San Jose State University President Mary A. Papazian will recognize this year’s top graduates at commencement ceremonies held May 22-24 at the SJSU Event Center and Avaya Stadiums. Hyung Ik “David” Han and Qurat Syeda will each receive the 2019 Outstanding Graduating Senior Award for academic achievements, leadership roles, contributions to the community and personal achievements. Carrie Bowers is the recipient of the 2018 Outstanding Thesis Award in recognition of the quality of her research.

Unwavering Determination
Hyung Ik “David” Han, '19 Psychology, has worked as a peer mentor at Peer Connections, a student assistant in the Center for Accessible Technology and an instructional assistant for a biopsychology course, while maintaining a 3.922 grade point average and engaging in research.

Psychology Professor Cheryl Chancellor-Freeland first met David in one of her most challenging courses, biopsychology, in which he earned a rare A+.

“He stood out among 125 classmates largely because of his superior intellect, and also because of his determination to master neuroanatomy and physiology despite his visual impairment,” she said.

Han went on to take four more courses with the professor, and due to his mastery of the course material and ability to help others learn the difficult material, she invited him to join her International Neuroeconomics Institute lab as a research assistant and to also serve as an instructional student assistant for the biopsychology course. The latter position is generally reserved for graduate-level students.

“David carved out his own niche and now serves as laboratory co-manager,” Chancellor-Freeland said.

Han has received numerous awards and scholarships including a California State University Program for Education and Research in Biotechnology (CSUPERB) grant in 2016 to pursue his own research. A member of Psi Chi, the international honor society for psychology, where he served as campus liaison for the year of 2017-2018 school year, and the United States Association of Blind Athletes, Han received a fellowship with the public defender’s office of Santa Clara County, where he researched the stress that indigent clients, especially non-citizens, face in the courtroom.

“I have found encouragement and peace while serving my community which helped me to overcome various obstacles," he said.
Experiencing the World

Qurat Syeda, '19 Accounting, moved solo to the United States to study business, earning the Beta Alpha Psi Scholarship, the Gus Lease Scholarship, the Atkins Scholarship, the Financial Executives International Silicon Valley Rising Stars Scholarship and the Financial Women of San Francisco Scholarship—all in recognition of her commitment to excellence and community service.

"I have always been passionate about learning," she said. "But I wanted to do more than just learn about the world from books. I wanted to experience it. So I made the bold decision to move out to the U.S. on my own for my undergraduate degree, the first in my family to do so."

As an international student who achieved a stellar 4.0 grade point average, Syeda has also been dedicated to helping other students succeed.

"Qurat is not only focusing on her academics, but trying to help others as well," said Michael Williams, an accounting lecturer. "She is competitive and wants to be the best, but not at the expense of other people."

As a peer educator at SJSU Peer Connections and the Jack Holland Student Success Center, she has tutored and mentored more than 500 students.

"Her creativity in constantly adapting her tutoring approaches is fervent," said Laura Roden, a lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Finance. "Always self-examining, soliciting student feedback, looking for ways to improve."

A member of Lucas College and Graduate School of Business’ Sbona Honors program, Syeda also earned second place at the 2016 PwC Case Competition and the 2016 ISACA Research Case Competition.
accepted a position with the accounting firm PwC.

“She demonstrates remarkable interpersonal and communication skills,” said Accounting Professor Maria Bullen, noting the student’s dedication to peer education. “She is truly giving back by her considerable involvement in helping her peers.”

Examining the Small Stuff

**Carrie Bowers,** ’18 MS Meteorology, had nine years of experience with the U.S. Forest Service, four of those on a hotshot crew in Northern California that uses hand tools and chainsaws to cut away vegetation during wildfires, before she enrolled in a master’s program at San Jose State.

“I love science and I love weather so I thought, gosh, I’ll go pursue my master’s in meteorology,” she said. “As a student studying fire, I feel like it’s a lot smaller scale. You have to study the details—the smaller things that make fires do what they do—whether it’s large-scale atmospheric patterns or even just small patterns around differences in terrain or small differences in temperature that determine where that fire is going to go.”

Her master’s thesis does just that.

Bowers conducted the first detailed climatological analysis of the Diablo winds of Northern California, the strong offshore downslope wind system thought to be responsible for some of California’s largest wildfires.

Her thesis, titled “**The Diablo Winds of Northern California: Climatology and Numerical Simulations**,” presents high-resolution numerical simulations of three significant Diablo wind events, examining the impact of this phenomenon to better understand and prepare for large wildfires in Northern California. She recently presented her findings to fire professionals, meteorologists and other researchers at the Fire Weather Research Workshop April 26.

Bowers helped Associate Professor of Meteorology and Climate Science Craig Clements connect SJSU’s Fire Weather Research Laboratory to Tahoe National Forest professionals for specialized training, enabling undergraduates and graduate students to collect research data at wildfire incidents.

“That really allowed us to connect with people in the fire and made sure we were talking with operations and safety people,” she said. “Everybody knew where we were and we knew what was going on. We were also able to get data from them, but also provide them data.”
“Carrie is a very dedicated student who has a great ability to eek out the details of what she is studying,” Clements said. “Carrie brought a sense of professionalism to the lab with her extensive experience as a hot-shot firefighter with the US Forest Service. Her experiences from the fire line helped motivate all the lab’s team members, not only in the classroom, but out in the field as well.”

He described Bowers as a natural leader and said he was honored she selected SJSU for her graduate studies.

“Her project on Diablo winds was a topic I was wanting to focus on for 10 years, and Carrie took that project idea and created the first quantification of these winds systems and the first numerical studies of their dynamics,” he said.

Bowers has returned to the San Diego area, where she used to live. She is now working for San Diego Gas and Electric as a fire science meteorologist.

“To have it work out the way it did is really amazing,” she said. “I always wanted to get down to San Diego because it’s where I grew up. Here I am, working a wonderful job with wonderful people. I’m using my meteorology knowledge and my fire experience and knowledge.”

*Julia Halprin Jackson contributed to this report.*