

# THE *Current*

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Marge Perko

## **Innovative environmental education earns top honors at 2026 Grad Slam**

To discover creative solutions to the challenges of climate change, educators are increasingly turning to those who could someday be impacted the most: today's children.

In her three-minute overview of such an approach, "Reimagining Climate Solutions Through Speculative Designs," UC Santa Barbara graduate student Kaylee Laub won the [2026 Grad Slam](#) championship event, held at Campbell Hall on April 9.

Laub's presentation focused on the work of science teachers who engage young students through innovative problem solving rather than projections of doom-and-gloom.

"I reimagined what climate change education could look like by positioning . . . students not as consumers of content, but instead as creators of possible futures," said Laub, who taught middle school science before pursuing a doctoral degree at the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. She was awarded \$5,000 for her winning presentation.

A recording of the event's livestream is available at the university's [YouTube page](#); Laub's winning presentation begins at the 47:50 mark.

Laub was one of [seven finalists](#) who advanced from preliminary rounds across a range of disciplines. Runner-up Michaela Sten, a doctoral student in marine sciences

and geography, won \$2,000 for “Carbon Collab: Where Should We Grow Seaweed to Mitigate Climate Change?” Jordan Bream’s presentation, “From 1960s Relics to Solid-State Reliability: The NASICON Energy Grid” won the audience’s People’s Choice trophy and \$1,000.

With the win, Laub has been invited to represent UCSB at the systemwide [UC Grad Slam](#) on April 22 in Sacramento.

“I hope to bring my research to a broader audience,” Laub said. “I’m really excited to represent the education department here at UCSB.”

Tags

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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.