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Dr. Carmen Maldonado-Vlaar receives the Bernice Grafstein Award for Outstanding Accomplishments in Mentoring from the Society for Neuroscience. [1]

Submitted by Giovanna Guerrero-Medina [2] on 28 October 2020 - 10:41am



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La Dra. Maldonado-Vlaar con miembros de su laboratorio

In October 27, 2020, the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) presented four awards to leading female researchers who have made significant contributions to the advancement of women in neuroscience. This was the most competitive year and the most nominations received in the history of an international organization of more than 38,000 members. "SfN is honored to recognize this stellar group of neuroscientists for their pioneering research and leadership in advancing women in neuroscience," said SfN President Barry Everitt, Ph.D. "These women are dedicated to both innovative and creative approaches to science issues as well as advising, advocating, and being role models for young scientists and minorities. All have already made significant contributions in their fields, developing new tools for research or therapeutic approaches".

Society for Neuroscience announced that the Bernice Grafstein Award for Outstanding Achievement in Mentoring was awarded to two distinguished neuroscientists: Dr. Barbara Shinn-Cunningham and Dr. Carmen S. Maldonado-Vlaar, Professor in the Department of Biology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences from the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. This important award recognizes scientific leaders who have successfully mentored the sustained development of the careers of women neuroscientists worldwide. Supported by a donation from Bernice Grafstein, Ph.D., the Society for Neuroscience's first female president, the award

recognizes the excellent mentoring work of these neuroscientists. Dr. Maldonado-Vlaar is the first Puerto Rican neuroscientist to receive this prestigious award.

For the past 24 years, Dr. Maldonado-Vlaar has served as a professor and researcher in the Department of Biology at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedra Campus. His research on the neurobiology of addiction combines molecular, behavioral, and neuroanatomical approaches. Using direct brain microinfusions, novel protocols in animal models, Dr. Maldonado-Vlaar investigates the neurochemical and molecular substrates of drug dependence, and hopes to discover possible cellular mechanisms for its treatment. In addition to her research, Dr. Maldonado-Vlaar has spent countless hours advising neuroscientists at all levels, from undergraduate students to faculty members. She has mentored more than 100 undergraduate students, all Latino, and more than 70 percent have been women. Two-thirds of the graduate students mentored in her lab have been Latina, and her mentoring has had a great impact on Puerto Rican women conducting neuroscience research.

Dr. Maldonado-Vlaar leads and actively participates in many programs aimed at promoting greater access for women and members of minority groups to careers in neuroscience such as the Summer Program of the Laboratory of Marine Biology in Neuroscience, Ethics, and Survival (SPINES, acronym in English); the Training Advisory Committee for the Diversity in Neuroscience Program (DPN) of the American Psychological Association; and the NeuroID program that fosters the development of future Puerto Rican neuroscientists at the undergraduate level, funded by the National Institutes of Health. Recently, he established the Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Undergraduate Learning (CRIIAS) at the Rio Piedras Campus. Dr. Maldonado-Vlaar is recognized as an excellent teacher, scientist, and very popular mentor among the student body thanks to her combination of demanding scientific rigor while understanding and relating to the challenges faced by her students.

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