UC SANTA BARBARA

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Going Out on Top

With Commencement Week officially underway at UC Santa Barbara, the university has announced recipients of its most prestigious student honors, awarded for scholastic achievement, extraordinary service and personal courage and persistence.

• **Emily Elizabeth Lopez** has won the Thomas More Storke Award for Excellence, the campus's highest honor, for her outstanding scholarship and extraordinary service to the university, its students and the community.

• **Michael Zargari** has won the Jeremy D. Friedman Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding leadership, superior scholarship and contributions to undergraduate life on campus.

• **Hugh Darius David Cook** has won the Alyce Marita Whitted Memorial Award, which recognizes a nontraditional student's endurance, persistence and courage in the face of extraordinary challenges while pursuing an academic degree.

An award ceremony for winners of these and other student awards, as well as for their families, faculty and staff, will be held at 3:30 p.m. Friday, June 10 in Corwin Pavilion.

The Yonie Harris Award for Civility in Public Discourse will be presented to **Vonnie Feng Wei**. The honor is bestowed upon graduates who best exemplify the principles of free speech and respectful dialogue and who foster a campus climate of civility and open-mindedness. **Timnit Kefela** and **Ryan Flaco Rising** will receive the

Michael D. Young Engaged Scholar Award for students who have successfully integrated their scholarly knowledge and/or values into action.

Prizes for the University Service Award, the University Award of Distinction, and the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Scholarship, Leadership and Citizenship will be presented to multiple graduating seniors and graduate students. The winner of the 2022 Mortar Board Award, which recognizes the student who earned the highest cumulative GPA of the graduating class, will be announced at the ceremony.

Lopez, the Storke Award winner, is cited for her scholarly excellence and positive contributions to the campus community at UC Santa Barbara, where she promoted better access for underrepresented groups in math and science. Her pursuit of challenging academic goals, her persistence through adversity and her dedication to fostering opportunities for others are what led to her selection for the university’s highest honor.

A transfer student from the College of the Canyons, Lopez arrived at UC Santa Barbara in 2018 to study mathematics in the College of Creative Studies. She is a first-generation college student and the only Latina in her cohort of 22 students — a fact in which she took pride and used as motivation to persist as a mathematician and a role model.

In addition to completing her coursework, Lopez was involved in multiple research and mentorship initiatives, including service as an undergraduate research assistant, a research intern at Williams College and a UCSB McNair Scholar. Her research led to a peer-reviewed publication, an award-winning poster presentation and talks at the SACNAS National Diversity Conference and the Northeastern Mathematics Research Experience for Undergraduates Conference, among other events.

Lopez is a member of multiple academic societies, including the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, the American Mathematical Society and the Association for Women in Mathematics. The winner of multiple scholarships and awards, she is moving on to a graduate program at Cornell University, where she will be a Dean’s Scholar, a Dean’s Excellence Fellow and an NSF Graduate Research Fellow.

Friedman Award winner Zargari is a UCSB Promise Scholar who in his freshman year founded the Promise Scholars Advisory Board to create networking opportunities and space for education for low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students.

He also served on the Student Health Advisory Committee, as well as the UCSB Student Health Insurance Plan Advisory Committee and the systemwide UCSHIP Committee.

Working as a budget analyst for the Associated Students Office of the Controller, Zargari sought to restructure budget allocations and spending procedures for AS organizations to boost student engagement without increasing fees. He also served on the Student Fee Advisory Committee and volunteered with the Community Financial Aid Fund.

Zargari is a double major in economics and in statistics and data science, and a double-minor in Iranian studies and translation studies. His research contributions include the creation and administration of a survey to assess student mental health before and after completion of economics courses and work with endangered languages, filming and translating videos of older generation Persian Jews from Farsi and ancient Judeo-Persian in to English.

One of two inaugural Promise Fellows, a new graduate initiative at UCSB, Zargari will next pursue a master’s degree in environmental data science at the Bren School.

Cook, the Whitted Award winner, dedicated his time at UCSB to helping students in recovery. As a Peer Recovery Intern for Gauchos in Recovery, he focused on overdose prevention education, mentorship, and the production of articles and blog posts for the Alcohol and Drug Program. In this capacity he also testified before the California State Assembly as an advocate for college students in recovery.

Characterized as a talented and inspirational writer who used words to foster connections among students, Cook wrote for the Daily Nexus and The Bottom Line and participated in the campus Poets Club, writing and performing many poems. He served as president of the Postal Art Club.

After his graduation from UC Santa Barbara, where he majored in writing and literature, Cook will pursue a master’s degree in counseling psychology from Pacifica Graduate School.

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.