

December 15, 2017 | By Kristin Schafgans

ARCS Foundation Awards 31 Fellowships to UC San Diego Graduate Students

The San Diego Chapter of the ARCS Foundation has awarded a total of \$232,500 to 31 graduate students at the University of California San Diego. The annual fellowship awards recognize exceptional students in the natural sciences, engineering and medicine. The philanthropic support also contributes to the [Campaign for UC San Diego](#).

The [ARCS Foundation](#) is a national nonprofit—led entirely by women—that is dedicated to boosting American leadership in science and technology by supporting promising undergraduate and graduate students. Since 1987, the local chapter has given a total of more than \$5 million to UC San Diego and supported over 670 graduate students. In addition to the financial award, being named an ARCS Scholar provides access to a network of leading researchers in academia and industry.

“We are truly grateful to the ARCS Foundation for their generous investment in our graduate students,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “Graduate students are essential to the excellence that is UC San Diego. They fuel our interdisciplinary research and innovative discoveries, and they inspire undergraduates to follow in their footsteps.”

This year’s fellowship recipients are pursuing fields ranging from the biomedical sciences, to mathematics and nanoengineering.

Aleksandra “Sasha” Shirman is a fifth year biophysics graduate student whose work focuses on ways to improve the methods scientists use to analyze data and make estimates and predictions. One of her current projects involves improving mathematical models for characterizing neurons. By developing better methods, Shirman hopes to help researchers better understand the behavior of real neurons and potentially identify differences between healthy and diseased neurons.



Chancellor Khosla joined representatives of the ARCS Foundation San Diego Chapter for a special check presentation ceremony

Shirman is a returning ARCS Scholar. She also received the award last year, and in addition to helping her focus on her research, the financial support helped fund a trip abroad where she met with other scientists in the field.

“I stopped at the lab of a scientist in Berlin whose work I am very interested in, and spent the day with her group,” she said. “We talked at length about overlapping interests, and I’m hoping this trip will open up the opportunity for possible future collaborations.”

The chance to network with other researchers has also been valuable for Cody Carpenter, a fifth year nanoengineering graduate student and new ARCS Scholar. Carpenter’s research aims to develop new skin-like materials for wearable devices, such as virtual reality gloves.

“The idea is to create the equivalent red, green and blue pixels found in televisions, but instead for the sense of touch,” he said. “These touch pixels could be combined to fabricate a device capable of recreating a wide variety of sensations on the complex geometry of the human skin.”

When asked about the ARCS fellowship, Carpenter said: “To be selected as a new member is a true honor. This award stands as a huge vote of confidence in the work I am doing. The financial support has made it possible for me to attend academic conferences where I can share my work with a broad audience and gain unparalleled exposure to the work of leading researchers inside and outside of my field.”

For more information about supporting UC San Diego graduate students, go [here](#).

MEDIA CONTACT

Kristin Schafgans, 858-822-3353, kschafgans@ucsd.edu

UC San Diego’s [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via studio@ucsd.edu. To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.

The Campaign For
UC San Diego

Continue the
nontradition
