

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Marge Perko

UCSB Graduate Division launches summer bridge program for CSU students

The first group of incoming doctoral students in UC Santa Barbara's newly launched GRAD EDGE (Engagement and Development for Graduate Equity) program begin their eight-week summer bridge studies in July.

Funded through the University of California Growing Our Own initiative, EDGE strengthens doctoral recruitment and persistence by providing early research engagement, structured mentorship and community-building before the start of the academic year. Transitioning to graduate study at UCSB, the ten GRAD EDGE students are arriving from California State University (CSU) campuses, including San Marcos, San Diego, Northridge, Fresno, Fullerton, Long Beach and Cal Poly Pomona.

Each EDGE Fellow receives a \$5,000 stipend, summer housing in San Clemente residence hall and \$1,000 for meals. The summer program runs July 12 through September 4.

"GRAD EDGE holds special significance for me because it was one of the first initiatives we pursued after I arrived at UCSB," said Janine Jones, Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Affairs and Anne and Michael Towbes Graduate Dean. "From the beginning, I was inspired by the extraordinary talent emerging from our CSU partners and the opportunity to help create a bridge to doctoral education. This

program reflects our belief that expanding access to research opportunities and mentorship benefits not only individual students but also the future of innovation and discovery. We are excited to welcome the inaugural cohort of scholars and support them as they explore the possibilities of advanced research and graduate study.”

Fellows will work on a research project under the mentorship of a faculty member in their home department, allowing students to build skills and connections before the beginning of fall quarter. They will also participate in a curated professional development workshop series to navigate the graduate school environment, create an Individual Development Plan for time management and productivity and explore resources available to them at UCSB.

“We want our fellows to know they have a supportive network behind them from the very start,” said Michele Johnson, Director of Graduate Admissions, Outreach and Diversity. “By connecting fellows with mentors and peers early on, we are cultivating a thriving, inclusive graduate community at UCSB where students feel supported in succeeding.”

This year’s inaugural EDGE Fellows are Brandin Ali (education), Karely Valdez Lopez (counseling, clinical and school psychology), Francesca Rodriguez (clinical), Fernando Casanova (Spanish and Portuguese), Telvis Marquez (Spanish and Portuguese), Darius Garrino (linguistics), Danielle Vu (sociology), Elsie Romero (earth science and geophysics), Chenrui Zhang (computer science) and Sebastian Aguero (chemistry and biochemistry).

“The research these fellows are creating is not only meaningful, but also impactful to the broader academic community and the fields they are committed to advancing,” said GRAD EDGE Coordinator Sebastian Lopez-Padilla. “We want to celebrate all that they’ve invested to reach this point in their journey, and one way we can do that is by reducing financial stressors. By doing so, we allow fellows to fully embrace their roles as students and engage with their work on a deeper level, with UCSB serving as their home and foundation for the next several years.”

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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.