



EMORY

NELL HODGSON
WOODRUFF
SCHOOL OF
NURSING

To the Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to offer my **strongest recommendation** for Ms. Gelila (Galilee) Ambellu for recognition as **Emory's Graduate Student Employee of the Year** in the category of **Professionalism, Effective Communication, and Interpersonal Skills**. Ms. Ambellu is a graduate research associate in my lab at the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing and a second-year master's student in Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences at the Rollins School of Public Health. Across time she has been hired as a team member in my lab through both the Rollins Earn and Learn (REAL) program and through the Nursing Department so that she could maintain consistent contributions to the lab even during pauses in REAL coverage. Among the more than 50 student researchers I have mentored across my graduate training, postdoctoral work, and faculty career, Ms. Ambellu stands among the strongest I have ever worked with. Her exceptional teamwork, communication, leadership maturity, and collaborative problem solving are outstanding and inspiring.

From the outset of her work in my research lab, Ms. Ambellu distinguished herself through her professionalism and her natural ability to build productive, trusting relationships with peers and cross-disciplinary collaborators. She consistently reaches out proactively to myself and other team members, initiating conversations about shared research interests, identifying overlapping goals, and establishing a framework for collaboration grounded in respect, clarity, and shared purpose. Her communication style is warm yet precise, and she consistently employs thoughtful methods of persuasion, helping diverse team members arrive at consensus during moments that require alignment on complex methodological or conceptual decisions.

One particularly striking example of her interpersonal and communication strengths is her leadership of a multi-institutional research team conducting a scoping review on narrative and life-story interventions for patients with serious illness. This work is inspired by her lived experience and career goals to support equitable, life-affirming psychotherapeutic interventions for marginalized and seriously ill patients. The review group includes eight team members from four universities across the US: Emory undergraduate and graduate students, PhD-level social work researchers at Washington University and the University of Michigan, and a master's student currently working at the University of North Carolina. Although the scoping review process has been daunting, tedious, and at times complex, Ms. Ambellu has been the primary driver of consistent progress, team morale, and balanced team participation.

Knowing this would be a complex scoping review from the outset, Ms. Ambellu independently structured the team's workflow, delegated responsibilities based on individuals' strengths, and cultivated an environment in which members felt supported, heard, and motivated. She led the team through over 5,000 article reviews by facilitating highly organized monthly Zoom discussions and additional email conversations to resolve uncertainties, synthesizing divergent viewpoints, and navigating moments of uncertainty with poise and constructive problem solving. I was impressed that monthly meetings were structured by agendas with 5–10 separate issues included, and Gelila

Emory University
1520 Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30322-4201

404.727.7976
www.nursing.emory.edu

could support the team to address all issues at nearly every meeting to ensure the project could move forward. Ms. Ambellu was always acutely aware of and responsive to each team member's progress, concerns, and experiences in the review. She documented resolutions from many late-night text exchanges with research assistants for my review and developed recorded videos to walk team members through specific protocols. I was impressed by Ms. Ambellu's creativity in the range of approaches she used to keep all team members informed and capable. Her approaches were so polished that senior doctoral students assumed she was already a postdoctoral scholar.

In the later stages of this project, as the team reviewed hundreds of full texts, Ms. Ambellu continued to sustain momentum and morale with creativity. She embedded motivational GIFs into data-collection instruments to keep the process engaging, updated them regularly to maintain team energy, and remained attentive to each team member's workload and constraints. She checked in individually to ensure assignments were manageable, persuaded the group to stay on track toward our benchmarks, and coordinated progress across all participants with exceptional clarity. Under her guidance, the team assembled a final dataset of over 180 articles, and she now leads the remaining data-extraction tasks as we move toward manuscript preparation.

Her professionalism is equally evident in her contributions to a National Institute on Aging-funded project focused on developing a new tool to record narratives from family caregivers of people living with dementia. During user-experience interviews and focus groups with 17 family caregivers, Ms. Ambellu demonstrated extraordinary empathy and active listening skills. She communicated with participants in a manner that put them at ease, enabling more open and rich dialogue. She also led the initial coding and synthesis of focus-group transcripts, inviting input from team members and guiding analytic decisions in ways that honored competing perspectives while maintaining methodological rigor. Although this was one of her first experiences with data analysis, she was able to glide through the process by balancing independent thinking with check-ins with me to address barriers. Each time Ms. Ambellu reached out, I was impressed that she had thoroughly considered a given issue, developed ideas for possible solutions, and fully presented the context to me so I could weigh in efficiently.

Ms. Ambellu also collaborates exceptionally well with peers across other ongoing projects involving narrative analysis among older adults with cognitive impairment and their caregivers. Her team's recent poster acceptance at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Scientific Meeting reflects her ability not only to generate high-quality scholarship but also to communicate complex ideas clearly and compellingly to multidisciplinary audiences. In preparing for this work, she served as an anchor for junior team members: clarifying expectations, facilitating communication, and mentoring others through analytical challenges. As the work continues, Ms. Ambellu has shown initiative and understanding, committing to an ambitious timeline for completion of analysis and, without prompting from me, developing a Gantt chart to set the pace of work for herself and her teammates, allowing all to see that the pace we selected was doable and that the work was already organized for them to complete. This approach reduced team members' anxiety about project completion, improved workflow, and reduced my weekly commitment to administrative tasks for this project by 25%. Her professional demeanor, patience, and clarity of expression elevated the entire team's performance.

Across all of her work, Ms. Ambellu consistently models the highest standards of student professionalism. She is punctual, thoroughly prepared, and exceptionally responsive in all communication. She routinely anticipates logistical, interpersonal, or analytical needs, and takes

initiative to address them proactively. I have been especially impressed at her initiative to work in person at my lab. While each research position in my lab is hybrid, and students are not required to do most work in person, I have expressed to students that working in person can improve our ability to communicate and work through barriers, keeping projects moving more efficiently and accurately. Out of the 11 students currently in my lab, Ms. Ambellu is the only student who regularly comes to work in person at the lab, and her in-person work has made our collaboration easy, efficient, and enjoyable.

Ms. Ambellu recognizes that success is driven by a positive group culture. Without prompting, she has organized several lab research assistant meet-ups to allow the student research assistants to get to know one another more, learn about each other's programs and training trajectories, and continue to explore their research interests. In the lab, when differing viewpoints emerge, Ms. Ambellu draws on evidence, shared values, and thoughtful persuasion to guide groups toward consensus.

In summary, Ms. Ambellu exemplifies the very best of Emory's student employees. She exemplifies students' abilities to strengthen Emory's research initiatives and represent Emory professionally in outward-facing contexts (e.g., conferences, cross-institutional research meetings). Ms. Ambellu truly embodies Emory's values through her interpersonal excellence and is a poised communicator, an exceptional collaborator, and a reliable source of professionalism and positivity within any team. Her impact on our work has been profound, and I can say without reservation that she represents the qualities the Student Employee of the Year award seeks to recognize. I strongly and enthusiastically support her nomination for recognition in the category of Professionalism, Effective Communication, and Interpersonal Skills.

Please feel free to contact me for any additional information.



Emily L. Mroz (she/ her)
Assistant Professor, Tenure Track
Aging and Gerontology Hub
Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing

57 Executive Park Dr. NE, Atlanta, GA, 30329
Suite 190, Room 134
Phone: 716-239-2467
Email: emily.mroz@emory.edu

[ResearchGate](#) | [Faculty Page](#)