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A new champion is crowned — and moves on to compete systemwide

Marge Perko
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We have a winner.

For her 3-minute research talk, “Healthy Forests, Healthy Humans,” Kacie Ring, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology, earned the title 2024 UCSB Grad Slam Champion in the competition’s final round, held Friday, April 5, in Campbell Hall.

“It's a lot of hard work going into this, strangely, for three minutes,” Ring said of her Grad Slam experience. “But I feel like it's all worth it.” One big reward was meeting the other finalists. “We're pretty good friends now, and I would have never met them if it wasn't for the Grad Slam. I am so happy to get to know them and to listen to their research.”

This year’s runners-up were Nākoa Farrant (Bren School) and Royce Olarte (Education), while the audience voted in Daniella Walter (Mechanical Engineering) for the $500 People’s Choice Award. As UCSB Champion, Ring received the $2,000 grand prize, while two runners-up each won $1,000.

Next, Ring will go on to compete at the systemwide UC Grad Slam on Friday, May 3.

“I'm really excited,” she said. “I think it'll be an additional challenge to take on. This whole experience has proven to be unique, and I've learned a lot. I can't imagine what else I'm going to learn and what other skills I'm going to gain going to the UC wide competition.”

Nearly 50 participants across disciplines competed in the 11th annual contest. Preliminary rounds were held in March.

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