Grad Slam 2018

What is it?

The annual Grad Slam competition at UCSF challenges graduate 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. The intention of Grad Slam is not to dumb-down or trivialize research; rather, it is meant to incentivize students to clarify their ideas and to help others understand and appreciate the significance of their work.

Grad Slam Live Event

The next Grad Slam contest will culminate in an exciting live event, which will take place on Thursday, March 22, 2018, 4-6 p.m., at the UCSF Mission Bay campus in Genentech Hall Auditorium. This year, for the first time, the event will also be live-streamed to Parnassus (Med Sci, S-214) for those unable to attend at Mission Bay. Audiences at both locations will cast "people's choice" ballots and enjoy a reception following the talks. This event is a celebration not only of the finalists and contest winner, but also of graduate research at UCSF and of scientific enquiry. As 2014 finalist Laura Simpson said, "This is the closest thing UCSF has to a football game!"

Prizes

The student who wins this year's Grad Slam contest will be awarded a $3,000 cash prize. The runner-up will receive $1,500, and the "people's choice" winner $750. The winner of the 2018 Grad Slam competition at UCSF will also be invited to compete in the UC system-wide Grad Slam event.

Judges

There are two sets of judges for the contest. A panel of screening judges will review the initial entries, which will be submitted on video. These judges will choose the finalists to compete in the live event. A separate panel of five judges will choose the winner and runner-up at the live event in the spring. The people's choice winner will be decided by the audiences at the live event and the Parnassus live-stream location.

Why enter?
First of all, being able to present your research in a concise way to a non-specialist is a crucial skill for all graduate students to have. Having such a presentation "in your back pocket" will help you with eventual job interviews and will help you to network at conferences and other events. It may even help you get funding for your ideas, and it will make you a better advocate for research, science, and education.

Being a finalist or winner of the Grad Slam contest will also look great on your CV! The Grad Slam competition will be well publicized, so finalists and awardees may get media attention as well. Additionally, each finalist will receive a professionally-edited video of their talk, to use as they wish.

Finally, that prize money could help you get to a conference you want to attend. It'll be yours to spend as you wish.

As an added incentive, and to recognize the effort involved in developing a talk and submitting a video, this year we will offer a $25 Amazon gift card to each eligible student who enters the contest with a video presentation that meets the contest guidelines and criteria.

How to Enter

The deadline to enter the 2018 contest has passed, but we hope you'll enter next year.

You can still see the rules for guidelines, judging criteria, eligibility, and other important deadlines. And check out our list of resources. Eligible students who declare intent to enter will be invited to submit a video of their presentation by February 1.

When will I know if I'm chosen as a finalist?

The 2018 finalists were announced on February 22.

Questions

Questions may be directed to Erik Rotman, communications coordinator of the Graduate Division.