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Keith Hamm

Undergraduates win cash prizes for UCSB Library's annual research award

A UC Santa Barbara campus award that features emerging scholarship, expansive academic support and considerable cash prizes continues to grow in size and reputation since it was launched in 2019. This year, the annual Library Award for Undergraduate Research named six awardees whose scholarly deep dives on a variety of topics demonstrated their expert use of UCSB Library collections, services and a vast array of related resources.

"As always, we were deeply impressed by the students' evidence of growth as young scholars," said Jane Faulkner, a research and engagement librarian. "In their reflective essays, all of them mentioned that their research process improved as they discovered new scholarly resources and learned to refine and adjust their search strategies."

To be eligible for the award, students had to submit a research or creative project, a comprehensive bibliography of supporting materials and an essay describing their research process. The submissions were reviewed by a panel of judges made up of library staff and faculty from across disciplines.

In the humanities and fine arts category, history major Hanna Kawamoto, who graduates this quarter and will be pursuing a master's degree from UC Irvine in the

fall, took the top honor with her paper, "Spiritually Unsexed: Believers, Critics, and Early Histories of the Publick Universal Friend, 1776-1835."

"My research topic originated from my personal quest to understand my gender identity," said Kawamoto. "By my second year in college, I came across the term 'non-binary,' and, added to my passion for history, I was curious to see whether there were historical individuals who did not explicitly view themselves as a man or as a woman."

Kawamoto credits her project's success to the availability of the library's online databases and its interlibrary loan program, which, during the past year alone, has borrowed from more than 800 libraries worldwide.

Placing second in the humanities and fine arts category was April Luce, who is majoring in physics and minoring in art. She wrote "Modesty, The Double Edged Sword: Exploring Veils as a Symbol of Female Liberation and Oppression in the Work of Lalla Essaydi."

In the Social Sciences category, first place went to environmental studies major Sanjana Sujeet for "Green Architecture: Comparing Ancient Civilization's Techniques to Today's."

The runner-up prize went to Audrey Gaceta, in the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences, for her research paper, "Navigating Higher Education: Stress and Control Among First-Generation Undergraduates."

First prize in the science and engineering category went to environmental studies major April Zhang, who wrote, "Flammability of Wildland Fuel Types and Its Relevance to Fire Spread and Ignition: A Comparative Flammability Study of Tree Dead Fuels and Surrounding Live Shrub Fuels in Southern California Forests."

Second place in the same category went to Shadoe Dewitt, a senior in the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences, for "Eco-anxiety in College Students: Assessment and Intervention in Populations Vulnerable to Climate Change Related Mental Health Disorders."

First-place winners received $750; runners up won $500. This year’s award was made possible with generous support from faculty emerita Jenny Cook-Gumperz.

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