

San Diego Fellowship Program Guidelines and Application Form

(For Submission of a Paper Application Form)

- For U.S. citizens and permanent residents only
- Apply at the time of application for admission to the university
- Only new incoming students are eligible
- Applications for the fellowships must be received by mid-March

The University of California, San Diego offers this fellowship program as a means to increasing campus diversity. The program is motivated by the campus's commitment to be fully inclusive and supportive of all students, and by the belief that a diverse graduate student body enhances the quality of the educational experience for all students.

The fellowship program provides two awards: The San Diego Fellowship and the Eugene Cota-Robles Fellowship. Both are recruitment and retention tools that provide fellowship support to those students who merit admission into graduate programs at UCSD and whose presence would enhance diversity to the benefit of the entire campus community. Two of the Cota-Robles Fellowships are designated as McNair Fellowships and awarded to nominees who participated in the Ronald McNair Program as undergraduates. An American Indian recipient, if any, of the Cota-Robles Fellowship will be awarded the Irene McFarland Trust Fellowship, which will be substituted for part of the Cota-Robles Fellowship. Although the University seeks racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, California law prohibits preferential treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin. Consequently, selection of award recipients may not be based on these criteria. Points to consider when completing the application are in Appendix A, Applicant Guide, at the end of this file.

Each department or program may nominate six (6) candidates for the fellowships. Applicants who submit the fellowship application form are first reviewed by their department/program. All Ph.D., D.M.A., Ed.D., and M.F.A. students selected as fellows shall receive two years of fellowship support from the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) and then two guaranteed years of comparable support by the department or program. OGS support is for years one and two only. All M.P.I.A. and M.A. students selected as fellows shall receive one year of funding. Funding may not be deferred. All continuing support is contingent upon the fellow remaining in good academic standing and meeting established departmental criteria for good academic progress toward the degree. All fellows shall have a faculty mentor appointed upon enrollment.

Nominees must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are recommended for admission to UCSD for Fall term. Nominees considered for the San Diego Fellowship must be recommended for admission to a program offering a Ph.D., D.M.A., Ed.D. or terminal Master's degree. Eligible Master's degrees are the M.F.A., M.P.I.A., M.A. in Latin American Studies and M.A. in Teaching and Learning. Nominees considered for the Cota-Robles Fellowship must be recommended for admission to a program offering the Ph.D., D.M.A. and Ed.D. degree. Candidates for either fellowship must complete a

San Diego Fellowship form, contained in the UCSD Application for Graduate Admissions, to be eligible.

Applications by individuals who are from underrepresented groups are encouraged, although all qualified applicants will be considered without regard to race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. Fellowships will be awarded based on applicants' eligibility (having social, educational or economic backgrounds that would add to the diversity of UCSD's graduate programs, or demonstrating a commitment to increasing educational access for underrepresented students) and merit (based on academic preparation and potential). The following are examples of how a student could enhance campus or departmental diversity.

- Student has successfully overcome significant educational, social, cultural, or economic disadvantage or adversity in a way that would enable him or her to contribute to the campus community in a manner that enhances campus diversity.
- Student has unique circumstances, experiences, skills or talents that would benefit others and would enhance the diversity of the program or campus.
- Student has a strong interest in undertaking research that would address issues of diversity as it relates to ethnic communities, social equity and justice, or economic opportunity.
- Student has shown a deep commitment to working with others, through such activities as mentoring or tutoring, to promote educational access to higher education for underserved groups.

Examples of experiences that indicate the student has had to overcome disadvantage or adversity include:

- Was educated in a school or college with limited facilities and educational opportunities.
- Had a low family income or had to work full time in high school or as an undergraduate to support family and/or to pay for college.
- Was the first member of immediate family to complete college.
- Overcame other social, cultural or economic barriers to pursue an education. The specific race, ethnicity, gender, or national origin of a nominee is not considered in selection, although barriers resulting from these personal circumstances are considered.

Summary of Eligibility

Nominee must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident;
- For the San Diego Fellowship, be recommended for admission to a program leading to a Ph.D., D.M.A., Ed.D., M.F.A., M.P.I.A., M.A. in Latin American Studies or M.A. in Teaching and Learning;
- For the Cota-Robles Fellowship, be recommended for admission to a Ph.D., Ed.D., or D.M.A. program;

- Enhance the diversity in the discipline, program or campus; and
- Have demonstrated high academic aptitude and achievement.

Funding Information

No deferment of the award will be permitted. The department or program may supplement the stipend amount.

Eugene Cota-Robles:

- Four-year award with stipend of \$18,000 and payment of tuition (first year only) and fees. OGS provides support for the first two years and the department provides support for the next two years at a comparable level or higher.

San Diego Fellowship:

- All Ph.D., D.M.A., Ed.D., and M.F.A. recipients receive four-year awards with stipends of \$15,000 and payments of tuition (first year only) and fees. OGS provides support for the first two years and the department provides support for the next two years at a comparable level or higher.
- All M.P.I.A. and M.A. recipients receive one-year awards of \$15,000 and payment of tuition and fees (professional fees not included).

Procedures

- Applicants must submit the fellowship application form to their academic department or program.
- The Department or program must nominate students to OGSR by the deadline in March.
- Departments or programs are limited to a combined total of 6 nominees for both fellowships.
- Departments or programs must provide a nomination letter that provides both an assessment of the nominee's academic merit and a compelling explanation of how the nominee will enhance diversity in the discipline, program or campus.

Application Instructions

Complete the application statement (below) and mail it directly to the department/program to which you are applying. If you are applying to more than one department/program you must submit a statement to each one. Your response to the application questions should be two pages or less.

Application Questions

The campus-wide committee that selects recipients uses the response to these questions as the primary source of information. Include all relevant information in this statement even though some information may be included in other parts of your application for admission.

- A. How would your presence increase campus or departmental diversity evaluated through your personal circumstances, conditions, experiences, contributions, commitments, and impacts? Selection is not based on the specific race, ethnicity, gender, or national origin of a nominee.

- B. What significant and unusual educational, social, cultural, economic, or other barriers have you overcome in pursuit of your education? Describe, in sufficient detail, the challenge as well as any unique insights, perspectives or skills you gained while overcoming this challenge. Describe how overcoming the aforementioned challenge will enable you to contribute to the campus community in a unique and positive manner that enhances campus diversity.

Questions about the application process may be directed to the academic department/program or to the Graduate Admissions Office at gradadmissions@ucsd.edu.

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SAN DIEGO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION
(SUBMIT TO YOUR PROSPECTIVE DEPARTMENT)

NAME:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM TO WHICH YOU HAVE APPLIED:

DEGREE AIM:

Respond to the fellowship questions in two pages or less

APPENDIX A

San Diego Fellowship Program – Applicant Guide

Strong candidates will usually fall into two of these categories. When the fellowship committee evaluates your application, it breaks the information provided into two parts: (1) Barriers overcome on the path to higher education; and (2) Commitment to diversity, demonstrated through activities undertaken, experiences had, skills obtained, and research planned to promote the interests of underserved groups in the U.S.

How to Demonstrate Barriers

In practice, barriers overcome on the path to college are highly variable, but among the most notable when the committee considers applications are: 1) being the first in your family to attend college; 2) attending secondary schools or colleges of limited educational resources; 3) working more than 20 hours per week in college to pay tuition and other expenses associated with getting your BA or BS; 4) supporting family members while still a student; 5) facing systematic discrimination.

Here are examples of how some applicants have demonstrated barriers:

“As a resident of a low-income neighborhood, I went to a high school that was rife with the gang culture of the Los Angeles Bloods and Crips. As a high school student, I mourned a 16-year-old classmate who had been mistakenly killed by senseless turf wars. Additionally I remember many examples of my high school lacking the necessary study materials and math textbooks. It was difficult to maintain the motivation to learn in circumstances where sports seemed to take the priority over academics.”

What the committee liked: The applicant was specific about the school and its environment. He could have explained in greater depth the particular barriers faced and how he overcame them on his path to higher education, but since his school was in the middle of gang territory, it was easy to see that those challenges existed, even if they were not enumerated.

“I am a first-generation college student. Neither of my parents graduated from college, my father, a tradesman, didn’t graduate from high school...At fifteen I was frustrated when I could not spend fun summer days with friends at the pool. Instead I worked as a waitress to earn money to attend Northwestern University, which, to my parents and me, symbolized a guarantee of professional success and financial stability...When I arrived at Northwestern, I felt disengaged from my peers, many of whom did not have to work, while I struggled to balance two part-time jobs with a full class load. But I was determined to take advantage of and fully enjoy my short time at Northwestern. So, with the help of professors and advisors, I poured my frustration into volunteer work.”

What the committee liked: The applicant skillfully integrated the story of her personal background with her reaction to it. She didn’t stop at demonstrating barriers in high

school; she also discussed her work in college, and how it set her apart from more privileged students. Finally, she addressed how her experiences helped direct her activities while a student.

“When I first moved on my own to the United States in 1997, going to school was a dream...My first barrier was my initial lack of command of the English language. This ability only came with time and with great effort going to ‘free’ language courses when available...[After I became a permanent resident] I was eligible for much lower school fees, which were at the time still high for me. I was working as a delivery driver in order to support a family while going to school. I am now working in order to provide the necessary financial help for my daughter at the same time that I am trying to support myself.”

What the committee liked: The applicant gave a full and frank account of his life since moving to the United States, including the fact that he was now raising a daughter on the proceeds of financial aid. Often, applicants address their lack of resources in early life in great depth but neglect to say anything about their circumstances now. The committee finds that barriers faced in the present are often just as or even more compelling than those faced in the past. How those barriers were overcome, what was learned, and what will be brought to UCSD as a result is also important.

“I was raised in a small town in rural Oklahoma...In school we were encouraged to go into agriculture or work in the oil fields. Instead I taught myself computer programming on an ancient computer in the high school library, because my family could not afford one...Coming from a mixed heritage and suffering two [medical] disorders, I was taught at a young age to appreciate differences.”

What the committee liked: The concrete details enhanced this application. General statements about “overcoming adversity” or facing general barriers never impresses the committee, but it can gauge exactly what challenges this student faced: coming from a poor family, an under funded school, and medical disorders, his path to the Ph.D. was more fraught than most. The candidate finished by establishing why overcoming these barriers would help him make a contribution to the university.

How to Demonstrate Commitment to Diversity

The fellowship is intended to encourage students with diverse personal experiences to attend UCSD, as well as to provide support to students who will contribute to their classmates’ educational enrichment. Because graduate students pursue different paths, the San Diego Fellowship committee provides multiple ways to demonstrate your contribution to campus life. Here are a few examples:

The committee particularly wants to hear about the implications of your research. Here’s how one successful candidate explained his research:

“My research interests are in the area of U.S. imperialism, globalization, and

immigration, but more specifically how these two processes have affected the social, economic, and political aspects of the U.S. and Latin American nations. Within this context my research will focus on how the lower classes in Latin America in general, and Brazil more specifically, were affected by coming to the U.S. and how they have adjusted to these processes in areas such as economic opportunity, social equity, and justice...[my research] helps pinpoint the reasons, and with them a solution, for the great socio-economic gap which is in the present moment leading cities like Rio de Janeiro to live in a state of almost constant, undeclared civil war.”

The committee also likes to hear about what in the candidate’s personal background prompted his/her research interests, as this successful applicant did:

“My connection to Latin America is personal and concrete, built upon my family history, reinforced by my socio-economic condition, and cultivated through my political consciousness...Once accepted into the LAS program at UCSD, my research will focus on human migration from Latin America. I am a product of this phenomenon, and a witness to the importance of this issue within the United States.”

The essay then went on to say more about the applicant’s involvement in immigration activism and the perspective that it had provided him on his graduate research.

But diversity can also exist in the context of a department or program. One applicant to the music program explained that he is unique in the context of traditional music studies because he traveled internationally as an “improvising, modern musician” and planned to focus on “European modern music” as a result of previous collaborations with interpretive dancers and aerialists. This fact was borne out in the nomination his department wrote for him, which mentioned that, in addition to his improvisation (which was unique within the department), he was also one of the few students from an economically disadvantaged background. If you choose diversity within the context of your department to fit this category, please be sure that your department is aware of how you provide this kind of diversity and they mention it in their support letter to Office of Graduate Studies. They know the entire applicant pool and all of the current students, and are able to say more about where you fit (or don’t fit, as the department did with this musician).

Finally, you can demonstrate diversity by discussing the volume of your mentoring and teaching activities. For example, women in engineering sometimes mention how they have spoken to organizations like the American Association for University Women about the challenges faced by women in science departments, or given mentoring seminars for middle or high school girls on careers in science. Others have simply mentored, tutored, or volunteered, as did this psychology graduate student:

“Although I gained an immense amount of experience and self-knowledge as an undergraduate, this activity alone does not entirely account for the intense personal growth I experienced...I served as a senior peer advisor for [college]’s Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO) Research Apprenticeship Program my

junior year in college...My role was that of a liaison between the student researchers and faculty members—specifically, to facilitate the development of successful research relationships which would carry over throughout the students’ undergraduate careers...My plans for future education solidified while I was volunteering at the hospital. It was my first work experience in a medical setting, and of all the volunteer duties I was most drawn to the psychiatric ward. I enjoyed interacting with all of the patients...The simple act of listening to their stories, ideas, fears, and worries seemed to brighten their outlook. Shortly thereafter, I knew my life would be dedicated to helping the mentally ill.”

Weaknesses we see in this component of the application generally involve failing to show the extent and level of involvement in volunteer experiences. While growing up in a diverse community or serving as an undergraduate TA to a diverse population are admirable pursuits, the committee expects to see *active* efforts to serve that are outside the ordinary purview of entering graduate students. The entire narrative of your involvement should be present, from the inception of your personal interest in the work undertaken and why it is of significance to you, to a full account of your current involvement with the activity.

Final Note

Your academic record is important to the university, and if it demonstrates part of the “diversity” component of your application, you should discuss it. However, departments typically nominate academically outstanding candidates. Very little academic variation exists in the nomination pool. Any differences in levels of academic performance among otherwise equally qualified candidates will be used to determine whether to award a San Diego Fellowship or a Cota-Robles Fellowship. Spend the bulk of your time talking about your barriers and your contribution to diversity. Evaluation of the application is holistic, rather than based on any single factor.

Good luck!