2017 Grad Slam Finalists

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The Graduate Division has announced the finalists in the 2017 Grad Slam competition at UC San Francisco. The Grad Slam contest challenges PhD students to present a compelling presentation of their dissertation research in three minutes or less, using language that not only their peers but also non-specialists will understand. Since 2015, the competition has been held across all ten campuses of the University of California. The winner from each individual campus will go on to compete in the system-wide Grad Slam contest in May.
Grad Slam LIVE!
The finalists are:

- Britta Berg-Johansen, Bioengineering Program (Jeffrey Lotz, faculty mentor)
- Peter Chisnell, Neuroscience Program (Kaveh Ashrafi, faculty mentor)
- Stephanie Holden, Neuroscience Program (Jeanne Paz, faculty mentor)
- Christina Hueschen, Biomedical Sciences Program (Sophie Dumont, faculty mentor)
- Ariel Kauss, Biomedical Sciences Program (Todd McDevitt, faculty mentor)
- Sophia Levan, Biomedical Sciences Program (Susan Lynch, faculty mentor)
- Anne Pipathsouk, Tetrad Program (Orion Weiner, faculty mentor)
- Sam Pollock, Chemistry and Chemical Biology Program (Jim Wells, faculty mentor)
- Hane Ryu, Pharmaceutical Sciences and Pharmacogenomics Program (Nadav Ahituv and Katie Pollard, faculty mentors)
- Ashley Smart, Neuroscience Program (Jim Wells and Grae Davis, faculty mentors)

The 10 student finalists will present their research in a live contest on Thursday, March 16, at 4 p.m. in Byers Auditorium at UCSF’s Mission Bay campus.

The panel of five live-contest judges includes UCSF Chancellor Sam Hawgood, MBBS; Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Dan Lowenstein, MD; and Bruce Alberts, PhD, who is the chancellor’s leadership chair in biochemistry and biophysics for science and education at UCSF. Alberts is former president of the National Academy of Sciences, former editor-in-chief of Science, and a recipient of the National Medal of Science. The panel also includes science journalist Gabriela Quiros, an Emmy Award winning television producer for KQED Science and Environment; and Indre Viskontas, PhD, a neuroscientist, opera singer, and host of the “Inquiring Minds” podcast created by Climate Desk.

Twenty-four graduate students submitted their talks on video to enter the Grad Slam contest. A team of nine preliminary judges, which included both faculty scientists as well as non-scientist communications specialists, reviewed the videos and chose the 10 finalists.

Liz Silva, associate dean of graduate programs, said, “I look forward to Grad Slam every year. It’s an opportunity to hear about the amazing research that our students do, so it’s both illuminating and really fun. I’ve heard the same from people all over UCSF, and I hope everyone will consider coming out to cheer for our young science communicators.”

The entire UCSF community and the public are invited to attend Grad Slam Live. The event will conclude with an announcement of the winner, who will be awarded $3,000. The runner-up will receive $1,500, and the “people’s choice” winner, chosen by the audience present, will get $750. There will also be a trivia contest and a celebratory reception.

(Finalist Stephanie Holden was unavailable for a photograph and is not pictured above.)

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