UC SANTA BARBARA

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Environmental Heroes

As the University of California steps up efforts to eliminate its carbon footprint, it has named Faculty Climate Action Champions at each campus to work with students on projects aimed at building community engagement and awareness.

The inaugural group of champions includes physicists, engineers, biologists, atmospheric scientists and others who have exhibited outstanding teaching, research and public service in the areas of climate change solutions, action and broad engagement.

The recognition comes with a $25,000 award, to be used for a project during the academic year. Each project will involve students in a community-engaged research project.

The program is designed to help meet and focus students' interest in climate-action education, and to inspire other faculty members to help the university's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025 through engaged research and education.

One goal, many approaches

All of the champions are devoted to working towards solutions to climate change, but they approach the issue from diverse angles. Some focus on scientific research, others on communication, others on cultural change, responding both to their own specialties as well as the interests of their students and local communities.

UC Santa Barbara champion, marine biologist Gretchen Hofmann, noticed that her undergraduate students have been expressing more and more interest in understanding how anthropogenic change is altering the planet, and how this will affect them and their careers.

“I’ve experienced this both in the classroom and in the requests from students who want to volunteer in my lab,” Hofmann said.

Hofmann plans to engage undergraduates and create a team of outreach specialists on climate change issues that are important to the California coast, and work on additional ways to reach non-scientific audiences.

UC Merced’s champion Michael Dawson plans to use his award to work with colleagues in other disciplines, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as local artists to explore different ways of presenting climate change data, both from the present and geologic history of California.

2015–16 Faculty Climate Action Champions

UC Berkeley: Whendee Silver, Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management

UC Davis: Kurt Kornbluth, Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering

UC Irvine: Steven Allison, Departments of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Earth System Science

UCLA: Alex Hall, Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences

UC Merced: Michael Dawson, School of Natural Sciences

UC Riverside: Mihri Ozkan, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

UC San Diego: Robert Pomeroy, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

UC San Francisco: Arianne Teherani, School of Medicine

UC Santa Barbara: Gretchen Hofmann, Department of Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology

UC Santa Cruz: Sue Carter, Department of Physics

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.