Grad Slam 2019

Overview

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 21, 2019, 4-6 p.m., at the UCSF Mission Bay campus in Genentech Hall Auditorium. Once again, the event will also be live-streamed to Parnassus (N 225) 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

We are happy to announce a new prize structure for the 2019 UCSF Grad Slam competition:

- First Prize: $4,000 cash award
- Second Prize: $2,000 cash award
- Third Prize: $1,000 cash award
- People’s Choice: $750 cash award

The First Prize winner of the 2019 Grad Slam competition at UCSF will also be invited to compete in the UC system-wide Grad Slam [1] event on May 10, 2019.

Judges

There are two sets of judges for the contest. A panel of screening judges [2] 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 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prize winners 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. To help you build these skills, this year we will hold a Grad Slam Prep Workshop on January 15 for students who declare intent to enter. Led by Bri McWhorter, the session will help you craft a 3-minute talk and practice your presentation skills.

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 $50 Amazon gift card to each eligible student who enters the contest with a video presentation that meets the contest guidelines and criteria.

Who can Enter?

As of March 21, 2019, you must be a current graduate student in a PhD program at UCSF. (You may be on filing fee.) You must also have advanced to candidacy no later than February 4, 2019. UCSF alumni are not eligible. Your presentation must be based on your own, original dissertation research. Students who entered the contest or who were finalists in previous years ARE eligible to enter again; however, the winner and runner-up of previous contests are not eligible to enter again.

How to Enter

Step 1: Declare your intent to enter by January 8 by completing a simple online form. You will then be invited to upload a video of your 3-minute talk.

Step 2: Review the contest rules, guidelines, judging criteria, eligibility, and other important information. Check out our list of resources to help you craft an accessible 3-minute talk. Watch some of the winning talks from past live competitions.

Step 3: Attend the Grad Slam Prep Workshop on January 15. (Everyone who declares intent to enter is invited. Optional but strongly recommended.)

Step 4: Submit a video of your 3-minute talk by February 4.
Amazon gift cards ($50) for all eligible video entries will be distributed electronically in February.

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

The 7-10 finalists will be announced on or about February 21.

**Questions**

Questions may be directed to Erik Rotman [8], communications coordinator of the Graduate Division.