

Dedication Statement to Daniella Gamboa Pabon

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Daniella (Dani) Gamboa Pabón was a fourth year PhD student in the Biomedical sciences Neuroscience and Neurological Disorders program. Growing up in the country of Colombia, Dani came to the United States in 2016 to attend the University of Toledo. She is an Alumna with a BS in Biology and Minor in Chemistry. Dani started her PhD in 2020 with Dr. Elissar Andari in the Laboratory of Autism and Social Affective Neurosciences (ASAN), where she conducted Translational and Pharmacological research. Dani used Prairie Voles to study social learning by exploring the endocannabinoid system and its impact on social behavior.

Along with Dr. Andari, Dani worked closely with the laboratories of Drs. James Burkett and Travis Taylor on Translation Projects related to autism and virus infection research. Dani also worked closely with her fellow PhD candidates Christopher “Gabby” Vento and Nilanjana Saferin on a variety of projects and other activities. In addition to other professors and PhD students, Dani also worked with ASAN staff, including Jackson “Gwen” Hoffman, as well as several MSBS and medical students who work part time in the ASAN as part of their programs. Dani previously

wrote about her work in the Toledo Blade in 2023 (1) and had tentatively involved in the Neuroscience department activities, including participating in special project teams, helping organize and attend student parties, gave departmental seminar talks, worked with the inclusion committee, and helped to mentor new graduate students and undergraduate students both within ASAN and the Neuroscience department. Finally, Dani mentored one of the Undergraduate students who took Lena Touny, in publishing her essay in this issue of Translation and helped Gabby Vento who coordinated this project with some of the administrative tasks.

Sadly, Dani passed away unexpectedly after an accident on the morning of April 16, 2024. Dani was writing several publications and was about a year away from completing her PhD. Her unexpected passing sent a shock wave of grief through the entire University of Toledo community. For those among us who worked closely with Dani, her loss was like losing a member of their own family. In a public tribute to Dani’s many contributions, Gabby Vento shared, “Daniella was going to graduate before I was, and her loss left an ever-gaping hole in our entire

intellectual family.” Dr. James Burkett echoed this in his own statement: “Daniella’s sudden loss has left a large hole in our hearts that may never be filled.” There are simply no words for after a loss of someone like this that can adequately enumerate our feelings of sorrow and grief. Her funeral took place on April 24th, which would have been her 26th birthday.

The day after Dani’s passing, there was a rainbow over campus, which many think may be her way of telling us that she was okay. As Dani’s father said - she may no longer be physically with us, but she is forever watching over us and lives in our hearts. Each of us had a different and unique relationship with Dani, and her loss affected all of us in profoundly different ways, as do the ways we continue to remember and honor her legacy. Forever with love from your scholarly family.

Forever with love from your scholarly family,

Chris “Gabby” Vento, MS – PHD Candidate –
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Dr. Elissar Andari, PHD – Assistant Professor,
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References

1. Daniella Gamboa Pabon. UT researchers explore autism spectrum disorder [Newspaper]. The Blade. (2023, August 7).
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