaboration.

After graduation, Edmund plans to pursue a teaching position in a diverse and inclusive classroom while completing the necessary hours for BCBA certification. His goal is to create an engaging and supportive learning environment where every student can thrive. By continuing studies in educational leadership, he hopes to influence broader systemic changes in the education sector.

Danielle Cilien, M.S.

*2024 Distinguished Master of Science in Speech and Language Pathology
Award Recipient*

Danielle Cilien is a dedicated and compassionate professional in speech-language pathology, driven by a deep belief in the power of communication. Her passion stems from her relationship with her aunt, who has a speech disorder, inspiring her to ensure every individual's voice is heard and respected.

Danielle has built a strong foundation in diagnosing and treating speech, language, and swallowing disorders. Her practical experience includes internships at the Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center and the Debbie



School, where she worked with individuals of all ages. She also participated in research on Expiratory Muscle Strength Training (EMST) to improve phonation in individuals with cervical spinal cord injuries.

An active member of Albizu University's National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) chapter, Danielle served as treasurer and earned certifications from the SPEAK-OUT program and the LEND program. She has also volunteered with the Traumatic Brain Injury Support Group at Jackson Memorial Hospital, supporting patients navigating life post-injury.

Danielle's dedication to helping others and her commitment to professional excellence make her a deserving recipient of the Academic Excellence Award, with a bright future in speech-language pathology.

Christopher Castaneda, M.S.

2024 Distinguished Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Campus) Award Recipient

Christopher Castaneda earned a B.A. in Psychology, with a Minor in Sports Medicine and Entrepreneurship, from the University of Miami in 2021. He was admitted later that year to the M.S. in Industrial Organizational Psychology at Albizu University, Miami Campus. His performance at his practicum placement at the Miami Dade College Homestead Campus, applying change management theories, was exemplary. He also served as an Assessment Analyst at the Miami Dade College North Campus Assessment Center. His academic performance was outstanding, and today he graduates with Distinction.

In his present position as a Change Management Specialist at the University of Miami, Christopher works diligently to develop innovative solutions that enhance user adoption and minimize resistance, to improve business processes. Part of his long-term professional goals is to serve as a Director of Change Management, where he can help organizations effectively navigate transitions and ensure satisfaction for the employer and employee.



Additionally, Christopher envisions establishing his own private consulting firm to provide expert guidance to corporations on their organizational development. He is committed to fostering an inclusive, engaging, and supportive environment in every role that he undertakes. The faculty is proud of his accomplishments and wishes him continued success in all his endeavors.

Luz N. Astacio, M.S.

2024 Distinguished Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Online) Award Recipient

Luz N. Astacio earned a B.A. degree in psychology from the University of Phoenix in 2021 and was later admitted to the M.S. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Albizu University, Miami Campus. Her professional experience included supervisory and management roles in well-known hotel and restaurant chains in Puerto Rico. During her studies, she demonstrated dedication to her academic performance, resilience, and determination. As part of her Final Capstone Projects, she sought to advance her skills in data driven process improvement in work settings and earned the prestigious Lean Six Sigma Green and Black Belt certifications.

Currently, Luz is the Director of Operations for Grupo Colon Gerena overseeing over 1,000 employees. She has successfully led her department to excellence, achieving established goals and winning many awards. Luz has honed her capacity to organize the logistics of projects and communicate effectively within team systems. In her free time, she enjoys spending quality time with her family.

Her long-term professional goals include establishing her own private consulting practice in the field of industrial and organizational psychology, to help private and not-for-profit organizations to meet their desired outcomes. The faculty is proud of her accomplishments and wishes her continued success in all her endeavors.



Patricia A. Serrano, M.S.

2024 Distinguished Master of Science in Psychology Award Recipient

Patricia A. Serrano earned a Surgeon Physician bachelor's degree from Universidad Central de Venezuela, in 1995. She subsequently earned a Master's in Psychiatry degree, in 1999 from Hospital Universitario de Caracas. She practiced there until 2007 as a physician, psychiatrist, and psychotherapist, treating patients with a broad spectrum of mental conditions in hospital and outpatient settings, and also in her own private practice.

In 2022, she was admitted to the M.S. in Psychology program with major in Marriage and Family Therapy at Albizu University, Miami Campus. She conducted her practicum duties in an exemplary manner at M.U. J. E. R., Inc. (Mujeres Unidas por la Justicia, Educación, y Reforma-Women United for Justice, Education, and Reform) where she served immigrant women, families, and children with diverse mental health and life issues. She was also a recipient of the federal Title V Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (PPOHA) graduate grant fellowships in 2023. Her academic performance was outstanding, maintaining a perfect GPA of 4.00 and graduating today with Utmost Distinction.

Patricia is currently exploring options to resume her career as a culturally sensitive psychotherapist in the United States. The faculty is proud of her accomplishments and wishes her continued success in all her endeavors.

Jorge Alcina, Psy.D.

2024 Distinguished Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology Award Recipient

Jorge Alcina is a fifth-year Albizu student in the Psy.D. program currently completing his predoctoral clinical psychology internship at Harvard Medical School (HMS) and Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) for the 2023-2024 year. Working in the Multicultural Assessment and Research Center (MARC), part of MGH's Multicultural Alzheimer's Prevention Program (MAPP), his clinical work is dedicated to the



provision of culturally fair neuropsychological services to individuals from ethnoracially-diverse backgrounds.

During graduate school, he was awarded a grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), as part of a training program for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) and other substance use disorders (SUDs) in an integrated care capacity. His doctoral project centered on the characterization of the protracted (or post-acute) withdrawal syndrome from alcohol use disorder (AUD) in terms of its biobehavioral features as well as the moderative role of cumulative life stress on the syndrome. His current research during internship focuses on the interplay among lifestyle, medical, substance use-related and other psychiatric factors, and their relationship to cognitive resilience in Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD), particularly in minoritized populations.

His work was recently highlighted as part of MGH's National Mentoring Month celebration. He has recently accepted a post-doctoral offer at his current internship site for the 2024-2026 training cycle, where he will continue his work related to dementia management and prevention.

Hannah N. Karolewicz, Ph.D.

2024 Distinguished Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services Award Recipient

Hannah N. Karolewicz is a licensed mental health therapist. She has almost 10 years of experience working with children and families, focusing primarily on teens and young adults who are facing life challenges, and individuals suffering from anxiety, ADHD, autism, depression, relationship issues, self-confidence, and decision making.

She enrolled in Albizu's PhD program in Human Services in 2019, considering its curricular design with a specialization in children and families and the virtual hybrid classes. Her five years in the program allowed her to work in a personalized smaller setting with strong academic support and effective use of resources that have been beneficial for her future. During the COVID-19 pandemic, distance learning presented many challenges. The adaptability of the faculty and staff



during this time helped her navigate the demands that the pandemic presented and were essential to her success.

Currently, she continues to grow her private practice and has further plans of expansion, considering teaching opportunities to give back to other students who may be in similar situations. Among other career aspirations, she hopes to one day work directly with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Graduation Honors Criteria:

Undergraduate cumulative grade point average:

Cum Laude - 3.33-3.49

Magna Cum Laude - 3.50-3.95

Summa Cum Laude - 3.96-4.00

Graduate cumulative grade point average:

Distinction - 3.60-3.94

Utmost Distinction - 3.95-4.00

Graduate students receiving honors cannot:

- ~ Receive a grade of C or lower in any course.
- ~ Receive a NP in or repeated courses, practicum, Internship, Dissertation/Doctoral Project, and/or Comprehensive Examination