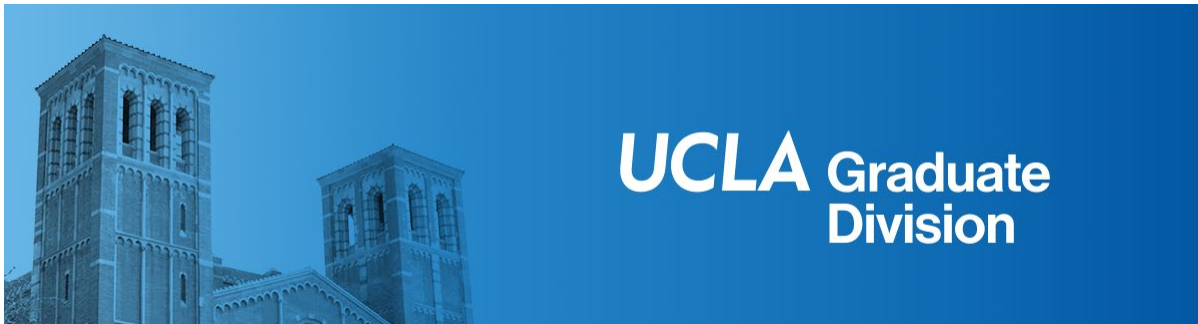


**From:** Dean of Graduate Education Susan L. Ettner

**Sent:** Thursday, December 1, 2022 9:01 AM

**Subject:** Expansion of Competitive Edge Summer Bridge Program and Changes to Tiered Selection System



**To: Deans, Department Chairs, Directors, Vice Chairs and Student Affairs Officers**

### **What you need to know:**

- The Competitive Edge Summer Transition Program to the Doctorate will expand to accept up to 100 qualified incoming doctoral students from all graduate departments within the purview of the Division of Graduate Education (DGE).
- For the 2023 program, the tiered funding model will be eliminated.
- For each participant, the DGE will fund \$4,000 of the \$6,000 student stipend plus all \$2000 of administrative costs for each participant. The department will contribute the remaining \$2,000 toward the student stipend.
- Departments that have not participated in the past should contact DGE for more information.

Dear Colleagues:

To increase support for incoming doctoral students from underrepresented populations, the Division of Graduate Education has allocated additional funding to expand the Competitive Edge Summer Transition Program to the Doctorate.

The Competitive Edge program is a six-week, full-time summer bridge program for entering doctoral students from underrepresented backgrounds who have an interest in pursuing a faculty or research position. Competitive Edge fellows are paired with faculty mentors throughout the program to conduct a summer research project. Additionally, Competitive Edge fellows participate in social and professional development activities to develop skills and learn about campus resources that will contribute to their success in UCLA doctoral programs.

Following the six-week summer program, Competitive Edge fellows are invited to participate in the Division of Graduate Education's retention program for first-year doctoral students from underrepresented groups, Grad STRIVE 2.0. Grad STRIVE 2.0 includes targeted workshops to foster continued student development, as well as a peer mentoring program, Grad2Grad, or G2G.

Competitive Edge began in 2009 with grant funding from the National Science Foundation's Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate. At its inception, the program focused on entering doctoral students admitted to programs in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM). Although NSF later discontinued its financial support of the program, the Division continued to fund the program through a cost-sharing model with departments. In 2019, the Division expanded Competitive Edge to include students from programs in the social sciences, and in 2020, Competitive Edge welcomed students pursuing doctoral degrees in the humanities. The Division is now committing to expanding the program to include all interested graduate departments within the purview of the Division, starting summer of 2023. Currently, about 45 entering doctoral students participate in the program each summer. This number will increase to up to 100 participants with the planned expansion.

The program cost per participant is \$8,000, which includes a \$6,000 stipend awarded to the participant and \$2,000 to cover administrative costs. In recent years, participants have been divided into two tiers – Tier I and Tier II – with department cost-sharing depending on the tier. For the 2023 Competitive Edge program, the tier structure will be eliminated and the Division will fund \$4,000 of the \$6,000 student stipend plus all administrative costs for each participant. The department will contribute the remaining \$2,000 toward the student stipend. Nominees must meet the following program criteria:

- Have accepted admission to a UCLA Ph.D. program for academic year 2023- 2024
- Be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, permanent resident, or undocumented student who qualifies for nonresident supplemental tuition exemptions under AB 540
- Have a background that is underrepresented in graduate education
- Have a strong interest in pursuing a university and/or research career

The Diversity, Inclusion and Admissions (DIA) team is beginning the process of preparing for program expansion for 2023. If your department has not had students participate and you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Assistant Dean Tiara Wair ([twair@grad.ucla.edu](mailto:twair@grad.ucla.edu)) to discuss the next steps.

We look forward to partnering with you to continue expanding and improving our support for graduate students.

Sincerely,

**Susan L. Ettner**

Dean of Graduate Education

**Kristen McKinney**

Chief of Staff/Chief Financial Officer

**UCLA**