Nora Maza has been selected as the 2020 Outstanding Research Assistant Award recipient. She is a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology.

Nora currently works as a Graduate Assistant with the counseling program at the Antonio E. Garcia Arts and Education Center. She has served as a Research Assistant for two studies in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology.

One of the projects that she has assisted with was a grant funded project entitled Enhancing Community Development through Vocational Empowerment and Leadership programming for Teenage Girls (VANTAGE), which was designed to enhance the community development potential of girls from historically underserved areas of Corpus Christi through social development programming. Nora played an integral role with this project, as she took the participants (i.e., 14 teenage girls from the Westside of Corpus Christi) through the VANTAGE program. Nora organized mentoring opportunities for the girls with women who are in leadership roles within diverse professions throughout the community. The experience was featured on KRIS6 news. Additionally, Nora facilitated team-based projects to promote community engagement and development.

Nora assisted with the data collection and data analysis for the project, presented the results at conferences across the U.S., and is currently working on the development of a manuscript for publication.

Nora was also instrumental on another study entitled Safety Compass: Child Abuse Prevention Program, which was developed for children and parents to learn child abuse prevention skills to help prevent child abuse before it occurs. Throughout this project, Nora assisted Dr. Kristina Nelson to implement the program, going above and beyond the requirements of her role as a Research Assistant. Together, they provided psychoeducation the participants regarding the topic areas (e.g., personal space, body safety, etc.), facilitated learning activities that provided opportunities for participants to practice learned skills associated with the program content, and facilitated follow-up group discussions to help participants process their experience and enhance the learning experience, thus encouraging skill acquisition.

In addition to her involvement with the implementation of the program, Nora served as the lead Research Assistant with this project, assisting with development of the curriculum, collaboration with community and university partners to organize project delivery, and collection and analysis of the data.

According to her nominators, Nora serves as a role model for other students, going above and beyond to produce quality work. She continuously excels in her work in the community as well as at the university. She is known throughout the department for her professionalism, strong work ethic, and passion for recognizing and addressing community needs through research initiatives as well as clinical practice.

Nora Maza was nominated by Dr. Kristina Nelson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology.