Discovery Fellows Program

The Discovery Fellows Program in the Graduate Division at UC San Francisco supports all PhD students in the basic and biomedical sciences at UCSF through an endowment of over $80 million. The Discovery Fellows program was made possible by a generous gift in December 2013 from Sir Michael Moritz, and his wife, Harriet Heyman. Each year, more than 70 students (“Discovery Fellows”) serve as ambassadors for the initiative and for basic science education. Discovery Fellows are chosen for their leadership potential, excellence in research, community-mindedness, and communications skills. Our hope is that the Discovery Fellows will become outspoken advocates for UCSF’s basic and biomedical science programs and for the importance of the innovative research going on at UCSF.

Selection Process

Discovery Fellows are selected once a year in late summer, based on key qualities cited above. Each basic science PhD program selects students entering their third year of study and submits their names to the Graduate Division for participation in the Discovery Fellows Program. The per program allotment of fellows each year is based on the size of each program’s cohort of third year students.

Benefits of Being a Discovery Fellow

Through a variety of federal, state, and private funding sources including the Discovery Fellows Program, all basic science and biomedical students at UCSF receive support for their tuition and are paid a stipend to cover their basic living expenses. Discovery fellows receive an additional $2,000 per year through their fifth year of study. This supplementary funding may be directed toward the student's research expenses or may be used for travel to scientific conferences.

Discovery Fellows participate in at least two campus events unique to the Discovery Program each year. Each fall, University Development and Alumni Relations (UDAR) and the Graduate Division team up to host an event comprising an ambassador training for new Fellows, an interactive workshop with a special guest presenter or facilitator, and a celebratory reception for Fellows, faculty, and donors.

Each spring, fourth and fifth-year Fellows present their research at the Discovery Fellows Research Symposium. This festive event gives all of the Fellows an opportunity to chat about their projects and to share their enthusiasm with the campus community and Discovery
Program donors. Donors, in turn, get the chance to meet the students they support, as well as to find out about the exciting research that graduate students are involved in at UCSF.

In addition to receiving monetary support, special training opportunities each year, and the chance to have their research highlighted at the annual Symposium, the distinction of being chosen as a Fellow may give program alumni a competitive edge as they begin their careers after graduation.

Donors

Sir Michael Moritz and his wife Harriet Heyman contributed $30 million to the UCSF Graduate Division to ensure the future of PhD education programs in the basic sciences, creating the largest endowed program for PhD students in the history of the 10-campus University of California. UCSF matched the gift with a $25 million endowment and a commitment to raise another $5 million through donations from at least 500 donors. After the successful completion of the Moritz Heyman Challenge, UCSF embarked upon a second phase, which included an additional $5 million in matching funds and a $1 million participation bonus if another 500 unique donors were recruited to the Discovery Fellows Program. Phase II goals have been met, inspiring the UCSF community to continue building the endowment, which currently totals over $80 million. In recognition of the couple’s generosity, a total of 50 students are named Moritz-Heyman Discovery Fellows each year. As additional lead donors make contributions to the Program, fellowships are added and named for the new donors.

As of May 2016, additional lead donors to the Discovery Program include William K. Bowes, Jr. and Ute Bowes; Brook and Shawn Byers; Doug Carlisle and Lauri Sanders; the Chuan-Lyu Foundation; Fred Cohen and Carolyn Klebanoff; former UCSF Chancellor Susan Desmond-Hellmann and her husband Nick Hellmann; Drs. Ann and Larry Hsu; Stephen Juelsgaard; Evelyn Landahl; Judith and George Marcus; Frank McCormick; Roger Page; Michelle Rhyu; UCSF postdoc alumnus and 2013 Graduate Division Alumni of the Year Pablo Valenzuela and his wife Bernardita; and several anonymous donors. Read about how you can support the program in ways large or small [1].

See a list of current Discovery Fellows [2] or see what Discovery Fellow alumni [3] are up to now.

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UCSF Main Site

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Links:
[2] https://graduate.ucsf.edu/current-discovery-fellows
[3] https://graduate.ucsf.edu/discovery-fellows-program-graduates