

Katzin Prize Awarded to Four UC San Diego Graduate Students

Fellowship recipients and donor recognized at Oct. 31 luncheon



Photo by Erika Johnson/University Communications

Four UC San Diego graduate students pursuing doctoral degrees have been named the inaugural recipients of the Katzin Prize and will receive additional fellowship support of \$10,000 per year for up to five years, above the support packages offered by their departments. Established last year with a \$4 million endowed gift from Jerome and Miriam Katzin, the Katzin Prize is designed to support UC San Diego's strategic priority of growing its graduate student population with students who excel across disciplines. The awardees are pursuing doctoral degrees in the arts and humanities, sciences and social sciences.

"Increasing the number of graduate students enrolled at UC San Diego is one of the first goals to emerge from our comprehensive strategic planning process," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "It's important that we invest in our Ph.D. students across a broad range of disciplines so we can enhance

their abilities to contribute to transformational faculty research that improves our community and world.”

Currently, 20 percent of UC San Diego’s student body is pursuing degrees beyond a bachelor’s degree, such as masters, doctoral and medical degrees. The goal is to grow that proportion to 30 percent.

Jerome Katzin, a retired investment banker and chair emeritus of the UC San Diego Foundation, together with his wife, Miriam, created *The Katzin Prize Endowment* to help the campus stay competitive as a top public research university. “The best doctoral students attract the best faculty,” he explained when the gift was announced.

“The 2013 Katzin Prize recipients have demonstrated impressive talent and potential, with work ranging from research of Parkinson’s disease to musical theory,” said Kim Barrett, dean of Graduate Studies. “We look forward to seeing what they accomplish while at UC San Diego and beyond.”

The 2013 Katzin Prize recipients are:



Jerome and Miriam Katzin



Melissa Burney
Psychology

Melissa Burney completed her undergraduate degree at UC Berkeley, where she made great gains in establishing her specialization in Parkinson’s disease research. Now, Burney begins her postgraduate research in the lab of Associate Professor Adam Aron, one of UC San Diego’s foremost investigators in movement disorders. “The Katzin Prize will definitely help me focus my time and resources on actually doing research,” said Burney. “This is a really great thing, and I am very appreciative.”



Lucas Chang
Cognitive Science

At Cornell University, Lucas Chang excelled in biology, psychology and, ultimately, cognitive science. Chang will continue the novel work of his honors thesis by considering cognition through a number of theoretical and disciplinary filters. “I am really thankful and appreciative that the Katzins chose to help out in this way,” he said. “Both the stipend and the feel-good effect that comes with the prize made a difference in my decision to come to UC San Diego.”



Brandon Cisneros
Chemistry

Brandon Cisneros completed his undergraduate study at Rice University, where the close proximity to MD Anderson Cancer Center factored into his highly productive discovery of cancer treatment applications. Cisneros is eager to raise his mastery as a well-rounded and innovative scientist. “Money is important. When you have no money, you learn that having enough to get by really isn’t optional. The Katzin Prize has certainly been instrumental for me in choosing UC San Diego. I’m unbelievably grateful for having received it.”



Tina Tallon
Music

Tina Tallon obtained her undergraduate degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and her master’s degree from Brandeis University, and has already proved a prodigious and notable composer. She approaches musical theory uniquely prepared by her high-level training in mathematics and biological engineering at MIT. “Receiving a Katzin Prize is an immense honor,” she said. “But even more than that, it means that I have the support and freedom to fully dedicate myself to my studies, my research and what I’d like to contribute to the world.”

Fellowship support is a major factor in UC San Diego’s ability to attract and retain top graduate students. The University of California's Office of the President revealed in results from its 2010 Graduate Student Support Survey that there was a steady decline in the number of students choosing University of California over non-UC schools relative to their financial support packages. Private support for UC San Diego fellowships, such as the Katzin Prize, can help reverse this trend by enabling the campus to stay competitive among peer institutions.

“Graduate students are vital to the success of any major research university,” added Barrett. “They increase the quality of research and help to train and mentor undergraduate students. While many become leading academics, others go on to found companies, creating jobs and contributing to the economic health of the region.”

Moreover, the changing landscape of the global workforce requires more graduate level training. The “Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers” report of the Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service projects that between 2010 and 2020, about 2.6 million new and replacement jobs are expected to require a graduate degree. About 20 percent of those jobs will require a doctorate or professional degree.

“We are truly grateful for the Katzins’ investment in our graduate students,” said Barrett. “Fellowship support is so important for the research, education and service mission of UC San Diego—and for the future success of our students.”

For more information about supporting UC San Diego graduate fellowships, go [here](#).

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