

THE *Current*

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[Debra Herrick](#)

Two UC Santa Barbara graduates receive inaugural Lafayette Fellowship

Selected from a pool of 3,400 applicants, recent UC Santa Barbara graduates Matthieu Huy '24 and Enri Lala '26 will spend the coming academic year in France, pursuing fully funded master's degrees as members of the inaugural Lafayette Fellowship cohort.

Offered by Villa Albertine, the French Institute for Culture and Education, the fellowship supports 30 American students pursuing graduate study at leading French universities and grandes écoles. Fellows also participate in a French-American leadership program that includes mentorship and immersive cultural and civic experiences across France.

Huy, who earned bachelor's degrees in economics and environmental studies, will pursue a master's degree in public policy and development/applied economics at the Toulouse School of Economics. He currently works as a research assistant at the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, contributing to macroeconomic policy and academic research.

As an undergraduate, Huy was involved with UCSB's Environmental Markets Lab. That work contributed to a recent publication in the Journal of Environmental Justice documenting the exposure of U.S. carceral facilities to environmental hazards. He

plans to pursue a career in public policy.

“Navigating today’s complex social, environmental and economic crises requires unwavering faith in international collaboration,” Huy said. “This fellowship empowers me to explore my Francophone identity alongside visionary peers and mentors who share my deep commitment to global cooperation and evidence-based policy at a time when cross-border solutions are needed more than ever.”

Lala graduated from UCSB with bachelor’s degrees in history and global studies and a minor in French. He will pursue a master’s degree in international relations at the University of Strasbourg, where he plans to continue researching weapons technology development and its effects on civilian life.

As an undergraduate, Lala served as internal vice president for UCSB Associated Students and founded a media platform focused on Balkan issues, experiences that allowed him to develop a background in public service and cultural activism.

“Studying the French language and culture has fostered a strong connection to my European roots,” Lala said. “This incredible opportunity deepens this bond while allowing me to pursue the pressing defense questions which will shape the future of the transatlantic relationship — which I hope to dedicate much of my career to strengthening.”

Established in 2025 to mark the 250th anniversary of French-American friendship, the Lafayette Fellowship is offered by Villa Albertine in partnership with France Science and with support from Albertine Foundation. The inaugural cohort was selected through a national process chaired by Nobel Prize-winning economist Esther Duflo.

The fellows visited Paris before beginning a summer leadership program across Paris, Avignon, Arles and Marseille.

Tags

[Awards](#)

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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.