UC SANTA BARBARA

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A Step Beyond

Graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and select alumni are invited to attend the first-ever virtual UCSB Beyond Academia Conference, running from April 5 through April 16. Registration is open now and free for this year's event.

"There were many challenges and prospects with adapting to a virtual conference," said Shuying Yu, a Ph.D. student in psychological and brain Sciences who also serves as executive co-chair for the Beyond Academia Committee. "The biggest challenge for our team was definitely figuring out the logistics. There was a steep learning curve for deciding which platform we wanted to host the conference and how to use it while ensuring we continue to provide an informative and enjoyable experience to fellow attendees without subjecting them to 'Zoom fatigue.'

"Due to the pandemic, we weren't able to secure many sponsorships from departments this year," Yu continued, "so there were a lot of hurdles to overcome in finding different funding sources to cover necessary expenses to make our conference successful. However, the bright side of planning a virtual conference is that we have more flexibility to invite a more diverse range of speakers to join the career panels, and open the registration to be free for all UCSB graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and alumni who have graduated in the last five years. Beyond Academia is an amazing opportunity for students to connect with industry professionals and consider the lucrative, non-academic career paths they can pursue with their Ph.D. degrees. I'm really thankful and proud of the team for all their hard work and for making the 2021 Beyond Academia Conference possible."

Each day will feature workshops, career panels and networking opportunities for attendees to meet each other and the panelists. Professional development workshop topics include transferable skills, networking, navigating interviews, and U.S. employment options for international students and scholars. Students can also participate in panel discussions with a variety of professionals working in sectors such as research and development, startups, data science and technology, communication, university administration, government, consulting, nonprofits, and other career paths.

This year's conference will open with keynote speaker Katie Linder, author of "Going Alt-Ac: A Guide to Alternative Academic Careers" and creator of the "You've Got This" podcast at The Academic Creative. Linder also serves as the executive director for program development at Kansas State University Global Campus.

"I am so impressed with the ways that the Beyond Academia organizing team has pivoted to create an entirely virtual experience to support career exploration on our campus," said Shawn Warner, director of professional development for the UCSB Graduate Division and a staff advisor for the Beyond Academia organization. "Beyond Academia has become the go-to resource for UCSB graduate students and postdocs who want to learn about the diverse career paths that a Ph.D. can lead to. Every year, the conference offers something new and exciting, and we hope the virtual nature of this year's event will allow even more people to participate."

The Beyond Academia organization is run entirely by and for UCSB graduate students and postdocs, which means that the organizers have an intimate understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the Ph.D. experience. Now in its seventh year, the conference has grown to span multiple days and boasts hundreds of attendees every year. This year's organizing team, comprised of graduate students and postdocs from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, secured a number of campus-based and external sponsors, allowing them to offer event registration for free.

Beyond Academia at UC Santa Barbara is a career exploration organization for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars of all disciplines. Inspired by UC Berkeley's Beyond Academia, the annual conference was established in 2015 and strives to educate about career options alongside and outside academia. Their goal is to help attendees develop an action plan that will prepare them for the career of their choice. For more information, please contact the organizing team.

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.