

UC SANTA BARBARA

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## University names winners of Thomas More Storke Award and other major prizes for 2023 graduates

Commencement season at UC Santa Barbara also ushers in student award season. And with graduation week in full swing, the university has now announced recipients of its most prestigious student honors, awarded for scholastic achievement, extraordinary service and personal courage and persistence.

- **Cameran Bahnsen** 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.
- **Annika Katarina Sanchez** has won the Jeremy D. Friedman Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding leadership, superior scholarship and contributions to undergraduate life on campus.
- **Hyun Joo (Jena) Lee** 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 16 in Corwin Pavilion.

The Yonie Harris Award for Civility in Public Discourse will be presented to **Jamaal Muwwakkil** and **Gurleen Pabla**. 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. **Laura Pritschet** will receive the Michael D. Young Engaged Scholar Award for students who have successfully applied their scholarly knowledge and/or values to 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 2023 Mortar Board Award, which recognizes the student who earned the highest cumulative GPA of the graduating class, will be announced at the ceremony.

Cameran Bahnsen, the Storke Award winner, is cited for her courage, persistence and co-curricular and scholarly achievement, as well as for the work she has done for communities — both native and non-native — across campus. Bahnsen, who is Assiniboine, tribe based in Montana on the Fort Peck Reservation, was deeply involved in American Indian and Indigenous focused activities, research and instruction throughout her time at UC Santa Barbara. A transfer student from Ventura College, she is graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental studies and a minor in American Indian and Indigenous studies.

A member and co-chair of the American Indian and Indigenous Student Association, Bahnsen also served as an undergraduate representative to the American Indian and Indigenous Collective, a planning committee member for the American Indian and Indigenous Collective Symposia, a co-chair of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, and a peer mentor to the Educational Opportunity Program's American Indian and Indigenous Cultural Resource Center. She served on the Environmental Studies Student Advisory committee and, for the past two years, worked to advance land repatriation, plant stewardship, food sovereignty and Traditional Ecological Knowledge through the creation and instruction of the inaugural Environmental Studies course, ENV S 194TK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge Studies), which has now been taught three times.

Following her graduation from UCSB, Bahnsen will work as a park ranger at Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, where she will focus on tribal relationships, education, and visitor services. She hopes to eventually pursue a master's degree

and Ph.D.

Graduating with a degree in psychological and brain sciences and a minor in applied psychology, Annika Sanchez, winner of the Friedman Award, has been tireless in her efforts to normalize mental health care. Recognizing the stigma that surrounds mental health care, particularly in communities of color, she created new and innovative ways to reach students.

As a mental health peer and president of the United Sorority and Fraternity Council (USFC), Sanchez provided a space for marginalized students to discuss topics such as imposter syndrome, sleep hygiene and stress. She co-authored a grant proposal to secure funding for a new program designed to normalize mental health care for first generation students of color at UCSB. Sanchez was also the first chapter delegate from Sigma Lambda Gamma to be nominated to work on a new sorority-wide wellbeing committee.

Whitted Award recipient Jena Lee has earned her degree in psychological and brain sciences. She first arrived on campus in 2021 as a non-traditional transfer student and student veteran. Finding her way to the Veterans Resource Center, she quickly got involved, focusing particularly on food security. Recognizing a reluctance to accept help, Lee created a system for student veterans to order groceries from the Associated Students Food Bank and pick them up in the Veterans Resource Center — lessening a barrier to support. She also re-established the Student Veterans of America chapter at UCSB and served as both president and vice president; the organization now boasts almost 30 members. In addition, Lee collaborated with Career Services to co-host a special career-focused event and served as a Health & Wellness intern specifically focused on the wellness needs of student veterans.

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## **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.