10 UC Irvine faculty members named Hellman Fellows for 2024-25

Program supports research by promising assistant professors.
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UC Irvine’s 2024 Hellman Fellows are (clockwise from upper left): Abigail Lapin Dardashti, Javier Sanchez-Yamagishi, Fangyaun Ding, Pablo Lara-Gonzalez, Katherine Trieste Rhodes, Alejandra Rodriguez Verdugo, Irene Vega, Xian Shi, Ji Seon Song and Travis Wiles.

Picture Credit:
UC Irvine

Irvine, Calif., June 5, 2024 —Ten assistant professors at the University of California, Irvine will receive Hellman Fellowships, which are bestowed annually to support research by junior faculty. They join an elite group of 85 UCI Society of Hellman Fellows since 2013, when the Hellman Fellows Fund was established here.

The program began in 1995 at UC Berkeley and UC San Diego and has since expanded organically to all UC universities and four private institutions. In 2020, after 25 years of funding the fellowships, the Hellman family created an endowment to allow the awards to continue in perpetuity across UC's 10 campuses.

This year, UC Irvine was able to appoint an additional fellow due to the generosity of an anonymous donor.

The 2024-25 awardees are:

- Fangyuan Ding, assistant professor of biomedical engineering, for a proposal titled "Systematic Characterization of Protein-Nucleic Acid Binding Kinetics in a Universally Applicable Manner"
- Abigail Lapin Dardashti, assistant professor of art history and visual studies, for a proposal titled "Itinerant Modernism: Politics and the Rise of Afro-Brazilian Art"
- Pablo Lara-Gonzalez, assistant professor of developmental & cell biology, for a proposal titled "Elucidating the Importance of Mitotic Duration Control in Embryogenesis and in Cancer"
- Katherine Trieste Rhodes, assistant professor of education, for a proposal titled "African American Children's RICH Mathematical Word Problems"
- Alejandra Rodriguez Verdugo, assistant professor of ecology & evolutionary biology, for a proposal titled "Principles of Multispecies Interactions for Evolution and Function of Microbial Communities"
- Javier Sanchez-Yamagishi, assistant professor of physics & astronomy, for a proposal titled "Quantum Electronics With Injection-Molded Two-Dimensional Crystals"
- Xian Shi, assistant professor of mechanical & aerospace engineering, for a proposal titled "Synthesis and Assembly of Carbon Battery Electrodes Using Natural Gas"
- Ji Seon Song, assistant professor of law, for a proposal titled "Crisis Policing"

- Irene Vega, assistant professor of sociology, for a proposal titled “Racialized Social Ladders: Navigating Mobility Alongside Persistent Inequality”
- Travis Wiles, assistant professor of molecular biology & biochemistry, for a proposal titled “Life, Death and Symbiosis: Igniting Viral Outbreaks in the Gut Microbiome to Promote Health”

“UC Irvine has named 10 outstanding assistant-rank faculty members representing a broad array of disciplines as the 2024-25 class of Hellman Fellows. These scholars were chosen for their innovative research that positively impacts our local and global community,” said Diane O’Dowd, vice provost for academic personnel. “We are grateful to the Hellman Fellows Endowed Fund and a generous anonymous donor that help these early-career scholars advance their research.”

Since 1995, more than 2,000 people from public and private institutions have been Hellman Fellowship recipients. The grants may be used for such research purposes as equipment, travel, photography and graduate assistants. The aim of the program is to support promising assistant professors who show the capacity for great distinction in their research. Funds awarded are intended as a one-time subsidy for activities that will enhance the individual’s progress toward tenure.

About the University of California, Irvine: Founded in 1965, UC Irvine 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, UC Irvine has more than 36,000 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 UC Irvine, visit www.uci.edu.

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