

Report for the 2026 AABA Business Meeting
Student Programs Committee
Kevin Hatala, 1, March 2026

The Student Programs Committee primarily implements two student award competitions. The first occurs at the Annual Meeting, when students who present research in either a poster or podium format compete for eight Student Presentation Prizes. The second competition is for the Pollitzer Student Travel Awards, for which students write an essay on a topic chosen by the Executive Committee. In this report, I first summarize the student prizes awarded at the 2025 Annual Meeting. I then provide preliminary information on the 2026 Pollitzer Student Travel Awards.

I. 2025 Student Presentation Prizes

The 2025 AABA Student Presentation Awards followed the same protocols that have been used for the past several years, with judges evaluating presentations using a common rubric, and assessing the scientific content as well as the style and clarity of the presentation. The number of student presentation award applications increased from 2024 to 2025 (n=33 compared with n=15) and 28 judges were organized to evaluate 33 presentations, with multiple judges assigned to each presentation.

Prize	Awardee	Presentation Title
AAA-AABA Anatomy in Anthropology	Laura Hunter	<i>Re-evaluating form-function relationships of carpal morphology in tool use and knuckle walking</i>
AABA Outstanding Presentation Prize	Laura Haynes	<i>Of mammals and museums: Utilizing collections to assess anthropogenic influences in the gut microbiome</i>
AABA Outstanding Presentation Prize	Katherine Rickelton	<i>Changes in cerebellar gene expression reveal drivers of differences in higher cognitive phenotypes between primates</i>
AABA Outstanding Presentation Prize	Paige Wagstaff	<i>The relationship between maternal pre- and postpartum oxytocin levels and significant childhood adversity in humans</i>
AABA Outstanding Presentation Prize	Melissa Zarate	<i>A reference mitogenome for the yellow-tailed woolly monkey (<i>Lagothrix flavicauda</i>) using Oxford Nanopore Sequencing, and the potential for fecal mitogenomics and altitude adaptation</i>
Mildred Trotter Prize	Levi Raskin	<i>Hidden state prediction suggests perikymata are unlikely to differentiate Middle Pleistocene hominins</i>
Patricia Whitten Prize	Isabelle Clark	<i>Peering to learn: Attentional biases change with age in wild chimpanzees</i>
Journal of Human Evolution Prize	Madeleine Kelly	<i>Bovid astragalus ecomorphology as a proxy for sub-member scale habitat variability in Shungura Formation Member G</i>
Honorable Mention	Kamar Afra	<i>Toward bioarchaeological recognition of Islamic burials</i>
Honorable Mention	Nicole Schapker	<i>Investigating the perception of risks during arboreal locomotion in wild and captive primates</i>

Committee of Judges for the 2025 Student Presentation Prizes (28 judges):

Erin Blankenship-Sefczek	Alexa Kelly
Marine Cazenave	Addison Kemp
Elizabeth Cho	Alexandra Kralick
Elaine Chu	Austin Lawrence
Melissa Clark	Scott Maddux
Rebecca Cook	Thierra Nalley
Lucas Delezene	Sarah Reedy
Andrew Du	Terry Ritzman
Heather Edgar	Roberta Salmi
Kelsey Ellis	Maja Šešelj
Hannah Farrell	Sean Tallman
Kevin Hatala	Lori Tremblay
Nick Holowka	Zewdi Tsegai
Mark Hubbe	An-Di Yim

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	-
2021	23	16
2022	21	11
2023	30	21
2024	15	20
2025	33	28

II. 2025 Pollitzer Student Travel Awards

The Pollitzer Student Travel Awards are designed to help students defray the costs of attending the AABA 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 AABA (AAPA). Support for these awards is provided, in part, by the proceeds from the auction at the prior year’s Annual Meeting. Starting in 2025, the award value was increased to \$595, which is provided to each recipient to defray travel costs to attend the AABA Annual Meeting.

This award is open to all AABA student members (undergraduate and graduate) who are attending the Annual Meeting. Students do not need to be giving a presentation to qualify but they do need to be a member of the AABA at the time of the meeting and should not have been granted their PhD prior to the submission deadline.

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 2025 was:

Imagine that you are a new postdoc or professor, preparing to teach your first course in Introduction to Biological Anthropology. Your university provides you with access to laboratory teaching materials, which include some decades-old, anonymized human skeletons. Their history is completely unknown to anyone in your department, as they were acquired long before any of the current faculty were hired. How do you propose to handle this situation? Are there ethical ways for you to use these materials in your teaching, or would that be outside of the bounds of ethical and responsible use? Or do you propose a solution that is somewhere between these two poles? In your essay, be sure to provide examples and address ethical considerations while referencing published scholarship.

The deadline for entry was January 6, 2025 at 11:59 PM Pacific Standard Time. The submission website went live in October 2024 and we received entries from October 28 through to the last minutes before the deadline. We received a total of 93 essays, which were rated by a committee of 28 judges.

Committee of Judges for the 2025 Pollitzer Student Travel Awards (28 judges):

Eric Bartelink	Mark Hubbe
Erin Blankenship-Sefczek	Jessica Juarez
Elizabeth Cho	Chrisandra Kufeldt
Elaine Chu	Scott Maddux
Melissa Clark	Nicholas Passalacqua
Zach Cofran	Terry Ritzman
Rebecca Cook	Roberta Salmi
Libby Cowgill	Sean Tallman
Lucas Delezene	Zachary Throckmorton
Andrew Du	Lori Tremblay
Ulises Espinoza	Erin Marie Williams-Hatala
Jesse Goliath	Teresa Wilson
David Green	An-Di Yim
Kevin Hatala	Todd Yokley

Evaluations used a standard rubric with a 25-point scale (5 points for addressing each of three components of the essay question, 5 points for referencing published scholarship relevant to the topic, 2 points for grammar and spelling, 3 points for overall writing style/structure and clarity of the argument.

Each entry was anonymized prior to review, using randomly assigned numerical identifiers. Each essay was scored by three judges. Each judge was asked to score ~10 essays. 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 was accessible at any time to the judges. No judge evaluated a proposal from a student at their same institution and the Chair of Student Programs was not

notified of any other conflicts of interest. In order to prioritize funding for first-time Pollitzer awardees, students who had previously received a Pollitzer award had 1.5 points deducted from their total score.

Due to new AABA funding initiatives, we were able to issue 76 awards (one student could not travel to the Annual Meeting, so a total of 75 monetary awards were made). The winners are listed below.

2025 Pollitzer Travel Award Recipients:

Belkis Abufaur (University of Florida)	Eimy Gonzalez Alvarez (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
Elise Adams (UNLV)	Haley Goren (University of Birmingham)
Alexandra Adams (McMaster University)	Madison Grant (City University of New York (CUNY))
Fnu Aditi (University of Tennessee)	Isobel Grimley (University of Bradford)
Griffin Assance-Goulais (University of Toronto)	Grace Heyborne (University of Utah)
Michael Atogu (University of South Florida)	Juliana Hicks (University at Albany)
Patrice Ausili (New York University)	Michelle Hoskins (University of Texas at Arlington)
Lydia Bailey (Mississippi State University)	Abigail Houkes (University of Illinois)
Kara Becker (George Mason University)	Laura Hunter (University of Chicago)
Jasmine Bonadies (SUNY at Albany)	Alexandra Idso (CUNY Graduate Center)
Madison Bradley-Cronkwright (Duke University)	Hannah Jacobson (Northwestern)
Alaina Brenner (UC Davis)	Carlyn Jenkins (Southern Utah University)
Thalia Burden (University of Toronto)	Madeleine Kelly (University of Chicago)
Seth Chagi (ASU)	Makoto Kobayashi (University of Chicago)
Jordan Chatellier (University of Louisville)	Autumn Koehling (University of Louisville)
Sophie Chorek (University at Buffalo)	Christine Lee (New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine)
Cédric Cordey (University of Zurich)	Makenna Lenover Moyer (The Pennsylvania State University)
Alexis Cutshall (Mississippi State University)	Cheng Liu (Emory University)
Stacy Edington (Baylor University)	Hannah Lyles (University of North Carolina at Charlotte)
Sedona Epstein (University of Oregon)	Alexandra McDougale (Columbia University)
Jimmy Erkens (Boston University)	Skylar McGinnis (Boston University)
Aiden Eylward (University of South Florida)	Almond Mckinley (University of Colorado Anschutz)
Sara Fatula (University of Tennessee)	Nicole Merullo (Boston University)
Sarah Friesen (University of Toronto Mississauga)	Lavania Nagendran (University of Toronto)
Tessa Garces (CUNY)	Horvey Palacios (University of Oklahoma)
Dana Gawlak (University of Toronto)	Laura Pott (University of Minnesota)
Katie Gerstner (Texas State University)	Mriga Rao (UMBC)
Madison Glenwinkel (Texas State University)	
Claire Gold (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)	

Levi Raskin (University of California, Berkeley)
 Vanessa Reeves (University of South Florida)
 Katherine Rickelton (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
 Emma Roach (Northern Michigan University)
 Alexandria Sambrano (University of Pennsylvania)
 Abby Scheeser (UW-Madison)
 Allyson Schmidt (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
 Ritika Sibal (Boston University)
 Allyson Simon (The Ohio State University)

Taylor Simon (St. Mary's College of Maryland)
 Amanda Slotter (Arizona State University)
 Cristina Stan (University of Arkansas)
 Nadine Steer (University of Missouri)
 Christina Trent (University of Central Florida)
 Bhavya Deepti Vadavalli (Boston University)
 Samantha Vee (Boston University)
 Sadie Wall (University of Minnesota TC)
 Laura Watson (University of Tübingen)
 Joseph Won (CUNY)
 Jeanne Wood (Louisiana State University)

History of the number of entries and winners for the Pollitzer Student Travel Awards:

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
2022	40	30
2023	87	30
2024	65	30
2025	93	76

III. 2026 Pollitzer Student Travel Awards

We are currently issuing awards for the 2026 Pollitzer Student Travel Awards. Again, the awards were made based on written essay submissions, and 106 applications were received. This year, we were able to issue 78 awards (three awardees could not travel to the Annual Meeting, so a total of 75 monetary awards were made). The winners are listed below.

2026 Pollitzer Travel Award Recipients:

Belkis Abufaur (University of Florida)
Elise Adams (University of Nevada, Las Vegas)
Iyunoluwa Ademola-Popoola (Pennsylvania State University)
Olayemi Ajayi (University of Cincinnati)
Rebecca Arden (Boston University)
Audrey Arner (Vanderbilt University)
Patriece Ausili (New York University)
Lydia Bailey (Mississippi State University)
Grace Bocko (SUNY at Buffalo)
Tyneisha Bradley (North Carolina State University)
Layla Brassington (Vanderbilt University)
Alaina Brenner (University of California, Davis)
Catherine Byun (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
Anik Chhoker (University of Guelph)
Mark Clemente (University of Central Florida)
Rebecca DeCamp (Rutgers University)
Emilie Dixon (The Ohio State University)
Miranda Ehlers (University of Alaska, Fairbanks)
Jimmy Erkens (Boston University)
Natalie Finnegan (UCLA)
Faith Flanders (Boston University)
Isabelle Fowler (University of Central Florida)
Amanda J. Fuchs (University of Massachusetts)
Maddy Grant (CUNY Graduate Center (NYCEP))
Carolina Gusmao (Federal University of Paraíba, Brazil/University of Nevada, Reno)
Leah Harrell (North Carolina State University)
Lauren Hayden (The Ohio State University)
Mason Hintermeister (Johns Hopkins University)
Hannah Holcombe (University of Delaware)
Abigail Houkes (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
Sarah Hourihan (University of Southern California)
Laura Hunter (University of Chicago)
Tiara Jenkins (Texas State University)
Madeleine Kelly (University of Chicago)
Thomas Kelly (University of Florida)
Makoto Kobayashi (University of Chicago)
Adrienne Kully (West Virginia University)
Alice Lee (University of Oklahoma)
Christine Lee (New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine)
Diana Malarchik (University of California, Davis)
Sophia Malloy (UC Berkeley)
Elise Marrah (Bryn Mawr College)
Rachael McCrary (The Ohio State University)
Elizabeth McGinnis (University of Cincinnati)
Tess Moore (East Carolina University)
Sophia Mummert (University of Wisconsin - Madison)
Jenny Munaweera (University of Florida)
Navit Nachmias (Texas State University)
Olga Nechyparenka (Keele University)
An Nguyen (Stony Brook University)
Nathan Nguyen (Texas State University)
Hannah Oliver (University at Buffalo)
Krisha Parekh (University of Delaware)
Victoria Poltze (University of Zurich)
Tejashwini Ramesh (University of South Florida)
Vanessa Reeves (University of South Florida)
Emma Roach (Boston University)
Sydney Silas (Mercyhurst University)
Allyson Simon (The Ohio State University)
Jacob Smertneck (West Virginia University)
Rachel Smith (Northern Michigan University)
Rebekah Stowe (Texas State University)
Benjamin Tournan (University of Zurich — Institute of Evolutionary Medicine)

Alexandra Tutwiler (Universiteit Leiden)
Sarah Unkel (University of Kansas)
Mary Vaughn (University of Nebraska-
Lincoln)
Joselyn Villa Gutierrez (California State
University, Northridge)
Madelaine Walker (University of
Minnesota)
Yafei Wen (University of Southern
California)
Maureen White (Mississippi State
University)

Kirsten Williams (Boston University School
of Medicine)
Beth Wilson (Georgia State University)
Emily Winnicki (University of Kansas)
Adriana Wisniewski (University of North
Carolina at Chapel Hill)
Krista Kei Wun Wong (London School of
Economics and Political Science)
Eleonora Zanetti (Washington State
University)
Melissa Zarate (Boston University)
Jaime Zolik (University of Minnesota)