

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE Current*

June 2, 2011

Eileen Conrad

## **UCSB Students, Faculty Member Receive Chancellor's Research Awards**

Three graduating seniors, two graduate students, and a faculty member have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to undergraduate research at UC Santa Barbara.

The Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research for 2011 has been awarded to three students in the College of Letters and Science: Mattias Fibiger, a history major from Newbury Park; Caitlin Fong, a biology major from Calabasas; and Corie Radka, an environmental studies and zoology major from Westminster.

Fibiger's extraordinary abilities as an historian are evident in his senior thesis on the Mayaguez incident of 1975, in which Cambodia's newly installed Khmer Rouge regime seized a U.S. naval vessel and held its crew captive.

His work is described in nomination letters as having "gone well beyond filling a gap in scholarship" by carefully "explicating the event, showing its political and diplomatic importance, and indicating how it still has resonance in today's world."

Fong's remarkable research on the evolution of photoreception has been co-published with her faculty mentors in high-profile academic journals.

She has also presented her work at national and international conferences.

As her scholarly interests evolved, Fong obtained funding to conduct independent fieldwork on the ecology of coral reefs in Moorea, resulting in a major discovery that has been submitted for publication in a top journal in the field.

Although localizing agriculture is a popular concept, little research has been conducted about its impact on energy consumption, emissions, and nutrition.

While serving as a research assistant for the Santa Barbara County agri-food project, Radka gained insight into the complexities of the agri-food system.

She is co-author of an important study about the effects of localizing fruit and vegetable consumption on greenhouse emissions and nutrition in Santa Barbara County.

It was recently published in a leading academic journal.

Richard Lewis and Stephen Gosnell have each received a Fiona Goodchild Award for Excellence as a Graduate Student Mentor of Undergraduate Research.

Lewis is a third-year graduate student in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, and Gosnell is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology.

Both have made exceptional contributions to the scholarly development of undergraduate students.

Jennifer Earl, professor of sociology, is the recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Undergraduate Research, which is bestowed annually upon a faculty member with a distinguished record of mentoring undergraduate students in their research projects.

An expert in information technology, social movements, and the legal system, Earl has received major grants and awards, including the National Science Foundation CAREER Award for young scholars.

Her dedication to fostering undergraduate research is truly extraordinary.

Over the past five years, Earl has fully integrated 41 undergraduates into research projects.

She focuses on training, mentoring, and supervising new students, and conducts seminars on research methods, and the steps necessary for achieving rigorous

results.

Many have been accepted by distinguished graduate programs or employed by public service organizations.

More than half of all UCSB undergraduates are now involved in original research with graduate students and faculty members. Students compete for grant funding to support their mentored research each year. Research, conducted under the supervision of professors who are eminent in their fields, fosters critical thinking skills and helps prepare students for future careers and advanced study.

---

## **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.