

# UCSB bulldog for rights commended by MTV

By ANN GRIFFITH  
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER  
e-mail: agriffith@newspress.com

Mel Fabi knows how he's going to pay for graduate school.

The UCSB student will use \$50,000 in grand prize money from an MTV contest called "Fight for your Rights." That's a respectable income considering it took him less than a month, on and off, to write three essays and collect the necessary letters of recommendation to enter the contest.

"It's such a great feeling to be able to

## \$50,000 award will pay for grad school

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everyone.

"I truly, truly felt that life was experiencing me and I could say what I wanted," said Mr. Fabi, who wants to go to film school at New York University.

His essay work, which addresses prejudice, is only part of the story. He won the grand prize in a contest that recognizes students who are "exemplary in their achievements in social justice and their future goals to impact their communities."

As an activist at UCSB, Mr. Fabi fights for the rights of gay, minority and disabled students, among other groups.

He wants to create his own television and film company, where he would hire a diverse staff to accurately portray all these groups of people, he said.

Mr. Fabi is spending his last two quarters in college on internships in Washington, D.C. and New York. He started as a researcher with "60 Minutes" on Sept. 10. His second day on the job lasted 16 hours, he said. Next, he'll work with the "David Letterman Show" before graduating in June.

"I've really known some great students over the years, but Mel is the most hard working, most productive and effective student I have ever known," said Michael Young, vice chancellor for student affairs at

UCSB, who has worked there 12 years. tell my parents I can pay for grad school," he said Thursday just minutes before he accepted the award in New York from his heroes: boxer and activist Muhammad Ali and performer Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs.

He still can't believe he stood between the two celebrities after he accepted the award on television. He thanked people who have helped him along the way and spoke on behalf of equal access to education for

UCSB, who has worked there 12 years.

Mr. Young was most impressed when Mr. Fabi was able to change the monthly pay day for student employees at UCSB. Students were always paid after their rent and many other bills were due.

It was an extreme inconvenience, and other students over the years had



Mel Fabi

tried to change the date "embedded in our bureaucracy," but only Mr. Fabi accomplished the task, said Mr. Young.

"I told him, 'I didn't think you could do it,'" said

Mr. Young. "He's a bulldog if he gets his teeth into anything."

Mr. Fabi's proudest accomplishment was when he served as an undergraduate teaching assistant in a Chicano studies class. A Filipino, he's double majoring in film and Chicano studies.

He said he's able to accomplish what he does thanks to "multi-tasking." In fact, when doing a newspaper interview over the telephone, he admitted to simultaneously sending an e-mail to a friend and then writing a short poem.

"He's the kind of young man, when they say 'Mel's up for this or he's up for an Emmy or an Academy Award,' you go 'yeah, well you kind of figured,'" said Mr. Young.

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