January 17, 2020

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Spring 2020 semester! We have lots happening this spring and I wanted to share a few updates with you.

Our graduate programs are continuing to grow as the campus grows, and our graduate applications for Fall 2020 increased by more than 17 percent over last year’s numbers, reaching 825 by our (soft) deadline! Now you all have the fun part — reviewing applications and deciding which of our excellent applicants you want to admit.

If you are recruiting students for Fall 2020, we are hosting Graduate Visitation Weekend Feb. 21-22. Graduate Division will host a reception from 4-6 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 21. We’ll communicate more details soon!

I am delighted to announce that we will once again offer our [Competitive Edge Summer Bridge program](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/grad-resource-center/signature-programmingprofessional-development/summer-bridge) this summer for a small cohort of incoming doctoral students, with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

As we grow, we continue to add new staff members to support our students. I am delighted to announce the hiring of our first academic counselor, Maria Nishanian. Maria’s role is to assist graduate students and postdoctoral scholars who are experiencing challenges affecting their academic progress. She can facilitate communication between mentors and mentees, provide graduate students, faculty and postdocs with training on best practices in mentorship, and help with other issues common to graduate students, such as adjusting to graduate school, work-life balance, dealing with the imposter syndrome, etc. Maria can direct students to resources around campus and she will work closely with related offices on campus such as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Office of Ombuds, the graduate support staff in the schools, and the Basic Needs Hub. With growth in the number of graduate students, I simply cannot meet with everyone who might want to talk with me, so please refer your students to Maria first, and if they feel they need to speak with a dean they can then contact Associate Dean Chris Kello. Maria can be reached by phone (209-947-9358), email (mnishanian@ucmerced.edu) or students, postdocs, and faculty are welcome to drop by her office (SSB 233) 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

I also want to remind you to discuss your expectations with your graduate students and encourage you and your students to use Individual Development Plans to ensure that they are receiving the preparation they need for the careers they are seeking — I recommend [University of Michigan’s](https://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/more-mentoring-plan-example-1.pdf) and [University of Wisconsin’s](https://ictr.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/163/2016/11/MentorshipAgreementTemplate.pdf) mentorship agreements and am attaching *Nature’s* mentorship checklist and UCI’s Individual Development Plan.

I was very pleased to contribute Graduate Division resources towards the Faculty Success Initiative launched earlier this month in collaboration with the Office of Research and Economic Development, school deans, and Organized Research Unit directors. The first Faculty Success Initiative-Extramural Funding Fellowship was held with an [inaugural cohort of 15 faculty fellows](https://news.ucmerced.edu/news/2020/new-fellowship-program-gives-faculty-edge-competitive-funding-landscape) from a variety of departments, selected from an applicant pool. The aim of the program is to support faculty in the pursuit of extramural funding, with the goal of growing the university’s research enterprise, advancing concepts in science and enhancing national health and welfare. We’re looking forward to seeing more of our graduate students funded by the resulting grants! And for those of you with NSF grants, please [check to see if your award is eligible](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2018/nsf18102/nsf18102.jsp) for supplemental funding to provide six-month non-academic internship opportunities for graduate students.

Please 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 holds walk-in hours **Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon.**The statistics tutor holds walk-in hours **Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to noon.** Both tutors are also available by appointment. [Dissertation Boot Camp](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GEARS/Dissertation-Boot-Camp) and will be offered again in May, [GradSLAM](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/gradslam) in the spring, and our [Grad EXCEL peer mentor](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/GRC_Peer_Mentorship) program will run throughout the year to help orient new doctoral students. Our Faculty Careers Day: CSU and CCC Faculty Positions in November was a success and we look forward to hosting it annually! We are also in the midst of planning **Data Science Day** May 1 — for more details on these and other activities and events, please see our [Events and Deadlines Calendar](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cbortiz%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CKH5NLHPP%5Cgraduatedivision.ucmerced.edu%5Csites%5Cgraduatedivision.ucmerced.edu%5Cfiles%5Cpage%5Cdocuments%5Cgd_spring20_ddcal_01.10.20.pdf).

In collaboration with colleagues from across the campus, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has renewed our UROC-H [undergraduate research and preparation for graduate school](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/17421) for a second three-year funding period. Our other Mellon grant, focusing on [faculty diversity](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/17431), including pathways to the professoriate, is ongoing and funds six new doctoral students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences and one peer mentor in our Competitive Edge Summer Bridge program. In addition, this grant supports a two-week orientation for new humanities/ humanistic social sciences faculty before the start of the fall semester, and a faculty development program for a cohort of about 10 junior faculty each year.

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 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’re excited to see our fourth cohort’s projects take shape this semester. In addition, our [NSF AGEP](https://hsi-agep.ucmerced.edu/) HSI Alliance (Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate), NSF Computing Alliance of HSIs [(CAHSI) INCLUDES](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/deans-corner/grants/nsf-includes), and [Luce](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/deans-corner/grants/luce-foundation) Foundation grants are humming along.

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. Please remind your students that the Graduate Division offers a [$200 award](https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/node/275) just for applying to a national pre-doctoral fellowship or other external fellowship of $12,000 or more. And this year 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.

Finally, if you have a domestic doctoral student who is a non-California resident for tuition purposes with the university, they will be charged the Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition (NRST) fee after their first year, and NRST is not paid by the university for master’s students. While they have received emails from Graduate Division, we could use your help in reminding your students to review the steps on [How to Change Your Non-resident Status to Resident](http://registrar.ucmerced.edu/nonresident_to_caresident) and maintain their necessary records over the next year.

I look forward to working with you all this semester to further advancing graduate education at UC Merced. Please feel free to contact me anytime with your ideas and concerns.

Best wishes for a wonderful semester!

Marjorie S. Zatz

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education

Professor of Sociology