Grad student wins annual DeClercq Poetry Prize

“Grandfather’s Meeses,” a poem by Melanie Roland of Hayward has taken first prize in the Fourth Annual California State University, East Bay Helen “Jackie” DeClercq Student Poetry Contest. The second year masters candidate with a double major in English and Interdisciplinary Studies will receive $250 and her poem will be published in this year’s “Occam’s Razor,” the student literary magazine.

“Her Hands,” by Natalie Garcia of Oakland took second place, and “13 Ways of Looking at a Black and Filipino Man” by Alysa Machado of Hayward was third. “Salvage” by Lynette Jones-Lipscomb of Oakland, and “Working for a Better Future” by Diana Ramos Firestone of American Canyon took Honorable Mentions from among the 160 poems submitted by 69 currently enrolled CSUEB students.

Awards will be presented at the Distinguished Writers Series event featuring poet John Espinoza at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 20 in the Biella Room of the University Library. Roland, Garcia and Machado have been invited to read their poems at the start of that evening.

Judges were Kathy and John DeClercq, family members of the late, long-time CSUEB employee Jackie DeClercq, whose bequest has funded the award; Mary D’Alleva, a lecturer in English and Human Development; Aline Soules, a university librarian, and Susan Gubernat, associate professor of English and contest supervisor. D’Alleva, Soules and Gubernat are all published poets.

The judges agreed that the winning poems were notable for their individuality and authenticity of voice, the emotional connection they were able to sustain with the readers, and for their technical craft.

“Occam’s Razor” will be published in June.

While poems may be on any subject, those celebrating aspects of family life are especially welcome.