The 2023-2024 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Graduate Leaders fellows

The fellows are working in all corners of the UCI School of Physical Sciences on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

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UCI Physical Sciences Communications



The fellows are already advancing projects that are elevating DEI work at the UCI School of Physical Sciences.

Picture Credit:
Tiffany Kuo / UCI

The graduate student Diversity Fellows in the four departments in the UCI School of Physical Sciences are champions of change. They advocate for and lead diversity,

equity and inclusion initiatives in their departments, and collaborate with the Physical Sciences Access, Outreach and Inclusion Program Coordinator, Ash Hormaza, and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Mu-Chun Chen to advance inclusive excellence within the school.

The 2023-2024 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Graduate Leader fellows:

Hui Wang – UCI Department of Earth System Science

Wang will run a program called “NextGen Connect,” which will involve social mixer events where undergraduates, graduates and postdocs can connect and exchange knowledge.

Leslie Liu – UCI Department of Chemistry

Liu will run an open dialogue workshop series centering graduate student wellness that will cover discussion topics such as attachment of identity to academics and interpersonal harassment in higher education. These workshops are aimed at equipping graduate students with the resources they need to recognize and address issues they may face in academia. A licensed counselor and/or psychologist will facilitate the workshops.

Jordan Thompson – UCI Department of Chemistry

Thompson is serving as a mentor, events coordinator and co-leader in the ChemUNITY Peer Mentorship Program in the UCI Department of Chemistry. The program pairs graduate student mentors with other graduate students in order to foster a supportive department environment.

Catherine Seo – UCI Department of Chemistry

Seo is leading the ChemUNITY Peer Mentorship Program in the UCI Department of Chemistry, and collaborating with the leaders of the Physics & Astronomy Community Excellence mentorship group in the UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy to run mentorship workshops.

DaVante Cain – UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy

Cain aims to increase the number of Black students in STEM majors by recruiting middle and high school students by funding UCI lab tours, and tutoring students in a 20-week math program to help them advance through calculus.

Setayesh Nekarae – UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy

Nekarae will analyze data pertaining to the admission process and retention of graduate students, while also facilitating communication between the department and graduate students to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

Yasmeen Sophia Baki – UCI Department of Mathematics

Baki will promote student success in UCI's Math 13 course by enrolling up to 10 students in a program that pairs undergraduates with graduate student mentors and then tracks how the program supported them – or didn't – in their coursework.

Maya Silverman – UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy

Silverman is running six workshops to prepare graduate students to mentor other students through the process of applying to the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program. Additionally Silverman is tailoring a kick starter workshop for first year graduate students and fourth-year undergraduate students to support them with their applications

Riya Singh – UCI Department of Chemistry

Singh will collaborate with international student organizations on campus to host events for students that foster connection and initiate dialogue for collective growth where international students can feel seen and heard.

AJ Nielsen – UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy

Nielsen will complete an application for SEA Change – an award given by the American Association for the Advancement of Science that recognizes advancements in DEI -- and create an initiative to create gender-neutral restrooms.

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