

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

May 9, 2024

[Shelly Leachman](#)

## **UCSB's Kacie Ring triumphs at UC Grad Slam, places second, wins people's choice**

With her three-minute talk, Kacie Ring finishes the Grad Slam season holding three awards.

That's what they call a hat trick.

After winning the campus competition, UCSB Grad Slam Champion Kacie Ring scored two more prizes in the [UC Grad Slam](#), taking second place overall and the People's Choice Award at the systemwide event in San Francisco.

"Throughout the talks, I did not imagine that I would take home a prize, and I didn't even know it was possible to take home two awards," said Ring, a Ph.D. student in ecology, evolution and marine biology. "I was ecstatic to receive the People's Choice. Throughout this process, I have been overflowing with gratitude to those who have supported me, but to have that even further validated by this award made me emotional. That award meant so much to me."

"We are all so proud of Kacie," said Interim Graduate Dean [Leila J. Rupp](#). "I was a little disappointed when the People's Choice award was announced because I thought that meant she hadn't won one of the first three places, which I knew she deserved. So it was even more exciting that she scored a double win. Her talk was

everything a Grad Slam entry should be: smart, accessible, and leaving you with something important you didn't know before. All in three minutes."

It was a Grad Slam milestone for UC Santa Barbara, with Ring receiving both the \$4,000 prize for second place and the \$1,000 People's Choice award for her talk "Healthy forests, healthy humans." UC San Diego's Iris Garcia-Pak won the first place "Slammy" for "The Brain: An Exclusive VIP Club," while UC Riverside's champion Shannon Brady took third place for her pitch, "Thinking out Loud: Is self-talk a secret to success?"

UCSB champions Leah Foltz (2017), Mengya Tao (2018), and Logan Kozal (2021) won the audience vote for People's Choice in previous years. In 2015, campus champion Daniel Heeber placed second.

"The support from the Graduate Division, my department and UCSB blew me away," Ring said of her Grad Slam experience. "I met the other winners from all the UCs and was wildly impressed with them. They were mostly neuroscientists, and their research felt revolutionary, so sharing the stage with them was an honor. I couldn't believe I was there with them. It was a joy chatting and laughing with them nervously. Presenting at LinkedIn Headquarters was also surreal in its own right. In short, it was an exhilarating, fulfilling, nerve-wracking whirlwind!"

Most importantly, her family and friends were in the audience to cheer her on when she took the stage last week. "San Francisco is an exceptionally special place to me," she said. "My grandparents and parents grew up there, and I lived in the city for a few years while working towards my master's at SFSU. It is a home base, and it felt like I was returning with something new and exciting to share! My parents, prior master's advisor, old roommates and friends were all in the audience. So, it truly felt like a pure moment of serendipity."

Media Contact

**Debra Herrick**

Associate Editorial Director

(805) 893-2191

## **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.