

# GRADUATE QUARTERLY

News & Information for UCLA Graduate Students

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

### DEAR GRADUATE STUDENT:

The kind of learning that's transferred via books and lectures is only one part of graduate education. Arguably the more crucial part is developing a professional persona consistent with the standards of one's chosen field. In other words, you don't just learn biology, you learn how to be a biologist or a social scientist, a linguist or a lawyer.

This is what we call professional socialization: initiating new recruits into the rules and behaviors sanctioned by the discipline. Part of this is learning the techniques of research in various fields and strategies for sharing the results: writing articles, conference papers, and even books. However, socialization is also learning how to interact: meeting colleagues in professional groups, becoming a citizen of academic communities, working with teams in science laboratories and other research groups.

This issue of the Graduate Quarterly provides a number of illustrations of how graduate students are learning to be future professionals in their fields. For the majority of graduate students, those looking forward to careers as professors in a range of academic settings, learning the skills that make a fine teacher is a crucial part of graduate education. We describe five young scholars who have been honored for distinguished work as teaching assistants in their respective departments. All have developed interesting communication and curricular strategies, but even more prominently they share a commitment to their students, not as a class but as a collection of individuals with different needs. They make personal connections, and that makes all the difference.

We also talked to students whose professional socialization takes a rather different and somewhat more glamorous form than the traditional journal article or conference poster. In the Design | Media Arts Departments, first-year students have been challenged through class assignments to prepare and submit work for international design contests. At least one has taken home prize money for what began as homework. Prisenaming work or competition is a key element of design careers, and our students are getting some practice.

Elsewhere on campus, the Coppola One-Act Play Marathon provides an opportunity for students in playwrighting to stage their works and for directors, many of them in the Film Department, to try their hand at live performance. Both groups benefit from the opportunity to work, not only with each other, but also with the actors they will depend on as they build careers.

We also commend to your attention our feature story: The web of connections between UCLA and campuses of the California State University is bearing fruit for both partners in the educational enterprise. Many of CSU's finest graduates are pursuing Master's and doctoral studies at UCLA, and many of our finest graduate students are going on to careers as CSU faculty. This is a relationship that the Graduate Division is devoting considerable attention to fostering.

As you go back to your books, I want to strongly encourage all students to engage in socialization activities early and often in your graduate career. Remember that professional socialization is part of what you're here for, too.

*Claudia Mitchell-Kernan*

Claudia Mitchell-Kernan  
Vice Chancellor, Graduate Studies



Photo: University of California

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## Table of Contents



### FEATURE ARTICLES

- 4** **CSUCLA**  
The connections between UCLA and the California State University system benefit all
- 8** **Warning Signs**  
Design | Media Arts students rack up the awards designing a sign that would warn people about radioactive waste buried in the desert
- 10** **The Power of Collaboration**  
Graduate student writers and directors work together with actors in the Francis Ford Coppola One-Act Marathon

### GRADUATE STUDENT PROFILES

- 12** **Martin Janecek** - Biomedical Physics
- 14** **Jennifer Nery** - Philosophy
- 16** **Eric Mayer** - Spanish & Portuguese
- 18** **Michael Mischna** - Geophysics and Space Physics
- 20** **Natalie Opestein** - Indo-European Studies
- 22** **Darren Schreiber** - Political Science

### NEWS

- 24** **The Distinguished TA Awards**

### GRADUATE STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 27** **Papers, publications, presentations, performance**



On the Cover: Marlene Shelton and Maureen Perkins, participants in the Francis Ford Coppola One-Act Marathon. See story on page ten.



Ashok Sukumaran's proposal, which won "best of show," illustrated a site thickly planted with genetically engineered, cobalt blue yucca plants, whose unnatural color would contrast starkly with the surrounding desert.

nonprofit organization that promotes the arts, humanities, and education in Nevada, partnered with the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV). Competing in contests "gets students out in the world, and also it's a great line for their resume," says Professor Steinkamp. In the case of the Yucca Mountain project, Professor Swanland says, the judging panel included "some of the big thinkers in the art world today... I thought it would be good exposure for the students to get their work into an arena like that."

The contest drew 150 entrants from around the world. Two members of the Steinkamp/Swanland class walked away with prizes: Ashok Sukumaran as best of show and Fabian Winkler among the honorable mentions. Both men are second-year graduate students in the Design|Media Arts Department.

Rather than creating a conventional sign, Ashok and Fabian submitted proposals that turned the whole Yucca Mountain site into a symbolic warning. Ashok envisioned a site thickly planted with genetically engineered, cobalt blue yucca plants, whose unnatural color would contrast starkly with the surrounding desert. Ashok sees it as "putting two demons together," nuclear waste and genetic mutation. The blue yucca is a meta-metaphor, he says, one mutant marking the other.

Alternatively, Fabian imagined covering the site with huge reflectors and "shimmers" similar to those used in the movie, *Dawg*, to create a warning on several sensory levels: heat, light, sound, and vibration. "When I first heard about the plans to bury nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, I thought, is this real or am I just in the wrong movie," Fabian says. Thus, he hopes people who think his proposal is "unreal" will understand that the reality of the situation is still more incredible.

The contest was intended to promote

public awareness rather than to provide an actual plan for the nuclear repository. However, the entries have appeared in several publications, and fifteen were displayed at UNLV's Marjorie Barrick museum in Las Vegas, "a setting where you ask yourself is this reality or just a movie—it was perfect," Fabian says. As "best of show," Ashok took home \$1,000, not a bad price for something that started out as a homework assignment.

The project was well-suited to Ashok, who hopes for a career designing "public space rewired, reconstructed, re-imagined." He was working as an architect when he was drawn to media art because "I wanted more forms of expression than walls and doors." UCLA's program was appealing because he found it more art-based than some alternatives.

Fabian was drawn to UCLA because the program gave students "more freedom to come up with your own ideas, to conceptualize as well as realize work." Connections to other UC campuses have extended the



Fabian Winkler and Adriana deSouza e Silva's <strike>database <strike>installation uses a printer, video camera, and database to question the meaning of computer interfaces.

opportunities to present his work. Besides the Yucca Mountain project, Fabian submitted another work in collaboration with Adriana de Souza e Silva, that has received honors. The <strike>database<strike> installation uses a printer, video camera, and database to question the traditional meaning of computer interfaces. Papers describing their work were presented at a conference

in Brazil and at ACADIA 2002.

Working with Adrians, "was fun because we both came from very different backgrounds," Fabian says. "My background is installation art and interactive real-time environments whereas Adriana has strengths in theory." Fabian says he "completely dislikes the competitive model of contests, the idea of outdoing others, especially in the field of the arts. What is important to me is to build up a network of persons, institutions and ideas... In attending conferences or exhibiting work I ideally enlarge this network by connecting to others and by seeing and hearing other ideas while presenting my own ideas."

To learn more about the Design|Media Arts program at UCLA, go to [www.design.ucla.edu](http://www.design.ucla.edu), which also provides web space for students. To learn more about the Yucca Mountain contest, go to [www.desertspace.org](http://www.desertspace.org).



Ashok Sukumaran and Fabian Winkler, Design|Media Arts Students

## Warning Signs

**I**T WAS A CHALLENGING ASSIGNMENT: Design a sign that would warn future generations about the perils of a proposed national repository for radioactive waste in the desert under Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Design|Media Arts faculty Jennifer

Steinkamp and Gail Swanland asked their students to do a proposal as their first project in a class on Tangible Typography.

Then they asked their students to submit the proposals to a contest, "Universal Warning Sign: Yucca Mountain," sponsored by the Desert Space Foundation, a