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Two USF St. Petersburg students win Leland Hawes awards in Florida History

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Leland Hawes Award winners Elizabeth Southard (left) and Douglas Ponticos (right) with Emeritus History Professor Gary Mormino.

Two USF St. Petersburg students have won prestigious Leland M. Hawes awards in Florida history, adding their names to a string of previous winners from USFSP.

Douglas Ponticos, a graduate student in the Florida Studies Program, received the prize for his paper, “Communities of Stone and Glass: Florida’s Brooksville Ridge.” Ponticos is a Brooksville native who was raised in Homosassa, and a graduate of Lecanto High School and Florida State University. After many summers working on family farms, Ponticos cultivated a passion for gardening and food. He is finishing his thesis, a study of the cultural history of the Brooksville Ridge. He dreams of farming and teaching on the Ridge.

Elizabeth Southard, an Anthropology major, received the prize for the best undergraduate paper, “The Cultural Importance of the Prehistoric and Historic History of Weedon Island.” Southard is a Memphis native who moved to Florida in 2003. While a student at USFSP, she developed a passion for archaeology. She spent the summer of 2012 with Professors John and Kathryn Arthur in Ethiopia studying the Gamo people. She recently helped curate the “Butch” Evans artifact collection at the [Nelson Poynter Memorial Library](#). Evans was a beloved student in the Florida Studies Program and an avid amateur archaeologist.

Both Southard and Ponticos wrote their seminar papers in Emeritus History Professor Gary Mormino’s Florida history seminar. Mormino is a co-founder of the Florida Studies Program.

The Leland Hawes Prize honors the life work of Leland Hawes, who spent six decades as a reporter, editor and history columnist at the Tampa Tribune. Upon his retirement, the [Tampa Bay History Center](#) and the [Florida Studies Center](#) at USF Tampa inaugurated the prize to recognize student scholarship in Florida history.

Previous USFSP Hawes Prize recipients include Thom Foley, for his 2008 essay, “Taming of the Hillsborough River;” Brad Massey for his 2009 paper, “The Rise and Fall of a Modern Florida Landmark, Tampa’s Floridan Hotel”; and Lois Ricciardi, for her 2010 paper, “Mary Lou Baker and the Women’s Emancipation Bill of 1942.”

Since 2003, USF St. Petersburg’s Florida Studies Program has shined a light on Florida’s history, culture and environment. No other program in the United States explores a state the way this does. The Masters Program brings together faculty from history, economics, geography, political science, anthropology and other disciplines to explain our state’s identity. For more information go to usfsp.edu/floridastudies.

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