GSS Community Service Award 2015 Nominees

In our inaugural year, the Awards Committee received a total of 17 nominations. Each of the graduate students nominated have given remarkable service to the UConn community. The committee enjoyed reading all of the nominations and had a difficult time choosing only one winner. We would, however, still like to recognize all of the graduate students who were nominated. Below, the Awards Committee has written a short paragraph on each nominee highlighting their outstanding service. Thank you to the UConn community for sending your nominations in and also to those graduate students who have in addition to their scholarly work, taken the time back to give back.

Winner:

Casey Green
Casey Green is currently an advanced Ph.D. Candidate in the History Department and was nominated for her integrity, perseverance, and resilient character. She is admired by her peers for her outstanding leadership and political activism. She has helped organize a student group, the Disability Advocacy Coalition, which advocates for students with disabilities on campus. Using her own experiences as a graduate student with cerebral palsy Casey has advocated for a more accessible and healthy campus for UConn community. More specifically, she has advocated for more accessible buildings and transportation in addition to also advocating on for expanded access to health and mental services. Not only has Casey been a strong advocate for graduate students with disabilities but she also been a strong advocate for mothers and the graduate student population as a whole. Casey’s tireless advocacy in addition to her graduate studies at UConn has made her a magnificent role model for the UConn community. Her work is admirable and the Awards Committee is humbled to be able to honor her with this award.

Nominees:

Morad Behandish
Morad Behandish engaged and empowered graduate students in the school of engineering. He maximised existing university career resources by increasing the graduate student professional membership, rewarding their participation, and planning opportunities such as the graduate career exposition. His peers recognize him as a mentor, which he additionally serves in a formal capacity as an Innovation Quest (iQ) mentor to convert student ideas into businesses.

Carrie Eaton
Carrie Eaton is a first year Ph.D. student in the school of nursing. She has spent countless hours helping her fellow classmates and previous students with personal and professional advice. She volunteered her time photographing students Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and upon winning arranged for the student in the photo to receive the prize instead of herself. Carrie lives by the motto “Everyone Was a Beginner Once” and tries to do all she can to help and enrich the lives of both undergraduate and graduate nursing students.

Cera Fisher
Cera Fisher's nomination resonated with every mark of excellence sought after by the Graduate Community Service Award. She responded to needs of the student body with hard work and sacrifice that directly impacts all graduate student employees of the university. Her service in negotiating graduate student contracts was process oriented, thorough, and has improved conditions for future graduate students.
Monique Golden
Monique Golden has volunteered countless hours in the past years in her continued service to the graduate community. With her partnership with the Graduate School, Monique has helped create a more navigable website for incoming graduate students. Her efforts have allowed incoming students easily navigate and find key information and important forms. She has a strong desire to help others join the UConn community and provide a welcoming atmosphere to graduate students.

Sapna Gupta
Sapna Gupta is the founder and president of the UConn Chapter of Keramos, the first ever Ceramic society for graduate students. In her capacity as president, she has spent countless hours of her time planning events for graduate students and offering guidance to undergraduates. She was recently selected by the Connecticut Technology for the “2015 Woman of Innovation” due to her service to the collegiate community. Sapna is a phenomenal role model to her peers and to the UConn community.

Kevin Marinelli
Debuting his data gloves at the World Maker Faire in September of 2013, Kevin Marinelli has continually represented the community in the best light. Integrating art and computer science struck Kevin as the perfect opportunity to design dual gloves that interface for activities such as puppetry. Kevin’s design has been demonstrated during UConn’s 2013 Open House to show prospective students the ‘hands on’ hybrid of art and computer science. Additionally, Kevin mentors fellow students in graphics systems and guest lecturers to undergraduate classes where he designs his own props. His dedication to innovation and education represents UConn’s finest.

Mairead O'Reilly
Mairead O'Reilly was nominated for her service in helping to organize the Public Interest Law Group Auction. This auction provides funding for fellowships to law students and is a great help to the students of the Law department. In addition to her leadership in PILG, O'Reilly is president of the Women Law Student Association and uses her position to help build a strong professional community in her department.

Arielle Sharma
Arielle Sharma is a second year law student at the University of Connecticut. Arielle has spent her time reinvigorating the Jewish Law Students Association, of which she is now the president. She donates her time and money to hosting Jewish events throughout the year including cooking for a Seder dinner at her apartment. She has helped run the Public Interest Law Group annual auction to raise money for fellowships to law students taking public interest internships over the summer. She also has a strong interest in social justice issues and especially prisoner rights.

Cynthia Torres
Cynthia Torres was nominated for her service to the athletics community here at UConn. Her research on heat exposure has helped her as a supervisor and mentor to many student athletes. Torres also volunteers with the Human Performance Lab in the Department of Kinesiology as well as working as a graduate assistant in the Sports and Medical Academy.

Paul Wortman
The current President of the Student Association of Graduate Engineers (SAGE) and UConn Cyber-security Club, Paul Wortman, has endlessly strived to better the Engineering community here at UConn. During his tenure, Paul organized many events such as coffee hours, professional development speakers, and the School of Engineering poster conference. But his dedication to graduate student lives does not stop at the events he designs and attends. Behind the scenes, Paul takes time to mentor his fellow graduate students out of the desire to make UConn life better.