

[Spieker Prize awarded to graduate Lilian Maldonado-Garcia](#)

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Recent School of Professional Advancement graduate Lilian Maldonado-Garcia is the first recipient of the Dr. Gisela Spieker Prize, presented to an outstanding first-generation college graduate. Maldonado-Garcia was also named to the 2020 class of Tulane 34, the university's most exclusive student honor. (Photo provided by the School of Professional Advancement)

Recent School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) graduate Lilian Maldonado-Garcia is the first recipient of the Dr. Gisela Spieker Prize, a \$500 award presented

to an outstanding first-generation college graduate. Maldonado-Garcia was named to the 2020 class of Tulane 34, the university's most exclusive student honor. She was also inducted in Alpha Sigma Lambda, the national honor society for adult students, and she repeatedly earned dean's list honors.

Maldonado-Garcia, who arrived in the United States at age 14 speaking no English, received her degree from SoPA in general legal studies in Fall 2019. She completed her studies while working full time as a legal secretary. She works as an immigration paralegal, assisting others with applications for asylum and special visas for victims of crime. She plans to attend law school and is presently studying for the LSAT.

"The Dr. Gisela Spieker Prize truly represents who I am, my values, origin and my family," said Maldonado-Garcia. "As a working student, I did not think this was possible for me. Now I know that anything is possible at Tulane University."

The award is named after the late Gisela Spieker, PhD (UC '61), whose family immigrated to the United States from Germany via the Dominican Republic in the aftermath of World War II. Spieker, who spoke German, Spanish and English, attended University College at night while working full-time for a local insurance agency.

She went on to earn a PhD in social work from Washington University in St. Louis in 1971 and served as dean of the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock. Her research and publications focused on alcohol abuse, child abuse and intra-family violence. She was also instrumental in creating the first battered women's shelter in Little Rock. Spieker passed away in 2016, leaving a bequest to the School of Professional Advancement.

The Spieker Prize will be awarded annually at SoPA's spring diploma ceremony.

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Lilian Maldonado-Garcia