

Undergraduate Education

NEWS

Two UCLA students win Strauss Scholarship for public service projects

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For the first time in three years, UCLA students have been named recipients of the Donald A. Strauss Foundation's annual public service scholarship.

Second-year psychobiology and political science double major Nathan Mallipeddi and second-year transfer sociology major David Nguyen will each receive \$15,000 to contribute toward their educational costs and the unique public service projects they have each founded.





Mallipeddi's project, the Southern California Stuttering Service, will provide resources and support for students in the Los Angeles Unified School District who struggle with stuttering and other speech disabilities.

Nathan Mallipeddi

Nguyen's Community College to PhD Association is dedicated to providing research opportunities and mentorship to community college and transfer students who wish to attend graduate school.

The [Donald A. Strauss Foundation](https://www.straussfoundation.org/) [<https://www.straussfoundation.org/>] awards scholarships to 10-15 juniors and seniors from 14 pre-selected California universities each year, including all University of California campuses. Each university nominates up to three students to be considered for the award.

Mallipeddi's Southern California Stuttering Service was inspired by his own challenges growing up with stuttering. He wanted to create a nonprofit similar to the National Stuttering Association (the largest organization in the world for people who stutter) but geared toward K-12 students in Los Angeles and able to provide funding for speech therapy in addition to support groups.

Most of the Strauss scholarship funds will pay for speech therapy for Los Angeles Unified School District students who may not otherwise be able to afford or access it, Mallipeddi said. The scholarship will also cover weekly or biweekly support group meetings, so students with stuttering and other speech disabilities across schools can spend time together, as well as a workshop or conference that will introduce students to professionals in a variety of fields (who all have speech disabilities) who will share their stories of success.

"I really believe in this project and I want to affect the lives of as many students as I can because I know how hard it was going through this," Mallipeddi said.

Donald A. Strauss Foundation Trustee G. Jennifer Wilson, former UCLA assistant vice provost for honors programs, will serve as Mallipeddi's trustee mentor for the duration of his scholarship. She said his project is efficient and feasible, and the selection board felt that an investment in him and his project would be an investment in a better future.

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"His personal experiences, the comments and support of his professors and mentors, his clear passion and dedication all show not only a fine student but also a man of emotional maturity who is already on the path to giving a voice to the voiceless," Wilson said.

Nguyen also shares a personal connection with his public service project. As a transfer student who plans to attend graduate school, he's noticed that while many community college and transfer students aspire to do research and apply to doctoral programs, they face unique challenges.

"Community college alumni are underrepresented [in graduate programs] and research suggests they're facing barriers with accessing PhD prep knowledge and undergraduate research opportunities," Nguyen said.

The Community College to PhD Association, which he founded as a club at UCLA last year, offers monthly "Saturday Academy" workshops on campus that cover topics such as research methods and PhD prep. The organization's first research conference is planned for May 26 and expecting about 100 presenters. Finally, the Community College to PhD Scholars program provides research opportunities, PhD mentors and faculty mentors for 29 community college sophomores who are interested in getting a social science PhD.

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Nguyen's Strauss Foundation trustee mentor is Dr. Gordon Strauss, former associate professor at UCLA in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Science. Strauss was impressed not only by Nguyen's personal journey – he attended several community colleges before transferring to

UCLA – but also by his detailed proposal that reflected Nguyen's own persistence and dedication to education.

"I felt it was one of the best proposals we have ever received, not only because his focus on community college transfer students is worthwhile, but because of the meticulous planning his proposal reflected," Strauss said.

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