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Grad Slam 2024: Diverse 3-minute talks, cash prizes

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If a headline like “Stop Being Weird” gets your attention, then get ready for this year’s Grad Slam, where over 60 graduate students will compete for your adulation in the art of the 3-minute research talk.

That talk “Stop Being Weird: Centering Chinese Bisexual People’s Experience of Stigma” was given at last year’s Grad Slam by Gevirtz School doctoral candidate Chongzheng Wei, who received a \$1,000 prize for advancing to the final round at Campbell Hall. The 2023 Grad Slam victor, however, was hydrologist Annette Hilton, a Bren School of Environmental Science & Management doctoral student, whose presentation “Turning on the Tap” examined the potential of historical data to inform groundwater management. For her top prize, she took home \$2,000, and a chance at the UC-systemwide championship.

[Grad Slam Showcase 2024](#) promises to bring just as much diversity in disciplines and research presented. A record number of folks — 15 candidates — have signed up to compete from the humanities and fine arts, filling in the pool of top researchers from across STEM, social sciences, education and more.

Students, staff, faculty and community members are invited to support graduate students at the competitive rounds leading up to the finals. Preliminary rounds are slated to run from March 4 to March 12.

Throughout the showcase, graduate students will present 3-minute research talks at one of seven [divisional preliminary rounds](#) designed to spotlight the range of academic excellence in disciplines across UC Santa Barbara. Preliminary rounds will be held in the Student Resource Building and the Engineering Science Building on Mondays and Tuesdays over the two weeks.

“What happens on stage is made possible not only by the exciting research of our student presenters, but also by the support of faculty, staff and student peers who help participants hone the craft of making complex work accessible,” said Leila J. Rupp, Interim Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean. “It can be scary getting up in front of a diverse audience, but the students who do it find joy in sharing their work and perfecting the art of public speaking.”

As part of the preparation provided to Grad Slam presenters, this year the Graduate Student Resource Center launched a new [Fundamentals in Public Speaking Certificate Program](#). The series, which is open to all graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, provides a way for participants to develop and demonstrate competency in the area of public speaking. Extensive training opportunities are offered on topics such as content development, stage presence and maximizing visuals.

Winners from each preliminary round will receive \$1,000 and go on to represent their disciplinary grouping at the in-person final round held in Campbell Hall on April 5. Finalists will have a chance to win more cash prizes, and the champion will represent UCSB in the [systemwide competition](#). Audience members can also vote for their favorite presenter in the People’s Choice category.

For more information about Grad Slam or the Certificate Program, contact Shawn Warner, the UCSB Graduate Division’s Director of Graduate Student Professional Development, at shawnwarner@ucsb.edu

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