Laura Gelles, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Engineering Education, was recently recognized by the Women in Engineering ProActive Network (WEPAN) for the research she presented at the 2019 Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity (CoNECD) conference held on April 14-17 in Crystal City, VA.

CoNECD is a diversity-focused conference put on by three engineering professional societies: the American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE), the National Association of Multicultural Engineering Program Advocates (NAMEPA), and WEPAN. CoNECD provides a forum for exploring current research and practices to enhance diversity and inclusion of all underrepresented populations in the engineering and computing professions.

Gelles, who was simultaneously engaged in a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded internship with a policy think-tank in Washington D.C., uses action-research methodologies to empower participants to advocate for themselves in engineering. Her research has primarily focused on graduate students and informed the paper she presented at CoNECD. This co-authored paper titled “Hidden Curriculum Advocacy and Resources for Graduate Students in Engineering” explored how graduate students in engineering programs across the United States and Latin America reacted to hidden norms and expectations (i.e., hidden curriculum) in order to determine what they perceive is necessary to advocate for themselves or others around issues of inequity.

This work is part of a much larger mixed-methods study headed by Dr. Idalis Villanueva, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Engineering Education. This mixed-methods study is funded by Villanueva’s competitive NSF CAREER grant (NSF 1653140) which seeks to develop an advocacy mentorship model to reveal and navigate the hidden curricula in engineering.