

## **Report for the 2021 AAPA Business Meeting**

### **Student Programs Committee**

Christina Torres-Rouff, 29 March 2021

The Student Programs Committee primarily implements two student competitions. The first occurs at the annual meeting, when students who are presenting research in either a poster or podium format compete for seven named prizes. The second competition is traditionally for travel funds to attend the annual meeting, for which they write an essay on a topic chosen by the Executive Committee. This year those funds were instead used to support student registration fees. Both competitions rely on a committee of judges that varies slightly in composition based on the judges' availability. In this report, I first summarize the 2020 Los Angeles meeting Student Presentation Prize competition, cancelled as a result of the pandemic, and then report on the 2021 Pollitzer Essay competition that was run in anticipation of the AAPA Baltimore meeting. Finally, I present preliminary information on the 2021 Student Presentation Prize Competition.

#### **I. 2020 Student Presentation Prizes**

The deadline for entry to the 2020 AAPA Student Presentation was March 1, 2020. This was the third year that we relied on an online submission form, with some minor adjustments that improved the process. We received 53 entries for the 2020 contest, more in line with previous years, instead of 2019's exceptional participation rate. As a consequence of the global pandemic and cancellation of the 2020 meeting, no student prizes were awarded.

#### **History of the number of entries and judges for the Student Presentation Prizes**

Year	Number of entries	Number of judges
2014	39	-
2015	31	-
2016	45	21
2017	69	34
2018	63	39
2019	91	41
2020	53	-

#### **II. 2020 Pollitzer Travel Awards**

The Pollitzer Student Travel Awards are designed to help students defray the costs of attending the AAPA meetings. They are named in honor of William S. Pollitzer, a Human Biologist who taught at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a Darwin Lifetime Achievement Awardee, and past president of the AAPA. The number of awards is also tied to proceeds from the auction that is held at the annual meeting of the AAPA in the year prior. The award traditionally provides \$500 to each recipient to defray travel costs to attend AAPA's annual meeting. This year, winners were given free registration to the 2021 (virtual) annual meeting.

This award is open to all AAPA student members (undergraduate and graduate) who are attending the annual meeting. Students do not need to be giving a presentation at the meeting to qualify but

they do need to be a member of the AAPA at the time of the meeting and should not have been granted their PhD prior to the submission deadline (February 1, 2021).

The essay question changes each year. Awards are made on the basis of an essay of no more than 750 words (excluding references). The specific prompt for this year was:

*The year 2020 will long be remembered as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic and of social uprisings against racial injustice. This combination of the pandemic and structural racism has likely impacted everyone directly or indirectly through the communities in which they participate. In an era of “fake news,” many individuals deny the science behind fighting against COVID-19 and do not understand the ways that structural racism impacts health. In your essay, please describe the role biological anthropologists should play in informing the public about the intersections of public health and race. Importantly, address how science communication should factor into the training and responsibilities of practicing and future biological anthropologists. Use references as needed for your answer.*

The deadline for entry was February 1<sup>st</sup>, midnight UTC -11hours. The submission website went live in January 2021 and we received entries starting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January through to the last few minutes before the deadline. We received 31 original essays. A committee of 25 judges was convened.

### **Committee of Judges for the 2021 Pollitzer Travel Award**

Andrew Barr  
Michael Berthaume  
Lauren Butaric  
Zachary Cofran  
Libby Cowgill  
Luke Delezene  
Maureen Devlin  
Jessica Dimka  
Lee Gettler

David Green  
Elaine Guevara  
Sarah Hlubik  
Chrisandra Kufeldt  
Sarah Lacy  
Scott Maddux  
Justyna Miskiewicz  
Thierra Nalley  
Terry Ritzman

Darcy Shapiro  
Eric Shattuck  
Zaneta Thayer  
Nathan Thompson  
Zach Throckmorton  
Anna Waterman  
Todd Yokley

Evaluation was done on a 100-point scale based on three criteria (30 points for originality and creativity; 50 points for the soundness of the scenario and logical reasoning based on evolutionary biology and theory, including references as needed; and 20 points for grammar and spelling). In an effort to standardize the scoring system, a rubric was utilized.

Each entry was given a number, and essays were identified only by number during the evaluation process. Each essay was scored by three judges. Each judge was asked to score ~4 essays and one back up judge was used for conflicts of interest. The final score for each essay was determined as the average of the three independent scores. Neither the named essays nor the number/name key were accessible at any time to the judges. No judge evaluated a proposal from a student at their same institution and the chair was not notified of any other conflicts of interest.

In order to implement the policy that priority would be given to novel entrants, students who had received a Pollitzer award previously had 7 points deducted from their final score. There were six

entries from previous winners. All of these ranked high enough to win a Pollitzer award again this year even with the penalty. We followed the protocol implemented last year for increasing the number of Pollitzer prizes awarded and for ranking essays in order to increase representation at the AAPA meeting by traditionally underrepresented groups. Information to this effect was provided by Heide Rohland and only accessed by Christina Torres-Rouff in determining rank.

AAPA had funds to award 28 awards. The winners are listed below.

**2021 Pollitzer Travel Award Recipients:**

- Malorie Albee, The Ohio State University
- Elizabeth Bews, University of South Florida
- Andrea Blackburn, Boston Univeristy
- Colin Brand, University of Oregon
- Alyson Caine, University of California, Merced
- Amy Chan, California State University Los Angeles
- Mekenzie Davis, University of Louisville
- Kara DiComo, The University of South Florida
- Francesca Dunn, University of South Florida
- Ashley Ezzo, University of Louisville
- Abigail Gancz, The Pennsylvania State University
- Alfie Gleeson, University College London
- Rachel Heil, California State University Fullerton
- Madison Homer-King, University of South Florida
- Courtney Johns, University of South Florida
- Kristin Kaosa, The University of Texas at Arlington
- Alexa Kelly, University of North Texas Health Science Center
- Rose Leach, Kent State University
- Amanda Leppert Gomes, University of South Florida
- Ingrid Lundeen, University of Texas at Austin
- Leela McKinnon, University of Toronto
- Isabelle Monroe, The University of New Mexico
- Vanessa Reeves, The University of South Florida, Tampa
- Jeremy Simmons, New York University
- Julianne Stamer, Arizona State University
- Nicole Torres-Tamayo, Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales (MNCN-CSIC)
- Jordan Wright, University of South Florida
- An-Di Yim, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**History of the number of entries and winners for the Pollitzer Travel Essay Competition.**

Pollitzer Travel Essay Competition		
Year	Number of entries	Number of winners
2012	-	43
2013	-	43
2014	-	50
2015	40	24
2016	68	42
2017	118	50

2018	75	57
2019	104	46
2020*	154	50
2021	31	28

*\* It should be noted that the 2020 Pollitzer Prizes were awarded per the last report of the student programs committee, but students did not receive funds as the meetings were cancelled. Funds were distributed, however, to those students who demonstrated non-refundable purchases attendant to the meeting so that they were not placed in undue financial hardship as a result of the cancellation of the Los Angeles meeting.*

### **III. 2021 Student Presentation Prizes**

The deadline for entry to the 2021 AAPA Student Presentation was March 1, 2021, and will proceed following the protocol used for the last several years with attendant modifications given the virtual meeting. We received significantly fewer student presentation prize applications this year than in the past (n=23) and 16 judges have been organized to evaluate these presentations.