Merkin Graduate Fellows Program

Established with the generous support of Dr. Richard Merkin, the Merkin Graduate Fellows Program provides UC San Diego graduate students with a novel opportunity to conduct innovative research in fields broadly related to translational medicine at academic and industry sites abroad. Merkin Graduate Fellows will work with researchers and clinicians across the globe with the goal of driving bold, transformational advances in medical research and clinical applications, and at the same time impact Fellows’ personal and professional futures. For more information, see: merkinfellowship.ucsd.edu

About

Merkin Graduate Fellows will design their own education abroad experience, proposing the length of the experience of between 3 and 6 months and the international site(s) at which they will conduct their research. Applicants may propose to work at an institution with which they or their PI/faculty advisor have an existing relationship, or they may propose to work collaboratively with the Merkin Fellowship Program Manager and their PI/faculty advisor to build a new connection that will facilitate their research at that site.

Merkin Graduate Fellows will be expected to provide regular updates on their research progress and education abroad experience as well as present at the annual Merkin Graduate Fellows Summit. Successful candidates will also be expected to write a statement at the conclusion of their time abroad describing the progress they made on the goals set forth in their application, as well as the impact of the award on their research, its contributions to translational medicine, and their own personal and professional growth.

Award

Merkin Graduate Fellows will receive a stipend award of $3,085/month for a fellowship term of 3 to 6 months, which is intended to cover all expenses directly related and essential to the proposed research, including travel and living costs. In Absentia tuition and fees will be paid directly by the fellowship. The Merkin Graduate Fellowship stipend counts as taxable income and must be reported to the IRS.

Eligibility

- The Merkin Graduate Fellows Program encourages applications from across campus with a primary focus on PhD and MD-PhD students from the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, Jacobs School of Engineering, School of Biological Sciences, School of Medicine, School of Physical Sciences, and Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences whose work falls broadly within the field of translational medicine.
- Fellows must be registered UC San Diego PhD or MD-PhD graduate students and must also be in good academic standing (GPA of 3.0 or above). For In Absentia eligibility, typically PhD and MD-PhD students must have advanced to candidacy by the time their travel abroad would commence. However, exceptions to this policy can be considered.
- International students are eligible for the Merkin Graduate Fellows Program.

Applications and Nominations

Application Materials

Application materials must be submitted via the Merkin Graduate Fellows Program Application Form. Complete applications consist of the following:

- Application form
- CV
- Research proposal (max. 3 pages) describing the: 1) research to be performed, 2) desired research site, 3) length of education abroad (3 or 6 months), and 4) project deliverable the applicant expects to achieve during their time abroad (e.g. conference abstract, working paper, etc.). Proposals should make a clear connection between the research topic and how the work performed will advance research, theory, and/or practice in the field of translational medicine. The research proposal may also indicate if the proposed research is within the broader scope of the applicant’s overall thesis project. Applicants should pay particular attention to articulating the benefits of conducting their research at an international site, detailing how they expect this will enhance the quality of their research, its impact on medicine and healthcare, and their personal and professional growth.
- Letter of nomination from the applicant’s PI/faculty advisor indicating their support for the applicant’s participation in this program. Nomination letters can be submitted as part of the application or via email to the Merkin Fellowship Program Manager.
- Optional letter of support from proposed host research mentor, if applicable.

Nominations for Prospective Merkin Graduate Fellows

Qualified UC San Diego PhD and MD-PhD students whose work falls broadly within the field of translational medicine may be nominated to be considered for the Merkin Graduate Fellows award. We particularly encourage nominations made on behalf of students whose work and potential impact on the field of translational medicine would be enhanced by research abroad. Nominations can be submitted via the Prospective Merkin Graduate Fellow Nomination Form and will be directed to Giulia Hoffmann, Merkin Fellowship Program Manager, who will reach out to the nominee with more program information and to encourage the nominee to apply. If the student applies, the faculty advisor will be asked to submit a letter of recommendation. Nominators may submit nominations for more than one student (one form submission per student).
Deadline

Applications to the Merkin Graduate Fellows Program are accepted on a rolling basis and will be reviewed once per quarter. The submission deadline for applications to be considered during the Winter 2023 review is January 20, 2023.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be selected based on the following criteria:

1. The proposal clearly articulates how the proposed work will advance research, theory, and/or practice in the field of translational medicine;
2. The proposal articulates how conducting the research at the proposed international site will strengthen the quality of the research and increase its impact on medicine and healthcare;
3. The proposal articulates how conducting the research at the proposed international site will enhance the applicant’s personal and professional growth; and
4. The proposal outlines a project deliverable that is realistic for the proposed time of research abroad.