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2026 Grad Slam opens call for graduate student competitors

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UC Santa Barbara graduate students are invited to sign up for the 2026 Grad Slam competition for a chance to showcase their research to a wider audience — and win some cash.

“Grad Slam challenges our graduate students to distill their research into a powerful three-minute story — an exercise that strengthens communication skills and confidence across any field,” said Janine Jones, Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Affairs and the Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean. “Beyond the prestige of competing among the UC’s brightest scholars, participants build networks that span disciplines and open new doors for collaboration and discovery.”

[Registration for the competition](#) begins Monday, Jan. 5 and will remain open through Feb. 6. Preliminary rounds run Feb. 20 through March 6 on campus.

Each winner from preliminary rounds, including the Second Chance Round for runners-up, will receive \$500 and move on to represent their disciplinary group in

the campus final, hosted by Jones on April 9 at Campbell Hall.

On the line for the winner: \$5,000. In addition, audience members will vote for their favorite presenter in the People's Choice category, with the winner receiving \$1,000.

UCSB's top presenter also earns an invite to the [systemwide competition](#), held in the spring at UC Center Sacramento.

In related news, graduate students are invited to sign up for the concurrent [Grad Slam Fundamentals in Public Speaking](#) certificate workshops to learn how to craft elevator pitches, design presentation slides and develop stage presence and other important professional communication skills.

"Grad Slam and the related workshops reflect what our professional development mission is all about, giving graduate students the tools, confidence and support they need to shine," said Anna Theogarajan, Director of Graduate Professional Development. "I've seen firsthand that when students find their voice, it creates a ripple effect, opening new paths for themselves, inspiring others and making a meaningful impact in their communities and fields. Whether you're stepping on stage or joining our public speaking certificate workshops, you'll build practical communication skills and confidence that you'll carry with you into any career."

For more information, contact [Theogarajan](#) directly at Anna.Theogarajan@graddiv.ucsb.edu.

2026 Grad Slam is sponsored by Yardi Systems, Inc.

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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.