COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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FULL STORY ON PAGE C2

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Cabrillo honors student wins Heslet Scholar Award

Harbor High School grad’s work shines at honors symposium

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APTOS » Cabrillo College honors student Samantha Zevanove took something she heard in her British Literature class and ran with it.

Zevanove, 19, not only wrote a research paper, but crafted a 15-minute presentation about “Celia,” a character in Ben Jonson’s play “Volpone.” Her presentation won the top award at the Community College Honors Research Symposium, chosen from 184 proposals state wide.

Zevanove said her idea, that Celia was the moral center of the play, stemmed from a class discussion about literary analysis. Most critics dismiss Celia a minor character, she said.

“I was taking the opposite approach from the mainstream perspective and because of that, I really had to be original,” Zevanove said.

The Harbor High School graduate became the second Cabrillo honors student in three years to win the Heslet Scholar Award, for which she received $200. Another Cabrillo student, China Armstrong, a top five finalist.

Carolyn Jackson, Cabrillo’s director of articulation and the honors transfer program, said Zevanove has a 4.0 GPA, with nearly half her classes at the honors level.

“She just has risen to the top through very hard work,” Jackson said.

Steve Schessler, Cabrillo English professor, led one-unit course for honors students preparing presentations for the symposium. For many students, the class is their first exposure to public speaking, he said.

What set Zevanove apart, he said, was her grace under pressure during the question-and-answer session.

“It wasn’t just the well rehearsed and practiced part,” Schessler said. “It was the depth of preparation that allowed her to think on her feet and deliver good coherent responses.”

Zevanove, who graduates in May, is looking for a four-year college with a strong drama program.

Cabrillo’s honors program, May 23, said she’s been accepted to Mills College and UC Irvine, but is waiting to hear from one more school before she makes her decision.