

Four UCSD Undergrads Win Library Research Prize for Outstanding Research Skills

Winning students demonstrate high levels of research prowess

September 25, 2009 - Four undergraduate students at the University of California, San Diego have received the 2009 Undergraduate Library Research Prize for their exemplary research skills. The prize, which is co-sponsored by the UC San Diego Libraries and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, includes cash awards of \$1000 and \$500 for first and second prizes winners in two categories: arts/humanities/social sciences and life sciences/physical sciences.

"It is an honor to recognize the recipients of the 2009 Undergraduate Library Research Prize," said Penny Rue, UCSD's Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. "Learning to conduct effective research is a critical part of our students' academic experience so it is gratifying to see that these students have so skillfully tapped into the vast network of knowledge and information resources available at the UCSD Libraries."

"This year's Library Research Prize award-winners have demonstrated an impressive ability to conduct effective and even innovative research," said Brian E. C. Schottlaender, the Audrey Geisel University Librarian at UCSD. "Their thoughtful and strategic use of a wide range of library resources, from specialized databases and library bibliographic tools, to electronic journals and manuscript collections, was compelling."

To be considered for the Undergraduate Libraries Research Prize, students are required to present their work at the annual UCSD Undergraduate Research Conference held in the spring. The conference, sponsored by Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP), a unit of Student Educational Advancement under Student Affairs, is one of three major undergraduate scholarly meetings that AEP coordinates each year that afford students from all academic disciplines the opportunity to present findings of research conducted under the guidance of UCSD faculty members.



In the social sciences, arts, and humanities, first prize went to Samantha Huang for her research on political mobilization and the

1978 Briggs Initiative. "Alliance Formation: Political Mobilization and the 1978 Briggs Initiative" delves into political movements and grassroots activism, specifically the political strategies employed by gay rights activists in their campaign against the Briggs Initiative. Huang, a History major, was nominated by Nayan Shah, an associate professor in the UCSD Department of History.

"The Library constitutes the repository of knowledge production, the place where knowledge can be found and where new forms of knowledge can be created," said Huang. "The importance of the UCSD Libraries to my area of research cannot be overstated, due to the multimodal and interdisciplinary framework that I employ in the synthesis of findings. In navigating through the wealth of sources, I have attuned my skills as a historian by learning the importance of referring to a diverse range of materials in reconstructing a historical narrative that is both accurate and original."



Second prize in the arts/humanities/social sciences category went to Kelly Mika Leong for her research examining the causes of the

2008 credit crisis. In "An Analysis of the Causes of the 2008 Credit Crisis," Leong, an economics major, utilized more traditional resources like specialized electronic databases as well as more novel sources like business school rankings and faculty panels from top-ranked schools. She also gathered comparative data about prominent economists and discovered that economists on the west and east coasts were more likely to site the housing bubble as a key factor in the credit crisis. Leong was nominated by Melissa Famulari, a lecturer and vice chair for undergraduate education in the Department of Economics, who described Leong's research and source material as "completely unique."

"Needless to say, the credit meltdown was and still is a confusing time filled with models, concepts, and terms that were foreign to me at the start of the project," said Leong. "The Library was the crucial factor that enabled me to understand the crisis in three stages: understanding the background information, collecting data, and

analyzing the data using economic models. In order to find credible information I used the resources recommended by UCSD Librarian Adele Barsh. Without her guidance, I would have probably used resources that were not credible, such as Wikipedia."



In the life and physical sciences category, Sara Richardson received first prize for her work on "Simulation of EVA Suite Effects

During Lunar and Martian Analog Exercise." Richardson's research explored the effects of lower body negative pressure versus lower body positive pressure as a way to simulate human exercise on the moon. She was nominated by her faculty advisor Alan Hargens, a professor of orthopedic surgery at the UCSD School of Medicine. She completed her research at the Clinical Orthopedic Lab at the UCSD Medical Center in Hillcrest.

"The research resources available from the UC San Diego Libraries have been extremely valuable in my project," said Richardson. "I have made extensive use of the UCSD Library resources listed in Sage and the E-journal subscriptions, which were necessary to view the results of my searches on PubMed and have been essential to my ability to access relevant papers. The research strategies I have picked up in this project have carried over into other aspects of my academic life-both for class and research. "



Second prize in the life sciences/physical sciences category was awarded to Emerson Posadas, for his research project on

"Melatonin across the Reproductive Life Cycle." Posadas, who was nominated by Dr. Barbara Perry, a professor of psychiatry at the UCSD School of Medicine, analyzed the changes in melatonin levels in women across the reproductive life cycle.

"When I first joined Dr. Barbara Parry's lab my junior year, the extent of my resource collecting abilities included performing a Google search," said Posadas. "However, through my experience from writing my research project, I've learned that the best academic resources are most efficiently found by utilizing UCSD Libraries' materials. Before I could start my analysis, I attempted to collect articles on melatonin and the reproductive cycle to gain a general understanding of the recent literature. I soon realized that using Google was neither sufficient nor an efficient tool for finding scholarly sources."

According to Catherine Friedman, Associate University Librarian, who oversees the Library Research Prize contest, this year's winners were quick to seek research guidance from library staff and therefore were able to tap into the Libraries' most sophisticated intellectual resources very early in the research process. The winners cited numerous resources that were indispensable to their research, including Pub Med, UC e-links, JSTOR, and Ariel Document Delivery service, as well as microfilm and archival collections.

All entrants, said Friedman, must be nominated by UCSD faculty members and are judged based on: the significance of library materials used, including print, electronic, and primary resources; demonstrated expertise in mining library collections, including identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing a variety of materials in the generation of research; and evidence of significant personal learning and the development of substantive research and inquiry skills over time.

According to David Artis, director of AEP, more than 130 UCSD undergraduates reported their research findings at the 2009 conference. A large crowd of family, friends, lab partners, and mentors attended the all-day event in support of the undergraduate participants. Members of the audience listened attentively and often engaged the undergraduate scholars in lively question and answer sessions after the respective 15 minute oral presentations.

With increasing regularity, undergraduates at UCSD and other selective and demanding colleges and universities act as research assistants to faculty members, said Artis. The students contribute to the generation of new knowledge on topics of local, national, and global interest. At UCSD's most recent conference, students presented research findings on a wide range of subjects, including predicting mortgage default in California, neuromodulation of sensory learning, the role of cell adhesion molecules in pancreatic beta-cell growth, and restoration of coastal sage scrub at the UC Scripps Coastal Reserve.

The UC San Diego Libraries, ranked among the top 25 public academic research libraries in the nation, play an integral role in advancing and supporting the university's research, teaching, patient care, and public service missions. The nine libraries that comprise the UCSD Library system provide access to more than 7 million digital and print volumes, journals, and multimedia materials to meet the knowledge demands of scholars, students, and members of the public. Each day, more than 7,300 people stream through one of the university's nine libraries. The Libraries' vast resources and services are accessed more than 87,500 times each day via the UCSD Libraries' Web site.

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