San Diego Fellowship Program Guidelines
and Paper Application Form

The University of California, San Diego offers the San Diego Fellowship program as a means to increase 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.

- Applicants for the fellowship must be U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or AB 540-qualified applicants only.
- Only new incoming students are eligible.
- Each applicant has the opportunity to respond to the San Diego Fellowship questions within the online application; the questions pertain to personal background and contributions to diversity.
- Responses to these questions will help the admissions committee assess your accomplishments to date as they relate to the San Diego Fellowship selection criteria.
- Applicants that do not respond to the questions within the online application may submit responses directly to the department to which they are applying.

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 are first reviewed by their department/program. Nominees must be U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or AB 540-qualified applicants who are recommended for admission to UCSD for the 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. or Ed.D. degree. Candidates for either fellowship must complete the San Diego Fellowship essays as part of the UCSD Application for Graduate Admissions to be eligible.
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 overcome social, educational or economic backgrounds and/or demonstrating a commitment to diversity or 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.

A student guide for completing the application is Appendix A at the end of this file.

Summary of Eligibility

Nominee must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident; AB 540 students are also eligible.
- 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 of the discipline, program or campus; and
- Have demonstrated high academic aptitude and achievement.

08-20-14
Award Information

Eugene Cota-Robles:

- Four-year award with stipend of up to $25,000, payment of tuition and fees, and where applicable payment of non-resident supplemental tuition (first year only). The Graduate Division provides support for the first two years and the department provides support for the next two years at a comparable level or higher. The department or program may supplement the stipend amount. 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.

San Diego Fellowship:

- All Ph.D. and D.M.A., recipients receive four-year awards with stipends of $18,000, payment of tuition and fees, and where applicable payment of non-resident supplemental tuition (first year only). The Graduate Division provides support for the first two years and the department provides support for the next two years at a comparable level or higher. The department or program may supplement the stipend amount.
- Ed.D. and M.F.A. students selected as fellows shall receive three year awards with stipends of $18,000, payment of tuition and fees, and where applicable, payment of non-resident supplemental tuition (first year only). The Graduate Division provides support for the first two years and the department provides support for the third year at a comparable level or higher. The department or program may supplement the stipend amount.
- All M.P.I.A and M.A. recipients receive one-year awards of $18,000, payment of tuition and fees, and where applicable payment of non-resident supplemental tuition. Note: professional fees are not included.
- 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.

Procedures

- Applicants must complete the San Diego Fellowship questions within the online Graduate Application.
- If the applicant did not respond to the questions in the online application, a fellowship application may be submitted directly to the academic department or program. See the paper application instructions below.
- Departments or programs must nominate students to The Graduate Division by the final 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 a compelling explanation of how the nominee will enhance diversity in the discipline, program or campus and a brief assessment of the nominee's academic merit.

**Paper Application Instructions**

Respond to the questions below and mail 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.

**San Diego Fellowship Application Questions**

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

A. How have you demonstrated a commitment to diversity in the past, and how would you work to increase campus or departmental diversity at UCSD? Describe personal experiences, contributions, commitments, and impacts that demonstrate your commitment to improving educational access or quality of life for diverse groups.

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.
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

08-20-14
Appendix A

San Diego Fellowship Program – Applicant Guide

The fellowship committee will evaluate your application based on (1) Barriers overcome on the path to higher education; and (2) Commitment to diversity, demonstrated through outreach activities and/or research (planned or completed) 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:

“Growing up in a low-income neighborhood in Santa Ana, California, and living off the meager income of my parents' blue collar factory work, my family consistently teetered on the verge of abject poverty. Due to the fact that my parents started work at 5am, being dropped off at school before dawn became the norm up until the end of high school. It was while sitting in empty classrooms and dark hallways waiting for other kids to arrive that I became wholly enamored with school – a place where teachers provided me with the kind of academic mentorship that my parents, by virtue of their hectic work schedules and inability to read or write with proficiency in English, could not engage in. In my naïve mind, I became engrossed with the notion that through my education I would liberate my parents from the economic hardships they faced on a daily basis.

“As the child of a Colombian migrant and an Iraqi refugee, I have often felt the pressing weight of the socioeconomic factors that have framed my pursuit of higher education and have sought to adjudicate my parents' struggles as migrants without access to avenues of public education by reaching the educational goals that they could not. I watched my own illiterate father struggle to make ends meet across various odd jobs due to a lack of access to education; before he could finish middle school in Iraq, he fled to neighboring countries to avoid an imminent draft into Saddam's army and did not have the luxury of pursuing educational goals. Similarly, my mother forsook an education and her childhood in order to support her family by traveling to the United States to work between jobs as a maid and a factory worker. Becoming the first person in both my immediate and extended family to attend a four-year university like the University of California, San Diego was a milestone that greatly impacted not only my appreciation for public education, but for the silent struggles and successes of other low-income, minority students like myself.”

What the committee liked: This student uses evocative images – the darkened school in which she waited for her classmates – that persuade the reader of her difficulties growing up.

08-20-14
Moreover, she shows how the difficulties she encountered due to her parents’ lack of education inspired her to pursue higher education herself. She tells a story of hardship that led to personal drive.

“My parents were born in Guatemala and immigrated to the United States in order to make a better life for themselves and their family, one they could never achieve in Guatemala. I was born in San Francisco, and for the first few years of my life we lived in my grandparents’ small apartment – with seventeen family members. When I was five my parents were able to move us to a small Bay Area town. Our neighborhood was located in one of the older, rundown parts of town filled with gang activity, prostitution, and violence. Our house was broken into four times during my childhood and unfortunately, the robberies took a toll on my mother and she became extremely depressed. She feared for our safety and felt completely helpless because there was nothing we could do; financial realities meant that moving to a safer neighborhood was not an option for us…

“When the time came to apply to college, I was very concerned about being able to afford paying for it because I knew my family’s financial situation. My parents were forced to take out several loans since they could not afford to cover the expected family contribution towards my tuition. As an undergraduate at UC San Diego, I worked part-time at the university auditorium because the financial aid I was given was not enough to cover all of expenses such as food, books, and part of my tuition. By applying to scholarships and maintaining a part-time job, I was able to compensate for the insufficient financial aid I was provided with and was even able to afford studying abroad.”

What the committee liked: This student clearly shows hardship growing up and uses specific details – living with 17 people in one apartment, being burglarized four times – to evoke a clear picture of what her life was like. Further, her explanation of having work through college and her parents’ needing to take out student loans shows continued need into adulthood. Often, students make a convincing case for a difficult past but fail to show that they are currently in need of support.

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.

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate commitment to diversity is to discuss 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.
Here are some examples of how students have successfully demonstrated commitment to diversity:

“At [current campus], I sought to be more than just a college student. Currently, I am the President of the Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists (MAES) organization on campus to promote and cultivate academic success, leadership, and overall good citizenship within the Hispanic and scientific communities. As President of MAES, I have pushed for weekly tutoring and study hours available for all of our members. Of our eighty members, approximately half attend to receive help. My responsibility is to support minority students in their career path in science while preserving the Hispanic culture, creating a sense of *familia* (family). Furthermore, we provide hands on science experiments and demonstrations for minority middle school students, so that they too may aspire to become future engineers and scientists.”

*What the committee liked:* This student has worked to encourage success in the sciences among Mexican Americans and other minorities, both at the college level (by offering tutoring for Mexican American STEM students), and with younger students (through science demonstrations for middle schoolers). He clearly shows a commitment to improving access to science education for minorities.

A description of your research interests can also demonstrate a commitment to diversity:

“As somebody with an acute sense of justice and equity, I am interested in doing research on the experiences of people of color involved in social movements. I am particularly interested in cultural form of resistance within these movements. I want to examine the ways in which diverse cultural forms of expression, such as music, dance, oral narratives, and the written word, are used to resist, contest and counter oppression. I hope to shed light on the struggles of underrepresented groups and use my research to express the needs of these communities as well as help bring about change. Furthermore, because of my working-class background and being brought up in an environment where the privilege of getting a formal education was elusive, my goal as a future literature scholar is to not only produce work for other academics, but to make it accessible to all people, including those that do not have access to higher education. Under the guidance of the Latin American Studies department, I hope to develop and contribute a unique form of scholarship that plays this role.”

*What the committee liked:* This student’s proposed graduate research shows a commitment to diversity in a way that can document and perhaps even further social change. Her goal to spread her findings to those outside academia demonstrates further commitment (though her specific plans for this dissemination could have been explained more clearly). Later in her essay, she also discussed volunteer activities related to this commitment. 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.

08-20-14
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!

Revised 08/20/14