

# THE *Current*

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## **Dean's award and other prizes recognize scholastic achievement in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, fine arts**

[Shelly Leachman](#)

June 14, 2023

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It's always nice to leave on a high note.

As they prepare to graduate from UC Santa Barbara, several outgoing students have picked up awards in their waning days on campus.

Keren Zou, a graduating senior triple major in the history of public policy and law, Asian American studies and geography has received the Dean's Award for Outstanding Senior, in recognition of her outstanding scholarship and contributions to the campus community. The award is given on behalf of the deans of the College of Letters and Science.

During her time at UCSB, Zou became interested in American immigration and ethnic history. Her history honors thesis explores the experiences of Chinese

immigrants in the Pacific Coast fisheries and canneries during the Chinese Exclusion Era. In addition, Zou served as the editor of the UCSB Undergraduate Journal of History and as a writing tutor at Campus Learning Assistance Services. She was also the 2021–2022 president of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association. After graduation, Zou plans to pursue a doctoral degree in history at UC Berkeley.

Priscilla Sharma, a third-year who is double-majoring in religious studies and philosophy — graduating a year early and earning Distinction in the Major in religious studies — has received the William R. Reardon Undergraduate Award for outstanding academic achievement in an arts or humanities discipline. The award is named for Reardon, a professor emeritus of dramatic art and former associate dean in the College of Letters and Science.

Sharma aspires to attain a Ph.D. in religious studies and to pursue research and teaching. Accepted into master's programs at both Harvard and Oxford universities, she has decided to begin her graduate studies at Oxford in the fall.

Jacob Nie, a third-year majoring in physics, has received the Francis Colville and Terry Dearborn Memorial Award for outstanding academic achievement as an honors student majoring in the sciences. The award was established in memory of Colville and Dearborn, associate professors of physical education at UC Santa Barbara.

During his time at UCSB, Nie has performed extensive experimental work in the area of condensed matter physics, in particular the rapidly developing field of moire materials. Nie has co-authored four papers, one of which was recently published in Science; he is also a recipient of the Worster Research Fellowship. In the fall, Nie will begin his Ph.D. in electrical engineering at Stanford University.

Liz Munday, graduating with Distinction in the Major honors for sociology, has received the Luis Leal Social Sciences Undergraduate Award for outstanding interdisciplinary achievement in the social sciences. The award was established in honor of the late Luis Leal, a professor emeritus of Chicana and Chicano Studies, whose presence and scholarship greatly enriched the Santa Barbara campus.

Participating in the Sociology Honors Program, Munday completed her senior thesis, "Visualizing Race: How Stereotypes Activate Racialized Thinking When Racial Cues Are Not Present." For that work she was awarded the first place Library Award for Undergraduate Research in the Social Sciences. She is also a recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and the Outstanding

Transfer Student Award, both from the College of Letters & Science. Munday will next pursue a Ph.D. in sociology, also at UCSB; she was awarded the UC Chancellor's Fellowship with her admittance. She plans to continue her research in the sociology of race and ethnicity, focusing on racialized language in interaction.

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The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.