

GRADUATE DEAN'S REPORT: INFORMATION AND UPDATES FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Fall 2017/November

POLYMER SCIENCE STUDENT NAMED THREE MINUTE THESIS GRAND CHAMPION

Rahul Shankar, doctoral student in Polymer Science and Engineering from Mumbai, India, captured the title Grand Champion during the finals competition of the Fourth Annual Three Minute Thesis competition on November 3. Rahul's captivating presentation, "Improving the Fuel Efficiency of Automobiles Using Thermoplastic Composite Materials," garnered top scores from a panel of distinguished judges. He earned the top prize of \$1000 and will compete regionally at the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools annual meeting in Fayetteville, Arkansas on February 24. Rahul's dissertation research is directed by Dr. Sarah Morgan. In the Runner Up position was Charles Joplin, a doctoral student in the Department of English from Pascagoula, Mississippi. His engaging oration was entitled, "I-Witness Reports: Reading the Writing Process of English War Poets." A student of Dr. Jonathan Barron, Charles walked away with a \$750 prize. Selected by the audience as the People's Choice and winning \$500 was Oindrila Paul, a microbiology doctoral student studying with Dr. Janet Donaldson. Oindrila is from Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India. She delivered the presentation, Stress! Even the Bacteria Cannot Escape It! Also competing in the finals competition were Carson Rouse, doctoral student in Anthropology; Kristi Carnahan, master's student in Anthropology; and Elizabeth Voorhees, doctoral student in Human Capital Development. Finalist Taylor Haynes, master of fine arts student in Theatre chose not to compete in the finals. All finalists, selected during preliminary rounds of the competition on November 1 and 2, were awarded a \$250 prize. In total, 32 students participated in the competition. A key component of the Graduate School's professional development emphasis, Three Minute Thesis is generously supported by the Offices of the Provost and Vice President for Research.



Three graduate students captured top honors at the 2017 Three Minute Thesis competition. Shown left to right: Rahul Shankar, Grand Champion; Oindrila Paul, People's Choice; and Charles Joplin, Runner Up.

EFFECTIVE GRADUATE MENTORSHIP WORKSHOP ATTENDED BY STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Twenty-nine faculty and graduate students attended the “Effective Graduate Student Mentorship Lunch and Learn Workshop” on October 27, led by eight experienced graduate faculty and moderated by the graduate dean. The program included roundtable discussions of case studies depicting realistic scenarios that might occur between a faculty mentor and their graduate students. Faculty leaders included Dr. Douglas Masterson and Dr. Brad Dufrene, USM’s 2015 and 2017 Graduate Mentor of the Year, respectively, along with Dr. Mac



Alford, Dr. Lachel Story, Dr. Heather Stur, Dr. Alan Thompson, Dr. Teresa Welsh, and Dr. Kathy Yadrick. The format was designed to encourage conversation to help graduate students and faculty understand their roles and responsibilities, to discuss policies that impact decisions and conflict resolution, and to prepare the group to face the inevitable challenges that will occur during a student’s progress to degree. The session provided mentorship training required for graduate faculty applications. Thanks are extended to Vanessa Molden, Special Projects Coordinator in the Graduate School for organizing the workshop.

Experienced graduate faculty led roundtable discussions during the effective mentorship workshop. Top photo: Dr. Brad Dufrene (right) discusses a case study with Psychology Ph.D student Mitch Brown. Left photo: Dr. Lachel Story (left) leads a conversation with faculty participants.

GRADUATE RECRUITING ASSISTANCE GRANTS (GRAGS) AWARDED

The intent of the newly-establish GRAGs program is to partner with departments to assist with recruiting efforts in the form of small grants. A call for abstracts was published in early October with an application deadline of October 30. Proposal requirements included a description of the project with attention to how a diverse group of prospects would be targeted; a plan for follow-up prospect communication using Hobson’s Radius; and an itemized budget. Grants supporting departmental recruiting activities were awarded to six departments for projects to be conducted during spring, summer, and fall 2018. Each funded department will submit a report on the effectiveness of the funded recruitment project at the end of the project period. In total nearly \$12,000 was awarded by the Graduate School to support departmental recruiting efforts. The following projects were funded:

- **The Department of Child and Family Studies** will use Radius to evaluate prospect interest following online advertising and face-to-face recruiting at a professional conference to inform recruiting decisions in the future.

Funds will support attendance of the National Council on Family Relations and paid advertising using internet resources such as Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

- **The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures** will promote the Master of Arts in Teaching Languages (MATL) at a major conference for teachers of foreign languages. They will follow up with weekly automated email communications to prospects through Radius to encourage initiation and completion of applications and rapid review and decisions by the department.
- **The School of Criminal Justice** plans to design informational flyers and high-visibility posters and to develop direct mailing strategies for targeted recruitment. They also will recruit at professional conferences using a MachForm to collect prospect data on site. Using their communication plan in Radius, prospects will be encouraged to apply. Their intent is to expand Criminal Justice applications generally, and forensic science applications specifically.
- **The Department of Psychology** aims to increase the diversity of their applicant pool. They will use a portion of the funds to establish a “Go Gold Diversity Fellowship” to enhance support for a highly-qualified, newly-admitted student. Remaining funds will be used to support “regional recruiting road trips” to HBCU’s by program directors to discuss Psychology degree options offered at USM and to distribute recruitment materials and brochures. Radius will be used to maintain regular contact with prospects.
- **The Department of History** will recruit at the Phi Alpha Theta Conference, the annual meeting of the national honor society for history. They will also visit regional college and university campuses to conduct informational sessions with prospective students. Funds will also be used to support travel and development of recruitment brochures.
- **The School of Leadership and Advanced Practice in the College of Nursing** will target recruiting efforts for the nurse anesthesia program to north and central Mississippi to expand outreach beyond south Mississippi. Faculty will travel to strategic locations including hospitals with high-level intensive care units and colleges and universities with associate and bachelor’s level nursing programs to give presentations, lead round table discussions, show videos, and distribute recruiting materials. Strategic advertising with nursing associations will also be done. Radius will be used to maintain prospect information and manage outreach.

GRADUATE COMPETITIVE TRAVEL AWARDS (GCTA) UNDER REVIEW

The inaugural GCTA competition was hugely popular. Following an application submission deadline of October 23, the Graduate School had received 37 applications from master’s and doctoral students seeking funds for travel to national and international professional conferences to present their research. Applications are currently being evaluated by a committee of graduate faculty. The announcement of students to be awarded travel support should be released prior to the close of the fall semester.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

New Graduate Student Orientation

Orientation for all graduate students beginning their programs in the spring 2018 semester is scheduled for January 11 (Hattiesburg campus) and January 12 (Gulf Park campus). New students located at GCRL and Stennis may attend either session. The orientation will provide students with information about Graduate School and university policies, resources, and support that will enhance their experience and minimize confusion about “where to go” and “what to do” when questions arise during their time at Southern Miss. Attendance is expected for all new graduate students and mandatory for all new graduate assistants. Departments should strongly encourage their new graduate students to attend.

Date(s)/Time(s)/Locations:

HATTIESBURG CAMPUS

January 11, 2018 | Thad Cochran Center
2:30-5 p.m.

GULF PARK CAMPUS

January 12, 2018 | Hardy Hall 316
10-11:30 a.m.

Registration will open November 17. See the link to register on the Graduate School website at: <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/new-graduate-student-orientation>.

Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium

The annual Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium will be held April 5, 2018 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Thad Cochran Center. To inform students about the expectations of the symposium, guidelines for oral and poster presentations, a sample judging rubric, and FAQ's can be found on the Graduate School website at <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/susan-siltanen-graduate-student-research-symposium>. Registration and a call for abstracts is now open. The submission deadline is February 9. All graduate students conducting research are encouraged to participate to hone their presentation skills in a friendly environment and compete for a prize for an outstanding presentation.

Professionals *in preparation*

Professionals in Preparation (PIP) Wrapping Up Fall Schedule

The final PIP session for fall 2017 will be held December 1 with Dr. Dave Davies, Director, School of Mass Communication and Journalism and Dr. Mohamed Elasri, Associate Dean, College of Science & Technology, leading a panel discussion called "Publishing and Peer Review: the Humanities and the Sciences." This session will inform the twenty PIP participants, doctoral and master's students who represent a broad array of disciplines in the humanities, physical, computational, and life sciences, and social and behavioral sciences about the expectations for publishing their work in peer-reviewed journals and other publications. The fall PIP schedule has been very successful and informative including sessions on academic integrity, mentorship, Strengths Finders, responsible conduct of research, communication, and participation in Three Minute Thesis. Participants will submit an individual development plan (IDP) before the semester ends to help them evaluate possible career paths, identify professional development needs, and map out a plan to gain training and experience to achieve short and long-term professional goals. Many outstanding USM faculty and staff have led PIP sessions this semester, and the students appreciate their willingness to share their time and experiences. The spring semester will bring valuable workshops and discussions, leading off with panel discussions on interviewing for an academic job (January 26) and for a job in business/industry (February 9). A call for applications to participate in the 2018-19 PIP program will be released during the spring semester.

GRADUATE SCHOOL RECRUITING

The fall recruiting season ended in November with Carolyn Cawthon's attendance at the National Collegiate Honors Council Annual Conference held November 8-12 in Atlanta where she staffed a recruiting booth, met with many honors undergraduate students interested in graduate studies, and collected prospect information. All prospect information collected during Graduate School recruiting this fall was loaded into Radius and is available for departments to review. We encourage departments to reach out to these prospects and encourage their applications. Outreach to prospects will likely strengthen our admissions funnel, improve selectivity, and potentially grow enrollment.

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICY/PROCEDURE UPDATES

External Employment and the Graduate Assistantship

The following policy on graduate assistant employment outside the university was approved by Graduate Council and the Provost during the fall 2017 semester. The policy is effective beginning spring 2018.

Any student holding a graduate assistantship must be enrolled as a full-time student. Therefore, any employment outside the university (external employment) is discouraged, and external full-time employment is prohibited for graduate assistants. Graduate assistants who wish to participate in external employment must obtain written permission from their major professor, graduate coordinator, and school director. The nature and extent of the external employment may be considered in granting permission. Renewal of external employment must be

requested and approved annually. If while engaging in external employment the student is unable to maintain good academic standing or fulfill the required duties of the assistantship, the graduate assistant contract may be terminated. Failure to comply with this policy will result in loss of the assistantship.

Updated Deadlines on Graduate School Website

To assist graduate students and graduate faculty in understanding the paperwork required during a student's progress to degree and corresponding deadlines, the graduate degree auditors, documents specialist, and director of operations reevaluated and redesigned the Graduate School Deadlines webpage in an attempt to clarify and simplify those requirements. The requirement and deadlines for fall 2017, spring 2018, summer 2018, and fall 2018 are now posted. Please note some revisions in deadlines were made after feedback was received from several departments following recent distribution of a draft document. Deadlines for applications for degree correspond to those posted by the registrar. Noteworthy changes from the former posted schedule include the following: 1) The "Approved Title Page" which preceded the "Final Title Page" is no longer required. The student will submit the title page only one time as "Signed Title Page," and it should be submitted via email. A paper copy is only needed if the department requires a bound copy; 2) a Commencement Program Form for doctoral students is now required to allow us to collect the information to be included in the commencement program.

*Please note Graduate School staff members **do not** contact students to remind them of upcoming graduation deadlines. It is the student's responsibility to check the Graduate School website for deadlines. We ask committee chairs or graduate coordinators to inform students of this responsibility as a part of advising.

Thesis/Dissertation/Nursing Capstone and Title Page Template Updates

A new thesis/dissertation/capstone project title page template was designed which requires original signatures only for the committee chair, department chair, and dean of the Graduate School. The purpose of the new template is to minimize a student's legwork in collecting committee member signatures on title pages especially when revisions to the document must be completed after the defense. This change will eliminate the need to mail hard copies of title pages when a committee member or the student is off site. The template should be used for documents submitted for graduation in spring 2018 and later. Students who have already submitted a signed title page need not submit a new title page.

Most style guides suggest the use of Times New Roman as the appropriate font for formal documents. Therefore, the Graduate School is discontinuing Arial font templates as an option for constructing thesis, dissertation, and nursing capstone projects. Five Times New Roman templates are available on the Graduate School website for students to choose from depending upon field of study.

A link to the revised templates is located on the Graduate School website at <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/templates-and-forms>.

Graduate Faculty Appointment Criteria Webpage Update

With input from the Graduate Credentials Subcommittee of Graduate Council, the Graduate Faculty Appointment Criteria webpage was revised. The former narrative often created confusion about specific requirements for different graduate faculty levels. The intent of the revision was to simplify and clarify the narrative. No changes were made to the criteria necessary for appointment as graduate faculty. The webpage is accessible at <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/graduate-faculty-appointment-criteria>.