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Interim Graduate Dean Leila Rupp to pass torch to Janine Jones

Janine Jones, a professor of school psychology and university dean of academic affairs will join UC Santa Barbara on July 1 as the newly titled Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Affairs and Anne and Michael Towbes Dean of the Graduate Division. Jones will take the reins from Leila Rupp, who has served as the interim dean since 2020.

“I’m delighted to be handing things over to Janine Jones, who I know will be terrific,” said Rupp, adding that her long tenure as interim dean “was a wonderful addition to my almost 50 years as a teacher and scholar.”

Jones joins the UCSB community from the University of Washington, where she has served as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs since 2020, and as a professor of school psychology in the College of Education since 2019. Jones is a licensed psychologist and has been a clinical supervisor in the UW School of Psychology Clinic. She received the Black School Psychologists Network Inaugural Summit’s Legend in School Psychology Award and was inducted into the Society for the Study of School Psychology in 2021. From 2018–2024, she served as Vice President for Professional Affairs with the American Psychological Association: Division 16, and is an elected member of the American Psychological Association’s Board of Professional Affairs.

“I’m most looking forward to championing the incredible work of our graduate students and ensuring they have the resources, mentorship, and community they need to thrive,” Jones said. “Graduate education is the engine of innovation—not just at UCSB, but for society at large—and I’m eager to amplify its impact.”

Rupp, an acclaimed historian, author and professor of feminist studies, took on the job of Interim Graduate Dean at the start of the pandemic in 2020. Despite the uncertainty and challenges of remote interactions during her first year, Rupp went on to welcome new cohorts of graduate students via virtual orientation, launched the Racial Justice Fellowship and its annual symposium, hosted an entirely online Grad Slam competition and congratulated new master’s and doctoral recipients via video during 2021 commencement.

In 2022, as students, staff and faculty were returning in-person to college campuses, a new challenge arose when more than 48,000 academic workers went on strike throughout the UC system. “I’m very glad that our graduate students won much-deserved better pay and benefits,” Rupp said. “But that left the Graduate Division in the position of figuring out a way to increase the stipends of our most prestigious fellowships without an increase in our budget. Our most pressing needs are more fellowships and more housing.”

As she nears the end of her term, Rupp notes the significance of graduate education during these tumultuous times.

“Now is the most challenging moment of all when the very existence of the university is under attack,” she said. “I think it’s so important that the wider public understand how critical graduate education is to all of our lives. Graduate students make every area of university life possible: they assist faculty members with their research and engage in their own innovative projects; they teach and mentor our undergraduate students; and they perform service on campus and beyond. Once they leave here, they take their abilities and skills and commitments and passions out into the world. Whether as faculty members in higher education, researchers in industry, teachers in public or private schools, administrators in non-profits, journalists, editors, artists, musicians — they will be meeting the challenges we face today from multiple perspectives. They are our future, and what they do is more critical than ever right now.”

Jones shares Rupp's commitment to fostering the potential of graduate students and unlocking opportunities for the next generation of scholars, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds.

"I'm deeply collaborative and relational," Jones said. "I believe in listening first, learning from a variety of perspectives, and being decisive to address needs. I'm committed to fostering an environment where every graduate student feels valued and supported in pursuing their academic and professional goals."

Rupp is confident that her successor will have a great team and a collaborative UCSB community to support her initiatives.

"This is, in my opinion, the best administrative job on campus. Working for our graduate students is so rewarding, and the staff members in the Graduate Division are amazing, committed, hard-working and fun," Rupp said. "UC Santa Barbara is a very special place, and what I call our 'small but mighty' graduate population is one of the things that makes it that way."

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.