



News Release

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Contacts:

Julia Kent, Council of Graduate Schools

(202) 461-3874

jkent@cgs.nche.edu

Beth Dempsey, ProQuest

(248) 349-7810

beth.dempsey@proquest.com

Winners of 2015 CGS/ProQuest® Distinguished Dissertation Awards Announced

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

Washington, DC – The Council of Graduate Schools / ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Awards, the nation’s most prestigious honors for doctoral dissertations, were presented to Jeongmin Choi and Timo Schaefer at an awards ceremony during the Council’s 55th Annual Meeting. Dr. Choi completed her PhD in 2014 at University of Missouri, in Plant Science, and Dr. Schaefer received his PhD in 2015 from Indiana University, in History.

Bestowed annually since 1982, the awards recognize recent doctoral recipients who have already made unusually significant and original contributions to their fields. ProQuest, an international leader in dissertation archiving, discovery, and access, 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, a \$2,000 honorarium, and funds for travel to the awards ceremony.

“The Distinguished Dissertation Awards demonstrate the dramatic impact young scholars have on their fields,” said CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega. “It’s a testament to the vitality and value of graduate education when recently minted PhDs contribute and expand upon knowledge to raise the level of understanding in their fields.”

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Austin McLean, director, ProQuest Scholarly Communication and Dissertations Publishing said, “ProQuest has devoted decades to improving both discovery of and access to dissertations because of the vital roles they play in advancing knowledge. We’re delighted to honor the excellent examples Dr. Choi and Dr. Schaefer have provided of the fresh perspectives and innovative thinking that are found in graduate works.”

The 2015 Award in the Biological and Life Sciences was presented to Dr. Choi for her dissertation, “Identification of an extracellular adenosine 5’-triphosphate receptor in *Arabidopsis thaliana*.” Recent research demonstrates Adenosine 5’-triphosphate (ATP) plays an important role in plant growth, development, and stress responses. This project focuses on the enigmatic mechanism of extracellular ATP recognition in plants. Choi describes “a mutant screen that identified a key molecular component involved in extracellular ATP recognition in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The gene identified by isolation of an ATP-insensitive mutant was termed DORN1 (Does not respond to Nucleotides 1).” She argues that DORN1 is “essential for perception of extracellular ATP and likely plays a variety of roles in plant stress responses.” Dr. Choi is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Cambridge.

Dr. Schaefer received the 2015 Award in Humanities and Fine Arts for his dissertation, “The Social Origins of Justice: Mexico in the Age of Utopian Failure, 1821-1870.” His project is a “comparative study of legal-institution building in indigenous towns, mestizo towns, and estate (*hacienda*) settlements in post-independence Mexico.” Schaefer argues that “struggles over the shape of Mexico’s post-colonial justice system turned on different conceptions of the appropriate place of labor in social life.” He concludes that “the historical failure of liberalism in nineteenth-century Mexico was linked to the defeat of a civic imagination that had conceived of labor not as the subordinate or alienated pole in an antagonistic property relation but as the constitutive and ordering power of all social life.” Dr. Schaefer is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of History at the University of British Columbia.

More information about the CGS / ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award is available at www.proquest.com/go/scholars or at www.cgsnet.org.

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About the Council of Graduate Schools (www.cgsnet.org)

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 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.

* Based on data from the 2013 CGS/GRE Survey of Graduate Enrollment and Degrees

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