



University of Massachusetts Boston  
*Spring Convocation 2026*

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

## Program

<b>National Anthem Vocalist</b>	Taylor Ventrice, Class of 2026
<b>Jazz Musicians</b>	Piano: Angel Yepes Henao, Class of 2028 Saxophone: Jackson Nesin Perna, Class of 2026
<b>Photographer</b>	Estefany Portillo, CLA First!
<b>Opening Remarks</b>	Joseph Berger, <i>Provost</i> UMass Boston
<b>Welcome</b>	Pratima Prasad, <i>Dean</i> College of Liberal Arts
<b>Presentation of Departmental Distinctions</b>	Jennifer Gregg, <i>Associate Dean</i>
<b>Presentation of Senior Honors</b>	Eve Sorum, <i>Associate Dean</i>
<b>Recognition of John F. Kennedy Award Nominees</b>	Rafael Jaen, <i>Associate Dean</i>
<b>Recognition of Undergraduate Research Showcase Winners and Portfolio Students</b>	Rafael Jaen, <i>Associate Dean</i>
<b>Presentation of Awards</b>	Anthropology Professor Patrick Clarkin  Art and Art History Professor Lorenzo Buonanno  Asian Studies Professor Sana Haroon  Classics and Religious Studies Professor Jason von Ehrenkrook  Communication Professor SunYoung Park  Economics Professor Michael Carr  English and Creative Writing Professor Susan Tan  History Professor Liza McCahill  Human Services Professor Carroy Ferguson  Labor Studies Anneta Argyres  Latin American and Iberian Studies Professor Isabel Gomez

Performing Arts  
Professor Carrie Ann Quinn

Philosophy  
Professor Nelson Lande

Political Science  
Professor Luis Jimenez

Psychology  
Professor Laurel Wainwright

Sociology  
Professor Reef Youngreen

Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies  
Professor Chris Barcelos

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## Departmental Distinctions

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Sofia Ana Adams <i>Anthropology</i>	Kayleen E. Denis <i>Anthropology</i>	Marissa M. McEvoy <i>Anthropology</i>
Maanya Anil Ahuja <i>Psychology</i>	Armani Dure <i>Labor Studies</i>	Victoria Merriman <i>Economics</i>
Nassi Adjambao <i>Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures (French)</i>	Skylar Finlay <i>International Relations</i>	Zane Mourad <i>Psychology</i>
Gabriela Alvarez <i>Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies</i>	Justina Fishta Martini <i>Performing Arts (Music)</i>	Ngoc Van Anh Ngoc Nguyen <i>Psychology</i>
Colbie Marie Atlas <i>Anthropology</i>	Sophia Garcia <i>Philosophy, Law, and Ethics</i>	Ciarán Edward O'Reilly <i>Anthropology English</i>
Elizabeth Danielle Batty <i>Anthropology</i>	Olivia Gerrish <i>English</i>	Cristian Orellana <i>Philosophy and Public Policy</i>
Georgia Berry <i>English</i>	Dante Giannelli <i>Communication</i>	Isabella Pessolano <i>Sociology</i>
Draven Stark Bonneville <i>Communication</i>	Brandon Hector <i>Philosophy</i>	Lauren Ramos Martin <i>English</i>
Shane Brown <i>Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>	Erika Justine Inge Kijewska <i>Anthropology</i>	Sarah Ribeiro <i>Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>
Litzy Cardona <i>Psychology</i>	Devon James <i>Political Science</i>	Isabella Slonka <i>English</i>
Brenda Castaneda Pineda <i>Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>	Isabella Johnson <i>Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures (Italian)</i>	Samantha Stanley <i>Performing Arts (Theatre)</i>
Veronica Costa <i>Communication</i>	Beau James Lahey <i>Human Services</i>	Haiwen Tan <i>Art and Art History</i>
Alexei Coyne <i>Classical Studies</i>	Jilliena Le <i>Psychology</i>	AnBinh Tran <i>Psychology</i>
Elian Cruz <i>Latin American and Iberian Studies</i>	Mercedes Leon del Rivero <i>Economics</i>	Ivanna Valdez Tavarez <i>Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>
Alliyah Cuevas <i>Psychology</i>	Kaleigh Lizotte <i>Political Science</i>	Delia Whitehill <i>Economics</i>
Matheus De Morais Lopes <i>Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>	Camilla Lopes <i>Asian Studies</i>	
	Rose Maniani <i>Psychology</i>	
	Brant Lee Assing Maynard <i>Anthropology</i>	

## Senior Honors

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Odette Abouzeid <i>History</i>	Sabrina Femino <i>Latin American and Iberian Studies</i>	Ngoc Van Anh Ngoc Nguyen <i>Psychology</i>
Mya-Jai Ackles <i>Performing Arts (Music Education)</i>	Fatuma Hassan <i>Human Services</i>	Kali Nikias <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>
Esam Alnajjar <i>Human Services</i>	Angela Hilton <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>	Kace Pharris <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>
Yvelyn Aridou <i>Human Services</i>	Ellie Huynh <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>	Bianca Pichardo <i>Latin American and Iberian Studies</i>
John Arruda <i>Psychology</i>	Devon James <i>Political Science</i>	Scott Ramlal <i>Performing Arts (Theatre)</i>
Kye Aylmer <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>	Michael Joseph <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>	Sarah Ribeiro <i>Sociology (Criminology and Criminal Justice)</i>
Elian Cruz <i>Latin American and Iberian Studies</i>	Natalie Knyazeva <i>History</i>	Arianna Rivera <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>
Alliyah Cuevas <i>Psychology</i>	Soonbee Kwon <i>Performing Arts (Music)</i>	Hillary Sreckovich <i>Human Services</i>
Matheus De Morais Lopes <i>Sociology (Criminology and Criminal Justice)</i>	Cody Lajoie <i>Human Services</i>	Karl Stanley <i>Performing Arts (Music)</i>
Jake (Harmony) Diaz <i>Human Services</i>	Kaleigh Lizotte <i>Political Science</i>	Samantha Stanley <i>Performing Arts (Theatre)</i>
Armani Dure <i>Political Science</i>	Amira Lucas <i>Latin American and Iberian Studies</i>	AnBinh Tran <i>Psychology</i>
Nicholas Farnacci <i>Sociology (Criminology and Criminal Justice)</i>	Rose Maniani <i>Psychology</i>	Carlos Vasquez <i>Human Services</i>
Kerem Farzaliyev <i>Economics</i>	Jill Monteiro <i>Human Services</i>	Abayomi Williams <i>English (Creative Writing)</i>
	Zane Mourad <i>Psychology</i>	Wilchina Zephyr <i>Human Services</i>
	Sophie Nagarayan <i>Psychology</i>	

## CLA Research Committee Award for Outstanding Research Mentorship of Undergraduate Students

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Professor Zsuzsa Kaldy, *Psychology Department*

## Students Nominated for the John F. Kennedy Award

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Ishaiah Alvarenga, *Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies*  
Nicole Carmona Martinez, *Sociology*

## **Undergraduate Research Showcase Prizes**

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First place: Abigael Babajide, Katie Duross, Luisa Valentina Duque Munos, Erinda Morina, and Nicholas Raymond “The angry-male/happy-female bias: The number of face features changed alters neural responses irrespective of the face feature attended.”

Second place: Kerem Farzaliyev “The Impact of Electric Vehicle Charging Strategies on Energy System Cost: A Case Study of Austria.”

Second place: Scott Robey “How America Betrayed its Earliest Allies: The Stockbridge Indians.”

## **Undergraduate Research Portfolio Certificates**

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Neena L. DiIorio

Sarah Ribeiro

# Undergraduate Awards

## Sally Goss Memorial Prize (Anthropology Department)

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*Since 1984, the Department of Anthropology has awarded an annual prize in honor of the late Sally Goss. Sally transferred to UMass Boston from Middlesex Community College and completed a bachelor's degree in anthropology. She was accepted into our master's program in historical archaeology and worked toward her degree for one and a half years, until her death from cancer in 1982. She was the mother of two sons, and throughout her student career she balanced the conflicting demands of home, school, and work, as well as her illness. Sally was a valued member of our community, and her family and the Anthropology Department are proud to honor her memory with this prize.*

*The Sally Goss Prize is awarded to an anthropology major who is a returning female student, who has demonstrated academic excellence, and whose education in anthropology has been especially meaningful to her because of the obstacles she has had to overcome to obtain it.*

### Erika Kijewska

Erika Kijewska is awarded this prize to acknowledge her high levels of classroom performance and leadership and to acknowledge the significant challenges she had to overcome to secure a bachelor's degree. Erika grew up in rural northern California in difficult financial and family circumstances that did not offer a clear path to higher education. Although she attempted community college after high school, the burdens of personal and family financial obligations were too overwhelming, and she left to join the U.S. Coast Guard with the hopes of securing longer-term financial and social stability and a chance to live elsewhere. Some of her service included time in Puerto Rico working

on pollution response that energized her anthropological interests in language, culture, geography, and the effects of colonialism. After her service, Erika resumed her goal of securing a university degree. She started in computer science, but quickly rediscovered her interest in anthropology and archaeology and changed her major. Erika has been reliable, strong, and well prepared in her anthropology courses, bringing her life experiences, organizational skills, and sharp focus to her work and to classroom activities. This past year she ably served, with initiative and care, as interim president of the Anthropology Club.

## Ruth Butler Scholarship

*(Art and Art History Department)*

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*The Ruth Butler Scholarship was established in honor of Ruth Butler, Professor Emerita of Art at UMass Boston and a distinguished scholar in the history of sculpture. While a student, Professor Butler won a Fulbright Fellowship that allowed her to pursue research in France. Recognizing that her trip abroad was a life-changing event, she would like art majors at UMass Boston to have a similar opportunity. The award provides an outstanding art major with funds for travel outside the United States for the purpose of studying and making art. Preference is given to projects that promote the student's understanding of a culture other than the student's own.*

### Rafaela Estudillo

Rafaela Astudillo is an art major, graduating with department honors, who was born in Quito, Ecuador. Her interdisciplinary artistic practice centers on the exploration of personal memory and its inscription on the body. She investigates how lived experience is carried, translated, and reactivated through material form. Deeply interested in the ways digital spaces preserve and mediate memory, her work often combines moving images with painting, sculpture, and photography, creating layered visual languages that move between the physical and the virtual. For the Ruth Butler Travel Scholarship, she will travel to Mexico City to develop a creative project

while gaining familiarity with the Latin American filmmaking industry and expanding her knowledge and experience across the many facets of film production. This three-month trip will immerse Rafaela in the city's film scene through direct engagement with established artists and film organizations. She will work as a studio assistant for Allegra Hangen, whose practice focuses on experimental film processes and installations. Through this trip, Rafaela aims to move closer to her goal of working on large-scale film productions in Latin America while also participating in the contemporary world of Mexican art and film as a Latin American artist.

## The Sam Walker Prize

*(Art and Art History Department)*

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### Juliette Joziatis

Juliette Joziatis is an art major, graduating with department honors, whose artwork is primarily focused on drawing and painting, with a secondary interest in printmaking and sculpture. She is especially committed to a representational approach, with the human body as her main subject. Through portrait and figure studies, Juliette tries to capture a person's personality through their posture and facial expression. Often returning to self-portraits, she explores

different angles and perspectives on her own likeness, a perceptual and psychological process that has long intrigued artists. With the funds from the Sam Walker Prize, Juliette plans to travel to Spain to study Surrealist painters, reflecting her interest in realism along with her curiosity about incorporating imaginative elements. The award will also support her purchase of more art supplies, with the hope of eventually having a studio space of her own.

## The Chiesa Prize for Painting (Art and Art History Department)

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*The Chiesa Prize for Painting was established in 2021 by Art Department Professor Emeritus Wilfredo Chiesa. This non-competitive prize is bestowed annually upon a single outstanding painting created by a student enrolled in a painting course at the introductory or advanced levels at UMass Boston. The prize is decided by the UMass Boston painting faculty (led by the full-time professor of painting), who may select a worthy recipient from art majors or non-majors.*

### Jade Aspenwall

Jade Aspenwall is a graduating senior majoring in both art and anthropology. For her, art has always been personal, primarily as a path to self-discovery. Most recently, Jade's artwork has focused on themes of her childhood. By observing who she was as a youth, she reflects on how the past has shaped her present and future selves. While such themes are deeply personal, her study of anthropology has given her the ability to explore and analyze her ideas in a much broader and objective context as well. The thing she most

appreciates about art—specifically painting—is the ability to create a space that no longer exists or has never existed. Thus, art provides a way for Jade to investigate memories, giving a tangible form to something fleeting. After graduation, Jade plans to expand her technical skills as an artist, building on her recent accomplishments in painting, as well as exploring other mediums. One of her goals is to become a teacher, so that she can encourage others to discover themselves through art.

## **Marian Parry Prize** *(Art and Art History Department)*

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*The Marian Parry Prize is named for the artist Marian Parry, who made a substantial gift of art supplies to the department. Born in 1924, Parry was the founder and senior instructor of the Watercolor Program for the Radcliffe Seminars at Harvard University. Her work is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Houghton Library of Harvard University, the Smith College Rare Book Room, the Eric Carle Museum, and the Boston Public Library. The annual award is comprised of a selection of artist's grade paper, sketchbooks, paints, brushes, pens, pencils, and miscellaneous studio materials. The recipient is a student of exceptional promise in drawing or painting.*

### **Nicole Zeng**

Nicole Zeng is a junior art major who has loved drawing since she was a child. She views art as a safe space where she can make mistakes and learn from them. Over time, she has applied this mindset beyond art in order to approach challenges in all aspects of her life. As she has increased her technical skills, art has remained an important outlet and confidence-booster. As an artist, she has developed work that explores themes of mental health and emotional

expression, using art as both a personal outlet and a tool for understanding other people. Through her experience working with children at Head Start, she has seen how creativity can support emotional development and communication. As a student of both art and psychology, Nicole plans to become an art therapist, helping others express their emotions and process trauma through creative expression.

## Michael Lafargue Award for Excellence in Asian Studies (Asian Studies Department)

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*This award, named after the first director of Asian studies, is given to an exceptional graduating major for outstanding academic achievement in the field of Asian studies and who shows great promise in his or her future pursuits, whether academic, nonprofit, public sector, or entrepreneurial.*

### **Brant Maynard**

Brant Maynard is this year's recipient of the Michael Lafargue Award for Excellence in Asian Studies, which is given to the most outstanding graduating senior major. Brant is accomplished in many fields: he is a double major in Asian Studies and Anthropology, with a minor in Chinese. He is a gifted writer who aims to bring new audiences to literary masterworks through work as a translator. To this end, he has immersed himself in the study of Asian languages, literatures, and cultures here at UMass Boston and further completed a year's program of intensive language study at the National University of Taiwan, one of the top

institutions in this field. He has excelled in every class and has distinguished himself throughout with imaginative and nuanced readings grounded in careful attention to textual detail; his research for the capstone seminar, which critiqued existing practices of Chinese-to-English translations of contemporary fiction, showcased the depth of his understanding of sophisticated critical frameworks. He plans to pursue graduate studies to further enrich his understanding of original texts and contexts. We look forward to reading his translations of those texts in the not too distant future.

## Outstanding Achievement in Classical Studies (Classics Department)

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*The Outstanding Achievement in Classical Studies Award is given each year to honor a graduating student for exceptional and distinguished performance in the study of the ancient Greek and Roman classics. The award recognizes academic excellence respectively in classical language and philology and in the broad-based interdisciplinary study of classical literature, history, and culture.*

### Sofia Adams

Sofia is a double major in classics and anthropology and she has demonstrated an exceptional capacity to integrate these two fields of scholarship. To further her study of archaeology and material culture, Sofia applied for and won the Historeuon grant, a competitive award designed to support study abroad experiences. She used this award to study Greek epigraphy on the island of Paros in Greece, an experience that also enabled her to develop her skills in ancient Greek. Indeed, her professor in Greek 211 was so impressed with her work in the language that he invited her to lead an entire class session focused on the Greek inscriptions she studied in Greece. Beyond her work in ancient languages, Sofia has demonstrated a creative mind with remarkable research and

writing skills. Her written work has exhibited an ability to synthesize broad and complex literary sources in service of a cogent and substantive argument. For an assignment in a course on “Magic and Science in Greece and Rome,” Sofia examined alchemy, a relatively under-researched topic in scholarship, and developed an interesting argument underscoring the hybrid nature of alchemy at the intersection of metallurgy and magic. In a course on “The Homeric Warrior,” Sofia showcased her creativity in a paper comparing the dynastic situations of Greek mythology with HBO’s *Succession*. Following graduation, Sofia plans to continue her studies in graduate school.

### Joseph Meuse

Joseph transferred to UMass Boston from the College of Holy Cross to study classics within a more inclusive environment. Shortly after joining us, he discovered a second intellectual passion, archaeology, leading to a double major in classics and anthropology. Joseph has availed himself of every opportunity to explore and experience the many different facets of classical antiquity, working diligently to integrate the study of material culture with ancient history and the classical languages. Joseph is making rapid progress in the study of Greek and has excelled in the study of Latin, with one Latin professor remarking that he was “by far the most dedicated” student in the classroom. His work in archaeology

has included experience at two field schools, one in Italy excavating the Roman through medieval remains of the port town Sipontum, and the second in Marblehead, MA, working on the Jeremiah Lee Mansion. He has also worked as an archaeological lab technician at the Fiske Center. Beyond the classroom, Joseph has tried his hand as a Greek tragedy actor. In the Spring 2025 semester he took on the role of Odysseus in an outdoor performance of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*, and in the Spring 2026 semester he was cast as Jason in the Performing Arts production of Euripides’ *Medea*. Joseph is planning to build on his work at UMass Boston by pursuing a graduate degree in classical archaeology.

## Robert Risse Prize in Communication Studies

*(Communication Department)*

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*The Robert Risse Prize honors a graduating senior for superior performance in communication in the College of Liberal Arts. The award commemorates Professor Robert Risse, one of the founders of UMass Boston's original Communication Studies Program. Professor Risse conceived and designed courses; developed and taught curricula in television fundamentals and production; and, early on, employed computer technology to enhance the study of imagery and sound. He directed the program for most of its first fifteen years, prior to the establishment of the Communication Department in 2013. He personally advised hundreds of students about their options in the field of communication.*

### Coleen Malley

As a proud transfer student from Massasoit Community College, Coleen Malley has thrived in the Communication program at UMass Boston, earning a 4.0 GPA. She has been actively involved in community theater productions, class projects, and research, while continuing to pursue her passion for fan engagement in sports media and communication.

During her undergraduate studies, Coleen fully immersed herself in her academic journey, approaching each course with enthusiasm and a commitment to growth. In early 2025, she experienced the loss of her father, John "Jay" Malley, during the semester. In honoring his memory, she remained steadfast in pursuing her goals, carrying forward the encouragement he gave her to follow what she loves. She is deeply

grateful for the unwavering support of her family, partner, and friends during that time and beyond.

Coleen's passion for learning, nurtured by dedicated faculty at UMass Boston, and her lifelong love of sports, inspired by her father, have led her to opportunities in the sports industry with the Boston Red Sox and TD Garden. These experiences hold special meaning, as they connect to cherished memories of watching Boston sports together at home.

She extends her sincere thanks to her family, friends, partner, and the exceptional faculty who have supported her growth and continue to shape her future.

## Leonard J. Kirsch Memorial Prize

*(Economics Department)*

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*Leonard J. Kirsch was a member of the Department of Economics at UMass Boston from its first years until his early death in 1977. He held a PhD in economics from Harvard University, and was the author of Soviet Wages: Changes in Structure and Administration since 1956 and the editor of the English-language edition of The Developing Countries: Employment and Capital Investment by S. A. Kuz'min. Lenny's devotion to his students, his brilliant classroom performances, and his distinguished contributions to the field of labor economics made him a fine representative of the university's mission. During good times and hard times, as the university grew and as it had its share of troubles, Lenny always found a way to keep us moving forward—and he kept us laughing along the way. Upon his death, the department decided to give its annual prize in his name, both to honor his memory and to honor the students who receive the award.*

### Samantha Doucette

Samantha is driven by the challenge of transforming complex data into actionable strategy. Her educational foundation includes an associate's degree in business administration and over two years of high-volume restaurant management experience. After pivoting from the hospitality industry to complete her Bachelor's degree, she focused her studies on the intersection of economic research and practical

project management. Currently, she is applying these analytical skills as an Economics Intern at Fields Corner Main Street, a nonprofit organization in Dorchester, MA, that supports local businesses. Following graduation, she is looking forward to applying this blend of operational leadership and data analytics to a project management or coordination role.

### Conal Scully

Conal grew up in Taunton, MA, and has been at UMass Boston since 2023, studying economics and philosophy in the Honors College. He lives in Dorchester and loves exploring Boston. Currently, he is teaching high school English and plans to continue doing so while pursuing an MEd at UMass Boston. In addition, he has experience doing economic research for the office of David Biele, specifically on bus lanes in the Seaport area.

In his spare time, Conal likes to travel, read, hike, bike, and do all things outdoors. He is also interested in home improvement and real estate, as well as tech theater. He writes and has published music and tries to collaborate with others musically whenever possible. Most important to Conal are his family and his friends, and his dog Laney.

## **Joann P. Stewart Prize** *(Economics Department)*

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*Professor Emerita Joann P. Stewart retired from UMass Boston in 1993, after spending most of her academic career at Boston State College. In 1969, she earned the first PhD awarded to a woman by the Economics Department of Boston University. Her scholarly interests have focused on the roles of women in economics and of unions in public life. In recognition of her contributions to the university and her encouragement of students, this prize is awarded each year to an outstanding female economics major.*

### **Mercedes Leon**

Mercedes Leon is an economics major with a specialization in mathematics, graduating summa cum laude. Originally from Mexico, she moved to the U.S. in 2021. Throughout her time at the University of Massachusetts Boston, Mercedes has focused on the real-world application of economic policy. Beyond the classroom, she authored an independent study on the potential benefits of microfinance in Mexico and interned with the Somerville UBI project. Mercedes is profoundly grateful for the

unwavering support she received from her professors, peers, and the Gold Key Foundation, all of whom contributed significantly to her success at UMass Boston. Following graduation, she plans to leverage her background in mathematics and economics to advance solutions for systemic social inequity, hopefully one day returning home to translate the knowledge she has gained into a lasting, positive impact for her community.

## **Alice E. Trost Memorial Prize**

*(Economics Department)*

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*Each year the department chooses an outstanding economics graduate to receive this prize, established in honor and in memory of our colleague Alice E. Trost, who died in 2001. In Professor Trost's short time at UMass Boston, she made an indelible impression on all who worked with her. She was a wonderful teacher and was particularly successful in engaging students with her wit and intelligence. Confronted with terminal cancer from the time she arrived here, Professor Trost never let that diminish her teaching and scholarly efforts. Her courage and dignity in the face of a tragic disease were a lesson to all who knew her. Significant factors in awarding the prize are the student's GPA in economics and overall GPA.*

### **Florencia Feoli**

Florencia completed her bachelor's degree in December 2025 and is currently working on her master's in applied economics as a member of the Accelerated Masters Program at UMass Boston. Originally from Costa Rica, she is passionate about economic policy, behavioral

economics, and market analysis. She looks forward to finishing her studies in December, 2026, and applying her skills to understand consumer demand and market behavior, helping businesses make more informed and data-driven decisions.

## David G. Terkla Memorial Prize (Economics Department)

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*Professor David Terkla joined the Department of Economics in 1987 as an assistant professor. He served as the chair of the department between 1994 and 2000. He then joined the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Dean's Office as an associate dean in 2010 and went on to serve the college as a dean from 2014 until his passing in the fall of 2020. The department established this prize in his memory to recognize his contributions not just to the department but also to the college and the university. Each year the department gives this prize to an outstanding economics graduate. Preferably, the prize will be given to a graduate interested in public finance or environmental issues.*

### **Kerem Farzaliyev**

Kerem is pursuing a BS in engineering physics with a concentration in computer science and a second major in economics. He was selected as a fellow in the MIT Break Through Tech AI program, where he worked on advanced machine learning projects and won two awards. In addition, he has been doing research with Professor Timmons on cost optimization in renewable energy systems with a particular focus on electric vehicle charging patterns and their impact on energy efficiency and system cost.

Beyond academics, he is the cofounder and CEO of a global healthcare start-up that applies AI to improve early diagnosis and clinical decision making, working closely with leading dermatologists in multiple countries. He has also founded other smaller companies.

After graduation, he plans to continue expanding Rightance Healthcare Inc. and accelerate its global growth, with long-term goals of pursuing graduate study.

## Eleanor Marie Fay and James William Fay Memorial Prize (English Department)

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*In memory of an avid reader, a perfectionist whose love and study of architecture were motivated by his lifelong appreciation of style and design balanced by the creative spirit, this prize will be awarded for the best capstone essay in English and Anglophone literature. Faculty nominate essays that demonstrate the breadth and imagination of the project, intellectual facility in blending abstract concepts with research, graceful articulation, and an appreciation of artistic achievement.*

### Lauren Ramos Martin

The English Department is delighted to award the Eleanor Marie Fay and James William Fay Memorial Prize for best capstone essay in English and Anglophone literature to Lauren Ramos Martin for her senior Honors thesis, “Ending is Better than Mending’: New Age Individualism and Its Reliance on Consumerism.”

An honors college student with a double major in English and political science, Lauren exemplifies the intellectual drive and scholarly nous that the Fay Prize recognizes. Lauren’s university career is distinguished by her academic daring and willingness to pursue her literary and political passions both on campus and beyond—usually in the most far-flung of study abroad programs—from studying folklore and theatre in the Aran Islands, to language training at the University of Kassel in Germany, to performing Shakespeare’s

*The Tempest* at UMass Boston’s Field Station on Nantucket. Diverse geographies and multidisciplinary landscapes are a signal feature of her honors thesis, “Ending is Better than Mending’: New Age Individualism and Its Reliance on Consumerism,” an incisive exploration of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. Lauren’s project traces the evolution of the dystopian genre to illuminate how and why Huxley’s novel emerges from—indeed, pushes against—the political and technological anxieties of the early twentieth century. What makes this project truly distinguished is its exploration of democratic individualism and cosmopolitan self-becoming, which Lauren reads as abiding thematic concerns in Huxley’s fiction and a defining tension within contemporary culture. The prose is elegant, the research rigorous, and the critical voice assured.

## Francis Russell Hart Prize

*(English Department)*

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*The Francis Russell Hart Prize honors a scholar of English and Scottish literature who set a standard for committed teaching and effective learning in his department, his university, and his profession at large. As co-founder of UMass Boston's Center for the Improvement of Teaching and author of *Beyond the Books: Reflections on Learning and Teaching*, Russ Hart devoted much of his career to enhancing the quality of the work done by many individual teachers and to enriching the teaching culture of the campus. He taught in the English Department from 1971 until his retirement in 1991 and he died in 2001.*

*The recipient of the Francis Russell Hart Prize is a senior English major who has demonstrated excellence in English studies and made significant contributions to the university community. The English Department recognizes with gratitude the support of its alumni whose contributions underwrite this award.*

### Ciarán O'Reilly

Ciarán O'Reilly's outstanding work as an English and anthropology double major in the Honors College and his commitment to mentoring students across the university exemplifies the spirit of the Francis Russell Hart Prize. As a peer mentor for the CLA First! & Beyond program in the College of Liberal Arts, Ciarán advised students and developed a biweekly newsletter that contributed to the program's mission to foster academic community among undergraduate students. Based on his reputation among CLA First! students and faculty, he was hired as an Honors College Alumni Engagement summer intern. As a University Writing Center consultant, Ciarán gave invaluable support, feedback, and encouragement to students across

academic disciplines. The impact of this work and his stellar academic record led to an undergraduate research assistantship on a grant-funded Writing across the Curriculum project. Ciarán's intellectual voraciousness and scholarly praxis culminated in his English honors thesis, "Exploring Student and Faculty Perceptions of Generative AI in College Writing Education," which examines the disconnect between faculty concerns about academic integrity and students' use of artificial intelligence to support their writing. Ciarán shared this project last month at the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

## The Alfred R. Ferguson Prize (English Department)

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*The Alfred R. Ferguson Prize is awarded to a junior or senior English major for outstanding work in American literature. Nominations are made by English faculty, and include a summary of the student's course work in this field together with one (or more) papers of at least 10 pages.*

### Nicholas Eagle

The English Department is happy to award this year's Alfred R. Ferguson Prize to Nicholas Eagle for his outstanding work in American literature. Nick's essays and seminar contributions revealed his insightful, sophisticated, and profound understanding of the wholeness of American literature, what F. O. Matthiessen called its unique ability to bring "the whole soul of man into activity." Nick's critical approaches revealed formal and thematic connections between, for example, fantasies of resolution and structures of refusal in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and the relationship between racial passing and musical emulation in James Weldon Johnson's *The*

*Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. A member of the Prize Committee singled out Nick's essay on Johnson, praising the shape of its argument as a "lovely triangle among music, race, and narrative" that reminded him of how Maya Angelou described the rhythm of her poem "Harlem Hopscotch." Nick's intellectual generosity, reflected in his tendency to nudge class discussions back to a classmate's hesitant observation, modelled collaborative thinking—the whole soul of academic engagement—and emboldened his peers to transform their emerging ideas into critical perspectives.

## Marcia Keach Memorial Poetry Prize (English Department, Creative Writing)

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*This prize is given by her family in honor of Marcia Keach, an English major in the creative writing program who died in 1988, in the spring semester of her senior year. People who knew her spoke of the energy, determination, indomitable good cheer, and unsentimental sense of reality with which she handled her life, her work, her three children, and her education. Many of those qualities are evident in her poems, some of which have been published in small literary magazines. In presenting this award recognizing the best poem by a graduating senior, Marcia's family hopes to share with other students her interest in poetry.*

### Arianna Riviera

*Close Enough* is a thesis about love—and all the ways we bend ourselves to make it happen. Arianna Riviera writes with piercing, incandescent honesty: “The sound of my heartbeat / when I lie to you / is instrumental.” She is equally attuned to tenderness—“I kept rewriting you / long after you left”—and to the quiet ways absence reshapes perception and language: “You give me just enough—a sentence, / half a response, /

something small I can stretch into meaning.” At its heart, this is a book about returning to the self. And about the gradual, sometimes painful, but necessary shift toward telling the truth, and refusing to settle for “close enough.” In fact, such “closeness” creates a distance of miracle and wonder, as Riviera writes, “the ribcage opens— / if not here, / then somewhere across the sea.”

## Chet Frederick Prize in Fiction

*(English Department, Creative Writing)*

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*The Chet Frederick Prize recognizes excellence in fiction writing. Students, typically graduating seniors in creative writing, are nominated by the creative writing faculty.*

### Michael Joseph

Skillfully written and elegantly structured, Michael Joseph's satisfying tale brings to life a number of lively and distinct characters—the volatile Danni, the self-contained Luke, the generous Darren. It's a story with clear stakes which unfolds in sensitive and confident prose as the narrator finds a way to make meaning out of a tragic event from his youth:

*The flesh must be severed. The wound must be pried open. The past must be reckoned with....I*

*have to keep writing. Even if it hurts; especially if it hurts. I need to cut into myself and tear the gash open for the world to see. Maybe I will bleed out, or maybe my flesh will fuse into a new form, the one that I was becoming before I lost my sense of direction....I lean in and whisper to my infant daughter, "We've got this kid. You and me together. We're gonna figure this out. It's gonna hurt, but I promise it'll be worth it..."*

Words to live by.

## **Paul F. Boller Prize** *(History Department)*

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*The Paul F. Boller Prize is named for a distinguished former member of UMass Boston's history faculty who taught here from 1966 to 1976 before leaving to take an endowed teaching position in Texas. Professor Boller's specialty was the history of ideas in American history. In the last 20 years he has published a number of books on American politics; the most successful is Presidential Anecdotes. It was largely money from the sale of his popular histories that provided the fund that forms the endowment of the Boller Prize.*

*Paul Boller loved teaching and scholarship equally because he loved to teach the things that he learned. He wanted above all to recognize excellence. The prize named in his honor is given each year for the best history essay written by a graduating senior.*

### **Odette Abouzeid**

Odette Abouzeid's research, which centers on the experience of Lithuania in the waning years of the USSR and the immediate post-USSR period, is a sophisticated and important intervention in Eastern European history. Based on Lithuanian newspapers that she herself catalogued during her internship at the Library of Congress, as well as visits to archives in Vilnius, Odette makes the argument that resistance to the Soviet regime was not simply political, but rather contained a significant and unstudied cultural component. She shows how resistance to authoritarianism in Lithuania took the form of a growing emphasis on Lithuanian folklore and tradition. Songs, fashion, and a revival of older myths about Lithuanian

history, she demonstrates, combined to help crystallize a national identity and push back against an externally imposed Soviet one. Odette thus engages with scholars who have focused solely on the political, arguing that their work, while important, misses the incremental (but crucial) shifts that ordinary Lithuanians would have felt and embodied in their participation in such traditions. In so doing, she re-periodizes the question of when Lithuanians resisted and expands the definition of how they did so. Odette is also an exceptional student in class as well as a standout departmental citizen, and I wish her all the best in her pursuit of graduate studies in history next year.

### **Natalie Knyazeva**

Natalie Knyazeva's thesis sets out to counter the popular image of the territory as the "wild west," refocusing the history of Arizona territory as a search for order during the Progressive Era (from the 1880s to statehood in 1912), in concert with the progressive reforms reshaping the East Coast and Midwest. She argues that the history of progressivism in America has neglected Arizona as a site of progressive politics, treating the territory in isolation rather than as part of the larger national movements. Knyazeva argues effectively that in the face of rampant violence, contrary to conventional expectations, it was groups of vigilantes, using unorthodox and sometimes extralegal methods to secure justice, who were finally able to bring order and put an end to banditry in the territory.

"These organizations," she writes, "were largely how the justice system functioned in Arizona prior to statehood and the establishment of proper legal procedures in the territory." Knyazeva provides detailed analysis of each progressive reform that she documents in a complex and fascinating history of Arizona's transformation from chaos to order. She has demonstrated exceptional research skills, both in her motivation to seek out evidence to support her theory and in creatively bringing together a wide range of sources. At this early stage in her career, she already stands out as a highly skilled scholar. Her thesis effectively and convincingly ties together local and national histories and has the potential to change the way historians view the Progressive Era.

## Outstanding Achievement in History (History Department)

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*The award for Outstanding Achievement in History is given each year to a graduating history major for exceptional and distinguished performance in history courses. The Department of History established this fund in 1999 in order to recognize the hard work and discipline that are the key ingredients in the achievement of academic excellence.*

### **Odette Abouzeid**

Odette D. Abouzeid is the 2026 recipient for Distinction in History, having achieved the highest grade point average among her fellow history majors. Odette's achievements are a testament to her innate talent as an historian and her diligence as a student. Many of her professors have noted Odette already working at the study table in the department from when they arrived in the morning until they left for home. Odette's essays are models of historical analysis and more than one of her professors 'saved' her essays to read last, out of fairness to other students and as a reward to themselves.

Odette's talent and perseverance resulted in her being awarded a highly competitive and prestigious

Summer Internship at the Library of Congress for 2025. This internship is fully paid, including room and board, and welcomed only 37 students from across the United States. Odette's immediate supervisor reported to the department internship coordinator that Odette's organizational and language skills made it possible finally to catalog an important collection of publications relating to the Baltic States, and said Odette is "welcome to return whenever she wants!"

Congratulations, Odette, on your outstanding achievements in history and as a model of scholarly discipline for both your fellow students and faculty.

## Outstanding Academic and Service Achievement in Human Services (Human Services)

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*This excellence award is given each year to the undergraduate student who has achieved exceptional performance in human services courses and has earned the highest overall grade point average of all graduating human services majors.*

### **Rich McGary**

This award is being presented to Rich McGary in recognition of his outstanding academic achievement in Human Services and for his invaluable service contributions provided to his classmates and during his internship experience. He has an extraordinary academic record, graduating with a 4.0 GPA in human services while also pursuing a double major. As a veteran, he has demonstrated a particular interest in

veterans' mental health and substance abuse. During his academic journey in human services, he consistently demonstrated excellence in understanding theory and applying various skill sets in the field. In all respects, he held himself to the highest standards and consistently went above and beyond in every human services course.

# Outstanding Achievement in Labor Studies

## *(Labor Studies)*

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*This achievement award is given each year to a graduating labor studies major for exceptional and distinguished performance in course work, research and/or community engagement. This award was funded to recognize the hard work and dedication that are the key ingredient in the achievement of academic excellence.*

### **Olivia Dannenberg**

Olivia Dannenberg is an outstanding reader, researcher, and independent thinker whose path through our labor studies program included developing a brilliant independent project for her capstone on the labor of care and social reproduction, which she presented at the 2025 College of Liberal Arts Undergraduate Research Symposium. Her contributions in labor studies classes set the tone, and the bar, for deep

engagement with our readings and assignments, and as a student worker in our Labor Resource Center, she helped found our UMass Boston Labor Club and provided essential support to all of our events and student outreach. In any setting, Olivia can be counted on for sharp insights into the core questions we ask in labor studies.

### **Devon James**

Devon James has been an outstanding member of our labor studies community at UMass Boston for the past four years. A standout student and autodidact who devours books and articles (particularly about his beloved home state of Rhode Island), Devon has contributed countless insights to labor studies classes. With our other awardees, Devon co-created our UMass Boston

Labor Club, and as a student worker at the Labor Resource Center, Devon has been instrumental in our communications, graphic design, and event planning. He also put his extensive skill set to work in a very successful internship with the Rhode Island AFL-CIO in Summer 2025. We are thrilled that he will continue his work in labor studies at UMass Amherst.

### **Carlos Pacheco**

Carlos Pacheco is an outstanding student, organizer, and presenter who has worked tirelessly to link his coursework and student activism at UMass Boston to the wider struggles of working people in Greater Boston. Carlos is razor-sharp in his critiques of power dynamics that shape our campus and our city, whether in our labor studies courses, the UMass Boston Labor Club (which he helped found), or his

capstone internship with Community Labor United (CLU), in which he has worked in support of efforts to diversify the building trades in Greater Boston. He is also an eloquent and incisive public speaker who has lent his voice to everything from rallies in support of campus workers to discussions of the 2024 election on NBC10 Boston.

## The Endowed Ann S. Blum Memorial Scholarship in Latin American Studies (Latin American and Iberian Studies Department)

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*This award, funded by the generous donations of family, colleagues, students, and friends, honors the extraordinary legacy of Professor Ann S. Blum (1950-2015), a historian of Mexico and a professor of Latin American studies. She was an exemplary colleague, generous with her time and ideas, and a model of supportive and critical engagement with the work of peers, students, and administrators. At UMass Boston she was widely known and respected as a firm defender of faculty governance, and of students' and workers' rights. One of her major contributions was the reconceptualization of what today is the Department of Latin American and Iberian Studies.*

### Sabrina Femino

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Sabrina Femino is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts Boston, where she earned a BA in Latin American and Iberian studies with a focus in translation studies, along with a minor in dance. As both a translator and dancer, she is deeply interested in the ways language and movement intersect as forms of expression, storytelling, and cultural connection. During her time at UMass Boston, Sabrina developed a strong foundation in Spanish language and translation, with a particular interest in making

language accessible across communities. She currently works as a translation intern with Hola Cultura, where she contributes to projects that center bilingual storytelling and cultural exchange. Sabrina plans to become a Spanish teacher, and she also hopes to continue using translation as a tool for connection, representation, and education. She is especially grateful to the Latin American and Iberian Studies Department for their mentorship and support throughout her academic journey.

## The Clara Estow Award in Latin American and Iberian Studies (*Latin American and Iberian Studies Department*)

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*A renowned scholar in Castilian Medieval history, Professor Clara Estow dedicated four decades of her life to UMass Boston and the Department of Hispanic Studies (1968–2008). During that time, Professor Estow gathered accolades for her inspiring teaching, her generous mentoring of junior faculty, her scholarly rigor, and her dedication to improving public education in Massachusetts. Her teaching effectiveness and her capacity for mentorship were proverbial. She inspired many students to become teachers and scholars. She showed an extraordinary teaching range and flexibility. Her accomplishments in scholarship were equally outstanding. Professor Estow authored several widely respected books in her field as well as dozens of articles and essays on a number of topics. Professor Estow was repeatedly selected by her peers to represent them on the campus' most significant committees and governance structures. She was the first Hispanic person to lead UMass Boston's Faculty Council.*

*In gratitude for Professor Estow's tireless, generous, and inspiring academic work on behalf of UMass Boston, her colleagues, upon her retirement, established an award in her honor. The Clara Estow Award is awarded to a junior or a graduating senior who has shown excellence, determination, and inspiration in his or her academic work in Hispanic studies.*

### **Bianca Pichardo**

From Lawrence, Massachusetts (“pequeño RD,” as she likes to call it), Bianca Pichardo is a Dominican American, bilingual philosopher and lover of literature who aspires to become a high school language educator and eventually pursue a PhD in Spanish literature and philosophy. Bianca majored in Latin American and Iberian studies (LAIS) with a track in Language, Culture, and Society, and minored in philosophy with a concentration in criminology. Her most fulfilling memories of UMass Boston will always be the in-class discussions of literary works, where her love for literature was surpassed only by her even greater love of sharing it with others. She has

said that “novels are most intimate when shared with another,” and indeed, she created those moments in the classroom through the creative Spanish class activities she designed during her internship at Salem High School in New Hampshire, in her independent study on Spanish philosophers and confessional subjects in existentialist works, and as a First-Year Seminar Mentor. In all these spaces, Bianca brought joy, wit, and generosity to every experience with a gentle and passionate spirit. She wishes to thank her LAIS faculty and classmates, who challenged her to excel, and her family for their essential moral support and love throughout her journey.

## The María Luisa Osorio Award

*(Latin American and Iberian Studies Department)*

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*The María-Luisa Osorio Prize is named in recognition of the many contributions of a colleague, who taught in the Hispanic Studies Department from 1967 to 1995. One of Professor Osorio's most passionate academic interests was the role of women in Spanish society, more specifically, the images of women in Spanish literature. Grateful for her wise and dedicated leadership, her colleagues, upon her retirement, established this prize in her honor, to be awarded to a graduating Spanish major who has written an outstanding paper on the topic of women in Spanish-language literatures or who has demonstrated academic excellence and an active interest in promoting greater understanding of the role of women in the Spanish-speaking world.*

### **Amira Lucas**

As an Ohio native, bilingual student, musician, and claims adjuster, Amira Lucas has always valued the importance of human connection through literature and conversation. Her undergraduate studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston consisted of a BA in Latin American and Iberian studies with a concentration in translation. Amira also learned more about how societies and languages evolve over time through courses in anthropology and gender studies. Throughout her academic work, including literary translation, Amira has been active in promoting literature as a mode of understanding and relating to the experiences

of others, and in highlighting the empowering effect that stories by and about women can have on their readers. As a recipient of the prize that celebrates the images of women in Spanish-language literatures, Amira writes admiringly of works by Guadalupe Nettel and Gioconda Belli, Mexican and Nicaraguan women authors whose female protagonists break the established molds, inhabiting new thresholds of reality. Amira would like to thank the Latin American and Iberian Studies Department for their continued devotion to higher education. She intends to use the skills she gained to promote coexisting, accepting, and fulfilling communities.

## **The Susan Schneider Prize** *(Latin American and Iberian Studies Department)*

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*Susan Schneider was a tenured member of the History Department who helped to establish the Latin American Studies Program at UMass Boston and served as its director for nearly a decade. Committed to both Latin America and social justice, she was instrumental in expanding educational opportunities for students both in Central America and at UMass Boston. This award honors her remarkable legacy by recognizing a student in Latin American studies who combines academic excellence and social conscience.*

### **Elian Cruz**

Born in Puerto Rico, Elian Cruz is a queer, bilingual, emerging educator who aspires to teach Spanish to the next generation. After moving to the United States at the age of 15, Elian experienced how assimilationist practices within the U.S. educational system limited his ability to practice and further develop his mother tongue. Through his major in Latin American and Iberian studies (LAIS) and translation coursework, Elian reconnected with Spanish, was inspired to teach it, and came to recognize the crucial role translation plays in community access and cultural preservation.

During his time at UMass Boston, Elian's resilience and motivation to challenge themselves were central to developing new skills that will support his goals as both an educator and a translator. In the near future, Elian hopes to continue gaining mentoring and teaching experience, particularly in a high school setting, in order to further grow as an educator. He is honored to receive this award and is deeply grateful for the respectful, constructive, and inspiring faculty who helped elevate his critical thinking skills. Elian also extends sincere thanks to the LAIS Department for its guidance and continued support throughout his academic journey.

## **John J. Conlon Prize in Theatre Arts** *(Performing Arts Department)*

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*The John J. Conlon Prize recognizes outstanding service to the Theatre Arts Program in honor of Professor John Conlon, distinguished scholar, theatrical director/performer, and dedicated educator of UMass Boston theatre arts students. Throughout his long career at UMass Boston, Professor Conlon inspired and mentored both faculty and students alike while always encouraging active participation in the lively arts and setting an inspirational example with his tireless service to the department, university, and community. The John J. Conlon Prize recognizes a graduating senior who best exemplifies this spirit of dedication and service to the theatre arts, fellow students, and the community.*

### **Lucy Rogers**

Lucy Rogers receives the distinguished John J. Conlon Prize in recognition of her outstanding dedication and enthusiastic service to theatre arts, her fellow students, and the university community. During her time at UMass Boston, she has demonstrated versatility by excelling in various areas of theatre, including acting, scenic design, scenic painting, costume technology, lighting, and sound. Lucy has represented our institution multiple times at the American College Theatre Festival, distinguishing herself in both acting and dramaturgy. She has also participated and represented us at the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) National Conference for three years, volunteering

as a conference assistant for the past two. Additionally, she has actively volunteered at numerous USITT New England events. Lucy was instrumental in reinstating the Theatre Guild student organization on campus and served as its president upon its revival. She served as a peer mentor and has consistently supported her fellow students as well as assisting faculty members in various capacities and challenges. Lucy has consistently demonstrated the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously while maintaining an outstanding GPA. She exemplifies the honor of this award through her dedicated service and commitment to theatre arts, her fellow students, and the community.

## Louis E. Roberts Prize in Theatre Arts

*(Performing Arts Department)*

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*The Louis E. Roberts Prize is named for the founder and mainstay of the Theatre Arts Program, who is presently professor emeritus of theatre arts. An accomplished actor, a versatile director, a prolific playwright, and, above all, an inspirational teacher, Lou Roberts led the Theatre Arts Program for three decades and made it a place where the lively art of theatre in all of its aspects thrives.*

*In recognizing the Louis E. Roberts Prize recipient, the theatre arts faculty honors and celebrates the graduating senior who has best combined academic excellence with artistic excellence in theatre.*

### Sierra Wilcox

Sierra Wilcox best exemplifies both academic and artistic excellence in theatre arts, and her combined record earns her the Louis E. Roberts Award. Sierra's professors consistently note her intelligence and outstanding work ethic in the classroom. Artistically, she has graced our stages with leading roles as an actor, designer, and wardrobe crew member. Her commitment to the department's theatre productions was impressive: leading roles in *Rhinoceros*, *Radium Girls*, *Clue*, and last fall's musical, *The Great Comet of 1812*. Nominated for the Region's Irene

Ryan Acting Scholarship from the American College Theatre Festival multiple times, she reached the final round of the competition twice, winning the highest praise in acting from the national judges from across the country. She served as Assistant Scenic Designer for *Peter & The Starcatcher*, broadening her leadership skills in theatre design. Sierra exhibited the utmost professionalism throughout her studies and with her tireless work ethic and generosity of heart for her ensemble, she has earned the respect of the theatre arts faculty.

## Martin Andic Prize for Distinction in Philosophy (Philosophy Department)

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*This prize is given in memory of Professor Martin Andic, a member of the Philosophy Department between 1971 and 2001. Much loved as a classroom teacher, Professor Andic was renowned for the range and breadth of his courses. He taught ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophy, in addition to nineteenth-century philosophy, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of religion, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science. His interest in literature allowed him to include thinkers such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Iris Murdoch on his syllabi. Professor Andic's research was equally far-ranging. He published on Greek philosophy, medieval philosophy, moral psychology, and religion as well as on particular thinkers such as Kierkegaard and the twentieth-century French philosopher Simone Weil.*

### Sarah Leder

The Philosophy Department is delighted to present Sarah Leder with the Martin Andic Prize for exceptional performance. Throughout her undergraduate studies, Sarah demonstrated a profound intellectual curiosity and an insatiable drive for profound understanding and unbound philosophical exploration. She displayed exceptional intellectual range and rigor in exploring varied philosophical areas such as history of philosophy (ancient and modern), social and political philosophy, logic, philosophy of mind, philosophy of memory, and philosophy of public policy. She showed remarkable consistency at the highest level of achievement, mastering content and demonstrating a willingness to step outside her comfort zone to pursue new knowledge. Sarah also had a

remarkable ability to spark critical thinking in other students through thoughtful discussion. She was a positive role model; her presence, critical reading, and enthusiasm for learning and philosophy inspired other students.

Her capstone paper exemplifies outstanding undergraduate research and writing. In her work, titled "The Existence of Self Without Memory", she argues against the idea that without memory there can be no self. Her essay showed a remarkable understanding of various philosophies of memory, both historical and contemporary, an ability to critically engage with texts, and the maturity to develop an original contribution.

## Roger Feinstein Award for Distinction in Public Policy (Political Science Department)

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*This award honors the memory of Roger Feinstein, a political science faculty member at UMass Boston (and, before then, at Boston State College) who inspired deep affection and respect among his many students and colleagues. With the help of Roger's family and friends, the Political Science Department established the award in 2005 to recognize a graduating senior who has demonstrated particular academic excellence in the field of state and local government and exemplified the personal qualities that made Roger so beloved a human being. His voluminous knowledge of public administration and state and local government was based not only on book smarts but also on his depth of experience working in civic and town associations that focused on environmental and international justice. Roger extended the classroom experience to the civic realm by taking his students to the meetings and events of myriad nonprofit and governmental groups—literally opening students' eyes to the fruits and frustrations of engaged citizenship. Accordingly, the Feinstein Award salutes a graduating senior whose activities inside and outside the classroom have reflected the same unwavering commitment to fostering a more empathic, respectful, and humane society that Roger's life's work did.*

### Armani Dure

Armani Dure has produced extraordinary work since coming to UMass Boston. Between his intrinsic desire to consume new information and his commitment to fighting for economic justice, Armani's intellectual merits and personal values distinguish him as both a scholar and citizen. In his senior honors thesis, Armani conducted extensive data collection and

employed sophisticated methods to study the Tea Party's consequences for state-level labor retrenchment, particularly issues impacting teachers' unions. Complementing his academic interests, Armani has been extremely active within both the campus and state labor movement. In addition to his studies, Armani currently works for the Massachusetts Teachers' Association (MTA).

### Sasha Sanchez

Sasha Sanchez is an interdisciplinary thinker who is both intellectually curious and creative. She displays the humility to deeply engage the foundational concepts in public policy and then reason with them to form unique and advanced analytic points. Her colleagues take note and

rightfully view her as a thought leader to emulate. Ms. Sanchez has the tenacity, intellectual talents, high standards of knowledge, rigor, and pizzazz to be a force in public policy. The field of public policy, and public policy outcomes, will be better when Sasha Sanchez is at the fore.

## **Maurizio Vannicelli Award for Distinction in International Relations** *(Political Science Department, International Relations)*

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*In 1992, the Political Science Department established this award, to be given to the graduating senior who best exemplifies the spirit of Maurizio Vannicelli, one of the finest students ever to graduate from the department. Like many other UMass Boston students, Maurizio came to this campus at age 26 with an uncertain sense of himself. Helped by many dedicated teachers here, he soon found a creative and stimulating channel for his energies. He went on to graduate training at Harvard University on a full fellowship and became a dedicated teacher and scholar himself, touching hundreds of students in his decade of energetic work as a teacher. Maurizio's career exemplifies what is best at UMass Boston. In memorializing his name with this book award, we hope that his passionate dedication to learning, teaching, and social justice will continue to inspire others for years to come.*

### **Katherine Delesdernier**

Katherine Delesdernier is polymath, double majoring in political and environmental science, on the Environmental Policy and Management track. Katherine possesses a rare combination of scientific rigor, qualitative reasoning, and well-honed writing skills. Her logic is incisive,

and she advocates compellingly for environmental causes that matter to her. Katherine has earned admission to Suffolk Law School and is well on her way to a career that leverages her intellect and her fierce sense of justice for the betterment of all.

### **Samuel Lovett van der Puyl**

Samuel Lovett van der Puyl came to UMass Boston after serving as a field radio operator in the U. S. Marine Corps and then as an electronics technician as well as a marksmanship coach. He is unassuming in class, but invariably well-prepared with a comment that shows the depth of his reasoning. He is also a natural leader

in the best possible way, through quiet and thoughtful example. Overall, his academic record at UMass Boston is simply outstanding. After graduation, he plans to return to the Marines with a commission and then later to pursue graduate studies.

## **Jalal Alamgir Award for Outstanding International Relations Major** *(Political Science Department, International Relations)*

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*The Jalal Alamgir Award for Outstanding International Relations Major pays tribute to former long-standing faculty members who were exemplary scholars, teachers, advisors, and mentors. It is given to outstanding students who distinguished themselves in their interests in understanding the challenges facing our global world, in their grasp of the dynamics of international relations, and in their commitment to fostering peace and justice.*

### **Noah Cook**

Noah Cook's sharp intellect and work ethic have opened many paths to him. He is a triple major in political science, psychology, and the Honors College, and he has balanced his studies with military obligations overseas. Noah is capable of anything, and he manages to do a bit of

everything. His Honors College senior thesis explores the security implications of militant non-state actors' online organizing. Noah will be a powerful force for critical reasoning and rational policymaking wherever his journey takes him next.

### **John Menard**

John Menard's near-perfect academic record in the international relations major exemplifies the seriousness of purpose and dedication reflective of the Jalal Alamgir Award for Outstanding Student in International Relations. A quiet but always attentive presence in the classroom, John's acute understanding of

international relations theory and practice are always evident in the pointed questions he poses or observations he makes in advancement of class discourse. John's intellectual acumen and "quiet man" character will serve him well as begins his next journey.

## Richard J. Landry Award for Distinction in Political Theory (Political Science Department)

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*The Richard J. Landry Award is given to the graduating senior whose work in the field of political theory exemplifies the scholarly standards and humane ideals of Richard Landry, who taught political theory in the Political Science Department until his death in 1973. Professor Landry, who received his education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the University of Chicago, and Cornell University, was a brilliant scholar and teacher, familiar with both Western and Chinese political theory. In the memorial for Professor Landry, Professor Glenn Tinder of the Political Science Department wrote, "In the classroom, he brought together two qualities that do not always readily go together: thorough scholarly rectitude and great popular appeal. His demands on his classes were as uncompromising as his demands as a scholar on himself; yet his courses were always filled with admiring and appreciative students." The recipient of the Landry Award must be a student whose work is distinguished by high intellectual quality and breadth. It is not necessarily awarded each year.*

### Abraham Bravo

Abraham Bravo has a deep concern with subaltern agency beyond the original context in which it was first studied, and with particular attention to how it can be mobilized to understand the counter-politics of immigration today, one in which immigrants contest their coerced speechlessness. He is also interested in analyzing

how structures of power shape our identity, while paying special attention to the ways in which struggling against those structures of power renders that identity more flexible, based on interpretations of postcolonial and decolonial theory.

### Shane Carpenter

Shane Carpenter brings to political theory an acute interest in historical materialism, a way of seeking to understand power as it relates to concrete, lived material conditions, and to the ways in which those conditions shape collective agency while not fully determining it. He is a close textual reader who is interested in the

history of political ideas and in the ways ancient and modern authors of political theory can be put into conversation with contemporary ones to rethink the relations of power that constrain our present and to drive those relations in more emancipatory directions.

## **Adrian Jill Barnett Memorial Prize for Academic Excellence** *(Psychology Department)*

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*Through the generosity of the Barnett family, each year the Department of Psychology awards the Adrian Jill Barnett Memorial Prize in honor of Adrian Jill Barnett, a psychology major, who was killed while riding her bicycle in Cambridge shortly after graduating with distinction from UMass Boston in 1977. Adrian was a research assistant in the Psychology Department and intended to carry her studies on to graduate school. The Barnett Prize is awarded to a psychology major each year on the basis of academic excellence as represented by the quality of a paper submitted for this competition. Interested students must be nominated by a faculty member in the Department of Psychology and submit a 10- to 30-page paper to the prize committee for evaluation. The paper may be a theoretical paper, a literature review, or a research study. Papers are judged with regard to organization, thoroughness, clarity, and originality. In addition to the award, the prize includes the inscription of the winner's name on a plaque displayed permanently in the department office.*

### **Maanya Anil Ahuja**

The winner of this year's Adrian Jill Barnett Memorial Prize for Excellence in Psychology Writing is Maanya Anil Ahuja. The Barnett Prize is awarded for excellence in psychology writing, and was established in memory of Adrian Jill Barnett, a psychology major and Honors student who was tragically killed in a traffic accident shortly after her graduation. Maanya graduates with a bachelor of arts in psychology and minor in philosophy. Maanya has served as the president of UMass Boston's chapter of Psi Chi International Psychology Honor Society. She was also a research apprentice for Dr. Vivian Caramitaro in the Early Minds Lab in 2025. As part of her research experience with Dr.

Caramitaro, Maanya wrote a literature review, "Crossmodal Correspondence in the Brain: EEG Evidence from the Bouba-Kiki Effect." The bouba-kiki effect is the sound-shape association that people consistently make between smooth-sounding pseudowords like "bouba" or "maluma" and a rounded shape, and sharp-sounding pseudowords like "kiki" or "takete" and an angular shape. Maanya's impressive, comprehensive review synthesized electroencephalograph (EEG) and event-related potential (ERP) studies on the bouba-kiki effect and other related sound-shape correspondences, focusing on the timing and neural mechanisms underlying them.

## **Ina Samuels Memorial Prize** *(Psychology Department)*

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*The Ina Samuels Memorial Prize is in memory of Professor Ina Samuels, who was a member of the Psychology Department for over twenty-five years until she passed away in 1998. This award is made possible by an endowment established through Dr. Samuels's estate and faculty, student, and alumni contributions. Professor Samuels taught a broad range of courses, specializing in physiological psychology and neuropsychology. She was an extraordinarily effective and inspiring teacher and a superb research mentor dedicated to fostering the personal and professional development of her students.*

*This award honors a student whose research proposal or research report is judged to be of such high quality as to have met Ina's criteria of scholarly evidence.*

### **John Arruda**

The winner of this year's Dr. Ina Samuels Prize is John Arruda. The Samuels Prize is given for excellence in psychology writing in the form of a research proposal or the reporting of a completed research project. John will be graduating with a bachelor of science in psychology. His thesis, titled "How Emotional Valences Influence Temporal Order Memory in Children 3 to 6 Years Old", was completed as part of his psychology senior honors thesis under the mentorship of Dr. Tashauna Blankenship in the Psychology

Department. John has worked with Dr. Blankenship in the Early Minds Lab since Spring 2025. His thesis was an interesting, well-written, and thorough description of his study, which used a board game paradigm to investigate how an event's valence (positive, neutral, or negative) affects children's temporal memory recall. His findings suggest that older children and children who rated their experiences as more positive had better temporal memory recall.

## **T. Scott Miyakawa Memorial Prize** *(Sociology Department)*

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*The T. Scott Miyakawa Memorial Prize provides recognition for the lifetime work and career of Scott Miyakawa, a distinguished scholar and leader. During his time at UMass Boston, Professor Miyakawa served as chair of the Sociology Department for six years. He also served countless students as a teacher and mentor. Although he was taken from us too early, he is remembered most often as simply a wonderful person. The Miyakawa Memorial Prize is presented annually to a student who embodies the ideals of Professor Miyakawa—excellence in academics and social service.*

### **Nicole Carmona Martinez**

Good citizenship, to Nicole, has meant an unequivocal commitment to social justice in many avenues. She engaged in service through research, applying her academic preparations to social-environmental justice action for communities of color.

Nicole's experience in partnership research investigated the relationships between universities and community-based organizations in environmental-social justice advocacy. Concurrently, as a Youth Wellness Corps fellow and program facilitator with Sociedad Latina, she designed and implemented an environmental justice curriculum engaging Black and Latinx students with structural frameworks of disparities in climate-environment and health outcomes.

As a managerial research project coordinator with the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy,

Nicole engaged Black, Latinx, Asian, and immigrant youth in workshops related to problem gambling, influencing exposures, mental health, and addictive behaviors. The workshops helped inform intervention recommendations for the Massachusetts Office of Problem Gambling Services.

Additionally, Nicole's participation as a fellow of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center U54 Undergraduate Researcher Fellowship Program allowed her to continue health disparity research among marginalized communities.

Nicole's future plans include advocacy in equitable policy and planning, challenging systemic racism within STEM pedagogy, and engaging students with science, sociology, community-based advocacy, and global frameworks, thereby shaping the next generation of justice advocates

## Founders' Award for Excellence in Women's Studies and Social Activism (Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department)

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*This award is given annually to a women's, gender and sexuality studies graduate who has achieved academic excellence in all coursework and contributed to the improvement of the status of women at UMass Boston or in the wider community. Students are invited to apply for the award by submitting a personal statement or letter of recommendation from someone who has a thorough knowledge of the applicant's record of social activism. Social activism is defined broadly in determining eligibility for the award. Examples of social activism include working with schoolchildren to promote understanding of gender differences or enhance girls' self-esteem, advocacy on behalf of women who are victims of violence, or organizing public educational campaigns in support of women's rights or particular policy reforms that will benefit women and families.*

*Initiated in 1990 by Mary Anne Ferguson, professor emerita of English and women's studies, the Founders' Award fund is supported by contributions from faculty, alumnae, and friends of women's studies.*

### Ishaiah Alvarenga

The Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies is proud to recognize Ishaiah Alvarenga as the recipient of this year's Founders' Award. Ishaiah has a major in women's, gender and sexuality studies and a double minor in Spanish and queer and trans studies. Ishaiah has been active on campus, working as a Beacon Ambassador, a Peer Academic Advisor, and a Ross Center Student Assistant. They are especially attentive to first-generation students, neurodivergent students, and students of color unsure of themselves while navigating unfamiliar terrain. Emphasizing the importance of peer-to-peer

support, Ishaiah founded the Sexuality Education Collective to push conversations on campus about sexuality, reproductive justice, and bodily autonomy, while materially supporting students in being able to make more informed decisions and have access to a greater number of choices for themselves and their families. Ishaiah just started a position as an advocate with The Network/La Red, an organization directly supporting LGBTQ+ survivors of partner abuse from overlooked communities. In the long term, they intend to pursue a master's degree in public health.

## The Human Rights Award (Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department)

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*This award is presented upon graduation to one or more student(s) graduating with a minor in human rights, in recognition of honorees' academic excellence and commitment to human rights and social justice. Awardees are typically students who have achieved the highest or second highest GPA, and who have supported human rights causes at an individual level or collectively, in the US or globally, during their time at UMass Boston. The Director of the Human Rights Minor receives nominations from faculty who have taught a potential awardee, following a review of the entire list of students graduating with a human rights minor in a given academic year.*

*This Award was established in 2018 by the minor's founding director, Professor Elora Chowdhury. It is funded from the minor's annual core budget from the College of Liberal Arts.*

### **Sophie Nagarajan**

The Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies is proud to recognize Sophie Nagarajan as the recipient of this year's Human Rights Award. Sophie has a major in psychology and a minor in human rights and has applied her learning from both fields to studying early learning skills among children, especially those from South Asian and underserved communities. Her dedication to this work is not only evident from her impressive service to organizations like Jumpstart and Head Start, where she interned, but also her involvement with UMass Boston's psychology and cognitive sciences lab, Early Minds Lab.

Sophie's study abroad program at the University of Edinburgh, where she participated in the student organization the Mixed Race Society, drew her attention to connections between the legacies of colonialism, racism, and poor health and further inspired her to pursue graduate studies in speech language pathology in order to help affected children and families. Going forward, Sophie plans to work on behalf of marginalized communities, especially children and families who face diverse challenges in their paths to success and self-empowerment.

