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‘A Magnificent Accomplishment’

The Phi Beta Kappa chapter UCSB has selected 123 new members from among the College of Letters and Science 2017 graduating class.

At UCSB, as at other major colleges and universities, students don’t apply for Phi Beta Kappa — they’re identified by members of the chapter, who themselves were elected when they were in college. Debbie Fleming, assistant vice chancellor for student affairs, was elected at UCSB. Temmo Korisheli, a music cataloguer and music director, also was elected at UCSB. Along with about a dozen other faculty, staff members and graduate students, they helped select the newest members of Phi Beta Kappa.

And it’s no easy feat: Candidates for Phi Beta Kappa are the best of the best, academically speaking. Their coursework must cross all three divisions of the college (Mathematical, Life and Physical Sciences; the Social Sciences; and the Humanities and Fine Arts), well beyond the minimum requirements for general education. They must have completed at least one foreign language through the intermediate level, and have attempted their academic coursework for a letter grade. And, of course, they had to demonstrate an exceptional degree of excellence.

According to chapter president John Park, a professor of Asian American studies, those selected were among the most accomplished young scholars at UCSB. “You are receiving one of the highest and most distinguished academic honors in the United States for students in college,” he told this year’s new members. “That by itself is a magnificent accomplishment.”

The oldest academic honors society and the first Greek-letter society in the United States, Phi Beta Kappa was founded in 1776 by students at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va.

UCSB’s Lambda Chapter (Lambda is the 11th letter of the Greek alphabet and the UCSB chapter was the 11th in the state) was established in 1968. Over its nearly 50-year history, the Lambda Chapter has inducted more than 2,000 members.

The Lambda Chapter awards four special Honor Keys in memory of early faculty leaders and in recognition of outstanding student achievement.

The Katherine Esau Honor Key, presented to a science student whose high academic achievement best represents the ideals of Phi Beta Kappa, was awarded to Kira Furie.

The William Frost Memorial Key, presented to an initiate majoring in English who demonstrates the highest level of excellence, was awarded to Noah Feiwell.

The Lawrence Willson Honor Key, awarded to Casey Coffee, recognizes the initiate who is also a Regents Scholar.

The Hal A. Drake Honor Key, awarded to an initiate majoring in history or the history of public policy and who best demonstrates the highest ideals of Phi Beta Kappa, was presented to Paola Dela Cruz-Perez. She is also the recipient of the 2017 Thomas More Storke Award, the campus’s highest student honor.

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.