

15th Annual Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year Award

Two faculty members are selected each year for this award, after being nominated by their undergraduates and reviewed by a committee of prior Mentor Awardees. Five faculty were considered by the committee this year including honorable mention Dr. David Braun (Biological Sciences) and the awardees listed below.



Dr. Mili Kuruvilla-Dugdale

Assistant Professor
Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences
School of Health Professions

Dr. Kuruvilla runs the Neurogenetic Communication Disorders Laboratory studying the loss of communicative skills in patients with ALS and Parkinson's Disease. Her creative approach to her work brings together techniques from neuroimaging, cognitive psychology, and motor speech research. She has mentored 45 undergraduates, including a McNair Scholar, 3 honors thesis students, and a Discovery Fellow.

Her students write *When we began working in Dr. Kuruvilla's lab, we had no idea how much it would shape our education as aspiring speech-language pathologists. Getting involved in research can seem daunting and inaccessible to students, but Dr. Kuruvilla bridged that gap by reaching out personally and encouraging us to participate.*

A colleague notes *She takes her role as mentor very seriously - connecting with her students daily, always looking for opportunities for them to grow in their lab experiences - whether through honors theses, professional presentations, or submissions of manuscripts or grant proposals.*

Another colleague observes *One striking aspect of Mili's mentorship is the way that she prepares her students for their professional presentations. This is evident from the support letters of her students, included in this packet. She is known for sending students to conferences having fully prepared them for every tough question! As a consequence, not surprisingly, they frequently win awards at these conferences*

Two seniors state that *She was also never afraid to tell us the undiluted truth, which allowed us to learn from our mistakes and grow as people and future professionals. We learned the importance of working hard, being precise, being straightforward, setting goals, problem solving, and knowing when to ask for help, all of which were instrumental to our personal development and confidence.*

Two juniors conclude *She challenges us to continue to develop our professional skills, to take initiative, and to step out of our comfort zone to seek out the many learning opportunities that research offers... She has created a safe space for us to try new things and look for ways to encourage and support us as we grow as students and as people.*



Dr. Antoinette Landor

Assistant Professor
Human Development and Family Science
College of Human Environmental Sciences

Dr. Landor is the associate director of the Center for Body Research and Policy. Her research examines multiple forms of discrimination (racial discrimination, colorism), stressors, relationships, and well-being among African American and Latino adolescents and young adults. Dr. Landor has mentored more than 20 undergraduates at MU, including 2 HES PURE awardees, 5 Psychology Honors students, and 5 McNair Scholars.

One of her student nominators writes *Dr. Landor has also encouraged me to...reach out to other students... Her encouragement to continuously reach out to her or other students in the lab taught me to remain active in taking control of my own learning.*

Dr. Landor is a true embodiment of what it means to be a good mentor by not only supporting and promoting academic and scholarly achievements, but also instilling the confidence in her students to believe in the change they want to see in this world and to celebrate every milestone big or small along the way.

A colleague observes *Each of the students of hers whom I have known personally have consistently informed me that they have never been held to a higher standard than the one Dr. Landor holds them to, but they have also never learned as much as they have from her. I can think of no higher compliment for a mentor.*

Another mentee shares that Dr. Landor...*provided the balance of allowing me to be independent with formulating my own research question while also giving me constructive feedback on how to simplify my data interpretations for other audiences.*

Dr. Landor's favorite quote is *"The biggest adventure you can ever take is to live the life of your dreams" by Oprah Winfrey. We were taught by our parents, teachers, and mentors to work hard to achieve our goals, but sometimes, all we need is for someone to push us to get there. Dr. Landor certainly pushes her students to keep going so that they can live the life that they've always dreamed of living.*