The GPSA Research Forum

by Becky Boulton

The Graduate & Professional Student Research Forum is hosted by the GPSA and Graduate College each spring. The Forum showcases excellence in research conducted at the graduate/professional level. This year’s event was held on the second floor of the UNLV Student Union, Saturday, March 26, 2011.

This 2010-11 academic year, the GPSA will award approximately $130,000 to offer support for graduate and professional student research & conference travel. One of the stipulations of receiving a GPSA grant is participation in the Research Forum. There were approximately 125 participants this year.

The GPSA and Graduate College appreciate the support of the faculty who took time out of their hectic semester to judge and provide the participants with valuable feedback on their research. Faculty judges include: Dr. Debra Martin, Department of Anthropology; Dr. Shiri Ayvazo, Department of Sports Education Leadership; Dr. LeAnn Putney, Department of Educational Psychology; Dr. Mehmet Erdem, Department of Hotel Management; Dr. Sajjad Ahmad, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering; Dr. Jaci Batista, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering; Dr. Clemens Heske, Department of Chemistry; Dr. Liz Bulikian, Campus Community Collaboration; Dr. Ralph Reynolds, Department of Educational Psychology; Dr. Donis Watson, Department of Sports Education Leadership; Dr. James Raymond, School of Life Sciences; Dr. Adam Simon, Department of Geoscience; Dr. Pierre Lienard, Department of Anthropology; Dr. Gale Sinatra, Department of Educational Psychology; Dr. P.G. Schrader, Department of Curriculum & Instruction; Rimi Marwah, Academic Success Center; Dr. Helen Neill, School of Environmental and Public Affairs; Dr. Andrew Spivak, Department of Sociology; Clayton White, Director of Oral History Program, Lied Library; Dr. Haroon Stevens, School of Environmental and Public Affairs; Dr. Bob Dippner, Department of Psychology; Dr. Randall Boone, Department of Curriculum & Instruction; Dr. Steven McCafferty, Department of Curriculum & Instruction; and Dr. Jacquie Elkouz, Assistant Director of the Writing Center.

This multidisciplinary event has a wide array of representation from across the campus Colleges of: • Education • Engineering • Fine Arts • Health Sciences • Hotel • Liberal Arts • Science • Urban Affairs • Law.

Without the volunteers this event would not happen. Many arrived early in the morning to get things set up! Kyle George, Jessica Lazure, Brenda Angueta, Thom Bussey, Jared Goode, Candace Griffith, Samuel Harr, Kyle Kaufberg, Mari Sakiyama, Sharon Young, Melissa Schaar, and Carol Servino. A special thank you to Candace Griffith who provided the majority of the laptops used in the oral presentation sessions!

Dear GPSA students,

Thank you for the faith you have put in me to lead this wonderful organization during the 2011-12 academic year. It is with both a deep sense of humility and excitement that I take on this responsibility.

In this same breath, I want to thank outgoing president Kyle George for his inspiring leadership during a tumultuous legislative season. As president of GPSA and chair of the Nevada Student Alliance, Kyle has exemplified the term “student leader.” We thank him for his longstanding service to GPSA over the years and wish him all the best in his future studies at law school.

It is no secret that most of GPSA’s focus over the past few years has been directed to mitigating the budget cuts to our school. Advocacy on behalf of GPSA, both inside and outside the university, will continue to be one of our top three priorities in the coming year.

Our other two priorities will focus on enhancing the graduate experience for students here at UNLV. We envision more activities, allowing graduate students to meet and mingle with fellow grade from across academic disciplines, through a community service event, day hike or maybe even an intramural team. If you have any suggestions for events, please let us know.

For our last priority, we realize that the primary reason students attend this institution is to ultimately get a degree and graduate. We certainly want to help graduate students in that endeavor through the distribution of competitive grants. Therefore, increasing the total amount allocated to grants will be one of the first items addressed in our review of the budget.

Finally, congratulations to all students who are graduating this semester – well done! For those of you who are still around next year, we hope to see you at one of our many GPSA events!

Michael Gordon

GPSA President, 2011-2012

Spring Commencement Ceremonies will take place May 14, 9am and 2pm at Thomas & Mack Center.
Check commencement.unlv.edu for more information.
CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!
GPSA Awards
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The GPSA Outstanding Mentor Award recognizes up to three UNLV faculty or mentors from the community per academic year. These mentors are people who have demonstrated continued success in preparing graduate and professional students for academia. Three awards this year go to: Sajjad Ahmad, Allen Gibbs, and Andrew Spivak. Each mentor was given a plaque in appreciation of their services.

Dr. Sajjad Ahmad was nominated by graduate student Kamal Qaiser. Kamal points out that Dr. Ahmad is a prolific researcher with 26 publications in peer-reviewed journals and has received over 10 research grants within his 4 year time at UNLV. Dr. Ahmad always finds time to be extensively involved with his students. He is open to ideas and makes his students feel like a partner in research.

Dr. Allen Gibbs, nominated by Lauren Reynolds, a PhD student, is described as an excellent mentor in the School of Life Science. No matter how busy he is, Lauren stresses, Dr. Gibbs never turns a student away. His selflessness fosters a creative, hardworking atmosphere.

Dr. Andrew Spivak was nominated by Brooke Wagner, graduate student in the Sociology department. Ms. Wagner speaks of her admiration of Dr. Spivak’s devotion to UNLV, its students, and the Las Vegas community at large. A few excerpts from other students:

“Dr. Spivak has made me completely comfortable with the idea of teaching a class and has spent countless hours reassuring me that I understand the material and am prepared to teach.”

“Dr. Spivak has been an outstanding mentor for me throughout my teaching experience and has taken a personal investment into the future of my own graduate education and future teaching endeavors, something that has become priceless to me.”

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The GPSA Service Award acknowledges up to three graduate and professional students per academic year. These students have displayed outstanding performance through their dedication and service to both the UNLV and the Las Vegas Community. The monetary award amount is $300.00.

Service Awards were given this year to Bartosz Kajak and Brooke Wagner.

Bartosz is a graduate student working on his masters in Electrical and Computer Engineering. Bartosz works under the direct supervision of Dr. Henry Selvaraj, chair of the department. Dr. Selvaraj described Bartosz as an outstanding instructor. Despite taking on a large load of course work and other graduate tasks, Bartosz is always keen to give an extra effort and stay after hours to help his students. Bartosz also serves on the GPSA Council.

Brooke Wagner is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology. Brooke is described by her dissertation chair, Dr. Andrew Spivak, as consistently taking on a full teaching load as well as regularly mentoring undergraduate students and helping them to develop their own graduate school applications.

The GPSA Merit Award recognizes up to three graduate and professional students per academic year. These students have proven themselves to be outstanding scholars in their field. The monetary award: $300.00. The three Merit awardees this year: Mallory Eckstut, Ajay Kalra, and Danielle Shields.

Mallory Eckstut is a 3rd year doctoral student in the School of Life Sciences. As Mallory’s research advisor, Dr. Brett Riddle notes that Mallory is a top-shelf research biologist. Publishing regularly and designing innovative approaches, she has landed some very impressive assistantships and grants.

Ajay Kalra is described by Dr. Sajjad Ahmad as an excellent student in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Ajay plans to continue his path of research and education, working towards understanding causes and solutions to hydrologic and environmental problems.

Danielle Shields is in the Criminal Justice Department. Dr. Randall Shelden stated in his recommendation letter that in his 30 years at UNLV, he has never known a student as active as Danielle. As a native Nevadan, Danielle has committed herself to making the community a safer place to live. She has worked in a variety of capacities, including supervisor for the departmental research subject pool in the Law Psychology Lab and for the U.S. Probation Office.