

[Home](#) » **Chemistry and Communication students honored with 2013 President's Medal and University Graduate Medal**[< Previous](#) [Next >](#)

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Chemistry and Communication students honored with 2013 President's Medal and University Graduate Medal

Arturo Gasga (B.A., Chemistry) and **Jennifer Zenovich** (M.A., Communication) were each selected as a President's Medalist (Fresno State's top academic honor) and University Graduate Medalist. The

announcement was made at the 102nd Commencement ceremony at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, May 18 at the SaveMart Center.

Each of the university's eight schools and colleges, along with the Division of Student Affairs, selected an undergraduate medalist and a graduate medalist based on academic excellence, community involvement and other achievements. Of this group, Gasga and Zenovich were chosen to receive the top honor.

When 15-year-old **Arturo Gasga** arrived in the U.S., his English vocabulary consisted of three words: yes, no and taxi. Today, the Chemistry major was named Fresno State's 2013 Undergraduate President's Medalist – the university's highest academic honor – at the 102nd Commencement ceremony at 9:30 a.m. at the Save Mart Center.

Gasga came to the U.S. in high school for an education. He worked hard, and once established brought his sister and parents as well. He still helps take care of his sister, who will begin as a Chemistry major at Fresno State next year.

"Arturo is an American success story and a wonderful example of Fresno State's mission of serving the underserved," said Susan Elrod, Dean, College of Science and Mathematics, who nominated Gasga for the honor. "We are very lucky to have such a fine young man as a student. He represents everything that makes Fresno State special."

Gasga has his sights set on medical school at UCLA, to fulfill his goal of becoming a physician and returning to the Central Valley as a bilingual primary care doctor.

Gasga says he has wanted to be a doctor since he was seven years old: "After Hurricane Paulina struck Acapulco, Gurrero, I witnessed many family members and friends suffer from illnesses because they were not able to receive adequate health care. I want to work with the underserved and continue to motivate others to obtain higher education."

Zenovich earned a Fulbright research grant in 2011 to study post-communist gender experiences in Montenegro. She has presented at eight national and international conferences, and was awarded a research grant at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington D.C. to further her interests in East-European studies.

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"Jennifer has pursued academic and research opportunities that nurtured her interest in communication theory feminism and globalization," said Dr. Vida Samiian, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities. "Her research exemplifies excellence and we are so fortunate to have had her be part of our campus community."

Zenovich is headed for a Ph.D. program in Communication at University of Massachusetts, Amherst with a full scholarship.

Biographical Info:

Arturo Gasga, College of Science and Mathematics

Arturo Gasga, of Fresno, completed a B.A. in Chemistry with a 3.72 GPA. Coming to the United States from a poor neighborhood in Mexico at age 15, he is a scribe at the emergency room at St. Agnes Medical Center and a chemistry tutor for the Health Careers Opportunity Program. For the past two years, he has worked with Dr. Melissa Golden on the organic synthesis of BMAA, a compound that may be involved with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and Alzheimer's disease. For this work, Gasga won an award from the American Chemical Society at the SACNAS symposium. He also presented at the national American Chemical Society meeting. Gasga has served as a volunteer screener for clinical research trials at UCSF-Fresno/Community Regional Medical Center and tutored high school students in chemistry. His goal is to become a physician and return to the Central Valley to care for underserved people in the Latino community as a bilingual primary care doctor.

Jennifer Zenovich, College of Arts and Humanities

Jennifer Zenovich, of Fresno, completed an M.A. in Communication with a 4.0 GPA. She earned a Fulbright research grant during the course of her graduate studies, which enabled her to complete a thesis focusing on an ethnographic study of academic women in Montenegro. She also worked on an oral history project about a local feminist/activist and an ethnographic study conducted at a homeless shelter for refugees in London. Zenovich is the recipient of several research grants, including a Woodrow Wilson International Center Scholars Award. She participated in several regional, national, and international conferences and is the co-author of a paper under review for publication in Text and Performance Quarterly. In the area of service, Zenovich served as president

of the Communication Graduate Student Association. She also volunteered for a number of organizations, including Crisis Homeless Center, River Tree Fresno, Fresno Mayoral Campaign and Community Garden. Additionally, she worked as a teaching associate in the Department of Communication.

By [Kathleen Schock](#) | May 18th, 2013 | Categories: [PRESS RELEASES](#) | Tags: [Commencement](#), [medalists](#), [president's medalists](#), [student affairs](#) | [Comments Off](#)

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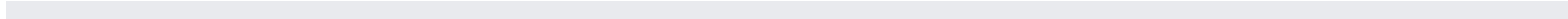
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