

## GRADUATE STUDIES

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships coordinates all forms of financial support and administers need-based financial aid programs for graduate students. We are here to help students understand the financial aid opportunities as well as the criteria utilized in determining eligibility for the various financial aid programs available at UC Merced.

Several forms of financial support will be available to facilitate the pursuit of a graduate education at UC Merced. Most forms of support are granted for merit, while others are granted for financial need or for a combination of merit and need. In large part, the Graduate Division provides financial support for graduate students, and we work closely with that office to coordinate all forms of student support.

### TYPES OF AID

Financial support is available at UC Merced in the form of graduate student research positions, teaching assistantships, fellowships and loans. All students, regardless of income, are encouraged to apply.

#### **Graduate Student Research (GSR) Positions**

Research positions afford excellent opportunities to gain invaluable experience in areas of importance to your graduate education and to receive financial support at the same time. Information and application materials for GSR positions are available from the Graduate Division.

#### **Teaching Assistantships (TA)**

Graduate students working toward advanced degrees are given duties in undergraduate courses that may include conducting discussion or laboratory sections, grading students' work and providing students with individual help in the subject. Teaching assistants are chosen for excellent scholarship and promise as teachers. They serve apprenticeships under active tutelage and supervision of regular faculty members. Teaching assistants are engaged in learning how to teach and work closely with faculty mentors. A limited number of teaching assistantships are available each year. On the recommendation of the academic deans, the Graduate Division makes appointments to teaching assistantships.

#### **Fellowships**

Fellowships are awarded primarily on the basis of scholarship and the promise of outstanding academic and professional achievement. Consideration is given to the

extent and quality of previous undergraduate and graduate work, evidence of ability in research or other creative accomplishment, evidence of intellectual capacity and promise of productive scholarship. Financial need or the availability of other sources of support in your graduate program is not relevant to the evaluation of academic merit, but may be an additional criterion for some fellowships. Students must establish eligibility for need-based fellowships by filing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For faster and more accurate filing, students can fill out the FAFSA online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.

## Loans

Financial aid awards that require repayment, loans offer the opportunity to defer the cost of your educational expenses by borrowing now and repaying later. Some loan programs are based on financial need, but there are loan programs available to all students regardless of income. Loan programs available through UC Merced are federally funded, providing long-term, low-interest loans.

***Federal Subsidized Stafford Loans:*** These loans are awarded to students with financial need. This loan is “subsidized” in that the federal government pays the interest while the student is in school and during the grace period (the first six months after leaving school or dropping to less than half-time enrollment status).

***Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loans:*** Not based on financial need, these loans are available to all eligible students, regardless of income. This loan is “unsubsidized” in that the student is responsible for paying all interest due. There is no federal interest subsidy for the loan. Interest accrues immediately upon disbursement. Borrowers may elect to pay accrued interest on a monthly or quarterly basis or have it added back to the principal balance in a process called capitalization.

## HOW TO APPLY

**To be considered for fellowships and loans:** Graduate applicants who are US citizens, permanent residents or immigrants are required to file a “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” (FAFSA). Although the FAFSA can be filed at any time, it is strongly suggested that you file by the priority processing date of March 2. However, if the March 2 deadline has passed, you may still submit this form. We process some forms of financial aid throughout the year. For faster and more accurate processing, you may fill out this form online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. This form is used to determine financial need only. Financial need is a component of the eligibility criteria for many forms of financial support. If you need assistance with your application, please contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

**To be considered for graduate student research or teaching assistant positions:** Graduate students who are interested in obtaining a graduate student research position or a teaching assistant position should contact the Graduate

Studies Division as soon as possible.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Please refer to the Money Matters website at <http://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu> for additional information and assistance.