

# Embracing Diversity in Recruitment of Trainees, Faculty and Staff

Presented by Dr. Maria 'Mercedes' Avila and Laura Rodríguez López

*Friday, March 27, 2020*

*A Webinar from AUCD's National Training Directors Council*



**Dr. Maria 'Mercedes' Avila** is Associate Professor of Pediatrics, the Health Equity and Inclusive Excellence Liaison, and the Director of the Vermont Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Program at the University of Vermont (UVM) Larner College of Medicine. She has been involved in numerous federal programs related to behavioral health disparities, maternal and child health, disability and advocacy, and addressing and eliminating health disparities and inequities. Dr. Avila's equity workshops have reached 7500 providers across 154 organizations in 27 states. Through her local, state, and national work, Dr. Avila has received 12 national, regional, and state teaching, service, and research awards. The 2019 most recent recognitions include the Western Connecticut Health Network Global Health Leadership and Humanitarian Award, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) Director's Award, UVM's Outstanding Contribution to Medical Education, and the Vermont Women in Higher Education Sister Elizabeth Candon Award for Distinguished Service.



**Laura Rodríguez López** is the Training Director for the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC), the University of South Florida (USF) University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). She is also the program director for the Positive Behavior Support graduate certificate, and coordinates the master's degree in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health – Developmental Disabilities focus area both offered at USF. Laura is the point of contact for all trainees, provides the core curriculum to students mentored by FCIC faculty, is responsible for on-going recruitment efforts, and collection of student-related evaluation data. She has a B.A. in Psychology & Political Sciences from the University of Puerto Rico, an MA in Education Leadership and Administration from Argosy University, and is pursuing her Ed.D in Program Development with a focus on Educational Innovation from USF. She has extensive experience in student and academic affairs and is particularly interested in developing out-of-the box recruitment practices increasing diversity and inclusion in behavioral health academic programs focusing on developmental disabilities.



# EMBRACING DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT OF TRAINEES, FACULTY AND STAFF

Laura Rodríguez López



# Agenda

- Short introduction
- Some Diversity Facts
- What FCIC has been doing?
- Diversity Pipeline
  - OJT and Community Scholars
  - Graduate (Inclusion) Scholars

# About me & FCIC

- New training director
- Minority member with a unique higher ed journey
- Family member of a person with disabilities
- UCEDD



# Enrollment Facts

- *“Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may never learn about opportunities available to them on the graduate level. If they do go to graduate school, many feel isolated within a community where few others (if any) look like them or share their experience” (Cassuto, 2019, para. 3).*



- *“In 2016 only 15% of all doctorates awarded by U.S. universities went to African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, although those three groups together represent more than 30% of the U.S. population, and about 35% of the population that might be considered of doctoral-graduate age” (Cassuto, 2019, para. 2).*

- The social and behavioral sciences field attracts a moderate number of students into graduate programs grabbing 34.6% of accepted graduated applications in the US (Okahana & Zhou, 2019). But data show that minority students remain substantially underrepresented in graduate education overall.

- In 2018, of all graduate students enrolled in social and behavioral graduate programs in the US (excluding dreamers) only 32% identified as part of a minority compared to 58.6% of their white peers (Okahana & Zhou, 2019).
  - Latino 12.7 %
  - American Indian/Alaska Native .6%
  - Asian 5.4%
  - Black 13.1%
  - Pacific Islander .2%

# FCIC's Diversity #s

- FCIC trainees currently include:
  - 22% Hispanic/Latino
  - 20% Black/African American
  - 7% Asian
  - 5% have a disability
  - 25% have a relationship with disability t

# Holistic Admissions

- Comprehensive Review of Applications
- Accounts for:
  - Socio-Economic Differences
  - Cultural Differences
- Addresses Implicit Bias

# Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Graduate Certificate

- **100% Online Program**
- **Rolling Admission (Fall, Spring & Summer)**
- **Admission Requirements**
  - BA/BS degree from a regionally accredited university, with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.
- **12 credit hours total**
- **Finish in as little as three semesters**

- Deepen your understanding of how to apply Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- Learn from expert faculty in the field
- Access a national network of resources through our University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service (UCEDD)
- Participants come from: education, mental health, early childhood education, social work, school administration, etc.



## Master of Science in Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health: Developmental Disabilities

- **100% Online Program**
- 39 credit hours
- Two tracks to choose from:
  - Thesis in CABH
  - Applied Field Experience  
**(GRE scores waived this selected track)**
- Access a national network of resources through our University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service (UCEDD)

- Non-clinical program that prepares students to serve in public and non-profit agencies and schools.
- Focus on child and adolescent behavioral health, cultural competence, behavioral health policy, and research & evaluation.
- Receive interdisciplinary training that prepares you to provide services to children and adolescents with developmental disabilities and mental health needs.



## Ph.D. in Behavioral & Community Sciences

- On campus & online classes available.
- 90 credit hours
- Multiple specializations available, including:
  - Developmental Disabilities
  - Positive Behavior Interventions & Support
- Access a national network of resources through our University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research & Service (UCEDD)
- An interdisciplinary program that prepares students to conduct research to enhance the quality of life and productivity of individuals with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges.
- Students and mentors will design an individualized program in area of focus.
- Potential sources of funding include Graduate Assistantships, Fellowships, Scholarships, and Research Assistantships.



# Core Curriculum Modules

- Individualized Trainee Learning Plan
- Trainee Commons
- Mandatory Learning Modules in:
  - Orientation to AUCD & FCIC
  - Introduction to Positive Behavior Support
  - Cultural Competence
  - Disproportionate Discipline
- Modules available to the public for free
- Modules translated to Spanish

# Diversity Pipeline

- Conscious and directed effort at implementing strategies to attract students from underrepresented minorities into the behavioral health field.

# Community Scholars

- On-the-Job Training
- Coaching
- Self-Advocacy Training
- Policy Training
- Short-term Trainees



# Graduate (Inclusion) Scholars

- Focus on recruitment, retention, professional development, and financial support. Includes:
  - Summer Workshop to prep for grad school
  - Individualized training plans (need/wants)
  - Mentoring
  - Graduate Assistantships
  - Long-term trainees

# References

- Byars-Winston, A., Gutierrez, B., Topp, S., & Carnes, M. (2011). Integrating theory and practice to increase scientific workforce diversity: A framework for career development in graduate research training. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, 10(4), 357–367. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.10-12-0145>
- Cassuto, L. (2019, January). How to increase graduate-school diversity the right way. <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/2152-how-to-increase-graduate-school-diversity-the-right-way?cid=VTEVPMSED1>
- Okahana, H., & Zhou, E. (2019). *Graduate enrollment and degrees: 2008 to 2018*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.
- Weber, S., Smith, J., Ayers, K., & Gerhardt, J. (2019). Fostering disability advocates: A framework for training future leaders through interprofessional education. *Psychological Services*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000386>

# Embracing Diversity in Recruitment of Trainees, Faculty and Staff

*Moving Beyond Diversity and Inclusion towards  
Equity and Justice*



The University  
of Vermont

LARNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Maria 'Mercedes' Avila, PhD, MSW, MED  
Associate Professor of Pediatrics  
Vermont LEND Director



**VT LEND**

preparing leaders  
across health professions

# Program Self- Assessment

---

## **Organizational Self- Assessment in Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CALC)**

- Evaluated how VT LEND as a program was culturally responsive
- Completed in 2011, 2015, 2019 (CLCADO, TAACT)

## **Results**

Overall need to diversify program at all levels- **faculty/staff/leadership, trainees and curriculum**

- In 2011, curriculum had 3 graduate class sessions focused on CALC
- In 2015, 4 seminars focused on CALC; with 3 hours of orientation training on CALC
- In 2018, every LEND seminar includes core CALC concepts

# Changing Ourselves and Our Programs

---

- **Institutionalized Cultural Knowledge**
- **Targeted recruitment**
- **Curriculum Changes**
- **Faculty and Staff Diversity**
  - 2009-2010 100% White,
  - since 2015 ~50% of Faculty and Staff are Racially/Ethnically diverse
- **Trainee Diversity**
  - 2009-2010 100% White,
  - since 2015 50% of Trainees and Fellows are Racially/Ethnically Diverse
- **Advisory Council**
  - reflects the demographics of the populations served

# VT LEND Graduate Courses

---

## **Interdisciplinary Seminar in NDD I & II**

- 3 graduate credits each; online

## **Changes**

- Integration of CALC into every class session
- Readings by researchers from underrepresented groups & videos from people with disabilities and families from different cultural groups
- Increased number of classes with CALC content as primary focus  
Guest lectures from culturally diverse faculty from other LEND programs
- Decolonizing perspectives
- Language used to teach about disability and underserved communities

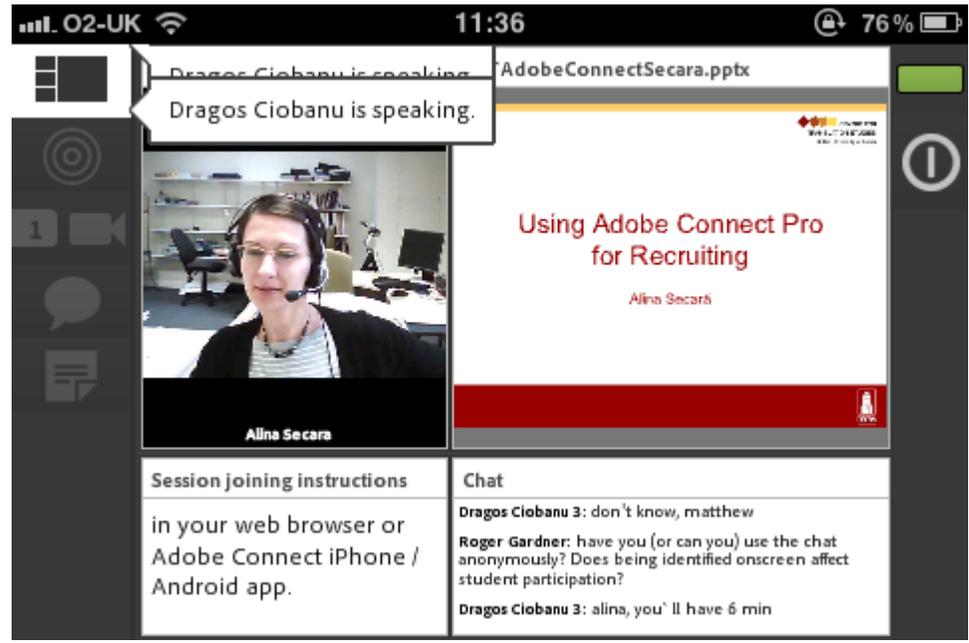
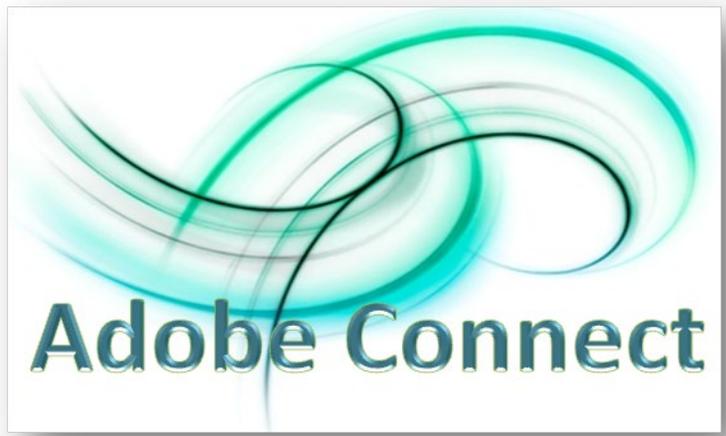
# CALC Topics in Graduate Courses & Training

---

- Racism: Health Disparities & Cultural Competence
- Health Literacy/Health Equity and Language Access
- Life Course and Social Determinants of Health
- Bias Awareness
- Public Health/Eugenics
- Cultural Perspectives of Health, Disability & Self-Determination: American Indian Focus
- Cultural Perspectives of Health, Disability & Self-Determination: Caribbean Native Focus
- Working with Cultural Brokers & Interpreters
- Home visits with parents from underrepresented groups who have children with disabilities

# Fully Distance Accessible

2019-2020 Majority of trainees/faculty used distance technology



# Two Part Advisory Council

---

- Health Disparities and Cultural Competence Advisory Council (Members of immigrant, former refugee, Native communities)
- State and local leaders (disability, advocacy, family, health, mental health, etc.), parents of CYSHN

# Recruitment and Retention

---

## ■ **Faculty/Staff/Leadership**

- Reflect the demographics of our trainees/fellows, community, and US

## ■ **Mentoring**

- Incorporates key aspects of cultural humility, structural competence, social determinants of health, National CLAS
- Faculty/staff/leadership trained in meaningfully understanding systemic oppression, -isms, decolonizing approaches

## ■ **Trainees/Fellows**

- have access to “brave” spaces where they can dialogue, learn and grow about systemic/structural problems in our society
- become change agents and advocates

## ■ **Community**

- VT LEND works with communities and not in or on communities
- we continuously work to build meaningful partnerships

# 2019-2020 Progress Report Highlights

---

- 55 CE activities – 2 local, 35 statewide, 8 in other states, 3 regional and 3 national venues impacting 3,645 participants
- 35 products - posters, publications, presentation, workshops, videos, keynotes, press communication, web-based products and reports
- To this date, we have provided CALC technical assistance and training to 27 other UCEDD and LEND programs

# Lessons Learned

---

- Weekly mentoring sessions faculty & trainees spend at least 50% of their time discussing CALC issues
- Recognize many disability concepts in US may not 'fit' into other cultural views, e.g. independence is goal of adulthood, ways teams respond to conflict, etc.
- Infusing information on social construction of race, racism, social determinants of health, health disparities and inequity within class sessions and training means we share more information and discuss these topics throughout the training year.
- Twice a year, intensive trainings for faculty/staff on bias, racism, privilege, white fragility, class inequalities and disparities, etc. is critical to support trainees in their CALC growth

# Trainee Reflections

---

*“Initially thought I was culturally sensitive and aware...but after this program, I realized I was wrong.”*

*“It is a very strange space to be culturally competent...not only do you have to know the culture, also you need to understand power and privilege dynamics and our role in perpetuating these systems.”*

*“You can never achieve CALC. It is a long journey.”*

# Moving Beyond Diversity and Inclusion

---

Diversity asks: who's in the room?

- **EQUITY** responds: who's trying to get in the room but can't, and whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure

Inclusion asks: have everyone's ideas been heard?

- **JUSTICE** responds: whose ideas won't be taken seriously because they aren't the majority and/or the ones holding power.

