2010 Creativity in the Arts & Sciences Award Winners

The 2010 CASE (Creativity in the Arts & Sciences Event) was a resounding success, with entries growing by 55%, 149 of which were students involved in the sciences. Students were awarded prizes totaling $6000. Our thanks go out to Jamie Creola and the staff of the Florida Museum of Natural History, the staff of the Harn and the staff of the Phillips Center for making this year’s event the most successful yet!

Matthew Neu
1st Prize Winner – Science Section

Matthew Neu was born in Gainesville and has lived here his entire life. He began fencing competitively in the second grade. He has continued the sport and now competes both nationally and internationally. He is a member of UF’s fencing team, and is the defending US collegiate club champion in Men’s epee. He also enjoys rock climbing, electronic music, and video games.

He is currently conducting research on Endothelial Progenitor Cells and how they are related to the pathogenesis of Diabetic Retinopathy. Next summer he hopes to spend six months in France at the Curie Institute studying cellular migration from a biochemical perspective and learning advanced microscopy techniques that he could apply to his project here at UF.

He hopes to use the award money to help fund his travel to and stay in Paris next summer as part of a SFL extramural fellowship. He has already contacted a researcher, Dr. Danijela Vignjevic at the Curie Institute who is excited to have him work there.

Michelle Corrado
First Tier Prize Winner – Science Section

Michelle Corrado is a sophomore at the University of Florida, with a major in Nutritional Sciences and a minor in Family Youth and Community Sciences. She plans to attend medical school and complete the MD-PhD program. Currently, Corrado works in Dr. Nicholas E. Simpson’s lab, searching for a cure to type 1 diabetes. Recent experiments have controlled animals’ blood glucose levels for an extended time and show the potential of the lab’s bioartificial pancreatic construct to cure diabetes. Corrado plans to use the HHMI Undergraduate Award to present these new, exciting strides at The Endocrine Society Annual Meeting and Expo, an event that brings approximately 10,000 researchers and doctors from around the world. Corrado specifically chose this conference with the goal of maximizing the number of individuals worldwide to understand new advances to finding a cure for diabetes, discovered at the University of Florida and with the generous support of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.
**Octavio Romo-Fewell**  
*First Tier Prize Winner – Science Section*

Octavio Romo-Fewell is an undergraduate student pursuing a bachelor’s degree in chemistry at San Diego State University (SDSU). Being an immigrant and the first member of his family to ever strive for higher education, he has overcome numerous challenges in his career path. After he finished middle school in Tijuana (Mexico), his parents made a crucial decision for him to continue his education in San Diego, California. Their plan was to provide him with the opportunities they never had. In addition, their economic situation was precarious and they could only afford to live back in Tijuana, where living conditions challenged his adaptation to the American culture. Nevertheless, he was blessed with strong family values, and all these experiences shaped his character to be strong and determined.

The goal accomplished in his project was the extraction and isolation of bioactive compounds from a native plant of Thailand. The crude extract from the leaves and twigs of Mallotus Macrostachyus, exhibited cytotoxicity against two mammalian cancer cell lines, the murine lymphocytic leukemia (P-388) and the human nasopharyngeal carcinoma (KB). The ethyl acetate extract of the plant also exhibited anti-HIV-1 activity in the anti-syncytium assay (active) and the HIV-1 reverse transcriptase (RT) assay (weakly active). The monetary award will allow him to concentrate on his studies while developing skills to aid him in obtaining his goal of a career in scientific research.

**Ashley Thomas**  
*Second Tier Prize Winner – Science Section*

Ashley Thomas is currently a third year Microbiology & Cell Science major and Anthropology minor. She is researching the use of gene therapy for treatment of Parkinson’s disease in Dr. Ronald Mandel’s lab for almost two years, helping her learn to work independently and confidently in the lab. Since participating in and being chosen as an award recipient in the 2010 Creativity in the Arts and Sciences Event, she has also gained confidence in presenting and discussing her research in a large venue.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute Science for Life program has equipped her with the skills to perform research and to present this research at various conferences. With the Science for Life Creativity Award she plans to continue to present his research at national conferences, for instance at the Society for Neuroscience 2010 Conference. Foremost, she would like to thank the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Science for Life program for the numerous opportunities to delve into and gain more experience in scientific research. With the 2010 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Science for Life Undergraduate Creativity Award he plans to present his research project at a national research conference. More specifically, she plans to submit a proposal to present at the Society for Neuroscience 2010 Conference, scheduled for November 13th-17th. With the support of HHMI and his research mentor, she plans to further his study on the use of gene therapy for the treatment of Parkinson’s disease.
Andrew Scheuermann
Second Tier Prize Winner – Science Section
Andrew Scheuermann is a junior double majoring in Chemistry and Economics. After graduating from Edgewood High School in 2007, he entered the University of Florida and began working in Dr. Cammy Abernathy’s group that September. Since then, Andrew has been awarded UF’s Wentworth Scholarship, the Department of Material Science’s REM Scholarship, the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Scholarship, the Anderson Award of Highest Distinction and the Hazen E. Nutter Scholarship from the Department of Liberal Arts and Science, has maintained a 4.0 GPA, and is currently a UF nominee for the Goldwater Fellowship awaiting the decision with crossed fingers.

Having also been a winner of last year’s HHMI Poster Symposium for his research on GaN-based HEMTs and MESFETs, Andrew presented this year his research from a summer internship at Sandia National Laboratories on MgO nanoparticles for thermal battery separators. This project is part of the National Nuclear Science Administration’s initiatives to secure our national defense through the nuclear weapon program while simultaneously allowing its research to proliferate and be published serving the public through the many new outlets of nanotechnology. This fast paced, elevated security project involved the growing and characterization of hundreds of nanopowders in the search of the one nanocomposite that provides both the desired electrical and mechanical properties. Uniquely, Andrew and his team were able to finish phase 1 and 2 of the project in their entirety by the end of the summer exceeding expectations and facilitating deeper study on the topic.

With the Undergraduate Creativity Award, Andrew is looking to present at a prestigious conference such as the Gordon conference. In addition, he hopes to travel abroad this summer with the REU program for an international research experience. In his free time, Andrew helps coordinate the Undergraduate Research seminars on campus and leads a successful rock band performing regularly around town. Andrew is a part of several clubs at UF, but plays the biggest role in the UF Fencing Team. He is the All Men’s Team Captain and recently became the highest ranked foilist in the school and the second highest collegiate foilist in the state of Florida. After placing 13th of over a hundred at the last Division 2 North American Cup he hopes to medal nationally this season.

Angel Rene Del Valle-Echevarría
Second Tier Prize Winner – Science Section
Ángel René Del Valle-Echevarría is currently in his senior year at the University of Puerto Rico at the Mayagüez. He will be graduating this June with a bachelor’s degree in biology. His main interest is nutrition enhancement in crops that lack essential nutrients and have a propensity to grow in hostile climates and soil by using molecular tools. He also enjoys reading about new developments in plant biotechnology that may contribute to the economy in the future. His short term goal is to gain a PhD in Plant Biology, especially in Plant Biotechnology, become a professor, perform research and give the same opportunity to his students as he was given.
He plans to use his prize money for lab supplies such as primer sequences.
Rita Cook, a student at the University of Florida, was also awarded a Second Tier Prize in the science section.

**Megan Kendzior**

1st Prize Winner (Tie with Stephanie Davlantes) – Art Section

Megan Danielle Kendzior is a native Floridian who graduated this April, 2010, from the University of Florida with a BFA in Dance Performance and Composition. Her senior thesis work, *Witness*, was composed as a result of a University Scholars Research Grant from the University of Florida, which funded her travel to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Poland and to the Impulstanz International Dance Festival in Vienna during August of 2009. These experiences, in addition to her generous and inspiring faculty mentors and fellow students at UF, have encouraged her growth as a choreographer, dancer, administrator and human being.

She has performed in the works of Jose Limon, Shapiro & Smith Dance, Neta Pulvermacher, Beatrice Kombe, Hemisphere Dance, Incidents Physical Dance Theater and has engaged in the choreographic process with many of her fellow students. She is the founding president of a student organization of dance majors, Dance in a Suitcase, whose purpose is to expose dance majors to the vast field of modern dance and to bring in guest artist opportunities to the University. Megan is grateful to have been acknowledged as an emerging choreographer by the Creativity in the Arts and Sciences Competition. She plans use the generous first place award to continue her research and fieldwork by sharing her work, *Witness*, with communities across the globe through performance opportunities in cities such as New York City, Vienna and Tel Aviv. She looks forward to a choreographic, professional and movement-oriented future within the field of modern dance.

**Stephanie Davlantes**

1st Prize Winner (Tie with Megan Kendzior) – Art Section

Stephanie Davlantes tied with Megan Kendzior for the first prize in the art section of the 2010 CASE. Stephanie used her CASE award to travel to Costa Rica and lend her talent to independent Costa Rican coffee farmers. She worked closely with farmers on coffee farms and in the coffee cooperative of a small town in Costa Rica. In response to the trip and the issues she researched, she will be designing labels and a website for the Costa Rican Coffee Cooperative so that the farmers may sell their coffee directly.
**Elise Frost**  
*Runner Up – Art Section*

It is Elise’s intention to use her HHMI award by funding her own artistic pursuits as well as considering her collaborator, Jeremy Miranda, whom she is sharing the award equally with for his dedication and input to the project. Jeremy has made plans to use this money in order to further his scope of dance through attending Laban Movement Analysis workshops this semester in New York City. Elise’s personal plans for the remainder of the award will be put toward attending the American College Dance Festival Association (ACDFA) held at the University of Illinois this semester. Along with performance opportunities, ACDFA will provide exposure to a wealth of dancers and artists involved in colleges and universities throughout the country.

**Megan Hamilton**  
*Runner Up – Art Section*

Megan Hamilton is a freshman studying graphic design and mathematics at the University of Florida. Her three pieces in CASE, *Animalia*, were digital paintings depicting three different species of animal. She plans to use her prize money to travel to Miami in December to experience the Miami:Art Basel art show.

**Greg Cole**  
*Runner Up – Art Section*

Greg Cole is a Digital Media and Graphic Design dual major student at the University of Florida. Many of his pieces use tools such as processing, electronics, video, graphic design, and more traditional creative methods to create work. One of his most successful pieces, AdShades, augments a viewer’s world by removing advertising and other messages in a space. The system allows a viewer to experience an everyday space that is transformed into a series of abstracted colorful shapes, making the world a gallery space for critical thought.

**Evan Kassof**  
*Runner Up – Art Section*

Evan Kassof, a University of Florida student, also qualified for a runner up prize.