Felipe Hernandez, a 2013 graduate in Music Performance and Political Science, has been named a Marshall Scholar. He is the first winner at UC Irvine in eighteen years, since Kelly Maglia won in 1996.

The Marshall Scholarship supports two years of study at a British university and is funded by the British government to honor the close relationship between the two countries embodied in George C. Marshall’s plan to rebuild and revitalize Europe in the wake of the Second World War. Together with the Rhodes Scholarship, the Marshall is one of the most prestigious and competitive scholarships in the world, with just 40 winners each year.

Hernandez plans to earn two master’s degrees while in the United Kingdom: Educational Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Bristol and Comparative Social Policy at the University of Oxford. He hopes to learn how policy can reduce barriers to success for first- and second-generation immigrant students and to research the effects on socioeconomic mobility. Hernandez explains, “By analyzing this complex issue through a scholarly comparative lens, combined with my work and personal experience, I will learn to develop social policies that can mobilize these communities; first in California then worldwide.”

Felipe Hernandez ’13

Felipe Hernandez is no stranger to the rigors of research. While at UCI, he completed two Honors theses, one on the effect of the “It Gets Better Project” on suicide rates for LGBT youth, and the other on Narcocorrido music performance and culture in the Los Angeles region, funded by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). He participated in the Campuswide Honors Program (CHP) and the Student Achievement Guided by Experience (SAGE) Scholars Program.

In 2010, while in college himself, Hernandez founded a nonprofit organization, Mentors Empowering & Nurturing Through Education (M.E.N.T.E.) to match low-income, first-generation high school students with college mentors. Hernandez kept in contact with his former mentees while in Colombia, where he taught dozens of young people as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at the University of Ibagué in Colombia. “As a world traveler, I actively share my narrative as a first-generation Latino from a low-income community with everyone.”

Hernandez is a highly decorated student, having previously won the Truman Scholarship and many other smaller awards. He has interned at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute for Congresswoman Linda Sanchez and at the U.S. Department of Education for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. After his Fulbright year in Colombia, he participated in documentary filming for Road Trip Nation Productions, interviewing successful first-generation American leaders across the country. He is currently participating in the California Capital Fellows program in Sacramento.
UCI Scholarship Opportunities Program turns 25!

The Scholarship Opportunities Program (SOP) launched 25 years ago to encourage and help UCI undergraduate students to win prestigious scholarships. SOP started as a branch of the Campuswide Honors Program in 1990 and is now housed in the Center for Excellence in Writing and Communication. In its first 25 years, SOP has worked with countless students to produce 550 winners, including 2 Marshall winners, 19 Strauss winners, 56 Fulbright winners, and 246 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship winners.

As the program continues to grow, SOP will continue to support UCI students to successfully vie for and win prestigious awards.

Students who utilize SOP services increase their involvement in meaningful research, service, and leadership opportunities on campus and beyond and cultivate solid relationships with faculty. We provide bright and dedicated undergraduates with the communication skills - writing, editing, public speaking and interviewing - needed to compete successfully for top awards. Through working with us, students learn how to evaluate and strengthen their talents and interests to achieve their academic and career goals.

Donald A. Strauss Scholarship Winner: Anna Tran

This year, UCI garnered its 19th winner of the Donald A. Strauss Scholarship. Anna Tran is one of fourteen students selected in California by the Donald A. Strauss Foundation to support a public service project during her senior year.

In conjunction with the Joshua Medical Internship Program, Tran will create a program matching undergraduate pre-medical interns with senior citizens. The novel “Pay It Forward” program will provide health and technology education and companionship for seniors living alone in Buena Park and Cerritos. “Pay It Forward” intends to improve seniors’ health and fitness education, teach them to use technology to stay connected to friends and family and access health information, and reduce social isolation through one-on-one and group activities. “It is important for society as a whole to continue to move progressively and advocate against an age-segregated community,” Tran writes. “This experience will be fulfilling for seniors because it will enrich their lives socially, mentally, and physically.”

Tran majors in Biological Sciences and is a Student Achievement Guided by Experience (SAGE) Scholar. After she graduates in 2016, Tran plans to attend medical school and become a primary care physician.
National Science Foundation Winner: Sean Feng

Sean Feng is a graduating senior in Chemistry, a Phi Beta Kappa member, and an Allergan Summer Research Fellow. Her organic chemistry research investigates a novel method for synthesizing functionalized carbocyclic scaffolds from sugars.

While at UCI, Feng researched in Professor Chris Vanderwhal’s laboratory, mentored by graduate student Sam Tartakoff, and presented at four research symposia. Feng also worked as a summer intern at Isis Pharmaceuticals, Inc. in the medicinal chemistry department.

Feng plans to obtain a Ph.D. at the California Institute of Technology and encourage young female scientists to pursue their dreams in her future career as a Professor.

The National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship provides three years of support, including an annual $34,000 stipend, a $12,000 cost-of-education allowance, and up to a $5,000 international travel allowance.

To date, 246 UCI undergraduate and graduate students, including Feng, have won National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships.

New Scholarship: Schwarzman Scholars

The SOP staff are thrilled to be supporting a new international scholarship, the Schwarzman Scholars program. This award funds one year of study in a leadership development curriculum at Tsinghua University in Beijing, one of China’s most prestigious universities. The program aims to cultivate the next generation of global leaders through fostering a better understanding of China’s role in global trends. In addition to the core coursework, students choose from concentrations in Public Policy, Economics and Business, or International Studies, and complete corporate or non-profit internships for real-world leadership experience. All courses will be taught in English.

Selection will be based on academic excellence and leadership potential. Students should also possess the “ability to anticipate trends and paradigm changes, exemplary character, desire to understand other cultures, perspectives and positions.”

The program is named for its founder and largest donor, Stephen A. Schwarzman, founder and CEO of the Blackstone Group. Schwarzman’s Advisory Board includes Former Prime Ministers Tony Blair (Great Britain); Kevin Rudd (Australia), and Brian Mulroney (Canada); Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy; Former United States Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, and Henry Kissinger; Former US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson; and Yo-Yo Ma.

Up to 200 Schwarzman Scholars will be funded every year, with about 45% of the awards going to U.S. citizens.

“Ultimately, my curiosity will continue to lead me to places that I would never imagine going.”
SOP Annual Luncheon Honors Winners and Finalists

On Wednesday, May 20, Dean of Undergraduate Education Michael Dennin and Interim Provost Michael Clark joined SOP staff at the University Club to honor the accomplishments of UCI undergraduate winners and finalists of prestigious merit scholarships. Faculty and staff supporters also attended the luncheon and were recognized for their contributions.

The students recognized for academic year 2014-15 include (in alphabetical order):

Sean Feng ’15 (Chemistry): National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Recipient


Jenna Hamza ’14 (Biological Sciences): U.S. Fulbright Fellowship: United Kingdom Finalist

Felipe Hernandez ’13 (Political Science, Music Performance): British Marshall Scholarship Recipient


Fahiya Rashid ’14 (International Studies): U.S. Fulbright Fellowship: Jordan Finalist

Anna Tran (Biological Sciences): Donald A. Strauss Scholarship Recipient
In winter quarter of each year, SOP staff present at our Big Workshops to inform and recruit future scholarship applicants. We detail each of the thirteen awards that we support and the role that campus endorsement or nomination plays in the scholarship selection process.

During the workshop, we explain how students who begin with great GPAs can enhance their competitiveness for scholarships and graduate study by becoming more deeply involved in research and leadership activities. We also provide advice on creating compelling CVs, research or project proposals and personal statements.

Total attendance over the eight workshop events in winter 2015 was 378, comparable to last year’s 387 students. As in previous years, most attendees were freshmen or sophomores, with over 120 students attending the workshop for Freshman science majors and 81 attending the Freshman presentation for all other majors.

In 2015-16, SOP staff plan to hold the senior workshop in fall quarter and create a new workshop on Arts & Humanities Creative Projects to respond to student feedback. We also plan to subdivide the lower-division science majors into STEM and health sciences in order to tailor the presentation more closely to student interests and meet demand for more seating in the popular science workshops.

Growing Demand: Big 7 Applications Up 25% for Summer 2015

Pre-applications for the summer scholarship process tripled in five years.

Forty-five undergraduate students submitted pre-applications for the summer advising and campus endorsement process for the “Big 7” scholarships. The “Big 7” is internal jargon for the most prestigious international scholarships, including Rhodes, Marshall, Mitchell, Gates Cambridge, Churchill, Fulbright, and Schwarzman Scholars. The intense-yet-supportive process developed by Scholarship Opportunities Program staff includes viewing past winning applications, submitting multiple draft applications, writing consultations at the Center for Excellence in Writing and Communication, and participating in campus endorsement interviews with a Dean of Undergraduate Education and faculty.

In 2014-15, 34 students submitted pre-applications. Ultimately, 19 applications from 16 different students were endorsed and submitted to the funding agencies. The most popular majors among pre-applicants were Political Science, International Studies, Psychology & Social Behavior, Biological Sciences, and English. In 2015, the distribution was similar, but Anthropology overtook Biological Sciences.

![Big 7 Pre-Applications](chart.png)
SOP Students In the Media

Grant Getters: http://news.uci.edu/features/grant-getters/


Felipe Hernandez Appears in Road Trip Nation Documentary Why Not Us?: http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/0d28df9d-8273-47d8-b6cb-1137479d015f/rtn_whynotus_video/


Stella Liu: Breaking the Silence in Irvine, California: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianessel/making-it-better-this-wee_b_6657254.html
