OUR MISSION

The University of California Leadership Excellence through Advanced Degrees (UC LEADS) program is a UC system-wide program designed to engage and educate California’s future leaders by preparing promising students for advanced education in science, technology, mathematics and engineering (STEM). UC LEADS identifies exceptional UC undergraduate students with great potential to succeed in these disciplines, but who have experienced situations or conditions that have adversely impacted their advancement in their field of study.

UC LEADS Scholars embark upon a two-year program of scientific research and graduate school preparation guided by individual Faculty Mentors. Scholars receive summer research stipends, and are provided with opportunities to explore their discipline and experience a research environment. Ninety-four percent of UC LEADS Scholars who enroll in graduate school complete their chosen programs. Many of these scholars earn prestigious fellowships. Thirty UC LEADS alumni are now tenure-track faculty, including six within the UC system, and many work around the world as industry and government scientists, teachers, medical doctors, and entrepreneurs. Our scholars are mostly individuals who are underrepresented in the graduate student and faculty populations in STEM fields of study. These groups include underrepresented ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, students who identify as LGBTQ, low income students, women, veterans, students with disabilities, and students from non-traditional backgrounds.

Professional and Academic Development

UC LEADS provides Scholars with Graduate Record Examination (GRE) training and workshops on graduate level writing, professional networking, and presentation skills. Scholars also gain extensive networking and presentation experience by participating at various conferences at the local, statewide, and national level.

Research Experiences

UC LEADS Scholars engage in paid research at their home campus throughout their time in the program and spend their second summer conducting research at another UC campus. By the time our scholars graduate they have participated in research for two years, and have presented their research findings in multiple arenas.

Mentorship

Each Scholar is mentored by our program staff and by members of the UC faculty who assist the student in designing a plan of research and enrichment activities fitted to the individual interests and academic goals of the scholar. This mentoring also familiarizes the scholars with the campus resources and community.


Melissa Soto graduated with a master’s degree in Environmental Science and Management from UC Santa Barbara in 2004, and went on to earn her Ph.D. in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education from Michigan State University in 2014. She now serves as the Deputy Director of the Biology Scholars Program at UC Berkeley.

“The foundations I received from UC LEADS included exposure to research, how to network, personal and professional developmental experiences (conferences, community activities, writing, how to present/give talks) as well as basic exposure to and understanding of the world of academia. These early lessons shaped me early in my educational career. I relied on these building blocks to navigate my graduate school years and often refer to these initial lessons learned as a professional who works in a university setting.”
UC LEADS SCHOLARS ARE DIVERSE

To date, 1,019 Scholars have participated in the UC LEADS program. This population is made up of 50% women, 53% first generation college students, and 52% underrepresented minorities.

UC LEADS SCHOLARS GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Of the 851 Scholars who have graduated with their undergraduate degree, 645 (76%) are either currently enrolled in graduate school or have already earned degrees in a master’s or doctoral program.

Of the 645 Scholars who matriculated into graduate school, 303 (47%) enrolled in a UC graduate program, and 342 (53%) enrolled in graduate programs outside of the UC.