

Henry L. Alder Awards

Alicia Prieto Langarica

Youngstown State University

Dr. Alicia Prieto Langarica of Youngstown State University has an impressive record of teaching, mentoring, and caring for her students. She incorporates research projects into many of her classes, emphasizing research that has the potential to benefit her community. Her students have helped to improve her campus library's staff scheduling paradigm; they have spurred the construction of a new parking structure; and they have helped the Youngstown City Council identify which buildings should be demolished, among other tangible impacts. In addition, Dr. Prieto Langarica never turns down students who want to gain research experience outside of class—she has even been known to mentor 25 students in research in a single semester!

Dr. Prieto Langarica is especially involved with mentoring students—both from her university and from across the country—from groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in the mathematical sciences community, including Latinx and Hispanic students. She strives to encourage mathematicians from minority groups, in part, by making more visible those mathematicians from similar backgrounds who have had successful careers. For instance, she co-founded Lathisms, “an accessible platform that features prominently the extent of the research and mentoring contributions of Latinxs and Hispanics in different areas of the Mathematical Sciences.” She also regularly invites minority speakers to give talks on her campus and sets up meetings for her students to network with the visitors. In addition, she helped establish a page on the MAA website with resources for minority faculty and students.

Dr. Prieto Langarica recognizes that her students cannot succeed academically if they fail to thrive personally. To check in with her undergraduate researchers, she takes frequent one-on-one walks with each of them. She organized a group of undergraduate women in math to form a running group to train for a 5K. She has helped students who have become single mothers, who are challenged with homelessness, or who have faced significant medical issues. In short, Dr. Prieto Langarica understands that her students are humans before they are mathematicians. This understanding is one of the reasons that she is profoundly successful at helping her students to achieve their potential. One of her former students, who became the first Rhodes Scholar from Youngstown State, observed that Dr. Prieto Langarica “is an effective and inspiring instructor of mathematics, STEM research, and of life.”

For these reasons and many more, we enthusiastically recommend that Dr. Prieto Langarica receive the Alder Award.

Response

I am humbled and honored by the effort of students, colleagues and collaborators and their kind and encouraging words in nominating me. Your support and recognition means more than I can put in words and working with you makes every day a joy. I want to thank the MAA for finding me worthy of such a prestigious award. I am incredibly grateful to Youngstown State University faculty, students and staff, not a single day goes by that I do not feel lucky to have ended up in such a wonderful institution. I want to thank my mentors who always encourage me and push me to be better, especially, but not exclusively, Dr. Wyels and Dr. Cordero. Finally, I want to thank my dad, Carlos Prieto, for showing me every day by example the power of discipline and hard work and my partner, Chontele Coleman, for always supporting my work and filling our life with humor.

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Prieto Langarica is Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Youngstown State University. She received her Undergraduate degree in Applied Mathematics from the University of Texas at Dallas in 2008 and her PhD from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2012. Prieto Langarica's research is in the intersection of mathematics and biology, specifically problems related to the medical field. Recently she started conducting research in data science and public policy.