The Eric Paul Allison Memorial Prize Fellowship was established to help finance the graduate education of an outstanding graduating senior in the Department of Philosophy. The award was established in memory of Eric Paul Allison, a former distinguished student in the Department. It is given to the graduating senior who best exemplifies the ideals of personal integrity, academic excellence, and commitment to learning that were affirmed by Eric Paul Allison. The department is delighted to announce the selection of Richard Johnson as the 2014 recipient of this honor.

Graduating with a major in Philosophy from Thurgood Marshall College, Richard will be starting law school at the University of California, Berkeley in the fall, where he also plans to pursue graduate research in philosophy.

Richard’s time in the department has been marked by a very high level of academic achievement. Richard wrote an honors thesis with Professor Dana Nelkin, entitled, ‘How Prudential Deficits Undermine Psychopathic Responsibility’. He will graduate with a 3.92 GPA, having received 5 A+’s during his time at UCSD.

The chief aim of Richard’s honors thesis is to explore the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a responsible agent, both from the point of view of moral evaluation as well as from the legal point of view. Reflecting on the agency of psychopaths allows Richard to give a sharp frame to some of the core issues in philosophy of action, as well as engage with the growing contemporary literature in moral psychology on the role that pathology should play in ascriptions of responsibility. Nelkin describes Richard’s work as ‘having canvassed a huge amount of literature in philosophy and in psychology’ to develop a novel thesis and a ‘very promising’ treatment of the topics.

At law school, Richard hopes to focus on the legal issues surrounding public policy, especially those which deal with the treatment of historically disadvantaged minorities. Richard also hopes to complete a PhD in Philosophy concurrently with his JD degree, with the plan of ultimately securing a position to teach at a law school.

The department is very excited to see where Richard’s future progress takes him, and offers him its warmest congratulations on all of his truly excellent achievements.