

## **UCSC Challenge Program at Kresge, Merrill and Stevenson**

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### **Mission**

The UCSC Challenge Program at Kresge, Merrill, and Stevenson provides high-achieving students with the opportunity to participate in a rigorous program emphasizing individual attention and dynamic interaction with UCSC faculty and academically-motivated peers in classes, social settings, and collaborative research projects. Students (frosh and junior transfers) are selected on the basis of their first quarter performance in UCSC classes, a faculty recommendation, and a written application. The Challenge program includes special seminars, colloquia, experiential learning, and research projects, spread over several quarters during the first two years of their enrollment. Seminar classes focus on the development of critical reading, analysis, writing, communication, and interdisciplinary research or field study/experiential learning skills. Students are invited to hear faculty speak about their research and discuss this research during dinner receptions. Faculty mentors guide students in formulating research questions and developing proposals that can be completed by individual students or teams of students working with a faculty member. The top six student-faculty collaborative research proposals will receive funding support and all projects will be shared with the campus community via a public forum.

### **Rationale**

The Challenge Program complements the UCSC Honors Program by recruiting high-achieving students who may not have been interested in or qualified for an honors program based on high school records. The program is designed to appeal to students attracted by active learning, participatory education, innovative and collaborative research or experiential learning projects with a problem-solving orientation. Some of these students may be first generation college students or students from high schools that offered few AP or IB classes who become inspired and engaged by their first quarter at UCSC. Some of these students may have talents and skills not readily measured by high school GPAs or have been transformed by classes taken during their first quarter at UCSC. Some may be junior transfers equally inspired by their first quarter at UCSC. Other students may not be interested in an “honors” program because of pre-conceived notions that such programs are elitist, but embrace the opportunity to develop research skills and work closely with faculty to produce a collaborative research project, or to work with faculty to produce tangible, reportable results from field study or experiential learning projects. Asking these students to present an array of qualifying information—first-quarter UCSC records, a faculty recommendation, and a writing sample in the form of a short application essay explaining their educational goals and qualifications—will help us recruit a more diverse group of applicants, assess their motivations and skills, and determine if they are well-suited to the demands of our Challenge program.

The Challenge program also provides clear benefits to the entire campus community. The first year spring seminar can serve as a bridge between frosh Core classes and classes within specific majors in developing critical reading, analytical, writing, communication, and research skills. The course will emphasize disciplinary approaches from different divisions and help students learn how to transform vague interests into viable research or experiential learning projects that include a review of existing scholarship, realistic and testable hypotheses, and manageable research or field study schedules. Once

students have learned basic principles and best practices in developing proposals, they can work as individuals or groups with a faculty member to develop student-faculty collaborative research proposals. Socializing and working closely with faculty will help retain high-achieving students and keep them deeply engaged in building a community of inquiry. Faculty, selected because of their commitment to undergraduate education, are likely to be invigorated by working with enthusiastic, impressionable and energetic youth. In guiding students as they prepare their proposals, faculty may consider new questions and approaches that can enhance their own research and teaching profiles. The funding provided to the top six collaborative research projects can generate new lines of investigation that can expand in later years to include other faculty, graduate students and undergraduates. The training Challenge students gain in designing and completing research projects in their second year will help prepare them for research in the major, retain them as active contributors to the college and the community, and assist them in acquiring valuable skills applicable to graduate school or future job prospects.

The fall speaker colloquia held in the second year will be open to the entire campus and could help revive college faculty involvement in the life of the college. Students, faculty, alumni and members of the local community can participate in the Question & Answer component and may become more involved in the program. Faculty in related areas of interest may be invited to the dinners that follow the talks so that they can meet and interact with Challenge students and other faculty and, hopefully, become mentors in the future.

## **Program Structure and Requirements**

### **First Year:**

During fall quarter in the first year of the program, the Challenge program will be described and promoted by the provosts at orientation and Core plenaries. Published brochures will be distributed at these events, circulated among Core instructors, college fellows, and staff, and included in college handbooks, webpages, and facebook pages.

After the first year, the fall speaker series will provide another venue for publicizing and promoting the Challenge program.

Students will apply at the beginning of Winter quarter.

### **Application Process:**

Students complete an application form that lists eligibility requirements that are verified by college advisers:

-A minimum Fall Quarter at UCSC GPA of 3.3

-A statement of purpose that consists of an essay (600-800 words) that includes responses to the following: (1) Why do you want to join the Challenge program? (2) How do you think it will enhance your educational goals? (3) What skills and characteristics do you have, or what experiences have you had, that you think would benefit the program? Information from the program Rationale above—e.g., about the kinds of students who might be attracted to or good candidates for the Challenge program—will be included in the prompt to help guide students' responses.

-The signature and contact information (email and phone number) of a UCSC faculty member (Core teacher or other) who has taught the student in fall quarter and read his/her statement of purpose.

The faculty signature attests that the student is qualified for the Challenge program. The student also may request that the faculty member email a recommendation to the program but this is optional.

Applications will be evaluated by each provost during the first year and by a committee of faculty participants, as well as the provost, in subsequent years. Evaluation criteria include academic achievements demonstrated by GPAs, faculty endorsement, and evidence of academic potential demonstrated by the statement of purpose. Approximately 25 students will be selected from each college.

**Spring Quarter Seminar (5 credits):** a multi or inter disciplinarily oriented course addressing a complex contemporary problem and fulfilling a GE (ie. Cross Cultural, Textual Analysis and Interpretation, Scientific Inquiry, etc.) The course structure and content will also include instruction on critical reading, analysis, effective writing and communication skills, innovative disciplinary approaches, and guidelines for preparing research or field study/experiential learning proposals. The assigned reading list may include material solicited from the 2nd year fall speakers and the comparison of diverse perspectives. Course assignments may include evaluations of research proposals (including bibliographies, scholarship review, hypothesis/research questions, methods, and sources) and publications from 2-3 different disciplines.

## **Second Year:**

### **Fall Quarter Speaker Colloquium Course (2 credits):**

Students will attend six talks given biweekly (weekly during the first 2 weeks) by a different UCSC faculty on a problem that lends itself to interdisciplinary cross-examination. The three participating colleges will each invite 2 speakers and host 2 dinners at their college. The 2014 topic: Scarcity and Resources in Today's World.

Faculty speakers will receive \$300 in research funds and will be selected based on their ability to present a talk that will appeal to a broad range of student majors, their commitment to undergraduate education, and their willingness to work with students on future collaborative research projects.

These faculty talks will be open to the entire campus and local community. The one-hour presentation will be followed by a Question and Answer period of 30 minutes that can spark ongoing dialogue between faculty, students, staff, alumni, and members of the local community. These talks can encourage new students and faculty to participate in the Challenge program in the future.

A dinner reception (\$250) hosted by a provost will follow each talk and will be limited to 25 Challenge students and selected faculty with relevant research interests to encourage informal socialization between faculty and students outside the classroom. Students can submit lists of 4 speakers they would like to meet and will be selected to participate in 2 dinner receptions.

All Challenge students are required to attend all 6 talks and complete a 2-3 page written report on each talk that summarizes the speaker's presentation and proposes research questions inspired by the talk. The reports will be reviewed by the provost at each college.

### **Winter Independent Study to Develop a Research Proposal for 2-5 units:**

Individual students or a team of students could select one of the faculty speakers or other faculty they have worked with at UCSC to design a collaborative student-faculty research proposal. Guided by the faculty member, the final product of the independent study will be a 7-10 page collaborative faculty-student research or field study/experiential or service learning project proposal that includes a bibliography (1-2 pages), scholarship review (2-3 pages), hypothesis/research questions (1-2 page), method and sources (1-2 pages), research (or project) plan (1-2 pages), and a budget request (1 page with a list of expenses of up to a maximum of \$500 in supplies and/or equipment).

Students are then encouraged to submit their proposals for funding from campus agencies, outside groups, and the Challenge program. Proposals submitted to the Challenge program research award committee will be evaluated by the three provosts during the first year and a faculty committee that includes the provosts in subsequent years. The committee will award fellowships for up to 6 projects. The faculty mentor will receive \$400 in research funds and the team will receive up to \$500 in funds for project supplies and/or equipment.

### **Spring Quarter Research Collaborations for 2-5 units:**

The 6 competitive fellowships will be used to fund UCSC student-faculty collaborations. Other projects may be funded by other agencies or groups or may be scaled down to allow completion without funding. Depending on the number of participants and the nature of the project, students will receive between 2 and 5 units of credit. After completion of the projects, the student-faculty teams will be encouraged to disseminate their results in public forums (a UCSC conference and an electronic forum accessible to the general public).

### **Program standards for receiving a “Challenge Program Participation and Completion Certificate”:**

- a GPA of 3.0 or above in Challenge courses and an overall GPA of 3.3 or above; and completing
  - the first year spring seminar;
  - the second year fall speakers colloquium;
  - the second year winter independent study to prepare a project proposal

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