



MEMORANDUM

To: Academic Deans
Vice Deans, Associate Deans and Staff with Responsibility for Graduate Programs

From: Andrew Stott, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Dean of the Graduate School
Meredith Drake Reitan, Associate Dean, Graduate School
Julie Posselt, Associate Dean, Graduate School

Date: February 4, 2022

Subject: Modification to the DIA and Provost Fellowship Top Offs for 2022-2023

To make clear our commitment to diversity as integral to scholarly excellence, and to enhance our ability to recruit students who contribute to this diversity, the Graduate School will:

- a) Retire the name of the “Diversity, Inclusion, Access” (DIA) fellowship top offs for incoming PhDs beginning in Fall 2022;
- b) Fold the previously-named DIA top offs into the existing Provost’s fellowship top offs;
- c) Modify the requirements of the Provost’s fellowship top offs to include a student’s contribution to diversity and/or the reduction of salient inequalities in a program or field.

Please note that this is not a reduction in funding. The previously-named DIA top offs will be added to the pool of Provost top offs.

In addition to supporting the university’s principles of inclusive excellence, we make this change for three reasons:

- To ensure that contributions to diversity are part of the highest awards offered by USC;
- In response to requests from schools and programs, and to evolve in parallel with peer institutions that are also making this change;
- In response to research that suggests that scholarships and fellowships designated specifically for minoritized students may unwittingly contribute to such students’ marginalization once they enroll. We want to avoid any risk that our mechanisms of funding may lead to students being stigmatized or their qualifications and belonging called into question.

As outlined in the fall fellowship memo received by schools, Provost fellowship top offs for incoming PhDs should be combined with an existing Graduate School Joint Fellowship. The top off is to be used to recruit students whose combination of training and background will make a substantive, documentable, and unique contribution to the program. To advance inclusive excellence at USC and in our fields, Provost fellowship top offs should not be used for recruiting generically “good” students, but for students who stand out through their academic or professional contributions and by contributing to diversity and/or the reduction of salient inequalities in the program and/or field.

As before, the Provost fellowship top off brings the student's stipend to at least \$34,000 for two years as part of a four or five-year funding package. The school commits to providing top offs to at least that level for the remaining years. Students who receive Provost fellowship top offs are eligible for Graduate School travel grants for conferences and research.

The Graduate School may also provide additional financial support in the form of a Provost top off for incoming students who contribute to the diversity and/or reduction of salient inequalities in a program or field, if a program provides a package comparable to a Graduate School Joint Fellowship using school or program-based funds.

Programs may make fellowship offers using the Graduate School's on-line Multi-Year Funding Offer system according to their own timeline and students may accept them up to April 15, 2022 at 11:59 pm Pacific time, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) national deadline for accepted offers of financial aid.

To award the Provost fellowship top off, programs will upload in summer 2022 a statement of 200-500 words explaining how the student will make a substantive, documentable and unique contribution to the program to the Graduate School's on-line Multi-Year Funding Offer (MYFO) system. The contribution should be assessed holistically and should include a combination of:

1. Superior academic achievement and/or professional experience AND
2. Contributions to diversity, which may include
 - a. social identities and other backgrounds that are underrepresented in the field of study nationally or in USC program;
 - b. first generation U.S. citizens, first generation in their families to graduate from a four-year college, or experiences with financial and economic hardship in an applicant's family.

In the process of developing nominations, as in the admissions process, we hope that you take into account the composition of the program and field, as well as how students of all backgrounds demonstrate a record of commitment to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion through their work experience, community service, or leadership of student or academic organizations.