August 23, 2019

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the new academic year! This semester, we anticipate about 165 new graduate students, for a total of nearly 700 students. This includes our first Management of Complex Systems cohort — please help me in welcoming them. We are also excited to begin recruitment for the Economics Ph.D. this fall!

I would like to call your attention to the [Faculty Recruitment Toolkit](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty_toolkit), which provides valuable information to help you with identifying, recruiting and enrolling new graduate students. It contains templates, printable fliers and links to assist you in your recruitment initiatives. You also received an invitation to the Recruitment Season Kickoff Breakfast for Faculty, which will be held from 9-11 a.m. Sept. 3, in COB2, Room 390. The kickoff will provide you with additional resources and tools, including opportunities take a headshot photo and record a short graduate group recruitment video.

Once they are here, we want to ensure our graduate students are successful, so we have developed a number of professional development and retention tools with the Graduate Council, including the [Graduate Policies and Procedures Handbook](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/uc_merced_graduate_policies_and_procedures_handbook_18-19.pdf) and [Mentoring Guidelines](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/ucm_mentoring_guidelines-_gc_approved_9_23_14-2_1.pdf), as well as other resources available on the [Faculty page](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff) of our website.

I also want to remind you to be sure you are making your expectations clear to students, whether through formal statements of expectations, using Nature’s Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in Research Mentoring Relationships (see attached) or other mechanisms. Along these lines, I’m delighted to announce that we are in the process of hiring our first academic counselor. This person will assist graduate students and postdoctoral scholars who are experiencing challenges affecting their academic progress, with particular attention to facilitating communication between mentors and mentees and providing training on best practices in mentorship. We hope to fill this position within the next month and will share more information then.

Please continue to encourage your students to make use of the [Graduate Resource Center](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GRC) on the second floor of the Student Services Building (SSB 217). Our writing and statistical tutors can be found there, as well as our library of successful fellowship proposals. The writing tutor will hold walk-in hours **Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon.**The statistics tutor will hold walk-in hours **Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.** Both tutors are also available by appointment. In addition, our [Resource Center](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GRC) webpage provides lots of helpful information and links. Associate Dean Chris Kello will again offer our [GEARS](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GEARS) professional development [course](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/grad_prof_dev_syllabus_fall_2018.pdf) with some sessions open to a broader audience. As usual, [Dissertation Boot Camp](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GEARS/Dissertation-Boot-Camp) will be offered in January and May, [GradSLAM](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/gradslam) in the spring, and our [GradEXCEL peer mentor](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GRC_Peer_Mentorship) program will run throughout the year to help orient new doctoral students. We will also host a CSU and Community College Jobs Day in November and a Data Science Day in the Spring — for more details on these and other activities and events, please see our [Events and Deadlines Calendar](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/gd_ay19-20_ddcal_8.16.19_0.pdf).

In collaboration with colleagues from across the campus, we have made great progress on our major grants:

* Our [NSF AGEP](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/deans-corner/grants/nsf-agep) (Alliance for Graduate Education Program) grant began last September with UC Santa Barbara, CSU Fresno and CSU Channel Islands. The AGEP award is designed to prepare UC students for academic positions in CSUs and similar institutions that focus on both teaching and research. We held a summer pedagogy institute at Santa Barbara this summer to prepare the UC students and their CSU mentors for the work they will conduct together this fall. Five UC Merced graduate students are funded in this first cohort.
* Our [Luce Foundation grant](https://news.ucmerced.edu/news/2018/humanities-project-launching-community-collaborative-graduate-training-and-research) trains humanities doctoral students in community-embedded research. Interested students participate in a methods course in the fall, collaborative research in the spring, and dissemination projects with community partners in summer. Eight UC Merced humanities graduate students were funded from the grant this summer, and we anticipate continued funding for five of them — along with another cohort of eight students — this coming year. The participants collaborate with community partners on projects that illustrate how humanities research can affect the local, regional and national dialogues on key issues. [Read more here.](https://news.ucmerced.edu/news/2019/humanities-grad-students-drive-community-engagement-public-understanding-through-research)
* We have two grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to help us further diversify our community of graduate students and faculty members, beginning with the humanities and humanistic social sciences. One grant focuses on [undergraduate research and preparation for graduate school](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/17421). That grant is now up for renewal for a second three-year funding period. The other Mellon grant focuses on [faculty diversity](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/17431), including pathways to the professoriate. It funds six new doctoral students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences and one peer mentor in our Competitive Edge Summer Bridge program each year, a two-week orientation before the start of the fall semester for five new humanities/humanistic social science faculty, and will support a cohort of about 10 junior faculty each year of the grant. The program seeks to jumpstart their publishing, grant writing, networking and other professional development.
* You might recall that we are now part of one of five inaugural NSF INCLUDES Alliance grants. Our project, [CAHSI INCLUDES](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/deans-corner/grants/nsf-includes), began last September and is designed to increase the number of Latinx students graduating from computer science programs at Hispanic Serving Institutions nationwide. We lead the Northern California regional initiative, and of course I want to see more of the CAHSI students nationwide go on to graduate school!
* Our NSF National Research Training in [Interdisciplinary Computational Graduate Education](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/deans-corner/grants/nrt-icge/overview) is entering its fourth year. The NRT-ICGE provides some programming training and opportunities for students to work on real-life projects in interdisciplinary teams, with advisors from industry and the national labs, as well as faculty. We will advertise for the program in fall, hold a launch in December and begin our program in spring semester. Please encourage your domestic, first-year doctoral students who are interested in computational work to apply.
* Finally, we collaborate with the other UC Graduate Divisions on a Council of Graduate Schools grant to study doctoral placements and whether we are appropriately preparing our students for their varied careers.

Finding funding for our graduate students is a top priority. We encourage you to direct your students to our [Financial Support webpage](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/financial-support) to learn more about internal and external funding opportunities. We’ve added opportunities specifically for [undocumented graduate students](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/funding/fellowships/undocumented-funding) or those looking at grad school. Please remind your students that the Graduate Division offers a [$200 award](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/275) for applying to a national pre-doctoral fellowship or other external fellowship of $12,000 or more. And, we continue to provide 25 percent of resident tuition for graduate students funded on grants with full indirect, giving you more flexibility in how you spend your grant dollars.

This year the competition for our [Interdisciplinary Small Grants Program](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/Interdisciplinary_Small_Grants) was so steep we ended up funding four projects instead of our usual three. This program facilitates faculty, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students coming together in contexts designed to facilitate interdisciplinary conversations and collaborations leading to grant proposals, special issues of journals or edited volumes and related outcomes. I hope you will all consider applying for next year’s grants!

On the technology front, our admissions system, [SLATE](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/faculty-staff/resources/slate), is fully launched and already improving our application and reporting processes. We continue to move forms to OnBase to increase workflow processing and decrease the mounds of paper we all handle. Additionally, the Graduate Reporting and Information Platform (GRIP), which was initially developed by the School of Natural Sciences, now tracks graduate student funding, graduate committees and graduate student progress across all three schools. Faculty members now have access to request student funding information through GRIP, and graduate group chairs can view student data and run reports on student progress and funding.

Finally, I need your help. When inviting members of the academic community to campus for various events, please consider reaching out beyond your acquaintances to graduate chairs, department chairs, center directors and others. This will help us get the word out about UC Merced and raise awareness and visibility about our fabulous faculty, students and programs.

I look forward to working with you all this year to further advance graduate education at UC Merced. Please feel free to contact me anytime with your ideas and concerns using this [online submission form](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/form/suggestions-dean).

Best wishes for a wonderful semester!



Marjorie S. Zatz

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education

Professor of Sociology