



Commencement Ceremony Miami Campus

October 9, 2026

Program

Salutation

Aperture

Message from the Student Council

Ms. Samira Sainsurin

Message from the President

Dr. Nelson E. Soto

Introduction of the Commencement Speaker

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dr. Marisel Del-Rio Roberts

Message from the Commencement Speaker

Dr. Wendi S. Williams

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, Licentiates, 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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Behavioral Business & Innovation Technologies Program
Dr. Tonya White, DBA, Director, MBA in Healthcare Management Program
Dr. Tracy Crosby, EdD, Coordinator, Bachelor's of Science in Language &
Behavioral Disorders Program
Dr. Tracy Crosby, EdD, Director, Master's of Science in Speech
& Language Pathology Program
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Commencement Speaker



Wendi S. Williams, PhD, is a psychologist, advocate, and educator whose work bridges psychology, education, and leadership. Over a career spanning 2 decades, Williams' work has focused on the inner lives of Black women and girls, using deep knowledge of their experiences to develop culturally responsive educational and psychological interventions. Applying frameworks from liberation psychology and Black, womanist, and intersectional feminist theory, she has developed strategies that drive leader and organizational change.

Dr. Williams has served in senior academic leadership roles, including provost and senior vice president at Fielding Graduate University, and held positions at Mills College School of Education and Bank Street College of Education. Through her consultation practice, she develops organizational interventions that enable leaders and teams to reach high performance while fostering sustainable equity practice.

As APA President, Williams aims to advance her campaign theme, “**Radically Well Together.**” She emphasizes the critical role psychologists play as scientists, practitioners, advocates and teachers—and above all, as leaders who can apply psychological science to promote wellness across communities. “The world needs us, and we need a healthier world,” she has said. “It will be my honor to continue this journey as president of our association.” Williams has held numerous leadership roles within APA, including president of APA’s Division 35, the Society for the Psychology of Women, and the division’s representative on APA’s Council of Representatives. She previously served as president of Division 35’s Section on Black Women and contributed to APA Division 17’s Presidential Taskforce Against Racism in K–12 Schools. She has also been a member of Divisions 44 and 45, as well as of the Association of Black Psychologists and Society for Indian Psychology.

Williams earned a BS in psychology from the University of California, Davis, an MA in general psychology from Pepperdine University, and a PhD in counseling psychology with an emphasis on multicultural psychology and family systems from Georgia State University.

Albizu University is proud to welcome Dr. Wendi S. Williams as the 2026 Commencement Speaker.

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Ms. Samira Sainsuran, Vocal

Bachelor of Arts in Exceptional Student Education

Mario Patterson

Bachelor of Science in Psychology

Adriano Cuesta Rodriguez
Alexis Javier Fraga Sanchez
Alicia Infante
Ana C. Bucaro
Ana Mary Riquenes
Anakaren Rivera Soto
Andrea Holguin Reyes
Andrew Lorenzo Comas
Annabel Mercedes Tato
Antonella Espinoza
Anyse M. Rodriguez
Arianni Niebla Bello
Arlette Gonzalez Garcia
Armando Pelaez
Clara Natalia Flores
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Dainne Perez Marquez
David Falcon
Dayana Falls Futiel
Daymari Davila Colina
Denise Barrios Gonzalez
Diego Borja
Ediney Acosta
Eliany Gonzalez Nerey
Elizabeth Giuliana Teodori
Emily McCall

Ernesto Perez de Medina Baez
Flavia Alonso
Ghitman Gomez Perez
Indirah Naranjo Lopez
Jennys Alvarez Perez
Jessie Hechavarria
Jesus Alberto Turmero Gonzalez
Jose Carlos Nieves Reyes
Katherine Collazo Morales
Kervine Gervil
Ketty A Garcia
Laiza Maria Fernandez
Leyanis Delgado Diaz
Leydis Baluja Rodriguez
Lilian De la Torre
Lilian Rodriguez Diaz
Liz Padron Leon
Lorena Hernandez Garcia
Lucy Marimon Alonso
Madelaine Mendez Gonzalez
Maicely Guerra Castillo
Marbelis Hernandez Ramos
Marco Antonio Toledo Marante
Melanie Chao Diaz
Melanie Gonzalez
Melanie Maria Cainas
Melanie Ramos
Merlyn Gonzalez
Michael Diaz-Garcia
Midialis Gonzalez
Mirta Beatriz Alonso Estrada
Monica Hernandez Cabrera
Naiviv Gonzalez Ramirez
Natalie Christine Hernandez
Nora T. Tirador-Ochoa
Orampa Ortiz Jordana
Pamela Palacio
Raydel Encarnacion
Rebeca Esther Puertas Ortigas
Sayuri Diaz
Stephanie Nunez
Thais Yulia De Armas Victores
Thalia Mas

Valentina Velez Garcia
Vicky Rojas Reyes
Walter Arnoldo Bonilla
Yadira MacHado
Yaima Santos Alfonso
Yainet Ossorio
Yaitza Paredes Navarro
Yajaira Perez
Yanelis Castro Benitez
Yanelys Caridad Perez Cabrera
Yanit Tarrio
Yislet Barbara Miron
Yolanda Tapia
Yudit Barrios
Yudriany Alvarez Amaro
Yumara Maristan Garcia

Graduate Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis

Alba R. Diaz Alonso
Alejandro Simon
Aliorky Garcia Aguiar
Anabel Quintana Pino
Carla Nicole Rodriguez Cortes
Carolina Ferro
Ceilan Ojeda Gonzalez
Coralis Lebron Lopez
Daniel Rodriguez Garcia
Daniela Alexandra Casanova Mindiola
Daylin Fernandez Hernandez
Daynell Santana Echevarria
Eddys Maestre
Ingris Echazabal Garcia
Ivelisse Rivera Marquez
Joaly Tojeiro
Karllos Neves
Katheryn Perez Salazar
Krystal Abreu
Leisa Castellanos Rico
Lilian Roxana Vazquez Urquijo
Lilien Hernandez Soler
Lisandra Ibelin Ramirez

Margarita Del Valle Chavez
Maria Alejandra Lemus
Mariam Rivero
Mayra Jimenez
Mayret Vina Amaro
Mercedes M. Lago
Michele Aurignac
Mileisy Gonzalez Rodriguez
Mindraguiz Gonzalez
Odalys Ortega
Randy La Villa
Rosa Maria Bermudez
Saimy Hernandez Avila
Sergio M Casariego Vega
Stephanie Pineiro
Thelma Ileen Long
Yarimar Colon Poggi
Yeneysy Trujillo
Yisell Moran
Yusnier Diaz Hernandez

Master in Business Administration Healthcare Management

Patricia Michelle Hernandez-Roman
Shadid Esther Matos Picard

Master of Science in Speech and Language Pathology

Amanda De la Caridad Sanchez
Amber Khan
Andrea Burns
Andrea Zapata
Camila Torres Hernandez
Claudia M Acosta Mirabal
Diana Revilla
Emily Anne Velez
Gabriela Maria Reyes
Grabiela Gutierrez Garcia
Inarys Caridad Cardo Gargallo
Isabella Rodriguez
Jazmine Jagessar
Julie Anne Sandoval
Kayli Chung

Laila Nickol Shalbafian
Lissette Gonzalez
Lorena Andarcio
Mayrelis Berrios Rosario
Monica Simon
Nicole Marie Martin
Pamela Galeano
Paula Santana
Rachel Tanis
Roxanne Chrystel Shaw
Samuel Justin Hidalgo
Saul Tejada
Siani Gomez
Sophia Ramos
Sophia Victoria Echemendia
Stephanie Naylor
Yeilin C. Hernandez Lopez

Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Carmen Jardine
Ivondelisse De Jesus Martinez

Master of Science in Counseling

Marianne Roselis Lobo
Sophia A. Rodriguez

Master of Science in Psychology

Alina de los Angeles Borbonet Ferrer
Alissa Marie Perez
Brittney Portuondo
Diana Garcia
Ernesto Reyes
Gabriela De la Portilla
Maday Armas
Saniya Amin
Saritha Regina Pedreira Chagas Marino
Viviana Gutierrez Acevedo

Master of Science in General Psychology

Alanna Rufino
Burdilla Camron
Catalina Rodriguez
Christina Arrieta
Clarisa Roye
Claudia M. Soto
Dominique Mai Alexis
Dylan Sankar
Edwlyn Delancy-Archie
Gabriela Diaz Mesa
Haydeelis Hernandez
Helia De La Caridad Baez Armas
Isabela Piclum Villela Cortes
Isabela Iglesias
Jada Swindle
Jennifer Gutierrez
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Laura Pinera Ruiz
Lisset Franco
Liz K. Quintana Navarro
Mariella A. Batista Colon
Maya Obehi Ehikhamenor
Maynela Quinones Mendez
Nechomo Cole
Raul A. Jimenez-Cuebas
Rhea Manoj Patel
Sheila Gonzalez
Yania Bellido de Luna
Yoselyn Gomez

Master of Science in Exceptional Student Education

Indira M.Castillo
Jany Perez
Juana C. Roque
Kirenia Rodriguez Gonzalez
Lisdanay Campos Santiesteban
Maylin Garcia Gonzalez
Melitza Horta
Odeivys Lazo Torriente
Orlando Hernandez Amaral

Yudania Alfonso Rodriguez
Yulieth Leon Gutierrez

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

Abigail Farfan
Alexandra Cabrera Gerena
Andre Alexander Phillips
Carolina Jayde Cardelle
Claudia Cedeno Nadal
Cristina I. Sanz
Ednei Estevez
Gabriela Corticchia
Griela Chirolde Rodriguez
Hannah Michelle Browning
Ivana G. Martinez
James Vincent Ugent
Jasmine Jimena Appolon
Jennifer Martin
Jessica Elaine Balter
Jessica Martin
Jorge Javier Rodriguez-Martinez
Katiana Eliz Hernandez Ruiz
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Lysmary Cadavieco
Maggie Elias Pacios
Maria Cristina Villena Odriozola
Martesha D. Collins
Megan Ronuk Patel
Mei-Ling Villafana Abraham
Nicole Stroude
Rebecca Villalba
Samantha Waters
Skylar Marie Slawiak
Sussy Arencibia
Tiffany Konada Needham
Valery G. Zullo
Yly Morales

Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services

Guadalupe Maria Zelaya
Raquel Natalia Reyes
Yoel A. Velazquez-Oliver

2026 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.*

Walter Bonilla

Bachelor of Science in Psychology

Mario Patterson

*Bachelor of Arts in Exceptional Student Education with a concentration
in autism spectrum disorder (ASD)*

Marianne Lobo

Master of Science in Counseling

Yeilin Hernandez

Master of Science in Speech and Language Pathology

Maylin Garcia Rodriguez

Master of Science in Exceptional Student Education

Viviana Guitierrez Acevedo

Master of Science in Psychology

Ivandelisse De Jesus

Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Yly Morales

Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

Yoel Alberto Velazquez-Oliver

Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services

Walter Bonilla

2026 Distinguished Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Applied Behavior Analysis Program Student Award

Walter Bonilla is graduating from Albizu University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a minor in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), earning a 4.0 GPA throughout his program. Originally from El Salvador, Walter immigrated to the United States in 2001 and overcame significant language and cultural barriers as he built a new life and pursued his educational and professional goals. His path to this achievement was neither short nor simple, and the discipline and determination he brought to it are reflected in every part of his record.

As a husband, father of two sons, and full-time Registered Behavior Technician (RBT), Walter carried responsibilities that would challenge any student, yet he balanced work, family, and academic excellence without letting any of them slip. He credits much of his success to the steady encouragement of his wife and family, whose support helped him stay focused and motivated even in the most demanding stretches of his studies.

For more than four years, Walter has provided ABA services to children and families in his community, translating what he learned in the classroom into meaningful care for others. Following graduation, he plans to pursue a graduate degree in ABA and become a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), deepening his ability to serve the families who rely on him. Walter is honored to represent the Bachelor of Psychology program and grateful to the faculty, colleagues, and faith community who walked alongside him throughout this journey.

Mario Patterson

2026 Distinguished Bachelor of Arts in Exceptional Student Education with a concentration in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Program Student Award

While attending Albizu University, Mario Patterson focused on exceptional performance and personal accountability for his own growth. During this time, he worked as a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) while earning his Bachelor of Arts in Exceptional Student Education with a concentration in autism spectrum disorder (ASD), using scientific, evidence-based approaches to support children with developmental and behavioral needs. Balancing full-time work with full-time study, Mario strengthened his ability to connect classroom learning with real-world practice, making tangible contributions to the lives of students, families, and the multidisciplinary teams he works alongside.

Beyond his academic record, Mario has shown himself to be a leader in his field, bringing professionalism and a genuine commitment to service. Collaborating with educators, therapists, and families, he helps implement individualized, evidence-based interventions that create opportunities for positive behavioral outcomes, stronger communication skills, and greater independence for the children in his care. These experiences have confirmed his dedication to lifelong learning and to advocating for people with diverse needs. Albizu University has played a significant role in shaping his professional development, giving him the knowledge, skills, and ethical foundation to make a lasting impact in the fields of special education and applied behavior

analysis. Mario is grateful to the University for its commitment to advocating for the quality of life of individuals with special needs, and for the values it has instilled in him throughout this journey.

Marianne Lobo

2026 Distinguished Master of Science in Counseling Program Student Award

The Master of Science in Counseling Program has selected Marianne Lobo as the Distinguished Graduate of the inaugural graduating class of the Master of Science in Counseling program. This award is in recognition of the character, professionalism, and genuine commitment to the counseling profession that she demonstrated throughout her time at Albizu University. Marianne approached her development as a counselor with dignity, grace, humility, and a deep respect for diversity and the lived experiences of others. Her passion for helping those in need was evident not simply through her academic work, but through the compassion, kindness, and genuine helping presence she consistently brought to her interactions with faculty, peers, and those she served.

Most notably, Marianne demonstrated a natural connection to the role and identity of a professional counselor. The qualities at the heart of effective counseling; empathy, warmth, respect, authenticity, and the ability to make others feel heard and valued, seemed to come naturally to her. As her knowledge and clinical skills developed, these qualities allowed her to assimilate into the counselor role with remarkable ease and authenticity. She became a trusted source of encouragement and support for her peers and was consistently a pleasure for faculty to teach and work alongside. Marianne represents the type of counselor our program aims to develop and contribute to the profession: knowledgeable and skilled, but also deeply human, compassionate, and committed to serving others. We have every confidence that she will be an exceptional counselor, and it is our privilege to recognize Marianne Lobo as our Distinguished Graduate and an outstanding representative of Albizu University's inaugural graduating class.

Yeilin Hernandez

2026 Distinguished Master of Science in Speech and Language Pathology Program Student Award

Yeilin was an exceptionally hardworking and dedicated graduate student who consistently demonstrated outstanding scholastic achievement, strong leadership, and professionalism. She approached her work with compassion, integrity, and a genuine commitment to learning and serving others. Throughout her graduate program, Yeilin maintained a strong commitment to academic excellence. Her consistently high-quality individual and group assignments reflected not only her intellectual ability but also her intrinsic motivation, work ethic, and drive for success. In addition to her academic accomplishments, she has distinguished herself through notable clinical and research achievements. Her focus, perseverance, and passion for lifelong learning embody the qualities recognized by this award.

Throughout her clinical experiences, Yeilin demonstrated maturity, responsibility, and respect for both her clients and colleagues. Her clinical experience included internships at Beyond Speaking Rehab and Life Care Center of Orlando, allowing her to work with clients across the lifespan. At Life Care Center of Orlando, she provided evaluation and treatment for adults with cognitive-linguistic deficits and swallowing disorders, with a focus on language rehabilitation and dysphagia management. At Beyond Speaking Rehab, she delivered therapy to pediatric clients, targeting early language development, AAC, and feeding therapy within a collaborative, multidisciplinary team. Both her supervisors provided outstanding reviews of her professional and clinical work.

Yeilin's unwavering pursuit of excellence, combined with her academic accomplishments, clinical skills, and dedication to serving others, distinguishes her as an exceptionally deserving recipient of the Academic Excellence Award. She exemplifies the highest standards of the speech-language pathology profession and demonstrates tremendous promise as a future leader in the field.

Maylin Garcia Rodriguez

2026 Distinguished Master of Science Degree in Exceptional Student Education with a concentration in Varying Exceptionalities Program Student Award

Maylin Garcia Gonzalez holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and has worked as a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT), supporting children with diverse learning and behavioral needs. While completing her Master of Science Degree in Exceptional Student Education with a concentration in varying exceptionalities at Albizu University, she balanced full-time professional responsibilities with her academic commitments, demonstrating dedication, perseverance, and a strong commitment to serving students and families. Her experience in psychology, special education, and behavior intervention has strengthened her passion for promoting inclusive educational opportunities and improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

Earning this degree from Albizu University has been one of the most meaningful accomplishments of her academic and professional journey. The program gave her a strong foundation in evidence-based practices, inclusive education, and advocacy for students with varied learning needs. Throughout her studies, Maylin benefited from the support and dedication of the university's faculty, staff, and academic community, whose commitment to student success fostered both professional and personal growth. The university's emphasis on diversity, compassion, service, and excellence helped prepare her to make a meaningful impact in the field of education and in the lives of the students and families she serves.

Viviana Gutierrez Acevedo

2026 Distinguished Master of Science in Psychology Program Student Award

Viviana earned a Bachelor's degree in psychology from Universidad Centroccidental Lisandro Alvarado in her native Venezuela in 2015. She practiced there as a psychologist and organizational consultant, providing mental health care and delivering corporate training programs. In Spring 2022, Viviana 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 All in One Solutions Counseling Center where she served substance abuse populations. Her academic performance was outstanding, maintaining a perfect GPA of 4.00 and graduating today with Utmost Distinction.

Viviana is the Home Study Post Release Service Caseworkers' Supervisor at Church World Service in Miami. She honors the values of compassion, resilience, and service that her family instilled in her. In addition to her work, she has volunteered at several religious organizations to assist youth and family groups. She has also provided psychological support to those affected by political persecution and torture as part of her humanitarian mission to advocate for others. The faculty is proud of her accomplishments and wishes her continued success in all her endeavors.

Ivondelisse De Jesus

2026 Distinguished Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology Online Program Student Award

Ivondelisse earned a B.A. degree in psychology from Ana G. Mendez University System in 2016, and was admitted to the M.S. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Albizu University, Miami Campus in Fall 2022. Her professional experience included customer service and human resources specialist roles. During her studies, she demonstrated dedication to her academic performance. As part of her Final Capstone Projects, Ivondelisse sought to advance her skills in data driven process improvement in work settings, and earned the prestigious Lean Six Sigma Black Belt certifications. Today, she graduates with Distinction.

Currently, Ivondelisse is the Executive Assistant to the Chief of People Officer (COP) at AAA, Inc. She is also a certified coach and an Inclusion and Belonging advisor. She values engaging in relationship building, supporting management diversity initiatives, and leading employee assistance projects. In her free time, she enjoys art exhibits, singing, public speaking, and connecting with nature. The faculty is proud of her accomplishments and wishes her continued success in all her endeavors.

Yly Morales

2026 Distinguished Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology Program Student Award

Yly Morales, PsyD, is currently completing a postdoctoral fellowship at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, Florida, during the 2026–2027 training year, where she serves as a Psycho-Oncology and Pain Psychology Resident. Her clinical work focuses on providing psychological assessment and evidence-based interventions to individuals living with cancer and chronic pain across outpatient, inpatient, and hospice settings.

She was awarded the Title V PPOHA Graduate Fellowship Award on four occasions in recognition of outstanding academic achievement among Hispanic American students. She also received the Florida AHEC Scholars Program Scholarship in recognition of her commitment to a career in healthcare, a Rehabilitation Psychology Conference Student Scholarship to support the presentation of her research, and an Albizu Student Research Award to present her work at the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) conference.

She has held numerous leadership positions at both the university and national levels. Nationally, she served as an American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS) Member-at-Large for two years, as an APAGS Liaison to the APA Membership Board, and as an APAGS Liaison to the APA Committee on Aging (CONA). She also served as an American Psychological Association Campus Ambassador. At Albizu University's Miami Campus, she held leadership positions including Student Council Vice President, Neuropsychology Club President and Secretary, and Psi Chi Public Relations Officer.

Her professional service and community engagement have included serving as an APAGS Student Diversity Initiative Award Applicant Reviewer, volunteering with Shake-A-Leg Miami and the South Florida Spinal Cord Injury Support Group, and participating as a student volunteer at a Spinal Cord Injury Exposition. She also served as a student organizer for multiple professional speaker series at Albizu University. In addition, she was a student representative for the Clinical Psychology doctoral program during the university's APA reaccreditation process, participated as a representative for prospective applicants to the Clinical Psychology doctoral program, and represented psychology graduate students nationally during an APA Presidential Town Hall.

Her doctoral research examined the emerging applications of virtual reality-delivered interventions for chronic pain among U.S. Veterans, with particular attention to the potential role of technology-based interventions in addressing chronic pain. Her current research focuses on sleep quality among individuals with traumatic brain injury and chronic pain. She plans to present her dissertation research at an upcoming APA conference and her current research during Tampa VA Research and Education Week in 2027.

Yoel Alberto Velázquez-Oliver

2026 Distinguished Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services Program Student Award

Yoel Velázquez-Oliver was born and raised in Guayama, Puerto Rico, where he developed the intellectual curiosity and discipline that would define an exceptional career in public service and scholarship. He pursued his undergraduate education in Natural Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Río Piedras campus, and completed a Master of Planning at the same institution, where he also pursued advanced graduate studies in statistics and economics. Yoel has dedicated his career to the rigorous application of planning, data analysis, and policy evaluation in service of institutions and communities.

As Assistant Vice-President of Planning at Universidad del Este, he led university-wide strategic planning, coordinated accreditation renewal efforts, and directed institutional policy formulation and evaluation. As Statistics Project Manager at the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, he directed the Puerto Rico Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index survey, managed large-scale economic data systems, and co-authored policy-relevant reports on environmental and human development indicators. He has served continuously as Adjunct Faculty teaching statistics, planning methods, and economics in the Graduate School of Planning at the UPR.

As Director of Planning and Institutional Research at Albizu University from 2018 to 2025, Yoel developed and implemented a comprehensive data system, incorporating key performance indicators, market analysis and pricing strategies, that provided the president and board of directors with the evidence-based intelligence needed to navigate consequential decisions and to sustain steady institutional growth throughout that period. He led the university's strategic planning process, ensuring that Albizu's leadership remained continuously informed and strategically aligned with the external forces shaping higher education in Puerto Rico and across the nation. He currently serves as Research Scientist in Planning and Evaluation at the UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, where he continues his commitment to evidence-based institutional development.

Employing advanced statistical models, Yoel's doctoral dissertation evaluated whether the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (the EPPP) serves as a fair gateway or an inequitable barrier for Hispanic graduates of Clinical Psychology doctoral programs in their pursuit of licensure. An article reporting the far-reaching research findings of his dissertation is now under final review for publication in Training and Education in Professional Psychology (TEPP), an APA peer-reviewed journal.

Yoel is graduating with a 4.0 GPA. He is a pianist who accompanies his wife Shakira, a gifted singer, in their church every Sunday.

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