



*Join us in celebrating and
congratulating all the 2022
Endowed Award Recipients*



The 2022 CSUS Endowed Awards Ceremony was held in person (338 Natural Resources Bldg.), supplemented with Zoom for those unable to be with us in person.

Wednesday, March 23, 2022, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Even though we had an in-person + Zoom ceremony, we decided to create this “booklet” again this year to extend recognition beyond the ceremony.

*This also provides an opportunity to celebrate all the wonderful work that **all our students** are doing and will be doing into the future. Our Endowed Awards celebration is only one of these opportunities. After you congratulate recipients during the ceremony, spend some time reflecting on your own positive work, learning, and contributions . . .and work toward a continuing contribution-filled future.*

Frank Fear Fellowship: *Excellence in Community Engagement*



This award was created by friends/colleagues to honor Dr. Frank Fear in recognizing outstanding graduate students in CSUS who excel in scholarship that reflects the democratic practice of community engagement. Frank worked tirelessly to support students and community. Recipients reflect qualities that Frank embodied during his career at MSU, including excellence and creativity in scholarship; a commitment to crossing disciplinary boundaries to work for change in the public good; an ability to engage with communities as a scholar-practitioner; and a commitment to civility, equity, and compassion in interactions with students, colleagues, and community partners.

Jessica Brunacini, a fifth-year doctoral student, currently is conducting her research field work in coastal Maine. This work is funded through a NOAA Office of Coastal Management fellowship. She is working collaboratively with community partners at the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve to develop a regional climate resilience plan for southern Maine and to address social equity concerns. Her work is founded on the theory that proactive, participatory processes that meaningfully engage residents in climate change adaptation planning are necessary for achieving socially and environmentally just outcomes, particularly in marginalized communities whose members historically have been excluded from decision-making processes.

One of her support letters said, “Jessica embodies the spirit and focus of this award in so many ways, including her authentic commitment to community-engaged research and practice; her persistent and graceful work as a climate adaptation scholar/practitioner; her devotion to equity and deliberative processes; and her commitment to her own evolution as an empathetic listener, facilitator, and community advocate.”

Another wrote: “[Her] public participation work, action research approach, and focus on democratic engagement principles epitomize qualities ... that extend the legacy of Dr. Frank Fear. She is committed to understanding the biophysical attributes of the social system where she works, and helps coworkers appreciate how social science and commitment to community engagement can improve the impact of that biophysical research.”



Jessica Brunacini (CSUS)

Malcolm & Ann Kerr: *Excellence in Scholarship*



By promoting international understanding through higher education, and teaching and research partnerships contributing

to the common good, the Kerrs' careers have embodied the spirit of MSU's Land Grant ideals in an international context. Malcolm Kerr, a renowned scholar of Middle Eastern politics and history, is best known as author of *The Arab Cold War*. He was president of American University of Beirut, 1982-84, and was assassinated on his way to work. Ann Kerr has carried on their legacy, serving on the AUB Board of Trustees, and on a presidential advisory board for EARTH University in Costa Rica. She also teaches a UCLA course on international cross-cultural understanding.

Maria Alejandra Garcia is a fourth-year doctoral student pursuing her degree in Community Sustainability. Currently she is conducting her field research in Colombia.

Maria Alejandra joined the CSUS Department on a Fulbright scholarship after earning a Master's degree in Sociology from Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia. She also worked as a research assistant at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture.

In her application, she stated, "I aspire to mentor the next generation of sustainability scholars and to be involved meaningfully in research projects promoting interdisciplinarity, social equity, and diversity." She spoke meaningfully about how social and environmental justice, communication, interdisciplinarity, and diversity in knowledge construction influence her teaching philosophy. Her goal after graduating from CSUS is to teach at a university in Latin America.

One letter writer for her emphasized the real-world experience with policy makers and stakeholders that Maria Alejandra will bring to the classroom. Another recommender wrote in support (simply), "Maria Alejandra is the best of the best . . . one of the most serious, talented students I have encountered in recent cohorts of our CSUS graduate program."



Maria Alejandra Garcia (CSUS)

George & Nancy Axinn International Scholarship



Nancy and George Axinn were committed to international development, and to improving life conditions of poor people in developing countries. Professors George and Nancy Axinn endowed this scholarship to support graduate students who are pursuing careers in international development. Recipients must be enrolled as graduate students in the Department of Community Sustainability (CSUS) and must focus their studies and careers on international development.

Maria Alejandra Garcia, a fourth-year doctoral student in Community Sustainability, supported by a Fulbright fellowship, was born and raised in Cali, a city in Colombia that was profoundly impacted by drug trafficking, urban violence, gender-based violence, and race discrimination. Thanks to a scholarship, she attended an elite-class school. She commented in her essay about the experience of living “between these two worlds.” This enabled her to witness the highly inequitable access to various opportunities. In her application, she discussed how her parents encouraged her to think critically about social problems in Colombia, something she says led her to major in sociology so she could contribute to a more just society. After college, she worked for four years as a research assistant for the International Center for Tropical Agriculture, which aims to reduce poverty and hunger in the tropics of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Her experiences there made her “a defender of women’s empowerment in agriculture and gender transformative policy-making in rural development.”

Her letter writers praised her, with one writing, “Maria Alejandra ... is a clear thinker and very committed to her work ... She’s a mature, talented student ... [with] a strong work ethic . . . She holds herself to high standards and her preparation is meticulous.” Another writer, describing qualifications specific to the Axinn Award, said, “Her passion and commitment to international development and her desire to do policy-relevant work” match Axinns’ values. Upon finishing her degree, she hopes to become a faculty member in Latin America, teaching international development subjects.



Maria Alejandra Garcia (CSUS)

Harriette B. Sherman Fellowship: *Recreation & Tourism Systems*



The Sherman Fellowship was created, with a founding contribution by Robert Ruigh, to support non-traditional students enrolled in the Dept. of Community Sustainability and who are pursuing

a degree in Sustainable Tourism & Protected Areas Management. Applicants meet ≥ 2 of the following criteria, all indicators of the determination of non-traditional students to pursue advanced degree work:

- be 35 years or older;
- be employed >30 hours/week while enrolled (excluding assistantships);
- have returned to school >10 years after enrollment in a degree program; and/or
- be a single parent or supporting/caring for dependents other than a spouse.

Tatiana Iretskaia came to CSUS after a highly interdisciplinary career and is now a third-year doctoral student in the Sustainable Tourism and Protected Area Management program.

In her application, Tanya noted many similarities between herself and Harriette Sherman, including a love for the outdoors, a thirst for knowledge, general curiosity, and an appreciation for the arts.

Tanya's thirst for knowledge certainly contributes to her productivity as a scholar. In the past year, Tanya has published one book review and, as a co-author, has submitted papers to several academic journals. She has presented her work at multiple conferences, including the International Association for Society and Natural Resources. Reflecting recognition of excellence, she has received an award from the Academic Association for Geographers and was the 2021 Kerr Fellowship recipient, for which she taught CSUS 273: Intro to Travel & Tourism.

Tanya's letters of support illustrate her potential for excellence as a scholar and educator. One letter reads, "... her interest in tourism is grounded in sustainability and she sees tourism and protected areas as parts of the systems that define sustainability issues in communities." Another letter writer expressed, "she has embraced the interdisciplinary, collaborative, and applied nature of [her] work with a refreshing research maturity."



Tatiana "Tanya" Iretskaia (STPAM)

Jon F. Bartholic Award: for Ensuring the Future of Michigan's Natural Resources



Dr. Jon Bartholic created this award to support graduate students who identify and study water and land resource problems and work toward

their solutions through cooperative efforts with partners outside the University. When he created the award endowment, Jon indicated that he hopes this award will help the Department of Community Sustainability continue its role as a boundary organization connecting new knowledge with end users who identify needs and contribute critically important practical knowledge for implementing new applications in the field.

Ellie Schiappa, from Pennsylvania, is a first-year master's student in Community Sustainability. She shared that she “was inspired to go to graduate school after taking some time working among river and watershed conservation non-profit organizations in Vermont” and how that “experience gave [her] hands-on understanding of the important role that water, and all our natural resources, provide to our social and ecological communities.” Ellie “chose to pursue a master's degree due to her interest in strengthening our social-ecological systems.”

Ellie is working with Dr. Perry on a project with Huron-Clinton Metroparks in the Greater Detroit area to address impacts of climate change. The parks that collectively create a peripheral ring around urban Detroit are united by the area's rivers. Their project is the first climate-planning action plan for an independent urban park system in Michigan, and will emphasize park action, public stewardship, and community inclusion toward conserving parks and their natural and cultural resources.

Ellie came to MSU with “substantial background in community engagement and relevant natural resource management inquiries.” She has demonstrated sensitivity to these issues in her work with HC Metroparks. By all accounts, Metropark staff are elated to work with her as the student on this project because she is “center[ing] their managerial concerns within a robust scientific framework and with attention to good practices for community inclusion.”



Ellie Schiappa (CSUS)

Milton H. Steinmueller Fellowship: *Natural Resources & Environmental Policy*



The M.H. Steinmueller Fellowship was established with gifts from alumni, colleagues, and friends wishing to honor the career of Dr. Steinmueller, who served for over 30 years

as Professor in the Department of Resource Development (now within the Department of Community Sustainability). The long-term goals of this fellowship are two-fold: **First**, it intends to create a living memorial in honor of Professor Steinmueller, who devoted his career to being a caring teacher of undergraduate and graduate students. **Second**, the fellowship aims to recruit and retain highly qualified graduate students to the Department who intend to emulate the career of Professor Steinmueller.

Suby Sharma, a fifth-year doctoral student in Community Sustainability, comes to MSU from Pokhara, Nepal. She completed her BS in Agriculture from the Himalayan College of Agricultural Science and Technology in Nepal, then joined the college as an Assistant Lecturer where she developed a course on climate change and agriculture. Thus began her interest in sustainable development within the context of environmental changes.

She received her MS in Natural Resources Management in Thailand, with her work focused on carbon mitigation in forest social-ecological systems. Afterwards, she worked as a researcher and program officer with World Wildlife Fund and Toyota Foundation, conducting assessments on emissions reduction, biodiversity, and poverty reduction in multiple Asian countries.

Suby's dissertation focuses on resilience of Tanzanian rangelands in response to drought, and its precarious relationship with food insecurity among livestock-dependent agropastoralists. Suby's professional goals are to engage in research relevant to the needs and priorities of forest- and other natural resource-dependent communities, ensuring that findings inform regional & national policies.

One letter writer said, "... her academic excellence, commitment to effective teaching, and underlying motivation to use her research to inform policy to protect natural resources" serve her well. Another asserts her passion for sustainability, systems thinking, and people's wellbeing.



Shubhechchha "Suby" Sharma (CSUS)



Thank you to all who served on award review committees and wrote letters of recommendations for the nominees.

Fear Review Committee

Kimberly Chung, Robby Richardson, John Kerr

Axinn Review Committee

Dan McCole, Michael Olabisi

Sherman Review Committee

Maria Claudia Lopez, Aaron McKim

Steinmueller Review Committee

Lissy Goralnik, Murari Suvedi, Phil Warsaw

Kerr Review Committee

Laura Schmitt Olabisi, Bess Perry, Matt Raven

Bartholic Review Committee

Michael Kaplowitz, Steven Gray

Thank you to Marsha Edington for all her behind-the-scenes work to collect, process, track, and distribute all nomination packets, and to order plaques. Thanks to Kim Richards for processing checks.