

November 07, 2016 | By Kristin Schafgans

## ARCS Foundation Awards \$255,000 in Fellowships to UC San Diego Graduate Students

The San Diego chapter of the ARCS Foundation, Inc. has awarded a total of \$255,000 to 34 graduate students at the University of California San Diego. The annual fellowship awards recognize exceptional students who are pursuing research in the natural sciences, engineering and medicine.

“Graduate students bring fresh perspectives and challenge expectations to tackle some of our most pressing challenges, from energy to health care,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “We are grateful to the ARCS Foundation for continued support of UC San Diego students.”

A national nonprofit led entirely by women, the ARCS Foundation is dedicated to boosting American leadership in science and technology by supporting promising undergraduate and graduate students. Since its inception in 1985, the San Diego chapter has awarded nearly \$5 million to graduate students at UC San Diego.

Olga Botvinnik, a fifth year doctoral student studying bioinformatics, is among the 2016-17 ARCS Scholars. Botvinnik’s research lies at the intersection of biology and computer science, harnessing the power of big data and analysis to study biological systems.

“We use computational tools to solve biological questions, from looking at differences in the brains of people with autism, to studying how motor neurons develop,” she said. “It’s an exciting field to be in right now.”

With the fellowship, Botvinnik will be able to travel to conferences to present her work and network with other scientists in the field—an important step as she prepares to complete her dissertation.

In addition to the financial award, recognition as an ARCS Scholar gives students access to a network of talented researchers in academia and industry.



*Representatives of the ARCS Foundation San Diego chapter joined Chancellor Khosla and fellowship recipients for a special check presentation ceremony. Photo by Erika Johnson/University Communications.*

“I feel very proud and honored to be recognized as an ARCS Scholar,” said Danielle Hagstrom, a graduate student in biology who has received the fellowship for the second year in a row.

Hagstrom’s research focuses on understanding how common pesticides damage the developing brain. She studies freshwater planaria—a kind of flatworm—that have the ability to regrow a new head and brain. The process involves many of the same key mechanisms as human brain development, explained Hagstrom, allowing researchers to gain insights into how these chemicals affect important developmental events.

Support from the ARCS Foundation has enabled Hagstrom to focus on her research and take advantage of opportunities to enhance her education, including participating in national scientific conferences.

“I am so grateful for the networking opportunities that being a part of this great organization has provided,” she said.

Growing the graduate student population is a strategic priority for UC San Diego and fellowships are critical to recruiting and retaining the very best. To learn more about supporting UC San Diego Graduate Students, [click here](#). For more information about the ARCS Foundation, [go here](#).

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