3 UC Irvine professors garner $8.7 million in state support for climate action projects

UC awards total of more than $80 million for progress toward California’s climate goals.
Wednesday, August 23, 2023
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UCI News





UCI researchers (from left) Alejandro Camacho, Isabella Velicogna and Steven Allison will work on state-funded projects that will spur implementation of solutions that directly address state climate priorities.

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Irvine, Calif., Aug. 23, 2023— Three University of California, Irvine researchers will receive more than $8 million in climate action grants to support projects that will help advance progress toward California's climate goals.

These projects are the result of a historic partnership between the state of California and the University of California, which today announced that it's awarding over $80 million in Climate Action grants. The grants will spur implementation of solutions that directly address state climate priorities.

The UCI recipients are:

- A multi-disciplinary team led by Steven Allison, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, will receive $5.5 million in matching funding to create a regional network that helps California communities adapt to climate change, conserve and steward land and mitigate climate risks. Three University of California campuses (Irvine, Riverside and San Diego) will partner and collaborate with community groups, tribes and management agencies to form the Wildland-Urban Interface Climate Action Network. WUICAN's goal is to create knowledge and climate solutions that protect and preserve California landscapes experiencing unprecedented climate events. WUICAN will create new opportunities for California residents to have a say in how federal, state and local agencies can best protect their communities from climate change.
- Alejandro Camacho, Chancellor's Professor of law, will receive $1.2 million in seed funding to develop innovative, local land-use plans aligned with state climate objectives and mandates. These include keeping California's municipal and county governments at the forefront of state climate policy; maximizing the economic, environmental and public health benefits of climate investments in disadvantaged communities; and ensuring compliance with civil rights laws. Integrated and Equitable Climate Action will be a collaboration among faculty and staff at UCI's School of Law, Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy, and Newkirk Center for Science and Society. It will include the UC Center Sacramento at UC Davis, community leaders, local city governments and organizations such as the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment; the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition; the Central California Environmental Justice Network; and Azul.
- Isabella Velicogna, professor of Earth system science, will receive $2 million in seed funding for a project that will combine model forecasts and satellite and Earth-surface observations to provide vastly improved seasonal and sub-seasonal projections of California's hydroclimate and its impact on agricultural output. Velicogna's team includes experts in climate science, remote sensing, artificial intelligence and agriculture who will work with specialists in UC Agriculture and Natural Resources and the California Department of Water Resources, farmers and private companies.

“I am very pleased that UCI faculty will be leading three exciting projects under the California Climate Action seed and matching grants program,” said Pramod Khargonekar, UCI’s vice chancellor for research. “These collaborative projects hold great potential to help California communities respond to, adapt to and minimize the negative impacts of climate change.”

Overall, the California Climate Action seed grants and matching grants will fund 38 projects that collectively involve more than 130 community, industry, tribal and public agencies, as well as 12 UC locations, 11 California State University campuses and two private universities. Seed grants totaling $56.2 million were awarded to 34 teams. Four teams received matching grants totaling $26.9 million to support larger projects that could leverage additional funding from nonstate sources. The $83.l million total is part of $185 million allocated by the state for UC climate initiatives advancing progress toward California’s climate goals.

“As the state’s preeminent research institution, the University of California is proud to partner with the state to pursue our shared climate goals. The innovations catalyzed by the Climate Action awards will make all our communities safer, more sustainable and more resilient,” said UC President Michael V. Drake, M.D. “I am grateful to the state Legislature and Gov. Gavin Newsom for providing funding to support this critical research on climate change in California.”

“With these investments, California is harnessing the ingenuity of our world-renowned universities and people to deliver climate action across our state,” Newsom said. “California is leading the charge in tapping our natural resources to protect our people, our communities and our planet.”

The California Climate Action seed and matching grant projects will mitigate wildfire risks, combat soil degradation and erosion, address water management in the state, and create land stewardship partnerships led by Indigenous communities. The selected projects aim to improve the health of farmworkers; increase resilience of state water and power systems; and identify innovative, nature-based solutions to biodiversity degradation, sea level rise and wildfire risk. Other projects align with the state’s solar and conservation goals and adapt community evacuation preparations to accommodate the rising prevalence of electric vehicles.

These two-year grants will cover every region of the state.

UCI’s Brilliant Future campaign: Publicly launched on Oct. 4, 2019, the Brilliant Future campaign aims to raise awareness and support for the university. By engaging 75,000 alumni and garnering $2 billion in philanthropic investment, UCI seeks to reach new heights of excellence in?student success, health and wellness, research and more. Learn

more at https://brilliantfuture.uci.edu.

About the University of California, Irvine: Founded in 1965, UCI is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities and is ranked among the nation's top 10 public universities by *U.S. News & World Report*. The campus has produced five Nobel laureates and is known for its academic achievement, premier research, innovation and anteater mascot. Led by Chancellor Howard Gillman, UCI has more than 37,000 students and offers 224 degree programs. It's located in one of the world's safest and most economically vibrant communities and is Orange County's second-largest employer, contributing $7 billion annually to the local economy and $8 billion statewide. For more on UCI, visit www.uci.edu.

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