UC SANTA BARBARA

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Advocating for Graduate Students

Four graduate students and one staff member have been presented the 2021 Dixon-Levy Service Award from the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

This year's recipients include Margaret McMurtrey, a doctoral student in English; Simone Stewart, a doctoral student in mechanical engineering; Jordan J. Tudisco, a doctoral student in comparative literature; and Julia Zuo, a doctoral student in materials.

The staff member recognized is Marge Pamintuan-Perko, director of marketing and communications for the Graduate Division. In addition, an honorable mention went to Heena Yoon, a graduate student in music.

McMurtrey is described by her nominators as a leader who is "dedicated, community-minded, full-of-heart." She has served as co-convener of the UCSB American Indian & Indigenous Collective's Research Focus Group, as founding and elected member of the UCSB American Indian & Indigenous Collective's Academic Council and as a member of the search committee for the next MultiCultural Center director. She is cited for her dedication and her commitment to "fostering collective space for Native and Indigenous scholars and allies on campus and in the community."

Stewart has been a tireless advocate for underrepresented groups in her roles at the Blum Center, the Society for Advancement of Chicanxs and Native Americans in Science, the Center for Science and Engineering Partnerships, the Black Graduate

Student Association and Graduate Students for Diversity in Science. Her voice, her nominators say, “has been vital to ensuring justice and vibrancy for the current graduate student community and future generations of graduates.”

Throughout her graduate career, Zuo has consistently demonstrated her commitment to inclusivity within the science community. She has developed a course for local high school students through School for Scientific Thought, a program of the campus’s Center for Science and Engineering Partnerships. Described by her nominator as “the catalyst for incredible change in our department,” Zuo is the co-founder of the Materials Student Association.

Tudisco’s accomplishments and contributions to the campus community include advocacy through the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity and the Queer and Trans Graduate Student Union, to their commitment to Queer and Trans graduate students’ rights campus-wide. “They are never content with simply attending, in their degree or campus organizations,” Tudisco’s nominators note. “They see this as their duty to the future of all of our academic lives, and we are fortunate to be in community with them.”

Pamintuan-Perko, according to her nominator, showed “selfless devotion to the graduate students’ wellbeing in our community.” Her “invisible” work, the nominator noted “is responsible for incoming graduate students getting resources available and know-how to navigate in a big institution.”

The award recipients were honored at a virtual ceremony June 1.

The Dixon-Levy Service Award was established in 1998 as the Travis Dixon GSA Service Award to recognize Dixon’s many years of service to the organization. In 2002, the GSA renamed the award as the Dixon-Levy GSA Service Award to honor graduate student Alan Levy commitment to his fellow students. The award acknowledges that advocacy for graduate students takes many forms, not only through service as an elected GSA officer.

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.