

UC San Diego

DIVISION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION
AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

MIND-BENDING
RESEARCH,
MADE SIMPLE



GRAD
SLAM



POSTDOC
PITCH

2026 Final Round

Thursday, April 2 at 3 pm

Qualcomm Institute

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WELCOME

POSTDOC PITCH JUDGES

Mario Aguilera	<i>Director of Communications for School of Biological Sciences</i>
Amanda Corona	<i>Director of Corporate Partnerships, Rady School of Management</i>
Jálin Johnson	<i>Senior Director of the Office of Community & Engagement, Salk Institute for Biological Studies</i>
Gabriela Hoffmann	<i>Senior Director of the International Services and Engagement Office</i>
Nathan Owens	<i>Associate Director of Strategic Partnerships, Division of Extended Studies</i>

POSTDOC PITCH FINALISTS (in speaker order)

Megan Dowdle <i>"Your Cell's Guardian Angel1"</i>	<i>Molecular Biology</i>
Virginia Chu Cheung <i>"Pregnancy, Disease, and Hope"</i>	<i>Pathology</i>
Mansi Padave <i>"A Dusty Trail to Star Formation"</i>	<i>Astronomy and Astrophysics</i>
Ido Avivi <i>"Uniting Two Revolutions: The Future of Heart Attack Prevention"</i>	<i>Medicine</i>
Brijonnay Madrigal <i>"Acoustic classification of false killer whales"</i>	<i>Scripps Institution of Oceanography</i>
Jiyo S. Athertya <i>"Her hidden strength - Imaging bone at risk"</i>	<i>Radiology</i>

GRAD SLAM JUDGES

Karen Biestman	<i>Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Equity and Inclusion, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Organizational Transformation</i>
Cyd Burrows	<i>Director of Research IT Services</i>
Sylvia Cares	<i>Director of Finance M&A Integration Management Office & ESG Controller, Qualcomm - MPIA Alumna</i>
Maysoon Lehmeidi	<i>Director of Pre-college Programs & Community Outreach, Division of Extended Studies</i>
Patty Mahaffey	<i>Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs</i>

GRAD SLAM FINALISTS (in speaker order)

Michael Reiss	<i>"Locating Pathways of Irregular Heartbeats"</i>	<i>Bioengineering</i>
Joanna Eckhardt	<i>"The Early Bird Gets the Worm: How Physical Activity Influences Sleep and Brain Health"</i>	<i>Neurosciences</i>
Qin Hui Li	<i>"Safeguarding the future: The race for a Zika vaccine"</i>	<i>Biomedical Sciences</i>
Aldan Creo	<i>"Is Artificial Intelligence Really Unsafe?"</i>	<i>Data Science</i>
Sai Krishna Bhamidipati	<i>"Stoplights in your brain"</i>	<i>Biological Sciences</i>
Arushi Srivastava	<i>"What If Connection Starts Before It Exists?"</i>	<i>Rady School of Management</i>
Yiyan Yu	<i>"How Fake Cells Stop Real Viruses"</i>	<i>Bioengineering</i>
Cole Kurashige	<i>"Error-Free Software For All"</i>	<i>Computer Science and Engineering</i>
Devyansh Agrawal	<i>"Healing Smarter: An Autonomous Bandage for Wound Closure"</i>	<i>Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering</i>

JUDGES' DELIBERATION & WINNER ANNOUNCEMENTS