

History Graduate Students Receive Awards at USU's Student Research Symposium

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Utah State University's Student Research Symposium is an annual celebration of student research, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In April, history graduate students Madison Maw-Carlstrom and Sam Schmuhl gave oral presentations on the research they conducted while working as interns for Prof. Sauda Nabukenya. Prof. Nabukenya works with colleagues at Michigan State University and the Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration to record oral histories and interviews with incarcerated individuals in the Michigan Department of Corrections through a multi-year process.

Madison was awarded the Arts & Humanities Best Graduate Oral Presentation for her presentation titled "Prison Security Classification and Lived Experiences of Fairness and Punishment," and Sam received the Social Science & Education Best Graduate Oral Presentation for his presentation titled "Security Classification and Access Programs and Opportunities."

Working with Prof. Nabukenya, both students combed through oral histories to research how the security classifications of incarcerated individuals in the Michigan Department of Corrections affected their experience of fairness and punishment. These security classifications often determine what programs are accessible to inmates, rehabilitation options, and length of confinement, among other things.

When asked about their experience with this research project and presentation, Madison said "It was rewarding to work with a public policy organization and see how the humanities can collaborate across disciplines to call attention to a serious issue impacting real people and their quality of life." Sam added, "I was proud and interested to learn more about the qualitative research process. I also enjoyed contributing to an ongoing research project that has real world implications."

Congratulations to Madison, Sam, and faculty mentor Prof. Nabukenya on their achievements at the 2026 Student Research Symposium!