



# 2022 Collegiate Award Winners Announced

**May 10, 2022** - The United States Fencing Coaches Association is pleased to announce the winners of the 2021-22 Collegiate Award Winners. Representing programs across genders and divisions, the USFCA presents both National Collegiate awards and Division III awards. All awards were determined by a nationwide vote of USFCA-member fencing programs.

In addition to the Collegiate Award winners, starting this season the USFCA introduced two different recognition awards. The Community Service Recognition Award recognizes those collegiate members who demonstrated strong commitment to serving their communities. The Excellence in Communications Recognition Award recognizes those who provided strong communications support and/or press coverage of NCAA fencing. Those who are being recognized this year are included in this announcement.

## **National Collegiate Men's Team Award Winners**

Coach of the Year: Gia Kvaratskhelia, University of Notre Dame

Assistant Coach of the Year: Kasia Dabrowa, Ohio State University

Epee Athlete of the Year: Ian Sanders, New York University

Foil Athlete of the Year: Ashton Daniel, Columbia University

Sabre Athlete of the Year: Shawn Kim, University of California San Diego

### **National Collegiate Women's Team Award Winners**

Coach of the Year: Gia Kvaratskhelia, University of Notre Dame

Assistant Coach of the Year: Dwight Smith, Long Island University

Epee Athlete of the Year: Kaylin Hsieh, University of Notre Dame

Foil Athlete of the Year: Amita Berthier, University of Notre Dame

Sabre Athlete of the Year: Elizabeth Tartakovsky, Harvard University

Newcomer of the Year: Anna Novoseltseva, Temple University

### **Division III Men's Team Award Winners**

Coach of the Year: Jennie Salmon, Brandeis University

Assistant Coach of the Year: Ben Bratton, New York University

Epee Athlete of the Year: Ian Sanders, New York University

Foil Athlete of the Year: Michael DeSando, Drew University

Sabre Athlete of the Year: Antonio Escueta III, Brandeis University

Newcomer of the Year: Antonio Escueta III, Brandeis University

### **Division III Women's Team Award Winners**

Coach of the Year: Jennie Salmon, Brandeis University

Assistant Coach of the Year: Lauren Wunderlich, New York University

Epee Athlete of the Year: Amira Mutakabbir, Drew University

Foil Athlete of the Year: Bettina Coker, Lawrence University

Sabre Athlete of the Year: Jia "Maggie" Shealy, Brandeis University

Newcomer of the Year: Tristan Luu, Denison University

## Community Service Recognition Awards

The USFCA is pleased to recognize the following individuals and groups for their community service work during the 2021-22 season: Alexander Wicken, Brandeis University; the Northwestern University Fencing Team; and the Vassar Fencing Team. Read below to learn more about how the work done by these teams and individuals.

### Alexander Wicken – Brandeis University

Alex is a transgender athlete on the Brandeis Fencing Team. He is a junior Politics major with minors in Social Justice and Social Policy.

Since arriving at Brandeis, he has been a visible and vocal advocate for transgender athletes and community at large as well as the LGBTQIA+ community at Brandeis and well beyond. Over the past year, Alex has spearheaded a collaboration between the Brandeis Athletics department, the Brandeis Gender and Sexuality Center, and the organization, Athlete Ally, to create a Transgender NCAA Athlete Fishbowl conversation with several other current and former transgender student athletes. The event took place on March 31st 2022 as a webinar and was attended by hundreds. <https://www.brandeisjudges.com/general/2021-22/releases/20220405gvcuiw>.

Alex is also a Community Advisor (equivalent to a Resident Assistant) for the Brandeis Department of Community Living and a Peer Educator for the Brandeis Gender and Sexuality Center. In September of 2021, the Brandeis Athletic Department was the first in the UAA to develop and publish a department Transgender inclusion policy to codify the University and the Department's adoption of inclusive participation practices and demonstrate a commitment to fair play and inclusion. Alex's advocacy and input were an important component of this policy's development. Alex has already had a great impact in leading the inclusion and equitable treatment of any marginalized person within the Brandeis community and the reach of his actions has been well past the Brandeis campus.

### Northwestern University Fencing Team

Northwestern Fencing this year did multiple community service projects both in the sport and in the greater Evanston community.

The biggest project they undertook was partnering with Girls Play Sports, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering leadership skills and confidence in girls through participation in a wide variety of sports. The team held multiple instructional events that taught 60 plus unique registrants the basics of the sport of fencing. This included question and answer sessions with the participants detailing their journeys to becoming Division 1 NCAA athletes and what their experience as student-athletes entails. The team then invited the girls that attended the training sessions to the Northwestern Winter Duals, one of the largest collegiate events in the country, to

see the sport live. The team answered questions on what the girls had just observed and then gave them a tour of the athletic facilities on campus.

Another project that came out of the pandemic, with many people locked down at home, pet adoption rates rose rapidly. As people returned to normal life many pets were returned to the shelters. The Northwestern team ran a group session where they collected dog and cat food as well as made toys for the animals in the shelter. They used old t-shirts and sweatshirts and transformed them into toys to help engage the animals that have been left behind.

They also connected with Nzingha Prescod and her organization PISTE and highlighted her through our University's "Together We Win" event where the University seeks to educate our community and help people thrive academically, socially, athletically and professionally. The team is looking to continue their engagement and look to find ways to assist Nzingha and her program through future outreach.

### Vassar College Fencing Team

Vassar Fencing resumed running an annual Blood Drive in December in conjunction with New York Blood Services. 65 units of Blood were donated.

In conjunction with the Eastern Women's Fencing Conference Championships held at Vassar College in February, Vassar Fencing promoted and staffed a table for Gift of Life, which matches potential bone marrow donors through the use of cheek swabs. Both competitors and spectators at the event submitted cheek swabs.

In April, Vassar Fencing partnered with the Hudson Berkshire Division of USA Fencing to host a tournament to benefit Family Services of New York. All entry fees, totaling \$1140 were donated to the charity.

### **Excellence in Communications Recognition Awards**

The USFCA is pleased to recognize the following individuals for their work in Athletics Communications and press coverage of the sport during the 2021-22 season: Nick Jallat of Vassar College and the University of California San Diego Communications Team. Read below to learn more about how the work done by these individuals.

#### Nick Jallat – Vassar College

Nick Jallat serves as the Vassar College Asst. Director of Athletic Communications. This season he went above and beyond for the program all season. Not only did he write excellent stories and promotions for all of their events and awards (see [www.vassarathletics.com](http://www.vassarathletics.com)), but he also ran the Bout Committee for two gigantic November events (Vassar Invite - 35 strips with 8 rounds of competition; Matt Lampell Invitational - 20 strips with 8 rounds of competition, plus tournament

style placement of the participating teams) and immediately made all scoresheets available in google files to share. He also ran the bout committee almost singlehandedly at the Eastern Women's Fencing championships which involved 9 rounds of dual matches and an individual tournament afterwards. Team and squad awards need to be calculated as well as individual awards all in that one day. He also setup and maintained the boxcast for all of the Vassar home events and for NCAA Northeast Regionals.

### UCSD Communications Team

UCSD runs external communications by having the SID (Scott Flanders) coordinate a student-athletes communications team (Sarah Shen, Syed Adam Emir Putra, Alyssa de la Cruz and Shawn Kim). The students have the opportunity to be considered an official intern in the Communications department. They build a formal communication plan with target audiences, goals, metrics, asset development plans and calendar of activities. They focus on visualizing the student-athlete experience beyond the traditional narrative of competitions, results, and awards.

Below are the links to two examples to illustrate the work done by this group to help showcase the sport of fencing at UCSD:

- "In the classroom series" to showcase interesting classes you can take at UCSD <https://www.facebook.com/114669161969073/videos/1582150475487416>
- "One day in the life" to show case a special day in the live of one of the students, it is an excellent example of the special bond within the team. <https://youtu.be/PeQd41BbyRI>