



GRAD

SLAM

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Wednesday, April 22, 2026

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UC Student and Policy Center, Sacramento

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS 10:30 a.m.

Yvette Gullatt

Vice President, Graduate and Undergraduate Affairs, and Vice Provost, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, University of California, Office of the President

GRAD SLAM PRESENTATIONS PRESENTATION ORDER

Joanna Eckhardt

*The early bird gets the worm:
How physical activity influences
sleep and brain health*

UC SAN DIEGO **NEUROSCIENCES**

David Nikom

*Leveling the game: A new script
for Alzheimer's in women*

UC RIVERSIDE **NEUROSCIENCE**

Maya McElfish

Senses in the seascape

UC SANTA CRUZ **ECOLOGY AND
EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY**

Tahirah Williams

*More than slime: When mucus
meets the Valley Fever invader*

UC MERCED **QUANTITATIVE AND
SYSTEMS BIOLOGY**

Cameron Geller

*Can we close cancer's escape
routes?*

UC IRVINE **DEVELOPMENTAL AND
CELL BIOLOGY**

Kaylee Laub

*Reimagining climate solutions
through speculative designs*

UC SANTA BARBARA **EDUCATION**

Jack Goon

Analyzing the cancer battlefield

UC DAVIS **IMMUNOLOGY**

Christian Gerard Capuno

*Mind over matter:
Understanding sleep disruptions
in myotonic dystrophy*

UCLA **PHYSIOLOGICAL SCIENCE**

Carla Bassil

*Machine learning-assisted gas
sensor chip for food safety
applications*

UC BERKELEY **ELECTRICAL
ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER
SCIENCES**

Brandon Courteau

*Protein 'Love Island': How
recoupling HER3 could reveal
new breast cancer therapeutics*

UC SAN FRANCISCO

**BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR
BIOLOGY**

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Protecting research funding

**Senate President pro Tempore
Monique Limón**

MODERATOR

Kathleen Fullerton

Associate Vice President and Director,
State Governmental Relations,
University of California, Office of the
President

LUNCH RECEPTION

AWARDS PRESENTATION

1:30 p.m.

Katherine S. Newman

Provost, University of California

Yvette Gullatt

Vice President, Graduate and Undergraduate Affairs, and Vice Provost, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, University of California, Office of the President

MEET OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER



State Senate Leader **Senator Monique Limón** was first elected to the California Senate in

November 2020 after serving four years in the Assembly. She represents the 21st Senate district, which includes Santa Barbara County and parts of Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties. She currently serves as the 50th President pro Tempore of the California State Senate and is the first mother and first Latina ever to hold the position. In the Legislature, Limón has passed landmark policies that improve the lives of Californians and protect the environment. Born and raised in the 21st district, Limón has worked continuously to serve her constituents in the Central Coast as an educator, leader and advocate for causes advancing the quality of life in her community.

MEET OUR JUDGES



Partho Ghosh is a professor of biochemistry and molecular biophysics at UC San Diego

and chair of the UC Academic Senate Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs. A structural biologist, his research explores how microbial pathogens interact with human cells to cause infectious disease. Ghosh has led his laboratory at UC San Diego since 1997 and is a fellow of the American Society for Microbiology. He earned a B.S. from Yale University and a Ph.D. from UC San Francisco.



Hayes Raffle is an award-winning product innovator and principal designer at

Google, developing applied consumer AI learning experiences across Gemini, Search and YouTube. At the forefront of emerging technologies, he previously helped launch Google Glass and Daydream VR, inventing industry-standard frameworks and securing over 75 U.S. patents. Raffle holds a Ph.D. and an M.S. in media arts and sciences from the MIT Media Lab and a B.A. in fine arts from Yale. He has over 40 peer-reviewed publications in tangible media, educational technology and human-computer interaction.



Janet Reilly chairs the UC Board of Regents. She is the co-founder and

board president of Clinic by the Bay, a free, volunteer-powered health clinic for the working uninsured in San Francisco and San Mateo counties. A former executive producer and on-air television host for NBC Bay Area – KNTV, Reilly and her husband own the San Francisco Examiner and the Nob Hill Gazette. Reilly earned a B.A. from UCLA and an M.S. in journalism from the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism.



Livia Shmavonian serves as deputy cabinet secretary and senior advisor for economic and workforce

development in the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom. She also serves as commissioner on the

U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. A leading voice in shaping international trade, economic and national security policy, she most recently served in the White House as the director of the Made in America Office. A proud UC alumna, Shmavonian earned her B.A. from UC Davis and an MPP from Georgetown University.



A student at Sacramento Community College, **Kya Young** is part of a neuroscience lab studying

the chemotaxis of *C. elegans* worms. Passionate about cognitive research, Young plans to earn an M.D./Ph.D. in neuroanesthesiology. She hopes to contribute innovative research to the neuroscience community, with a focus on consciousness. In her free time, she participates in community engagement and extracurricular activities, including the UC Davis medical program, Avenue M.



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The University of California creates public benefits for California, our nation and the world. The UC Advocacy Network works with government officials and policymakers in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., to highlight the impact of UC's contributions. We need your help to spread the word.

Thousands of higher education advocates are already making their voices heard. Together, our letters, emails, phone calls and actions will help shape policies that will ultimately move UC — and California — onward. Please lend your voice to support UC. Together, we are making a difference.

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