UC SANTA BARBARA
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# A Sense of Urgency

Climate shocks. Water quality. Fracking. Food production. Plastics. The array of environmental challenges facing our planet is dizzying and the to-do list to fix them is long.

To assist the emerging scientists driving that important work and to foster solutions-centered research, UC Santa Barbara has launched the Environmental Solutions Fellowship Program. Made possible by a generous gift from philanthropist Wendy Schmidt through The Schmidt Family Foundation, the program will support 21 graduate students and 11 undergraduate students at UC Santa Barbara conducting research directly targeted at solving problems that compromise the health of our environment.

“The next generation of environmentally focused scientists look at the world holistically, and with a great sense of urgency,” said Wendy Schmidt, president of The Schmidt Family Foundation and co-founder of Schmidt Ocean Institute. “They have the opportunity to greatly influence how we think about our land and ocean and how we treat them. Eric and I are deeply committed to the future of scientific research with the goal of sharing it widely. We’re excited for the work this group of fellows is undertaking and the impact it can have.”

The university’s inaugural group of Schmidt Environmental Solutions Fellows conduct research across a range of topics, from coral reef recovery and shark conservation to California grassland restoration and irrigation system improvements. While their funded projects vary greatly, they all are united by a common goal: designing

tractable environmental solutions.

“With our oceans warming, extinction rates accelerating and new forms of pollution entering our environment, we absolutely must get serious about investing in next-generation environmental scientists,” said Douglas McCauley, an associate professor in UC Santa Barbara’s Marine Science Institute. “I’m thrilled that this program was created because these fellows are not only our insurance policy for the planet, but they also are the insurance policy for our species.”

The new endeavor began as a response to the elimination of a significant reduction in federal funding for doctoral research in environmental and ecological science. In addition to funding early career Ph.D. students at UC Santa Barbara, the Environmental Solutions Fellowship Program provides support for undergraduate students to partner with those same doctoral students to conduct research in the laboratory or in the field.

The program is committed to supporting UC Santa Barbara students from diverse backgrounds who conduct exceptional research. Environmental Solutions Fellows will spend a year working on their projects then convene to share their discoveries in an open community forum to be held on campus.

Reflecting the importance that both UCSB and the Schmidts place on the partnership of world-class research and effective science communication to improve the planet, the 2019 fellows participated in an intensive science communication training workshop to launch the program. Led by science communication specialists from the Schmidt Ocean Institute, the seminar coached the students in skills necessary for sharing the results of their research with the media, the public and policymakers.

“Our goal with this fellowship program is to support the next generation of scientists by giving students the tools and encouragement they need to pursue research-driven solutions to our most pressing environmental issues,” said Pierre Wiltzius, UC Santa Barbara’s Susan & Bruce Worster Dean of Mathematical, Life and Physical Sciences. “There is no doubt in my mind that our Environmental Solutions Fellows will not only make great strides toward healthier oceans, cleaner air and less polluted water, but will learn how to effectively disseminate their findings for the greatest possible impact.”

## 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.