



Hello Helia,

We are so excited that we are just weeks away from welcoming you to UC Merced! As you prepare for graduate school, we have some updates regarding campus operations under COVID-19, new student orientation, and class registration process.

Campus Operations Update

The pandemic continues to unfold throughout the state, country, and world. The UC Merced community is working around the clock to mitigate the risks of the virus spreading on campus. Information about the health measures being taken to protect our community can be found here: <https://doyourpart.ucmerced.edu>.

The good news is that our operational plans for relaunching research on campus have been approved by the Merced county health department, and these plans include graduate student research. Some of you may be starting your research activities soon after you arrive, and you can check with your graduate program faculty members for more information.

The plan for Fall instruction is to deliver about one quarter of instruction in person, small classes only with social distancing in place. In-person instruction is prioritized in courses for freshman, first-year graduate students, and graduating seniors in need of in-person coursework. The delivery mode for individual courses is still being finalized, but you can check current progress by clicking the "Course Schedules" link on the Registrar's page: <https://registrar.ucmerced.edu/schedules>. Because this process is ongoing, assignments for Teaching Assistants are also being finalized, with more information coming soon. New students with Research Assistantships or Fellowships should check with their faculty contacts for information about Fall research and training activities.

Plans for campus operations with low-density, in-person instruction will require review and approval by the county health department to enable our envisioned hybrid mode of instruction. We are also preparing for fully remote instruction if needed at any time during the semester. In either case, we will start the academic year as scheduled, with our new graduate student orientation as summarized below. We plan to progress through the academic calendar until Thanksgiving, with the remainder of instruction delivered remotely through the end of the semester. On-campus research activities are lower density and therefore may continue if and when instruction is remote.

We will keep in contact as plans progress from here. The campus and the world will be different this Fall, but scholarship will endure. Embarking on your graduation education will be an adventure like never before, and we hope you can share it with your new peers, mentors, instructors, advisors, and colleagues. We are doing all we can to support you and everyone in this regard, through both in-person and remote modes of interaction and learning. If you need special accommodations, please reach out to academic counselor Maria Nishanian at mnishanian@ucmerced.edu.

For more information, visit the campus COVID-19 resource [page](#).

Graduate Orientation Week

Graduate Orientation Week (GROW) encompasses a number of workshops, training programs and events held at the beginning of each academic year to introduce new students to the campus community and prepare them to start their graduate studies at UC Merced.

GROW will be held remotely this year because it normally happens in relatively large gatherings of all incoming graduate students with various faculty and staff. A virtual GROW does have one advantage—it can be spread out over more than a week. We cover a lot of material and we hope that spreading it out over time will help students take it all in.

August 17th is a milestone because it is the date by which all new graduate students should be registered as students and paperwork completed for employment (more info soon about paperwork processes this year). It is also the official start of GROW, and we will still have some required training starting August 17th. However, other parts of GROW have been spread out over a pre-GROW summer schedule that includes webinars, zoom panels, and email updates. The schedule can be found [here](#).

GROW [registration](#) is now open! Please register by Friday, July 31st at 12pm PST.

Register For Classes and Prepare for Your Student Bill

Registering for classes is the first step towards preparing for your arrival this Fall. If you have not been in touch with your faculty advisor regarding course registration, please contact your graduate program staff for information on which courses you should be registering for:

Engineering: soe-grstaff@ucmerced.edu
Natural Sciences: snsgrads@ucmerced.edu
Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts: ssha.grad@ucmerced.edu

You can also find additional resources about the registration process on the Office of the Registrar [website](#).

All graduate students are also responsible for paying [campus-based fees](#) by August 19th. You must enroll in at least one course before you will be able to pay those fees.

Your bill will include additional fees, but if you have an academic appointment as a teaching assistant or graduate student researcher, or if you have been awarded a qualifying fellowship, your other fees will be paid by that appointment. Additional fees include mandatory health insurance (SHIP), tuition, and a student services fee. If you do not have an academic appointment, you should [check your student account](#) to view and pay the balance owed by the August 19th deadline.

A special note for financial aid recipients: The money you receive before your academic appointment has not yet been applied to your bill, so your bill will appear to be for a larger amount than you are actually required to pay.

[Watch this video to learn more about registering for classes.](#)



Get (or Waive) Health Insurance

All students are automatically enrolled in and charged for the campus-based Anthem Blue Cross medical plan when you register for classes. If you carry your own medical insurance, you may file a Medical Health Insurance Waiver. The electronic insurance waiver application can be submitted on the [UC Merced web portal](#) under the Student Services tab. Waiver applications for 2020 - 2021 must be completed **no later than Sunday, August 1, 2020**.

For more information, please contact the [Health Services Office](#) at (209) 228-2273

Please don't hesitate to contact the [UC Merced Graduate Resource Center](#) with any questions or concerns. Also, save the date for our next virtual webinar **Incoming Student Office Hours with Dean Kello** on Wednesday, July 1st at 1pm PST. Access the Zoom chat [here](#).

Sincerely,

UC Merced Graduate Division and the GROW Committee

2020 Grow Committee

Graduate Division
Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL)
English Language Institute (ELI)
Graduate Student Association (GSA)
Human Resources Payroll Center (HRPC)
Office of International Affairs (OIA)
Office of Research and Economic Development
School of Engineering
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School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts



REGISTER HERE FOR GROW



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