



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 7, 2023

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Winners of 2023 CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Awards Announced

Awards recognize outstanding research by graduates in the fields of Biological and Life Sciences and the Humanities and Fine Arts.

Washington, DC – Today the Council of Graduate Schools and ProQuest™, part of Clarivate™, presented the Distinguished Dissertation Awards to Shawna Cunningham and Maura Kindelan McCall during an award ceremony held at the CGS 63rd Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Since 1982, the awards recognize recent doctoral recipients who have made significant and original contributions to their fields.

Cunningham received the 2023 award in humanities and fine arts for her dissertation, *Stories from Inside the Circle: Embodied Indigeneity and Resurgent Practice in Post-secondary Institutions*, which she completed at the University of Calgary. Cunningham's work focuses on public post-secondary institutions in Canada engaging with sustainable acts of reconciliation through education. She does so through the stories of nine indigenous leaders of indigenous student centers and their roles, perspectives and experience with decolonization and indigenization of higher education institutions. She asks important questions about how indigenous leaders can embody their indigeneity while balancing the systemic transformations taking place in indigenous education, leadership and policy studies.

The 2023 award for biological and life sciences was presented to McCall for her dissertation titled *Genotypic and Phenotypic Predictors of Cancer Therapy Adherence and Symptom Trajectories in Women with Breast Cancer* while at the University of Pittsburgh. Her work analyzes women's experiences with side effects from types of early-stage breast cancer treatment that when taken are highly effective in eradicating the cancer after five years. Only 48 percent of women adhere to the regimen in the first year due to the symptoms, or side effects. McCall's work uses data to analyze the relationships between the types of symptoms experienced over time to help identify interventions for women who may stop adherence to the medicine due to the burden of these symptoms. She was able to establish bidirectional relationship between symptoms and adherence, a new finding in this research area.

CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega stated that the work of Cunningham and McCall represents the best of graduate education and research.

“The CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Awards recognizes the innovative research of young scholars and their important impact on their disciplines and the broader graduate education community,” said Ortega. “Their tenacity and dedication to their scholarship is apparent in the significant contributions Dr. Cunningham and Dr. McCall have made in their respective fields.”

“The University of Pittsburgh is thrilled that Dr. McCall was honored for her groundbreaking research on breast cancer treatment. Dr. McCall’s innovative research demonstrates a novel approach to understanding the roles of adherence and symptoms in aromatase inhibitor therapy,” said Amanda Godley, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Professor at the University of Pittsburgh. “We are proud of Dr. McCall’s accomplishments and anticipate that her scholarship will continue to impact the field for years to come.”

“Dr. Cunningham is a remarkable scholar and leader whose exceptional work embodies the spirit of transformational change we cultivate at the University of Calgary and our commitment to reconciliation through education,” said Robin Yates, Deputy Provost, University of Calgary.

“The Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Calgary is excited to have Dr. Shawna Cunningham’s research on engaging with sustainable acts of reconciliation through education recognized by this award,” said Tara Beattie, Interim Dean and Vice Provost (graduate studies), University of Calgary. “Dr. Cunningham’s research and innovation through graduate studies will enrich our community with her diverse perspectives, approaches and ways of knowing.”

Chris Burghardt, Senior Vice President of Information Solutions, Academia & Government at Clarivate said, “Dissertations are not only a critical milestone of accomplishment in the academy, but an important— and often underutilized— source of expertise, methodological innovation and intellectual insight. The new integration between the Web of Science™ and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global ensures that these valuable contributions are made accessible to researchers at institutions of higher education across the globe. I am proud to honor Dr. Cunningham and Dr. McCall with the 2023 Distinguished Dissertation Awards and I am pleased to announce that their dissertations will be cross listed in the Web of Science and PQDT Global!”

ProQuest, part of Clarivate – whose ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database (PQDT) features a vast collection of dissertations and theses – sponsors the awards, and an independent committee from the Council of Graduate Schools selects the winners. Two awards are given each year, rotating among four general areas of scholarship. The winners receive a certificate of recognition, a \$2,000 honorarium, and a travel stipend to attend the awards ceremony.

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About CGS

The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of

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candidates for advanced degrees. The organization's mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.