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Creative Studies student earns coveted Knight-Hennessy Scholarship for neuroscience

College of Creative Studies (CCS) student Ashley Yeh ’24 has been selected for the prestigious 2024 Stanford University Knight-Hennessy Scholarship. This is the first year that students from UC Santa Barbara have been honored since the program’s establishment in 2018. College of Engineering alum William Heap '23 also received a 2024 scholarship.

Yeh was recognized for her outstanding contributions to the field of neuroscience and her commitment to interdisciplinary research.

“I am absolutely honored to have been admitted to the Knight-Hennessy Scholars Program. The opportunity to meet so many talented individuals from my cohort during the interview weekend was truly inspiring, and I can’t wait to continue working with them over the next few years,” she said. “Above all, I am immensely grateful to the excellent mentors I’ve found at UCSB, specifically Britney Pennington, Dennis Clegg, the Clegg Lab, and UCSB Career Services for supporting me throughout the application process. I couldn't have done it without their support.”

After she receives her bachelor’s degree in biology from CCS this spring, Yeh will pursue a Ph.D. in neuroscience at Stanford School of Medicine. During her undergraduate years, Yeh has concentrated her research on molecular, cellular and

behavioral systems, while also studying computational neuroscience at renowned institutions such as Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zurich, Stanford and UC San Francisco.

True to her interdisciplinary spirit, Yeh's research focuses on understanding the neural circuits involved in behavior and their implications in neurological disorders. At Stanford, she will continue this research by exploring innovative strategies for repairing neurons damaged by neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's. She hopes not only to uncover potential pathways for reversing the progression of these diseases but also to translate these findings to clinics in order to improve treatment outcomes.

Additionally, Yeh co-founded Science Translated, an international science communication organization, where she leads community outreach initiatives aimed at promoting scientific literacy in local communities. Through the Knight-Hennessy scholarship, she remains committed to this passion for science communication for the general public.

Yeh has been the recipient of esteemed scholarships such as the Goldwater Scholarship and the ThinkSwiss Research Scholarship to support her research endeavors. She was also selected for the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) and acted as a student representative at the 2023 Spring UC Santa Barbara Foundation 150th meeting.

"Congratulations to Ashley, this is an absolutely outstanding accomplishment — one of UC Santa Barbara's very first Knight-Hennessy Scholarship recipients!," said CCS Interim Dean Timothy Sherwood. Ashley's selection for this prestigious program truly reflects her commitment to creating new knowledge and her potential as a visionary, courageous and collaborative leader. As she embarks on this new journey at Stanford, we all look forward to the impact she will make on society."

UCSB CoE mechanical engineering alum Heap will put his Knight-Hennessy scholarship towards his doctorate in mechanical engineering at Stanford School of Engineering. He aims to translate novel research into impactful robotic systems through a combination of technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills. He is currently working to develop soft, pneumatic "vine" robots for use in search and rescue and hazardous environment inspection. At UCSB, he managed a multidisciplinary team to pursue technical and needfinding development for vine

robots, and raised more than $100,000 in funding for the team’s work. William was awarded the UC Regents Scholarship, was a Stanford Summer First Fellow, and is currently a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow.

The Knight-Hennessy Scholars Program is renowned for its multidisciplinary leadership development program and rigorous selection process. In 2023, 7,119 applications were received for 85 awards. Scholars receive a fellowship for up to three years of tuition, depending upon their degree length. They also receive a stipend for living and academic expenses, and a travel stipend for one annual trip to and from Stanford.

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