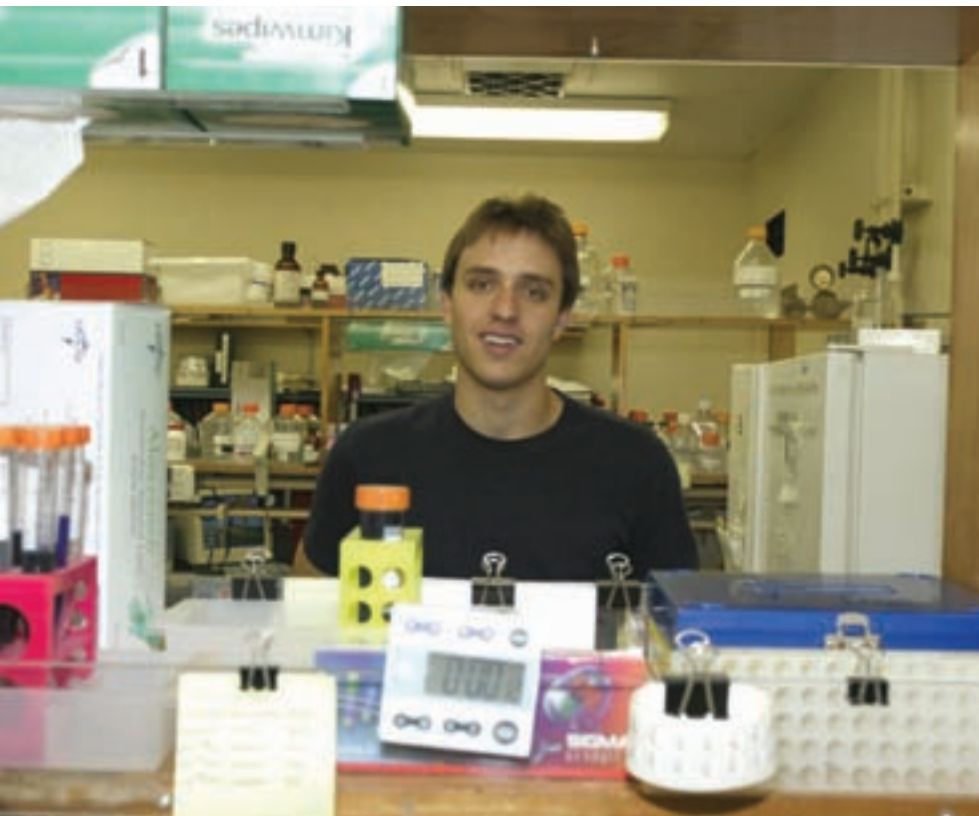


PORTRAITS *of*

The six student winners of the Charles E. and Sue K. Young Awards for 2007 are recognized for their



William Thomas Clarke

Senior, Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology

Seeking answers and treatments for inherited diseases

While many undergraduates dream of one day becoming medical researchers who can cure or tame disease, Tom Clarke is already well on his way toward realizing that ambition. A Howard Hughes Undergraduate Research Scholar and recipient of a prestigious Marshall Scholarship, Clarke is working in the laboratory of Assistant Physiology Professor Rachelle Crosbie. There, Clarke has helped with research on the genetic disorder of ciliary dyskinesia, which causes respiratory illnesses and infertility; and on Duchenne muscular dystrophy, which usually results in death by the late teens.

“My research work has been the most exciting experience of my collegiate career, and has reinforced my decision to use the science of medicine as a physician to develop novel therapeutic tools for treating inherited human diseases,” said Clarke.

Stephan J. Pennington

Graduate student, Musicology

Incorporating marginalized musical voices

A disadvantaged childhood, eight years in the Army, and being both a person of color and a transsexual give Pennington an unconventional perspective on education and life.

“I always make sure to include a variety of voices and viewpoints every time I teach,” said Pennington, who won the Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award for 2005–06. “That way, I can incorporate the histories of marginalized people that I myself never learned while I was in school.”

Pennington’s dissertation is on the Comedian Harmonists, a diverse German vocal group that included Jews and flourished until Hitler came to power. Pennington, who plays the banjo, sings and composes, learned about the group while he was in Germany as an Army intelligence analyst.



Excellence

Photographs by Collin Erie Class of 2007

extraordinary talent, commitment and achievement.



Jennifer Pfeifer

Graduate student, Psychology

Mapping the neural basis of identity

Pfeifer is among just a few people in the country who are conducting research in the emerging field of developmental social neuroscience, according to Matthew Lieberman, one of her half-dozen academic advisors. Working in the Ahmanson-Lovelace Brain Mapping Center, Pfeifer uses magnetic resonance imaging and other tools to examine the social cognitive development of children and teens.

“My goal is to understand how the neural systems that support self and social perception develop and affect adjustment, achievement, attitudes and developmental disorders,” said Pfeifer, who received a master’s degree in developmental psychology from UCLA in 2003. “Identities are not solely about our unique qualities, but also about what connects us with others. Because identities bloom in the transition from childhood to adolescence, it’s the perfect time to examine their neural foundations as well as their effect on developmental outcomes.”

Hrayr Khanjian

Senior, Linguistics

Using mathematics to analyze language structure

Coming from a bi-cultural family and a high school that taught Armenian language and culture, and learning some French and Turkish, all have helped Hrayr Khanjian appreciate language and linguistics. At UCLA, he has combined that background with his research interests. A former mathematics major who works part time as a math tutor, Khanjian is applying mathematical techniques used by Linguistics Professors Edward Keenan and Edward Stabler to the study of grammatical structures in Central West Greenlandic, a dialect of Greenlandic Eskimo.

“I like how languages have multiple levels of structure that are not immediately evident,” said Khanjian. “There are tiers of structure in intonation, sound, word, phrase, sentence and meaning that are similar across languages, and that are very rule-governed.”



Darcy Wanger

Senior, Chemistry/Materials Science

Making solar power affordable

“Organic solar panels should be visible in everyday life in the next 10 years,” said Darcy Wanger, who is doing her best to make that happen by working in the laboratories of Physical Chemistry Professors Benjamin Schwartz and Yves Rubin. Wanger is undertaking the lab research while also pursuing both a bachelor’s degree in chemistry/materials science and a master’s degree in physical chemistry.

“Solar work is both interesting science and ethical,” Wanger said. “It’s something real that could have a positive impact on the world.”

Wanger’s master’s thesis is on creating new organic compounds that absorb light and transport energy from the sun, and can be made inexpensively.




Ronald Lok-Ming Liu

Graduate student, Mathematics

Using math to understand and combat brain disease

Mathematics, especially geometry, has been Liu’s passion since he was in middle school. At UCLA, he has found a way to direct his passion and skill for the advancement of medical research. Liu uses innovative applied mathematics to identify brain structures in MRI scans, which helps to establish markers of brain disease. Ultimately, his work could help scientists quantify the progression of disease and understand the brain’s complex structure and function.

“I love mathematics and I also like teaching a lot,” said Liu, who received a master’s degree in applied mathematics from UCLA in 2005, and has already published eight academic papers, including four as a first author. “I would like to encourage students’ interest in mathematics and continue my research. Using mathematics for more effective, efficient and precise analysis of human brain disease will hopefully lead to cures.”

About the photographer:

Photographing the College’s award-winning students is a talented photographer who is himself a UCLA undergraduate. Collin Erie is a contributing photographer to US Presswire. His images have been published in USA Today, Sports Illustrated, the Los Angeles Times, ESPN.com, SI.com, and NBCsports.com. A communications studies major, Erie is a 2007 graduate of UCLA.