



Sofia Zaragoza (center) Muir College senior, winner of the Championing Freedom of Expression category on stage with Earl Warren College Provost Emily Roxworthy, who served as emcee with Kafele Khalfani, dean of student affairs at Warren College.

Lights, Camera, Service: Principles of Community get the Star Treatment at BEARLs

What does it mean serve your community? Can a small gesture make a positive impact and will that impact be enough? The UC San Diego campus community is rife with individuals who ask themselves these questions in their day-to-day work to foster a collaborative environment where excellence and diversity thrive.

On March 8, many of these members were honored for their contributions to the campus at the second-annual “BEARLs” Academe Awards for Principles of Community. The Hollywood-style awards ceremony—reminiscent of the Oscars—honored students, staff and faculty along with a distinguished

alumnus, and a special celebrity guest for their positive impact on society.

“It feels really good, this is a real honor” said Fnann Keflezighi, ’11, assistant director of residential life at Thurgood Marshall College who was awarded in the category of “Rejecting Acts of Discrimination.”

Keflezighi’s work at Marshall centers around identity development and inclusion for underrepresented and underserved communities. She often creates spaces for critical conversations around equity alongside students and colleagues.

Honoring humanity

Dubbed “The BEARLs,” the ceremony is sponsored by UC San Diego’s Warren College. The name is a combination of Tim Hawkinson’s famous Stuart Collection “Bear” outdoor sculpture, located near on the Warren campus, and “Earl” Warren, the college’s namesake. The event was established last year to promote UC San Diego’s Principles of Community, developed two decades ago to foster a campus culture of inclusivity and collaboration.

The event at the Qualcomm Institute featured a red carpet arrival, complete with “mocktails” and live entertainment.

The March 8 awards coincided with International Women’s Day, a message that was echoed throughout the ceremony.

“It is important that the event takes place on International Women’s Day, as many of our honorees happened to be women and it’s wonderful to celebrate their achievements creating a more just society,” said Earl Warren College Provost Emily Roxworthy, who served as emcee.

This year’s special celebrity honoree was actress Shannon Elizabeth, who appeared films such as “American Pie” and “Love Actually.” She was honored for her animal-conservation and poaching-prevention work in Africa with her non-profit Animal Avengers.

“More and more, I see young women behind many of today’s conservations efforts,” Elizabeth said after accepting the Earl Warren College Humanitarian award. “We must remember to help whenever, where ever.”

She told the story of how Animal Avengers started out as a dog and cat rescue in Los Angeles and how its reach broadened to Africa and to the continent’s endangered species.



Actress Shannon Elizabeth

“In 2015, something changed in me,” Elizabeth said. “I saw a video of an elephant who was missing half its face...it had been poached. It’s ivory taken, all for just a trophy to satisfy someone’s ego. And then I was watched the video, I heard the elephant cry and I realized it was still alive... I was outraged that we live in a world where this goes on.”

She cited the most recent statistics on poaching. The United Nations estimates that 100 elephants per day are poached, and for Rhinos the number is about four.

Elizabeth’s work focusses on Rhino conservation. For example, her nonprofit helped finance the security of the Rhino Proud Foundation in South Africa, so that the animals could be protected in an enclosed setting to protect against poachers who routinely attempt to trespass.

“That one video changed my life forever,” Elizabeth said. “I encourage you all to not be afraid to expose yourself to difficult subjects—you never know how it will impact your life.”

Finding the courage to create

Keflezighi was nominated by her peers for her efforts facilitating dialogue on privilege and oppression, power and disempowerment, and how students, staff and faculty could make conscious decisions to empower others on campus.

“I am part of a collective of staff, faculty and students who are trying to make a more equitable world. It’s great to have this work recognized and to know it’s valuable to the university.”

Other award winners included alumnus Alex Sinclair, ’91, of DC Comics who was honored for his distinguished career as well as his recent work teaching wildlife art technique to the public at the San Diego Zoo.

Sinclair’s credits at DC include Harley Quinn, Batman: Hush, Superman and Wonder Woman. After taking the stage, he spoke about the importance of believing in yourself

“When I got the email saying that I was selected for this award, I had to read it a couple of times to believe it,” Sinclair said. “I thought surely Warren has many prestigious alumni, this must be a mistake... Funny, after 25 years of having a career as an artist, I still needed a reminder that I was enough.”

He spoke about how his professors at UC San Diego helped instill a sense of confidence in him while he was studying visual arts and how important that is for all artists.

“As artists, we’re all looking for some form of acceptance, so I want to thank everyone who has believed in me over the years,” he said.

He concluded his speech by thanking his wife.



The BEARL statue

“My wife is here tonight,” Sinclair said, tears welling up. “She says she has no artistic ability but she created four masterpieces, my beautiful children.”

As a tribute to Sinclair, the night concluded with a video in which all honorees were asked which comic book hero they would like to meet the most, the most popular answer was, fittingly, Wonder Woman.

The full list of award of UC San Diego students, faculty and staff winners and nominees and their categories, are below:

- **Celebrating All Cultures:** Recognizing individuals and organizations who ensure that the diversity of UC San Diego and the surrounding community is reflected in our shared cultural experience.
 - Pu “Riley” Zhang, Warren College sophomore —winner
 - Wayne Harrison, Marshall College junior—nominee
 - Residential Life Programming Assistants—nominee
- **Championing Freedom of Expression:** Recognizing individuals and organizations who protect the open discourse and free flow of ideas that are essential to both educational institutions and society at large.
 - Sofia Zaragoza, Muir College senior —winner
 - William Given, Lecturer in analytical writing —nominee
 - The Equilibrium, a Warren College student organization—nominee
- **Promoting Individuality:** Recognizing individuals and organizations who tirelessly work to cultivate and honor the unique contributions of our diverse community members.
 - Stephanie Ellsworth, Warren College junior—nominee
 - Cesar Figueroa, assistant director of residential life at Warren College —nominee
 - Warren College Transfer and Commuter Commission—winner
- **Rejecting Acts of Discrimination:** Recognizing individuals and organizations who make a concerted effort to educate and intervene in order to interrupt the discriminatory behaviors produced by implicit bias.
 - Leslie Lewis, professor in the Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning—nominee
 - Fnann Keflezighi, assistant director of residential life at Thurgood Marshall College —winner

- **Resolving Conflict Constructively:** Recognizing individuals and organizations who tackle the difficult conversations and polarizing issues that divide our community while modeling respect and empathy for everyone involved.
 - Amarachi Metu, Warren College senior —winner
 - Sgt. Manual Garcia, UC San Diego Police Dept.—nominee
 - Student Promoted Access Center for Education and Service Overnight Programs—nominee

The BEARLs were launched in 2016 with the support of the Climate Enhancement grant from the Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Last year's celebrity awardee was Paula Abdul. For more information on the campus tradition, sponsored by Warren College, click here <https://warren.ucsd.edu/programs/bearls/2017-awards.html>.

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