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I can proudly say that the MRII Diversity Award has given me the confidence and skills to venture into research projects armed with fundamentals that I am applying to my work in high-visibility projects.

Leily Sánchez

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Winter 2024

Sponsor



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The MRII Diversity Award

In 2022, Market Research Institute International (MRII) established its **Diversity Award** program to further its commitment to combat racism, discrimination, inequality, and injustice by increasing fair access to learning opportunities for market researchers and insights professionals.

This award is for individuals in the U.S. who come from underrepresented groups and wish to enhance their market research and insights skill sets. Recipients receive:

- **FREE MRII Principles Express course** of the recipient's choice. These highly regarded courses are offered by MRII and University of Georgia. Find the course list [here](#).
- **Attendance at the Insights Association Corporate Researchers Conference (CRC)** as a guest of the Insights Association with a travel stipend courtesy of Full Circle Research.

We invite you to read about our recipients' experiences in these pages. You'll learn more about this and other awards from MRII at mrii.org.

If you or a colleague could benefit from the MRII Diversity Award, be on the lookout for the call for nominations in 2027





For Ava's full post, scan or [click here](#).

Ava Wells-Quantrell

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Spring 2023



“During my time as an early-career market researcher, I very quickly recognized how essential it is to independently continue one's professional development and competencies in the market research arena. I was primarily fascinated by revealing the real, objective stories behind the data of the average consumer. Once I recognized this about myself, I knew that I wanted to go far within this career path and needed to learn as much as humanly possible out of pure conviction that this was where I belonged.

After searching online for a viable path to appropriate, professional market research courses that would offer me the opportunity to refine and level up fundamental and more advanced skills, I admittedly encountered more than one – sometimes terribly vague – path for me to take. It felt as if I would have to either endlessly scroll through numerous Google searches for the right opportunity or be forced to speak to countless market research (or even academic research) colleagues for a great length of time in hopes of identifying some options at a much quicker pace. Finally, I was fortunate enough to come across MRII's website, as well as their *Principles Express* course offerings.

I was excited to not only see the affordable costs of the courses but also a chance to apply and be considered as a recipient of the MRII Diversity Award. I didn't want to pass up a chance to apply as a multicultural, bilingual English & French, Black American woman originally from the north suburbs of Chicago who's absolutely enamored by the world of research. I was even more excited about actually being awarded the MRII 2023 Diversity Award and was able to undertake any course I was interested in.

I fearlessly opted to take the *Global Market Research* course, which was informative, detailed and thought-provoking thanks to its simultaneous emphasis on the fundamentals of the entire research process and lifecycle, as well as the similarities and differences between domestic and global market research.

Happily, I am progressing even further into my research and insights journey. Having taken the *Global Market Research* course, I feel capable of translating and applying the knowledge I have gained within my current position as a Research Project Coordinator at Northwestern University.

Opportunity

What motivated you to apply for the MRII Diversity Award?

I was looking into going back to school to start my Master's degree but wanted to make sure I would be learning things relevant to my line of work, so when I saw that there was a one-off class I decided to apply. A coworker actually recommended I apply for this specific scholarship.

What does it mean to you that you were selected as the MRII Diversity Award winner?

It was really nice getting selected for the award. I appreciate the opportunity to expand my knowledge of market research.

Tell us about your motivations for pursuing a market research/insights career?

I was a math major and didn't have clear sight into the field of work I wanted to go into. I only knew I wanted to impact people's lives. I was recommended to apply for my company's summer internship, and I took that summer to explore a career in research. I fell in love with marketing research and was able to start my career right out of college.

What were your initial expectations for the Introduction to Market Research and the Research Process express course?

My only hope going into this course was that it should help improve my understanding of how to structure a study. I don't have a background in insights, so I needed to learn the basics to better understand the reasoning behind our procedures.

Tell us about your course experience.

The course was really helpful! It was easy to follow and engaging.

What feature(s) about the course were most valuable to you?

The sections on addressing specific marketing needs and reporting and presenting reports. These added context on how to take a question, turn it into study, execute the study, and then report the findings in a clear and digestible way. I could immediately put this into practice at work.

How do you look to leverage your course experience as you progress your career?

I plan to use the knowledge from this course to design better research studies for my brand clients.



For Brae's full post, scan or [click here](#).

Brae L. Fletcher

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Summer 2023



Understanding

Advantage



Leily Sánchez

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Winter 2024

What motivated you to apply for the MRII Diversity Award?

The most recognized challenge of being a first-generation college student is that the knowledge-sharing accessible to those with parents who have obtained a higher education is limited or absent. For me, the added challenges of holding part-time and freelance positions while attending college meant I had less time to learn about professional organizations or hold internships. Once I learned about MRII's dedication to providing equal access to educational opportunities, I knew I was applying for the opportunity to learn more in-demand skills from an organization that values the unique experiences and perspectives that I add as a market researcher.

Tell us about your motivations for pursuing an MR/Insights career.

When I transferred to Cal State LA from Pasadena City College, I learned more about the research, analytics, and strategy of creating successful marketing campaigns. Selecting the correct methodology, developing questionnaires, and the problem-solving involved for data wrangling necessitate an analytical and strategic approach, which I craved.

Initial expectations (both positive and concerning) for the Qualitative Market Research Express course.

I felt concerned about the course length and the depth of the topics listed in the syllabus; it seemed very ambitious! I was pleasantly surprised that the course offered appropriate pacing and depth to each topic, all organized engagingly and insightfully.

What feature[s] about the course was most valuable to you?

I immensely enjoyed all the supplemental materials. The situational examples were also beneficial in understanding real-world applications. However, the best part was the commentary from experts. Observing their career trajectories was an unforeseen advantage that helped me brainstorm ideas to map my career path.

How do you look to leverage your course experience as you progress in your research and insights career?

I have already begun to utilize the knowledge gained, and I look forward to continuing to leverage this knowledge to develop as a research manager.



For Leily's full post, scan or [click here](#).

What motivated you to apply for the MRII Diversity Award?

I was initially drawn to the award because I resonate strongly with its mission of diversifying the industry. I aim to be a part of making the insights field more inclusive by telling my own story as a queer, nonbinary person and speaking about sexuality and gender inclusivity within research. We need more diversity in both the leaders of this industry and in our respondents.

What does it mean to you that you were selected as this year's recipient?

Receiving this award reiterates what I've witnessed in my past two years in the industry – MRII's leaders are committed to ensuring equitable representation and inviting people from different walks of life into the field.

Tell us about your motivations for pursuing a market research career.

Initially beginning my career in public health, I was convinced I would stay in that discipline, until I realized I wanted to weave my foundation of feminist studies into research spaces that might not have equity as a cornerstone.

What were your initial expectations for the *Introduction to Market Research and the Research Process* express course?

Since I had some initial footing in the market research industry, I was really searching for detailed technical support. The in-depth syllabus offered me a rich understanding of each course, so I was able to select one optimal for my level.

Tell us about your course experience.

As an avid learner, I was energized by the breadth of material it covered and how relevant it was to my everyday tasks. Thanks to this award, I feel more capable than ever of designing unbiased and respondent-friendly surveys that pinpoint client objectives and deliver insightful recommendations in a creative way.

What feature(s) about the course were most valuable to you?

This course furthered my technical skills and enhanced my ability to be a powerful data analyst and strategic storyteller.

How do you look to leverage your course experience as you progress your career?

I plan to use the knowledge from this course to design better research studies for my brand clients.



For Hannah's full post, scan or [click here](#).

Hannah Kaplan

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Summer 2024



Inclusion

Empowerment



Nikki Porcher

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Summer 2025



For Nikki's full post,
scan or [click here](#).



When I think about my work, I always come back to one core idea: our stories deserve to be told clearly, powerfully, and in ways that move people to act.

My background is rooted in community building and economic advocacy. I founded Buy From A Black Woman to help Black women-owned businesses grow, but over time, my work has expanded to support Black businesses more broadly and push for stronger Black economic power as a whole. Research has been at the center of that.

I didn't set out to become a traditional market researcher. Research has always been a tool for advocacy, a way to turn community voices and lived experiences into action. I wanted to learn more about insights and data because they help ensure our stories aren't just heard but also taken seriously. When we communicate research effectively, it doesn't just sit in a report; it leads to policy change, economic investment, and real community shifts.

The Communicating Research Results course was exactly what I needed at this point in my journey. It taught me how to break down complex data and translate it into messages that different audiences can truly understand and act on. I especially valued learning how to shape insights into stories that resonate beyond the charts and numbers.

Going forward, I'll use what I learned to continue pushing for policies that support Black businesses, help Black entrepreneurs understand their markets, and educate consumers on why buying Black is an investment in our shared future. Clear, impactful communication turns research into real-world change, and that's the mission I'm carrying forward.

Thank you to MRII for seeing the power in this work and investing in voices that often go unheard.

What motivated you to apply for the MRII Diversity Award?

Investing in my personal growth and continuously expanding my research knowledge base is something I take seriously. I am actively working to position myself at the intersection of research, operations, and the rapidly evolving AI research landscape, and access to continued education matters enormously in that journey.

What does it mean to you that you were selected as this year's recipient?

It affirms that a nontraditional path into this industry has value, and that the time I have spent learning and growing is recognized beyond the organizations I have worked within.

Tell us about your motivations for pursuing a market research career.

Over time, my work deepened into qualitative and multicultural research, where the stakes felt highest — helping organizations understand audiences that are too often underrepresented in the research process itself. What keeps me motivated is not just the work, but the opportunity to shape how it gets done, who it centers, and what it ultimately delivers for the people and communities being studied.

What were your initial expectations for the *Evolving Methods in Market Research* course?

I was excited about the potential to sharpen my thinking around emerging tools and methodologies, especially given how much is shifting right now with AI and technology in research. My honest concern was whether the course would feel too foundational for where I am in my career, but it met me as a practicing researcher and pushed my thinking in ways that felt immediately relevant rather than introductory.

What feature[s] about the course were most valuable to you?

The most valuable aspects were the frameworks around the hybrid researcher model and T shaped collaboration across functions. The instructors, as well as the content, were really engaging and energizing!

How do you look to leverage your course experience as you progress your career?

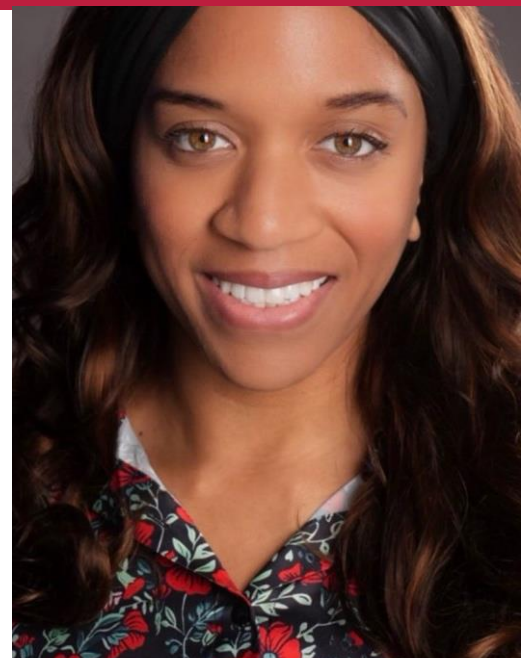
I am actively looking into roles that sit at the intersection of research, operations, and customer success and this course gave me the frameworks and language to show up more strategically in that space

For Ivayana's full post, scan or [click here](#).



Ivayana Abdi

MRII Diversity Award Recipient
Summer 2026



Purposeful

MRII

MARKET RESEARCH
INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL

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