UC SANTA BARBARA
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On the Rise

For young scholars, the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship is among the country's most preeminent honors.

The fellowship program recognizes and supports outstanding graduate students in NSF-supported science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines who are pursuing research-based master's and doctoral degrees at accredited United States institutions.

And an impressive 26 UC Santa Barbara students — 19 graduate students and 7 undergraduates — have been so recognized for 2020. An additional 22 students received honorable mentions.

The total number of winners is up from 19 last year of the distinction that also provides research security and freedom by giving graduate students $138,000 over three years.

"I'm incredibly proud of the entire community that had a hand in our campus' success," said Robby Nadler, graduate writing specialist in UCSB Graduate Division, who mentored many of the awardees in his annual NSF GRFP (Graduate Research Fellowship Program) Success Series.

"From previous student winners volunteering their time to read application drafts to faculty panels offering strategies for successful applications, this was a team effort," he continued. "This includes staff members Victoria Steffes and Joseph Alzagatiti, who joined me in reading dozens of student applications and Julie Standish (and her

staff) in the Materials Research Laboratory for giving our series a home and funding. No one wins a GRFP alone, and it has been an honor to help run our campus' GRFP program."

"I am delighted to learn of these tremendous results," said Carol Genetti, Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean. "UC Santa Barbara has always punched above its weight with regards to this competition, but Robby Nadler and his team have now taken our game to a whole new level. The combination of carefully crafted workshops and individual mentoring is powerful and effective.

"Of course, the core of this success is our superb graduate students, who dedicated time and effort to produce stellar applications," Genetti continued. "They are truly impressive and I warmly congratulate all of them on this distinguished honor."

While the number of UCSB fellows increased significantly this year, Nadler said, so did the group's range of disciplines. "Not only did we have our first winner in the social sciences in a number of years, but we had three of them."

Early analysis suggests that, based on total winners, UCSB ranks No. 22 among all institutions nationwide with GRFP awardees, according to Nadler. But, he noted, adjusting the data for population demographics and by category, which takes months, will provide an even more accurate reflection of the university's performance. For example, his figures, currently show UCSB at No. 18 among all institutions for graduate student winners. However, UCSB's graduate population is smaller than that of most institutions, so this ranking rises when controlling for enrollment.

"Using last year's data as an estimate, UCSB would climb to No. 4 in graduate student winners," Nadler said, "so we're expecting a sizeable climb in this year's rankings because the seven added graduate winners is an enormous jump for a school of our size."

As the oldest graduate fellowship of its kind, the NSF GRFP has a long history of selecting recipients who achieve high levels of success in their future academic and professional careers.

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.