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Fellowships for Justice

In light of recent protests against police violence directed at Black communities and the persistence of systemic racism, the Graduate Division and multiple deans at UC Santa Barbara have launched an initiative designed to enhance the recruitment of graduate students committed to teaching, research and mentorship around racial justice.

The Racial Justice Fellowships will provide recipients $8,000 in summer funding for three years on top of a five-year package of full funding. Four fellowships, open to incoming students in any discipline, will be offered each year. All departments may nominate students for this opportunity.

“The Racial Justice Fellowship Program is desperately needed and right on time,” said Walter Boggan, graduate division director of admissions, outreach, and diversity initiatives. “This most important action by the UC Santa Barbara Graduate Division and deans from across all disciplines highlights their support and a true commitment to our future Black, Indigenous and graduate students of color.”

Interim Graduate Dean Leila Rupp worked with fellow deans and campus leaders to build this program to recognize and provide financial support for incoming graduate students committed to racial justice. “Students in a variety of disciplines are engaged in research that explores the historical roots or contemporary experiences of racism; the educational, environmental, health or economic disparities impacting Black, Indigenous and communities of color; cultural, social and political anti-racist resistance; and other ways in which systemic racism and responses to it have

shaped and continue to shape human societies," she said.

Rupp noted that graduate students also work to translate and mobilize research on topics unconnected to racial justice in the interests of marginalized communities. "In addition, some have provided mentorship for underrepresented high school students, and have participated in university or community organizations in the interests of racial justice," she said. "They have worked in so many ways to demonstrate a commitment to building an inclusive and just campus or community environment."

The Racial Justice Fellowship Program is a campuswide collaboration supported by the Graduate Division as well as the deans of the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management; the College of Engineering; the Division of Humanities and Fine Arts; the Division of Social Sciences; the Division of Mathematical, Life, and Physical Science; and the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education.

"The College of Engineering enthusiastically applauds the establishment of the Racial Justice Fellowships," said Rod Alferness, dean of engineering. "They will provide important steps toward building a more inclusive and just college and campus community. As a college, we hold inclusivity and diversity as core values, and we are committed to strengthening diversity in order to ensure that every individual feels welcome and an integral part of our college. We embrace and celebrate inclusion because a more diverse environment will provide new insight to solve society's grand challenges."

For the past nine years, the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education has been one of the leading divisions at UC Santa Barbara in attracting and providing access to postgraduate education to people traditionally underrepresented in the academy. This fall, over 40% of students entering their doctoral, masters and credential programs are members of the African American, Native American, and Chicanx/Latinx communities.

"The Gevirtz School takes its responsibility and duty as a school to use education research, practice and policy tools to dismantle racism and promote the wellbeing of our many diverse communities incredibly seriously," said Jeffrey Milem, Gevirtz School dean. "The new Racial Justice Fellowships abet our efforts in crucial ways, helping us attract and retain a diverse student body who will do research that focuses on the pursuit and attainment of social justice."

In conjunction with other initiatives already underway across campus, this fellowship program is designed to foster a more inclusive university community committed to racial justice. “Society is raising more complex questions which require more complex research and solutions,” said Carlos Nash, director of graduate diversity programs. “The lived experience of the people asking the questions are diverse, and we need highly-informed, multifaceted research to develop complex solutions. The university’s core missions are teaching, research and public service. We definitely have a role in addressing social needs and issues.”

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.