



Tuesday, January 27, 2026

2025-2026 Senate Distinguished Graduate Teaching/Mentorship Award

The Senate Distinguished Graduate Teaching/Mentorship Award is intended to encourage and recognize individual excellence in teaching at the graduate level and mentorship of graduate students. Both are important functions of faculty at a research university. However, many of the faculty at our young institution have had limited opportunities to teach formal courses at the graduate level or to serve as major professors for graduate students. Accordingly, this award may be given in recognition of excellent performance in either or both areas. A list of previous recipients is provided on page 3 and is available at https://senate.ucmerced.edu/previous_senate_awardees.

Eligibility

All Senate faculty members who have not previously received this award are eligible, including those nominated in prior years but not selected.

Criteria for Award

1. A faculty member is limited to one award per lifetime.
2. The award may be given in recognition of outstanding instructional and mentorship activities during a single year or over multiple years.
3. The qualities that distinguish excellent graduate teaching and mentorship are highly variable across disciplines. In general, distinguished graduate teaching and mentorship are defined by the following traits:
 - Command of the subject.
 - Continuous growth in the field of study.
 - Ability to organize course material and to present it cogently.
 - Ability to inspire students' intellectual growth and independent, original and critical thinking.
 - Enthusiasm for the subject, and the ability to convey that enthusiasm to students.
 - Maintenance of the highest standards of professional conduct and personal ethics, which guides students to emulate such standards.
 - Setting and consistently attaining high standards of professional scholarship.
 - Fostering the development of graduate students' communication skills, written and oral, as appropriate for the students' disciplines by critiquing written work and oral presentations.
 - Accessibility to students and effective and respectful communication in interactions with students.
 - Education of students in the culture and procedures appropriate to their discipline; helping students network with other scholars in the field.
 - Providing career guidance, actively helping students to find professionally relevant employment.

Nomination Process

Initial nominations for the award may be submitted by any member of the academic community (students, faculty, staff, or alumni). The nomination should describe reasons for the award to the faculty nominee based on the criteria listed above. **Nominations should be submitted electronically as one PDF packet to the Chair of the Academic Senate (senatechair@ucmerced.edu) with a copy to the Senate Office (senateoffice@ucmerced.edu), and must include the following:**

1. A [nomination form](#).
2. **One nomination letter** (maximum of two pages) highlighting the outstanding contributions of the nominee to UC Merced in graduate teaching and mentorship. This letter should be written by a UC Merced faculty member who is familiar with the nominee's accomplishments in these areas. Faculty with administrative appointments (e.g., deans) may serve as nominators.
3. **Three supporting letters** (suggested length two pages) specifically solicited for this nomination.
 - One letter is written by a UC Merced faculty member.
 - One letter is written by a current or former graduate student, not necessarily a research advisee of the nominee.
 - One letter is written by another faculty member, another student, or any other individual who has an appropriate professional background to comment on the nominee's graduate teaching and/or mentorship (e.g., faculty from other campuses or institutions, or other UC Merced staff).
4. **A current and complete curriculum vitae.**
5. **Nominee's statement on teaching.**

Student teaching evaluations should not be included as part of the nomination package but may be summarized and/or excerpted by writers of nominating or supporting letters.

Based on the nomination materials, supplementary information may be requested by the GC Awards Committee. Supporting materials may include course syllabi, teaching evaluations, published textbooks, articles on pedagogy, additional letters or support, and any other evidence of exceptional instructional activities. All materials and notes will be held in confidence by the GC Awards Committee.

Selection Process

The [Graduate Council](#) (GC) will form an ad-hoc committee from its membership to serve as the GC Awards Committee with a minimum of three Senate faculty. The GC Awards Committee will have balanced representation from a range of academic areas and broad school representation. If additional expertise is needed, non-GC committee members will be appointed by the GC Chair. The GC Awards Committee reserves the right to not give an award if there is an insufficient number of nominees, or if nominees do not meet the above criteria for the award. The GC Awards Committee will review nominees, and members will submit their first-choice candidate or their recommendation that no award is merited, to the Chair of the GC Awards Committee, with a brief justification for either case. The GC Awards Committee will select a recipient based on majority vote.

The GC Awards Committee will complete its selection process and inform the Chair of the Academic Senate (senatechair@ucmerced.edu) and the Senate Office (senateoffice@ucmerced.edu) of the results. On the recommendation of the GC Awards Committee, any finalist may be nominated for the award the following year.

Deadline for Nominations: 5:00pm, Monday, March 30, 2026.

The announcement of the recipient will be made during the UC Merced Spring [Meeting of the Division](#).

Past Recipients

- 2024-2025 Paul Almeida
- 2023-2024 Linda Hirst
- 2022-2023 Abel Chuang
- 2021-2022 Katrina Hoyer
- 2020-2021 Frederick Wolf
- 2019-2020 Zulema Valdez
- 2018-2019 Miriam Barlow
- 2017-2018 Michael D. Cleary
- 2016-2017 Jan Wallander
- 2015-2016 Ashlie Martin
- 2014-2015 Harish Bhat
- 2013-2014 Jinah Choi
- 2012-2013 Nestor Oviedo
- 2011-2012 Jennifer Manilay
- 2010-2011 Ignacio López-Calvo