

2025-26 California Pre-Doctoral Program Application Guide

Introduction

The California Pre-Doctoral Program will award funds to approximately 75 juniors, seniors, and master's students in the California State University (CSU). These funds will support students as they explore and prepare to succeed in doctoral programs in their chosen field of study. Awards are based on competitive review of current upper-division or master's students who, in the judgment of the review panel, demonstrate academic excellence while having experienced economic or educational disadvantage, and who are committed to a career in teaching and research at the university level. All matriculated upper division and master's students, with the exception of international students, are encouraged to apply.

Program Overview

The California Pre-Doctoral Program is designed to increase the diversity of the pool from which the California State University draws its faculty. It does so by supporting the doctoral aspirations of CSU students who have experienced economic and educational disadvantages. A special emphasis is placed on increasing the number of CSU students who enter Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programs at one of the University of California campuses.

Each of the applicants selected will be designated a Sally Casanova Scholar and will work closely with their CSU faculty mentor to develop an overall plan that leads to enrollment in a doctoral program. These plan should be tailored to the specific goals and career objectives of the student.

Additionally, the program provides:

1. **Travel Funds** for the student to visit U.S. doctoral-granting institutions and/or to attend professional meetings appropriate to the student's development.
2. **Development Funds** for academic and professional development (student membership in professional organizations, subscriptions to academic journals, graduate school applications and test fees, GRE preparation) and the cost of minor research materials.
3. A **Summer Research Experience** opportunity at a University of California campus or other U.S. major research university, fully funded by the California Pre-Doctoral Program, so that the scholar can participate in doctoral-level research prior to applying to a Ph.D. program.

Eligibility

Interested applicants are strongly recommended to contact their campus California [Pre-Doctoral Program campus coordinator](#) for guidance.

All CSU students, with the exception of CSU international students, are eligible to apply. Current or previous Sally Casanova Scholars are not eligible to re-apply. Applicants to the California Pre-Doctoral Program must be matriculated upper-division or master's degree students who are enrolled at a CSU campus for at least the fall semester (or quarter term) of the 2025-26 academic year. Each applicant must have a faculty mentor from the student's home campus who will be available for the duration of the plan specified in the application.

The California Pre-Doctoral Program is designed for students interested in obtaining research doctorates. Students interested in obtaining professional masters or doctoral degrees (law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, or an MBA degree, for example) are not eligible.

Selection Criteria

Applicants will be selected on the basis of three major criteria: potential for success in completing a doctoral program, probable effectiveness of the student/faculty plan, and level of economic and educational disadvantage.

Submission

Applications will be submitted through Smartsheet. The online application can be found at the website for the California Pre-Doctoral Program. An application is considered complete when the online form is submitted before the deadline with all supporting documents: transcripts, faculty mentor's letter of recommendation, budget plan, and three essays.

Due Date

Applications are due electronically by 5:00pm on **Friday, February 14, 2025**.

Application Components

Use the following list to prepare for the application.

- Information
 - Personal
 - Contact
 - Academic
 - Education
- Essays (300-600 words each)
 - Describe the field of study in which you would like to pursue a doctoral degree and the research questions or theoretical perspectives that interest you in this field. Please be specific.
 - What elements of your educational, research, community service and/or personal experience have contributed to your interest in and preparation for pursuing doctoral study, and your determination to succeed in it?
 - Many professionals with doctoral degrees enter careers to serve as college and university faculty, and most faculty serve a diverse student body. Describe your interest in such a career and experience that would prepare you for it.
- Transcripts
 - Current unofficial CSU transcripts
 - Unofficial undergraduate degree transcripts, for master's students
 - Community college transcripts, if applicable
- Proposed Student Budget
 - Must total \$5,000
 - May include:
 - Visits to potential graduate programs
 - Attendance at professional meetings, symposia, seminars, colloquia
 - Fees associated with graduate school application
 - Research-related expenditures (\$500 limit)
 - Other: Membership to professional organization, journal subscription, software
- Letter of recommendation from CSU faculty mentor
 - The deadline for the letter of recommendation submission is Friday, February 14, 2025.