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For some undergraduates, summer means grad school prep

Marge Perko

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Once again, summer brings over two dozen undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds for research and graduate school preparation at UC Santa Barbara. Twenty-six scholars participating in [UCSB UC Leadership Excellence through Advanced Degrees \(UC LEADS\)](#), the [Academic Research Consortium \(ARC\)](#), the [CSU/Sally Casanova Scholar Program](#), [Cal-Bridge](#), and the [UCSB-California State University Channel Islands \(CSUCI\) Summer Research Experience](#) are developing summer projects and graduate school readiness in labs, classrooms and workshops across campus.

“For undergraduates who may not have the chance to work on research projects, and for master’s students seeking experience at a Research I university, this is the opportunity of a lifetime,” said Interim Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean Leila J. Rupp. “Our dream is to recruit every single one of these students to UC Santa Barbara.”

It’s also an opportunity for graduate students to practice mentoring.

UCSB-CSUCI graduate student mentor Annjulie Vester, a doctoral student in the Department of Political Science, said she was excited about the opportunity to work with undergraduate students. “That’s not something that we get to do as grad students in political science beyond teaching,” she said, adding that she also learns from her students. “Even though they’re much younger than me, I think there’s much to be learned about their passion and their drive to go to grad school.”

One of Vester’s summer mentees is Abbie Wells, a biology and biochemistry student at CSUCI. “I’m looking to get a graduate degree, hopefully apply for a Ph.D. program this next cycle,” she said. “I really want to research and see how labs on a campus work. I’m excited to do some science – I love what I do.” She is also looking forward to experiencing the UCSB campus environment. “It’s a beautiful campus,” she said. “I’ve never been here before and I know that UCSB has a reputation for having great science.”

Computer science graduate student Danish Ebadulla is mentoring UC LEADS scholar Krish Jain, a UCSB transfer student in data science and statistics. Jain works in the Dynamo Lab under the guidance of Professor Ambuj Singh. Ebadulla was inspired to be a UC LEADS graduate student mentor by his experiences working with students during this year’s Early Research Scholars Program (ERSP).

“Mentoring allows me to share my passion for research, and watching students learn and grow into fully-fledged researchers is incredibly fulfilling,” Ebadulla said. “I’m excited to mentor Krish as he embarks on his first foray into graduate research. My goal is to provide him with firsthand experience of the research process, including its challenges and rewards.

“Research involves both exciting breakthroughs and moments of uncertainty, and experiencing both is crucial to developing a true appreciation for the work of a researcher,” he added. In addition to research mentorship and opportunities, the Graduate Division also provides over 18 workshops, training sessions and events on topics such as guidance on graduate program admissions, presentation skills, working with a faculty mentor and self-care. The students are also developing essential graduate writing skills through workshops led by Robby Nadler, a lecturer for the Academic and Professional Writing Program at the Victoria University of Wellington, and will receive extensive coaching on presenting their research. They’ll have the opportunity to demonstrate what they learn at the UCSB-CSUCI Summer Research Experience and the Academic Research Consortium symposia in August.

“This summer we are fostering community and shared experiences across departments and disciplines for approximately 100 participating summer scholars,” said Karen van Gool, assistant director for graduate outreach. “Why is this important? Because it’s essential that students understand that their community might not solely come from their department or their discipline, but rather across majors, affinity groups, clubs or other organizations. With our summer research programs and events, we provide promising future doctoral scholars an opportunity to glimpse what life is like as a UC Santa Barbara graduate student.

The summer research programs also promote access to graduate education opportunities as part of the [University of California’s Growing Our Own Initiative](#), which focuses on recruiting UC graduate students from the many UCs and CSUs that are classified as minority-serving institutions.

Director of Graduate Diversity Programs Carlos Nash stewards the [CSUCI-UCSB Summer Experience](#), a pipeline for CSU students to prepare for advanced degree programs at UC Santa Barbara. “We are not only providing opportunities for CSU students to receive research experience; we are also trying to recruit them as future graduate students at UCSB,” he said. “Faculty members who open their research spaces to these scholars get an opportunity to know them well, thus potentially becoming important advocates for when they apply to our graduate programs.

“The combined efforts of UCSB's summer research programs — like UC LEADS, ARC, the CSU/Sally Casanova Scholar Program, Cal-Bridge and the UCSB-CSUCI Summer Research Experience — create a dynamic and nurturing community for scholars,” said Walter Boggan, director of admissions, outreach, and diversity. “These collaborations offer invaluable mentorship, comprehensive workshops, and diverse research opportunities, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Through these interdisciplinary connections, scholars not only hone their academic and professional skills but also build lasting relationships that prepare them for graduate school and beyond.”

Media Contact

Marge Perko

marge.perko@ucsb.edu

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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.