



## News Release

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### **Winners of 2019 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 Kishauna E. Soljour and Brian M. Sweis during the Council’s award ceremony at the 59th Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN. Dr. Soljour received her PhD in May 2019 at Syracuse University in history, and Dr. Sweis completed his PhD in 2018 from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities in neuroscience.

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 educational technology and content – including 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 of recognition, a \$2,000 honorarium, and a travel stipend to attend the awards ceremony.

“The Distinguished Dissertation Awards demonstrate the significant impact young scholars have in their disciplines,” said CGS President Suzanne T. Ortega. “Dr. Soljour and Dr. Sweis’s innovative research contributes and expands upon work in their fields and demonstrates the value and impact of graduate education to the world. Their work deserves to be celebrated.”

“Drs. Soljour and Sweis are exceptional scholars who have contributed critical insights to their disciplines,” said Angela D’Agostino, Vice President of Product Management for ProQuest’s dissertation products. “ProQuest is proud to partner with CGS to recognize their excellence. The works these scholars have published will contribute to significant advancements in their fields of study, and we’re excited to follow where their research takes them in the future.”

Dr. Soljour received the 2019 Award in Humanities and Fine Arts for her dissertation, *Beyond the Banlieue: French Postcolonial Migration & the Politics of a Sub-Saharan Identity*. Using oral histories from Black communities in Paris to reveal a rich legacy of sociopolitical, economic, and cultural efforts to navigate and negotiate this divide, Soljour details and historicizes the space between French state

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acculturation policies and the lived experience of Afro-French residents from 1945-2018. Her project mines the experiences of black diasporic populations in Paris over the past seventy years to reimagine the place and power of race in contemporary French history. Dr. Soljour is currently a senior program manager at Working In Support of Education (W!se).

The 2019 Award in Biological and Life Sciences was presented to Dr. Sweis for his dissertation, *Beyond Simple Tests of Value: A neuroeconomic, translational, disease-relevant, and circuit-based approach to resolve the computational complexity of decision making*. By combining neuromodulation technologies targeted to circuit specific memories along with neuroeconomics to dissociate complex decision processes, Sweis links specific memories to how decisions are made and how each can uniquely go away. Through his research, Sweis hopes to “better understand individual differences in pathogenesis and to develop novel interventions tailored to an individual’s circuit-specific computational dysfunction.” Dr. Sweis is currently a physician-scientist trainee at the University of Minnesota Medical School, where is he completing his M.D. in neuroscience.

More information about the CGS / ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award is available at [www.proquest.com/go/scholars](http://www.proquest.com/go/scholars) or at [www.cgsnet.org](http://www.cgsnet.org).

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**About the Council of Graduate Schools ([www.cgsnet.org](http://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.

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