

Tulane PhD student wins regional Three Minute Thesis Competition

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Tulane Bioinnovation PhD student Samantha Kurtz won the 2019 Three Minute Thesis Competition with her presentation on her research into novel drug delivery systems to treat early-stage breast cancer. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

On Feb. 16, Tulane bioinnovation PhD student Samantha Kurtz was selected as the winner of the 2019 Three Minute Thesis Competition.

The contest took place in Knoxville, Tennessee, at the annual meeting of the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS). As its name suggests, participants have only three minutes and one static Powerpoint slide to share their research with a general audience.

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Kurtz's presentation, titled "More Than Just a Pastie," centers around her research on novel drug delivery systems to treat early-stage breast cancer. Her choice of topic was inspired by her desire to develop existing research around breast cancer prevention and treatment.

"If you could prevent what was happening, you would save so many lives," Kurtz said. "Vaccines work so well now because people don't have the diseases. It's so much easier to prevent something than all of a sudden having measles and trying to treat it."

Kurtz was one of 40 students representing various Southern graduate schools across the United States. She advanced to the finals after competing in a qualifying heat against 10 other students. In the final round, Kurtz was selected out of eight students as the winner of the competition. Despite the pressure of the contest, Kurtz said she thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

"I love being on stage and being able to present to people," she said. "To be able to communicate the passion that I have for my PhD in a way that people understand ... it's very validating, like what I'm doing has a purpose and matters to people."

As a reward for her win, Kurtz will receive \$1,000, as well as the opportunity to share her presentation at the national level this December at the CSGS annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee.