

From: [Dean of the Graduate Division](#)
To: [Dean of the Graduate Division](#)
Subject: New Approach to Advancing Graduate Program Competitiveness and Diversity
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December 3, 2021

TO: TOTAL CAMPUS DEANS
GENERAL CAMPUS ASSISTANT DEANS
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT AND GROUP CHAIRS
GRADUATE PROGRAM ADVISORS
GRADUATE COORDINATORS
DEPARTMENT BUSINESS OFFICERS
CC: ACADEMIC SENATE CHAIR
ACADEMIC SENATE VICE CHAIR
EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR - ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
VICE CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
VICE CHANCELLOR - STUDENT AFFAIRS
VICE CHANCELLOR - EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION
GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT
FR: JAMES ANTONY, Dean of The Graduate Divisions

SUBJ: New Approach to Advancing Graduate Program Competitiveness and Diversity

In March 2021, the UC San Diego administration [announced a commitment](#) to further improving graduate funding, to make our graduate admissions offers more competitive and also enhance the diversity of the students who enroll in and earn degrees from our graduate programs. A key aspect of this commitment is the opportunity for students to earn at least \$30K during each 12-month period of their funding guarantee, through a combination of stipend support allocated to those departments that do not yet meet this minimum and the progressive creation of more summer employment opportunities.

UC San Diego has now admitted its first cohort of new PhD and MFA students with a funding guarantee of five years and three years, respectively. This new era of universal funding guarantees opens an opportunity to assess the efficacy of our historically-defined approaches to graduate funding allocations for improving competitiveness and diversity.

Accordingly, during summer 2021, a task force of faculty, students, administrators, and staff met regularly to assess the impact and sustainability of the block grant formula and our diversity incentive strategy. The task force recently forwarded a series of recommendations on both components of graduate funding. *The UC San Diego administration has accepted the task force's recommendations and is investing approximately \$8M in additional recurring resources to implement them.*

I am writing to offer you an update on the implementation of the task force's integrated recommendations regarding block grant and other diversity incentive resources, which are jointly intended to improve yield and diversity in our entering graduate cohorts, along with improved degree completion rates for students from historically marginalized populations.

BLOCK GRANT

Here, I provide an update on the implementation of the task force's *block grant*

recommendations, and an announcement of FY 22/23 block grant allocations.

A New Block Grant Formula

A long-standing goal of graduate funding reform has been to simplify the block grant formula, making it more predictable and transparent. The task force worked to achieve these goals, while also allocating summer stipend resources to departments that do not yet meet the 12-month \$30K stipend minimum.

In its simplest form, the task force's recommended block grant formula for PhD programs with minimal resources is:

*(3 quarters of tuition, fees, and stipend; plus 2 summers of stipend) * (entering cohort size jointly agreed to by the program and Graduate Division)*

The formula is similar for MFA programs, with the exception that the summer stipend component is for one summer.

Implementation

While some programs are nearly fully dependent upon the block grant and TA-ships to fund their students, others have access to external resources and have consequently never relied upon the block grant as a primary source of graduate funding. Therefore, the implementation of the new formula will be adjusted to take into account program variation in access to different types of external resources.

Furthermore, as the March 2021 campus-wide announcement "[Additional Investment in Doctoral and MFA Summer Support](#)" made clear, new resources to enable a 12-month stipend floor of \$30K are focused on graduate programs where student support has historically been below this amount. Shortly after the campus-wide announcement, School/Division Deans were consulted to confirm which graduate programs already met or exceeded the 12-month \$30K stipend minimum, and which still needed resources to meet this requirement.

Taking the above factors into account, the task force recommended that the implementation of the "3Q+2S * cohort size" formula be contextually adjusted and that these adjustments be reviewed periodically by School/Division Deans and the Graduate Dean.

The upshot is that for FY 22/23 nearly all programs will see a one-time increase in their block grant.

- For most programs within the Division of Arts & Humanities, the Rady School of Management, and the Division of Social Sciences (except for Psychology, which has historically funded its students above the 12-month \$30K floor), 100 percent of the agreed-upon entering cohort size shall be used as the multiplier in the 3Q + 2S formula in determining the block grant for FY22/23.
- For Psychology, SIO, the Division of Biological Sciences, the Division of Physical Sciences, the Jacobs School of Engineering, and Health Sciences PhD programs, the previous year's block grant shall be augmented by a one-time amount.
 - In addition to the one-time increase, Math and Clinical Psychology shall also receive an appropriate summer stipend component to account for the fact that neither program has historically reached the 12-month \$30K minimum stipend.
- In FY 22/23, nearly all other programs will also receive a one-time increase in their block grant; and HDSI, as a new PhD program, will have an initial level of support and block grant value determined using a methodology to be discussed with that program's

leadership.

Other Important Notes:

The following notes govern the implementation of this new block grant formula:

- The Graduate Division will outline basic accountability and reporting requirements at the department and school/division levels.
- Departments can make local decisions about how to spend block grant funds in support of graduate education each year, so long as they meet the obligations of funding guarantees to students. Departments must spend their full block grant allocation on an annual basis.
- The block grant may be adjusted in future years, subject to the availability of funding.
- GSGEI allocations totaling about \$15M per year, which provide substantial relief for non-resident supplemental tuition (NRST), shall continue this year at the current 90% reimbursement value. **Please note that this year-by-year program is subject to annual review.**
- We expect this renewed campus investment in block grant to be strategically deployed by departments and schools/divisions to yield improved rates of enrollment and degree attainment by students from historically marginalized populations.

Finally, in an effort to promote transparency, the FY 22/23 block grant and diversity allocations for all programs will now be posted online, easily reachable from the Graduate Division website. The direct link for [FY 22/23 allocations can be found here](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AIMED AT IMPROVING DIVERSITY

Here, I provide an update on the implementation of the task force's recommendations for ***resources aimed at improving diversity***. There is also an update on Student Housing Opportunity Recruitment Enhancement (SHORE) slots.

Examining the Diversity Recruitment Strategy

The current diversity strategy has not been examined in many years. Because we have entered an era of universal funding guarantees for all PhD and MFA students, the university has an opportunity to explore the possibility of considering more than just recruitment-only strategies when it comes to advancing diversity. In its conversations, the task force discussed several challenges associated with the historic diversity recruitment fellowship strategy. These included:

- The cumbersome nature of the current fellowship nomination process has placed many departments at a disadvantage when competing for students.
- Some programs receive awards year after year, while others rarely get any awards.
 - The current strategy is almost entirely dependent upon individual disciplines' recruitment cycles and admission yields--if a department is not fortunate enough to yield a student it has nominated for a diversity fellowship then the department receives no diversity monies.
- The recruitment-only focus of the existing diversity strategy limits departmental flexibility to advance diversity in other equally important ways.
 - Many departments wish they had access to funds that would allow them to promote diversity goals using additional strategies that extend beyond recruitment.
- The current diversity fellowship strategy has lacked a dedicated, permanent budget line leading to wide variation, year-over-year, in the number of awards and in spending; and offers no mechanism for aiding our Graduate Council in further incentivizing diversity.
 - A new approach is needed that creates a dedicated, predictable, funding stream for diversity resources that departments can count on, that the Graduate Division can responsibly manage as part of its now-enhanced graduate support budget, and that

gives Graduate Council the ability to help advance diversity goals.

Because each department's diversity goals may differ, defining diversity dollars solely in terms of recruitment fellowships in an era of universal funding guarantees may have been attenuating some departments' ability to reach their diversity goals. The task force recognized the need for greater flexibility. The task force also recognized the utility of a predictable source of diversity incentive money, as opposed to the current strategy which did not guarantee money to any department. The task force recognized the importance of creating a dedicated and predictable line item in the budget specifically for advancing diversity, to support clear tracking of university investments, programs' expenditures, and their impact on diversity in our graduate programs. Finally, the task force recommended providing an additional new mechanism for the Graduate Council to further incentivize measurable progress on diversity within graduate programs,

A New Two-Pronged Approach to Advancing Graduate Program Diversity

The task force recommended a new two-pronged approach to advancing graduate program diversity, in place of the existing diversity recruitment fellowship strategy. Therefore, with the exception of the Tribal Membership Initiative (see notes below), beginning with the current admissions recruitment cycle the Graduate Division will no longer follow the nomination-driven diversity recruitment fellowship strategy of the past. Instead, this new two-pronged approach shall be used:

Prong 1: Fixed Allocation of Diversity Incentive Money

Each department will receive an annual fixed allocation of diversity incentive money that they may use as part of their overall strategy to achieve the university's goals of recruiting, retaining, and graduating an increasingly more diverse graduate student cohort. **For FY 22/23, this amount shall be up to \$30,000.** Departments that offer both the PhD and MFA shall receive one \$30K allocation.

Using the same definition we have always used, diversity resources should be allocated to US Citizen, Permanent Resident, or AB 540 qualified students: *whose presence would enhance diversity to the benefit of the entire campus community. This includes being from a disadvantaged social, educational, or economic background, and/or demonstrating a commitment to diversity and/or being committed to increasing educational access for underrepresented students.*

As has always been true, we ask that diversity resource allocation decisions be made by more than one departmental representative, so as to avoid the possibility that any single individual is responsible for making these decisions. Department chairs should take the lead on designating a group of individuals who will make these decisions, whether it be their admission committee or another group altogether. In order to aid decision making, especially for incoming students, the graduate application will continue to contain prompts that allow applicants to offer information about their contributions to diversity.

Diversity resources should be allocated as direct-to-student aid. Departments may choose what amounts to award, and may spend money on more than one student. The money does not need to be spent on incoming students, although a department is free to do so. However, when allocating resources, departments must adhere to the following spending guidelines, which have been recommended by the task force:

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Spending Guidelines for Diversity Incentive Money

This direct-to-student aid may be spent in any of the following ways (specific students must be identified as recipients of specific amounts):

- to top off the stipend of a student who contributes to diversity
- as additional summer stipend support for a student who contributes to diversity
- as direct admission recruitment support of a student who contributes to diversity; this may include any approach to help yield an accepted student (such as travel to UCSD, or other recruitment support to help an accepted student choose our campus)
- as research support (including conference travel, data collection support, support for archival work, fieldwork support, etc.) for a student who contributes to diversity
- as a partial or full “buyout” from TA responsibilities for a student who contributes to diversity
- to fully or partially match other departmental support for a student who contributes to diversity

Prong 2: Recommendation--Academic Senate Graduate Council Diversity Incentive Money

One of the strengths of UC San Diego is its robust system of shared governance. The faculty who serve on the Academic Senate’s Graduate Council have long held an interest in promoting, and incentivizing, the diversity of our graduate programs. Up until now, however, any recommendations the Graduate Council might have made lacked a means for follow-up.

The task force suggested providing a new mechanism for the Academic Senate’s Graduate Council to further incentivize diversity within graduate programs. The task force proposed that, each year, a pool of diversity incentive money (equivalent to 10 percent of the average of the top five departmental block grant allocations) could be held within the Graduate Division to support the Academic Senate’s Graduate Council recommendations. The Academic Senate’s Graduate Council could make decisions about how to allocate this money and establish expectations for department/school/division reporting and accountability, with the Graduate Division managing the logistics. This proposed recommendation from the task force still needs to undergo formal Senate review before implementation is finalized.

Assessment and Accountability

The fixed allocation of up to \$30,000 in diversity incentive money is offered on an annual basis. Departments must spend the money on an annual basis. No carry forward of diversity incentive monies shall be allowed. The Graduate Division will, at the close of each academic year, ask departments to report how the money was spent, and on whom, and what the demonstrable impact on diversity has been.

The Graduate Division will work with the Academic Senate’s Graduate Council, schools/divisions, and departments to periodically assess the impact of this new two-pronged approach, with the first assessment occurring no later than 2025. As clear areas of improvement emerge, we will jointly explore refining the approach.

In an effort to promote university-wide transparency, all block grant and diversity allocations will now be posted online, easily reachable from the Graduate Division website. The direct link

for [FY 22/23 allocations can be found here](#).

Retaining the Names and Honoring Prior Commitments

The task force recognized the value to a student when they received a named award. Therefore, in allocating funds to departments, the Graduate Division will designate some funds with the honorifics “Cota Robles Fellowship” and/or “San Diego Fellowship,” and/or other honorifics that are developed over time.

Another existing competitive nomination-driven fellowship program--the Tribal Membership Initiative (TMI)--will continue as single-year awards with the possibility of renewal. The Graduate Division is able to use endowment resources to support this award. These endowment resources presently enable us to offer a maximum of five TMI fellowships per year.

UC San Diego looks forward to raising additional money to support further growth in named awards promoting diversity in graduate education.

Please note that any previously-awarded diversity fellowship commitments will be honored. Both the Graduate Division and departments shall meet their commitments to students who received past awards, according to the offer letters received by those recipients.

Student Housing Opportunity Recruitment Enhancement (SHORE) Slots

SHORE slots are multi-year housing guarantees (maximum 6 years) intended to be used as recruitment incentives that aid departments in advancing their diversity goals. HDH annually allocates 200 SHORE slots to the Graduate Division, and slots will continue to be proportionally allocated to programs based on the previous year’s Fall quarter doctoral and MFA population size. A maximum of 10 slots shall be allocated to any one program, and slots will continue to be allocated to programs that offer only masters degrees. Further details on the SHORE program, along with final allocation numbers, will be shared at the annual Graduate Coordinator’s SHORE Luncheon in Winter quarter.

As a reminder, the Graduate Division expects departments to prioritize the awarding of their SHORE slots in ways that demonstrably advance diversity, such as offering these slots to students who contribute to diversity, those who are from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who are first-generation. To that end, graduate programs may continue to offer any of their allocated SHORE slots to students who receive any of the above-described Cota Robles or San Diego diversity incentive monies.

In closing, we thank the task force for their hard work and thoughtful recommendations. We look forward to seeing these integrated changes to graduate funding enhance the competitiveness of our admissions packages, the yield of students, and our ability to promote access, inclusion, and success for students from groups that have long been underrepresented in the academy.

UC San Diego occupies the un-ceded territory of Kumeyaay Nation. Today, the Kumeyaay people continue to maintain their political sovereignty and cultural traditions, and are vital members of the San Diego community.

We acknowledge their great contributions to the region and the university’s responsibility to honor and serve this community.

