



Chancellor Khosla with the 2017-2018 Hellman Fellows. Photo by Erika Johnson/UC San Diego Communications

11 UC San Diego Faculty Members Honored with Hellman Fellowships

Junior faculty receive fellowships to support research and creative endeavors

Husband and wife Warren and Chris Hellman established the Hellman Fellows Program at UC San Diego in 1995 to support and encourage junior faculty to pursue research projects and creative endeavors with the goal of enhancing their candidacy for tenure. This year, 11 faculty members representing a variety of academic disciplines have been awarded a total of approximately \$500,000.

The UC San Diego Hellman Fellowship Program was launched by the Hellman Family Foundation with an initial gift of \$2.5 million. The program proved so successful that it has since been rolled out at all 10 University of California campuses. At UC San Diego, the foundation has committed a total of \$7.5 million to date for the program. The Hellmans have stated that “creating the Hellman Fellows Program is one of the best things our family has ever done with our giving.”

“The Hellman Family’s continued generosity has supported the careers of nearly 300 of our young faculty reaching across all academic genres,” stated UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “The research they are able to do has a lasting impact on their areas of study and on their careers. We remain grateful to the Hellmans for their ongoing altruism.”

Joshua Kohn, professor of ecology, behavior and evolution, echoes the chancellor’s sentiments. Kohn was an inaugural Hellman Fellow in 1995 who used his award to study self-incompatibility in plants, a common mechanism in flowering plants that prevents inbreeding. He received enough money to fund the work of a post-doc in his lab, and the research they conducted helped Kohn receive a grant from the National Science Foundation. This, in turn, helped him publish several papers, which helped him achieve tenure.

He says the award “had a profound effect on the trajectory of my career,” but his fondest memories actually involve interacting with the other fellows. Without much opportunity to meet young professors from different departments, Kohn greatly enjoyed talking with other fellows and learning about their projects and areas of study.

Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Elizabeth H. Simmons emphasizes how important these awards are to faculty who are just starting out. “Early-career funding can be difficult to obtain,” she said. “Unrestricted funds, such as those provided through the Hellman Fellows program, support research and scholarly activities that can make a critical difference in a junior faculty member’s career progression.”

The 2017-2018 Hellman Fellows are focused on a broad range of topics, from plant immunity and 3-D kinetic maps of the Orion Nebula cluster, to the history of Asian soldiers in the U.S. military and an opera about a construction crane.

Justin Meyer, assistant professor of ecology, behavior and evolution, will study viral evolvability — in other words, what makes some viruses better able to evolve and more difficult to treat. When he learned he had been selected as a 2017 Hellman Fellow, he said he felt “excited that we found support for this very important project.” He will use his funding to conduct experiments, sequence virus genomes and use artificial intelligence to determine what mutations make certain viruses more evolvable and dangerous.

Amy Non, assistant professor of anthropology, will use her Hellman Fellowship to investigate whether the children of Hispanic immigrants are aging faster due to stressors such as poverty or discrimination. Non states, “I was thrilled when I learned about the fellowship because it allows me to move my project into the forefront of epigenetics research by funding the most cutting-edge of genetics tools for my study.”

The 2017-2018 Hellman Fellows are:

Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Engineering and Scripps Institution of Oceanography:

- Alisa Huffaker, cell and developmental biology
- David Fenning, nanoengineering
- Justin Meyer, ecology, behavior and evolution
- Michael Yip, electrical and computer engineering
- Quinn Konopacky, physics

Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Global Policy and Strategy and Rady School of Management

- Amy Non, anthropology
- Daniel Navon, sociology
- Danielle Raudenbush, sociology
- Julie Burelle, theatre
- Natacha Diels, music
- Simeon Man, history

To learn more about the Hellman Fellows Program click [here](#).

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