

UC SANTA BARBARA

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## **UCSB Announces Winners of Thomas More Storke Award and Other Top Prizes For Outstanding Graduating Students**

Three remarkable graduating seniors at UC Santa Barbara have been named winners of the university's top awards for their scholastic achievement, their extraordinary service to the university and the community, and their personal courage and persistence.

·Paul Monge-Rodriguez, of American Canyon, is the recipient of the Thomas More Storke Award for Excellence, the campus's highest student honor, for outstanding scholarship and extraordinary service to the university, its students, and the community.

·Bashir Hassan, of Long Beach, is the recipient of the Jeremy D. Friedman Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding leadership and superior scholarship, and the student who has -- in a particularly innovative and creative way -- contributed significantly to the quality of life on campus.

·Jonathan Weber, of Carpinteria, is the recipient of the Alyce Marita Whitted Memorial Award, which recognizes a non-traditional student's endurance, persistence, and courage in the face of extraordinary challenges while pursuing an

academic degree.

These and other student-award winners will be honored at a University Awards Ceremony and reception on Friday, June 10, at 3:30 p.m. in the campus's Corwin Pavilion.

(The winner of the Storke Award will also be honored at the Social Sciences II Commencement ceremony at 9 a.m. on Sunday, June 11, on the Commencement Green.)

Monge-Rodriguez, the Storke Award winner, is described by a nominator as someone "destined for major leadership positions in his life."

An honors student majoring in global studies and sociology, he has demonstrated outstanding scholarship and leadership in support of higher education and social equality.

In recognition of his distinguished academic performance, he was recently inducted in Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest honorary academic society.

At UCSB, Monge-Rodriguez served as president of Associated Students where he was an advocate for public higher education and new student retention services.

He lobbied state legislators to increase higher education funding, and met with UC President Mark Yudof to help generate university support for legislation that allows undocumented high school graduates to pay resident fees in California public colleges and universities.

In addition, he was a driving force behind the creation of a campus food bank for students with limited resources.

As co-chair of UCSB's Student Commission on Racial Equality, Monge-Rodriguez organized state conferences and led a successful campaign to focus university resources on hate-crime awareness.

He also served as a mentor for the Educational Opportunity Program, and was founder of the Recruitment and Retention Center and the Salvadoran Student Union.

Moreover, he was a community liaison for the United States Student Association (USSA).

In his work with USSA, he spoke at national conferences and trained chapters nationwide.

His accomplishments are even more impressive, given that English is his second language.

Monge-Rodriguez is a first-generation college student, and one of seven children of immigrant parents who escaped civil war in El Salvador.

Hassan, winner of the Jeremy D. Friedman Memorial Award, is graduating with a double major in black studies and sociology.

His commitment to communal values and social justice is evident in his scholarship, leadership, and creative accomplishments in the performing arts, which have enhanced the quality of student life on campus and beyond.

Throughout his childhood, Hassan had to adapt to new environments and cultures, having lived in Nigeria, Egypt, Sudan, and other countries, where he developed impressive skills as a polyglot speaker of Hausa, Arabic, Fulani, Yourba, Italian, and English.

An honors student at UCSB, he participated in the McNair Scholars Program, where he conducted ethnographic research on racial politics that has been praised by faculty members for its depth of analysis and originality.

He served as a peer adviser for the Educational Opportunity Program, a resident assistant for the Summer Transitional Enrichment Program, and a mentor and board member for the Ujima Peer Mentor Program for African and African-American students.

Hassan's dedication to improving student life at UCSB included the formation of the Amatory Dance Crew, a fusion dance troupe characterized by its fluid assimilation of different dance traditions, and its commitment to inclusiveness.

The highly popular troupe helped break down identity stereotypes and created a model for cultural collaboration that has since been embraced by other universities.

A nominator said he is "one of those students who come along only once in a great while; someone with exceptional skills and unusually strong motivation; a person who seems destined to do great things in life."

Next fall, Hassan will attend graduate school at Cornell University to pursue a master's degree in African-American studies and performance.

For his rare combination of academic and co-curricular excellence and extraordinary perseverance, Weber has been awarded the Alyce Marita Whitted Memorial Award.

He has earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology and already has made important contributions to the field.

Weber is described by a nominator as one of the most gifted students in the department.

Prior to attending college, Weber worked in fish processing plants and as a commercial fisherman in Alaska, where he developed a passion for anthropology and, in particular, for research focused on marine environments and native populations of the Pacific Northwest.

Before coming to UCSB, he had already published an ethnographic paper on anthropomorphic legends among Native Alaskans.

In addition to the common challenges faced by many first-generation college students, Weber lost his dominant hand in an accident, and had to relearn how to function in the world.

From this experience, he said he learned about forgiveness and how to face challenges with creativity and optimism.

At UCSB, he was president of the Sociology and Anthropology Society and founding editor of the Journal of Anthropology, a publication that has been praised by faculty members for its exceptional quality.

During the summer, Weber worked on a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research vessel, and later as an intern with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and the National Marine Fisheries Service in Seattle, Wash.

He recently produced an important educational brochure on Makah Marine Resources, published jointly by NOAA, the Makah Tribal Council, and the Makah Museum in Washington.

It is the only written material to accompany the Makah Cultural and Research Center permanent exhibit.

In Santa Barbara, Weber delivered public lectures and was a guest speaker in anthropology and archeology courses at Santa Barbara City College.

In addition to these accomplishments, Weber funded his entire college education through merit-based scholarships, which testifies to his impressive academic achievement.

In the future, he plans to continue his work in applied anthropology.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.