Four UCSD Students Recognized For Their Stellar Library Research Skills

Winners cite participation in research as major benefit for undergrads studying at UCSD

Stephanie Cham, 1st prize winner
Life & Physical Sciences

October 29, 2010 – Four undergraduate students at the University of California, San Diego have received the 2010 Undergraduate Library Research Prize in recognition of their stellar research skills. The prize, which is co-sponsored by the UC San Diego Libraries, the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and the Alumni Association, is awarded annually to students who demonstrate outstanding use of library resources and services in support of their research. Two students in the Arts /Humanities/Social Sciences and Life/Physical Sciences are selected by a panel of judges to receive cash awards of $1000 (first place) and $500 (second place).

"We are very pleased to pay tribute to this year's Library Research Prize award-winners," said Brian E. C. Schottlaender, the Audrey Geisel University Librarian at UCSD. "Learning to conduct effective research is a critical part of our undergraduates' academic experience. This year's winners clearly demonstrated the superior research skills needed to succeed academically, and their strategic use of various library resources-from specialized databases and library bibliographic tools to electronic journals and manuscript collections- was impressive."

The prize-winners (all seniors) for 2010 are: Shelley Guyton, Revelle (1st prize) and Claire Halbrook, Eleanor Roosevelt (2nd prize) in the Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences; and Stephanie Cham, Muir (1st prize) and J.R. Bachman, Eleanor Roosevelt (2nd prize) in the Life Sciences/Physical Sciences.

"The winners of this year's Undergraduate Library Research Prize reflect the high level of intellectual rigor and achievement that has become synonymous with UC San Diego," said Penny Rue, UCSD's Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. "Students come here to learn from the best and brightest faculty and, at a research powerhouse like UCSD , that goes way beyond the classroom. It's gratifying to see how skillfully students are using the substantial knowledge and information resources available at the UCSD Libraries."

To be considered for the Undergraduate Library Research Prize, students must be nominated by their research advisor and are required to submit documentation and an essay on their work. Students must also present their research at the annual UCSD Undergraduate Research Conference held in the spring. The conference, sponsored by Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP), a unit of Student Educational Advancement under Student Affairs, is one of three major undergraduate scholarly meetings that AEP coordinates each year that provides a venue for students from all academic disciplines to present research projects conducted under the guidance of UCSD faculty members.

Claire Halbrook, 2nd prize winner
Arts & Humanities/Social Sciences

"The Libraries are the essential foundation for serious research at a university like UCSD," said Armin Afsahi, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Alumni Affairs at UCSD. "Our students' ability to harvest and apply that knowledge bodes well for their current and future success, both in and beyond the academy. Our students go on to apply knowledge and give back in often unpredictable and amazing ways. We are glad we can play a role, with the Libraries and Student Affairs, in recognizing and awarding exemplary research prowess among our student body."

Shelley Guyton, an anthropology major, was honored for her research on "The Filipino Author in English," an examination of English literature in the Philippines, and the influence of Western culture on colonialism and the Filipino national consciousness. Guyton was nominated by Suzanne Brenner, a professor in the UCSD Department of Anthropology, who, in her nomination of Guyton, noted that she "was impressed by how well written, interesting, and coherent her thesis was and by how well she was able to integrate sophisticated theoretical arguments with empirical evidence from both primary and secondary sources."

"The amount I learned during the research process was so fulfilling for me," said Guyton. "The library is no longer simply a catalogue of books to me. It is a starting point that can take me far outside the building itself, giving access to other campus or local libraries and digital libraries. Finding scholarly sources at such an efficient pace made me feel like I was involved in a 'web of knowledge' in which I could productively learn and then combine everything I learned from all the diverse sources."

Claire Halbrook, whose studies focus on political science and theatre, was nominated by UCSD Political Science professor Philip Roeder. Halbrook was recognized for her honors thesis, "Participation of Women in Parliaments and Political Corruption," in which she utilized a wide variety of library resources and research methods to demonstrate an exceptional ability at locating, applying, and analyzing extensive primary and secondary resources.

"Claire sought to untangle the causal links that would reveal whether it is the presence of women that leads to lower corruption or some other cause that explains both participation of women and lower corruption in some countries," said Roeder, who described Halbrook as an "intrepid researcher" and called her paper "a masterful study."

Shelley Guyton, 1st prize winner
Arts & Humanities/Social Sciences

"The library's worldwide political abstracts saved me countless hours in developing my literature review, which proved the critical first step in getting my thesis started," said Halbrook, "and the Circuit and Interlibrary loan systems gave me access to more books than I could have ever imagined. Many students are capable of asking critical questions, but it takes a bit of trial and error as well as a push in the right direction from specialists and research experts to understand how to find the answers to those questions. I also am grateful for the many kind, patient librarians who chatted with me on the weekends and late into the night on *Ask a Librarian*."

Human biology major Stephanie Cham, received a 1st place prize for her research project on "Muscle and Sleep Problems Associated With Statin Use." Cham's research investigated the risks and benefits of using statins, the best-selling class of prescription drugs in history, widely prescribed by doctors for lowering cholesterol. Cham was nominated by Dr. Beatrice Golumb, an associate professor at the UCSD School of Medicine, who was impressed with Cham's creative use of resources.

"The nature of the library resources capitalized upon and synthesized in her research was diverse, including peer-reviewed scientific research, but extending well beyond it to patient chat, regulatory agency and industry Web sites, as well as reference management tools. To my count, there are 15 separate utilizations of library tools employed by Stephanie in her research," said Golumb.

"A future in medicine and medical research requires adept abilities to search and read through the vast literature available," said Cham, "and participating in the research conference and assisting with writing papers has taught me many strategies. This invaluable experience with the process of research methods provides me with tools I can carry into my future in medicine, research, and academics. The library resources available through the university were vital in our ability to successfully carry out our two studies, which have been published in two biomedical journals."

J.R. Bachman, a bioengineering major with minors in philosophy and physics, was lauded for his research on "Non-invasive Bone Blood Oxygenation Studies Using Near Infrared Technology." Bachman's adviser, Alan Hargens, a professor of orthopedic surgery, remarked that Bachman "developed an excellent sense of inquiry and use of UCSD Libraries' resources that demonstrate great promise for a future career in research and medicine."

JR Bachman, 2nd prize winner
Life & Physical Sciences

"Very early in the research process, I was advised to seek the help of UCSD librarians, guidance I initially resisted" recalled Bachman. "In the age of the Internet and Google, it seemed old-fashioned to go to the library and speak with a librarian. However, this eventually proved to be the most productive development in my research. Taking advantage of the librarians and library resources saved me countless hours of combing the Web through questionable sources. As it turns out, I've discovered that the best online resource for beginning research is not Google but instead the UCSD Libraries' Web site."

According to Catherine Friedman, Associate University Librarian, who oversees the Library Research Prize contest, this year's winners were very astute in using the expertise of research and subject librarians and archivists who could save them multiple steps in their research efforts.

All entrants, said Friedman, must be nominated by UCSD faculty members and are judged based on: the significance of library materials used, including print, electronic, and primary resources; demonstrated expertise in mining library collections, including identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing a variety of materials in the generation of research; and evidence of significant personal learning and the development of substantive research and inquiry skills over time. For more information about the Undergraduate Research Library Prize, see: http://libraries.ucsd.edu/about/undergrad-prize-2010.html

According to David Artis, Dean of Undergraduate Research Initiatives, more than 150 UCSD undergraduates reported their research findings at the 2010 UCSD Undergraduate Research Conference on April 24, now in its 23rd year. A large crowd of family, friends, lab partners, and mentors attended the all-day event in support of the undergraduate participants. Over the last decade, faculty nominations of undergraduates to participate in the conference have increased by nearly 50 per cent, said Artis.

With Increasing regularity, undergraduates at UCSD and other selective and demanding colleges and universities act as research assistants to faculty members and with faculty mentors, added Artis. The students contribute to the generation of new knowledge on topics of local, national, and global interest, ranging from nanotechnology and immigration to visual arts and surgery.

Ranked among the nation's top 20 public academic research libraries, the UC San Diego Libraries play an integral role in advancing and supporting the university's research, teaching, and public service missions. As the intellectual heart of the UC San Diego campus, the nine university libraries provide access to more than 7 million digital and print volumes, journals, and multimedia materials to meet the knowledge and information needs of faculty, students, and members of the public. Each day, more than 7,300 patrons visit one of the UCSD libraries and more than 87,000 people access library resources through the UCSD Libraries main Web site.

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