



American College of Neuropsychopharmacology

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Carolyn Rodriguez receives the ACNP Dolores Shockley Diversity and Inclusion Advancement Award:

The American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) has named Carolyn Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., as the winner of the 2022 Dolores Shockley Diversity and Inclusion Advancement Award.

Dr. Rodriguez received her B.S. in Computer Science from Harvard University, followed by an M.D. from Harvard Medical School-M.I.T. and a Ph.D. in Neuroscience and Genetics from Harvard Medical School. Currently, Dr. Rodriguez is Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the Stanford University School of Medicine and a Consultation-Liaison Psychiatrist at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs. As the Director of the Translational Therapeutics Lab and Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Dr. Rodriguez leads studies investigating the brain basis of severe mental disorders. Her landmark clinical trials pioneer rapid-acting treatments for illnesses including Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and related disorders. Her NIH-, foundation-, and donor-funded mechanistic and clinical efficacy studies span targeted glutamatergic and opioid pathway pharmacotherapy, noninvasive brain stimulation, psychotherapy, and suicide prevention. She has won several national awards, including the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). The PECASE recognizes investigators who are pursuing bold and innovative projects and is considered one of the highest honors in scientific research.

Dr. Rodriguez is known for her lifelong dedication to improving opportunities for underrepresented minority (URM) trainees in STEM. She started this important work when she herself was a trainee. Regarding her early career, Dr. Josh Gordan noted: *“As one of three underrepresented in science undergraduates majoring in computer science at Harvard College, she was highly aware of the need for representation. She founded HEMIS, a URM peer support and public service undergraduate group that organized science day outreach events to inspire elementary school students in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Carolyn has continued this mission through her leadership activities, serving as co-chair of Columbia Psychiatry Department’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion advisory committee while a postdoctoral fellow and then as the inaugural Associate Chair - Inclusion and Diversity at Stanford. Carolyn is a role model and pioneer in many ways; she is one of three tenured Latina Professors among the current faculty in the School of Medicine at Stanford.”*

Now, in her own lab, Dr. Rodriguez continues this leadership, providing trainees outstanding mentorship in experimental design, statistical methodology, and writing and presentation skills, as well as career development activities to hone her trainees’ interests and credentials to

transition to careers in the biomedical research workforce. Beyond her laboratory, Dr. Rodriguez contributes as a mentor and invited speaker for trainees to encourage their entry into academic careers and boost their leadership and grant writing skills through the following NIH-funded programs: Career Development Research Institute (CDI) for Psychiatry, R25 Pathways to Neuroscience, and T32 programs, as well as through foundation and professional organizations (e.g., serving as a mentor in the -American Psychiatric Association [APA] Junior Investigator Research Colloquium).

Dr. Adrienne Grzenda notes: *“Carolyn is an enthusiastic and generous mentor who leads first and foremost by example. She actively encourages junior researchers to find their voice while promoting their visibility and facilitating crucial connections and opportunities. She is the champion that every early career researcher needs to succeed.”*

Dr. Rodriguez also contributes to the broader scientific community by publishing articles about mentoring practices. Dr. Hannah Raila had this comment about Dr. Rodriguez’s efforts: *“Dr. Rodriguez gets the word out: she has published (e.g., in Harvard Business Review, in American Journal of Psychiatry) on strategies around supporting women of color in science and medicine, and on solutions to mitigate biases that hold women back from leadership positions.”*

Dr. Claudia Lugo-Candelas further details Dr. Rodriguez’s impact as a leader in the field and mentor: *“As a mentee, it is inspiring to see Dr. Rodriguez’s leadership and impact across many areas, including publishing, science, service to the field and DEI, as a Deputy Editor for the American Journal of Psychiatry, Director of her own research lab/team, Chair of the NPAS NIH Study Section, Associate Chair and Associate Dean at Stanford University School of Medicine, and member of the scientific council/advisory board on a number of national organizations, such as the APA Council on Research and the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation. At the same time, Carolyn is both humble and very open with her experiences, which is critical to understanding the roadmap of how to pursue opportunities in an academic medicine field despite obstacles. Dr. Rodriguez exemplifies Dr. Shockley’s framework for success in science and academia: ‘aim high...never give up.’”*

Dr. Debra Bangasser noted Dr. Rodriguez’s work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the College: *“During Carolyn’s terms as Chair and Vice-Chair of the URM task force, she founded a URM women networking event within ACNP, based on the recognition of the need for intersectional spaces and peer support (between 2018 and 2021 the group tripled in size). She also advocated for two nonmember URM trainees to join the URM task force to simultaneously promote belonging and encourage them to join the College. Carolyn championed the task force’s proposal to create a new award to recognize URM mentoring (with the goal of increasing visibility and need)—now the Dolores Shockley Award—which was resoundingly approved by council. As a result, Carolyn was invited by ACNP leadership to interview Dr. Shockley and the inaugural recipient of the award (the video is posted on the ACNP website).”*

Drs. Gordan and Bangasser sum it up with: *“Carolyn embodies Dr. Shockley’s advice for mentors: ‘Be passionate and stick with it...and help others get prepared and seek opportunities.’ We can think of no one more deserving of this recognition.”*

The Dolores Shockley Diversity and Inclusion Advancement Award presented at the 61st Annual Meeting of the ACNP is in recognition of an ACNP member who has been particularly

successful in mentoring young scientists from underrepresented groups in the field of neuropsychopharmacology and related disciplines. The award was named in honor of Dr. Dolores Shockley, the first Black woman to receive a Ph.D. in Pharmacology in the United States and the first Black woman to chair a Pharmacology department in the United States. Dr. Shockley, who was known for her humble and loving spirit, taught and mentored many students and was a role model to many. She sadly passed away in 2020 at age 90. However, her legacy lives on in the work that those like Dr. Rodriguez do to mentor and train the next generation of scientists.

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ACNP, founded in 1961, is a professional organization of more than 1000 leading scientists, including four Nobel Laureates. The mission of ACNP is to further research and education in neuropsychopharmacology and related fields in the following ways: promoting the interaction of a broad range of scientific disciplines of brain and behavior in order to advance the understanding of prevention and treatment of disease of the nervous system including psychiatric, neurological, behavioral and addictive disorders; encouraging scientists to enter research careers in fields related to these disorders and their treatment; and ensuring the dissemination of relevant scientific advances.