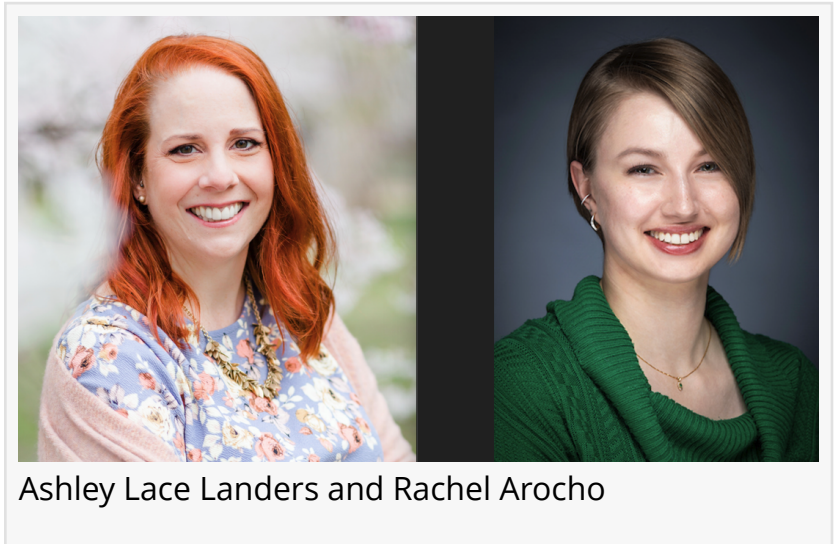# Cognella Honors Two Professors with Cognella Innovation in Teaching Awards for Family Science

In partnership with NCFR, Cognella celebrates Dr. Ashley Lace Landers and Dr. Rachel Arocho's innovative teaching practices

SAN DIEGO, CA, UNITED STATES, December 12, 2024 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Ashley Lace Landers and Dr. Rachel Arocho were honored with 2024 Cognella Innovation in Teaching Awards for Family Science at the [National Council on Family Relations](#) (NCFR) Annual Conference in Bellevue, Washington, November 20 – 23.

Ashley Lace Landers and Rachel Arocho

Developed by Cognella and NCFR, the award program recognizes outstanding family science instructors who develop and apply innovative teaching practices within their courses to enrich students' learning experiences and advance the discipline.

> Dr. Landers and Dr. Arocho have gone above and beyond to provide their students with exceptional learning experiences, and we're honored to recognize their incredible work."
>
> *Kassie Graves, Cognella Vice President, Editorial*

"Reviewing the applications for this award program is such a highlight each year," said Kassie Graves, Cognella Vice President, Editorial, and a member of the judging panel. "It's incredible to see how instructors continue to advance their teaching practices and integrate the latest research in family sciences to well prepare their students for their future careers. Dr. Landers and Dr. Arocho have gone above and beyond to provide their students with exceptional learning experiences, and we're honored to recognize their incredible work."

The judging panel awarded Dr. Ashley Lace Landers, a tenured associate professor in the Department of Human Sciences at The Ohio State University, first place.

To help her students better understand the complex nature of diagnosis in couple and family therapy, Dr. Landers redesigned the course to introduce a concept called "major players." Each week of the course was devoted to a particular chapter of the diagnostic manual, and students were tasked with identifying the most common diagnoses. By the end of the course, her students were able to identify the "major players" and develop a diagnostic decision tree that aided them in assessing for the most common diagnoses to the rarest ones in order of prevalence.

Innovation in Teaching Awards for Family Science Logo

In addition, Dr. Landers introduced live and video examples of families impacted by disorders, guest lectures from clinicians, and live demonstrations of diagnostic assessments to highlight the symptomology of disorders and bridge the gap between the classroom and the clinic.

"When I was asked to provide a quote about what winning the first-place 2024 Cognella Innovation in Teaching Award for Family Science meant to me, I was honestly speechless," said Landers. "After deep reflection, I am both honored and appreciative for this opportunity. As a family scientist and family therapist, I am keenly aware of the exceptional number of high-quality family science educators that exist across the country and the world. To be recognized among such high caliber educators is deeply appreciated.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to express gratitude to my mentors. This award would not be possible without Drs. Sharon Danes, Manijeh Daneshpour, and Sara Axtell. Each of these educators expressed genuine interest in my professional development, fostered my enthusiasm for learning, and not only brought the real world into the classroom, but brought the classroom into the real world where the profession of family science and family therapy meets the actual lives of families. Like many other educators, my teaching experience began as a student. My mentors laid the foundation for my use of innovative and engaged teaching strategies.

In my years as an educator, I have found that the best teaching occurs within relationships. Families do not exist in a vacuum and neither do students or educators. Our relationships with one another are vital to teaching and learning. While I have the privilege to teach my students, my students are the ones who have taught me how to teach by showing me what methods work best and inspired me to strive to meet their needs."

The second-place award went to Dr. Rachel Arocho, an associate professor of family science and the department chair of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department at Utah Valley University.

Dr. Arocho has implemented metacognition and principles of game-based learning to encourage intrinsic motivation and positive affect in her courses, especially in Research Methods. Recognizing that students are generally not enthused to take Research Methods, Dr. Arocho applied a metacognitive framework, building in steady formative feedback and opportunities for students to reflect. These opportunities built her students' appreciation for why research is important and confidence in conducting meaningful research.

She's also integrated game-based learning into her course through Qualtrics, a survey administration software. Dr. Arocho has designed games that incorporate fun challenges, instant feedback, and personalized learning opportunities – the hallmarks of successful game-based learning.

"I am honored to receive this award," said Arocho. "Teaching is one of my greatest loves and being able to share the work I'm doing and some of ideas and experiments has been a joy. I appreciate this recognition of my work!"

To learn more about the winners' unique contributions and innovations, read their full profiles at: cognella.com/innovation-in-teaching-award.

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About the National Council on Family Relations

The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), founded in 1938, is the oldest nonprofit, nonpartisan, multidisciplinary professional association focused solely on family research, practice, and education. NCFR members are dedicated to understanding and strengthening families. Members come from more than 35 countries and all 50 U.S. states, and include scholars, professionals, and students in Family Science, Family Life Education, human development, marriage and family therapy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, social work, theology, child development, health, and more.

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