Ph.D. in Education
Program Guide

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE
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Why a Ph.D. in Education at UCI?

Focus your research in one of three areas (see page 4)

Collaborate with world-renowned faculty who, combined, are principal investigators on $96 million in grants (1)

Conduct research in the heart of Orange County, the nation’s sixth most populous county, featuring 28 school districts and 500,000+ K-12 students

Study at the No. 20 graduate school of education in the nation – No. 10 among public universities (2)

Receive guaranteed funding for five years

Spark inspiration from the No. 1 university doing the most for the American dream (3)

Join students with a vast array of backgrounds: students historically hail from dozens of states and countries, and have a wide range of work and educational experiences

Live on-campus in beautiful Orange County with five years of graduate housing - 15 minutes to the beach!

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Dean’s Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the UCI School of Education’s Ph.D. in Education program. As you will learn from this booklet, our doctoral program is focused on advancing educational sciences and contributing to improved educational opportunities and outcomes for individuals across the entire lifespan. We are a diverse, dynamic, and collaborative institution, and our research, community partnerships, and programming are dedicated to producing innovative scholarship, addressing the needs of local schools, and preparing students for careers in academia, nonprofits, government, and the private sector.

At the UCI School of Education, there is no limit to the research you can undertake, or faculty with whom you can collaborate. As of June 2020, our faculty were principal investigators on grants whose combined total exceeded $96 million - and the research on these grants demands the contributions of doctoral students such as yourselves. The curriculum at our school draws on perspectives from neuroscience, economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and more. At the School of Education, you will have an unparalleled chance to grow into a conscientious and well-rounded academic.

The University of California, Irvine is consistently recognized as a leader in higher education. In 2019, Money ranked UCI the No. 1 Best College in the U.S. UCI was also ranked the “No. 1 university doing the most for the American dream” by the New York Times. UCI is an Asian American-, Hispanic-, and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution.

Our campus is in the heart of Orange County, the nation’s sixth most populous county. Surrounding us is a diverse K-12 student population and dozens of school districts whose goals and demands are rapidly evolving. Through strategic partnerships, you will have the opportunity to work on the ground floor with local schools to create tangible improvements for our county’s students and teachers.

Thank you for your interest in our program. If you have any questions, please contact our Student Affairs Office, whose information can be found on page 23.

I hope to see you in the fall.

Sincerely,

Richard Arum
Dean and Professor
University of California, Irvine School of Education

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1 – Data as of June 2020
2 – U.S. News & World Report “2021 Best Education Schools”
Areas of Focus

Students in the Ph.D. in Education program are required to take 12 courses total, eight core courses, and have the ability to focus their research in one of three areas.

At the UCI School of Education, doctoral students are not committed to working with one professor for the entirety of their studies. Rather, students can work with different faculty as their research interests evolve. As a result, students become well-rounded educators exposed to a variety of research areas.

Educational Policy and Social Context (EPSC)
Drawing from economics, sociology, developmental psychology, and anthropology, EPSC faculty and students use a range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method approaches to understand impacts of existing policies, to design and evaluate new policy and intervention models, and to understand the relationship between policy making and implementation.

Human Development in Context (HDiC)
Drawing on education, cognitive science, neuroscience, developmental psychology, and anthropology perspectives, faculty and students conduct lab experiments, engage in field-based studies, and use longitudinal data sets to examine human development in a wide range of areas. Research in this area contributes to building theory on human development across the lifespan and intervention efforts.

Teaching, Learning and Educational Improvement (TLEI)
Drawing on a range of research perspectives, TLEI students investigate teaching and learning in schools, communities, online settings, and informal learning contexts across a range of disciplines. Students utilize case studies, design-based implementation research, research-practice partnerships, evaluations of learning outcomes, and text and data mining to improve the life chances of children and adults through education.
Our Faculty

The UCI School of Education is home to a diverse and internationally recognized group of faculty dedicated to research that advances educational science and improves learning outcomes for all students, regardless of background. Our faculty’s research interests are wide-ranging; they include developmental psychology, learning analytics, immigration, STEM participation, afterschool activities, and more. As of June 2020, our faculty were principal investigators on grants whose combined total exceeded $96 million.

Penelope Collins, Associate Professor: Reading & Writing Development, Bilingualism & Biliteracy, Digital Literacy, Academic Language, Engagement in Literacy


Gil Conchas, Professor: Diversity & Equity in Education, Race & Urban Education, Immigration, School Reform

AnneMarie Conley, Associate Professor: Motivation in Education, Adolescent Development, Person-Centered Approaches to Studying Change

Shayan Doroudi, Assistant Professor: Educational Data Sciences, Educational Technology, Learning Sciences

Jacquelynne Eccles, Distinguished Professor: Academic Motivation & Achievement, School & Family Influences on Adolescent Development, Gender & Ethnicity in STEM Fields

Greg Duncan, Distinguished Professor: Economics of Education, Program Evaluation, Child Development

Shane Goodridge, Assistant Teaching Professor: Educational History, Philosophy, Charter School Movement
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Constance Ilohi</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Educational Equity, College Access &amp; Choice, Educational Stratiﬁcation, Institutional Behavior, Anthropology of Education, College Student Learning &amp; Development</td>
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<td>Susanne Jaeggi</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Cognitive Training Interventions, Working Memory &amp; Cognitive Functions Across the Lifespan</td>
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<td>Jade Jenkins</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Development, Child &amp; Family Policy, Policy Analysis &amp; Management, Program Evaluation</td>
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<td>Fernando Rodriguez</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of Teaching, Study Methods, STEM Education, Learning Analytics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judith Haymore Sandholtz</td>
<td>Professor, Teacher Professional Development, Teacher Education, School-University Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rossella Santagata</td>
<td>Professor, Mathematics Education, Video &amp; Multimedia in Teacher Learning, Culture &amp; Learning, Equity &amp; Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hosun Kang</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Science Education, Teaching &amp; Teacher Education, STEM, Gender, Identities, Social Justice, Diversity &amp; Equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young-Suk Kim</td>
<td>Professor, Sr Associate Dean, Language &amp; Literacy Acquisition &amp; Instruction, Early Literacy Predictors, Reading Fluency, Reading Comprehension, Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carol Booth Olcon</td>
<td>Professor Emerita, Academic Writing, Language Arts, Adolescent Literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra Simkins</td>
<td>Professor, Organized Afterschool Activities, Motivation, Family Influences, Diversity &amp; Equity, Immigration &amp; Culture, STEM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth van Es</td>
<td>Professor, Teacher Preparation &amp; Professional Development, Teaching Mathematics for Equity, Teaching Practice, Video &amp; Teacher Learning, Design of Learning Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deborah Love Vandell</td>
<td>Chancellor’s Professor Emeritus, Developmental Processes &amp; Educational Outcomes, Longitudinal Research Methods, Early Childhood Education, Afterschool Programs, Teacher-Child Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Peña</td>
<td>Professor, Associate Dean of Faculty Development and Diversity: Bilingualism, Language Impairment, Test Development &amp; Treatment</td>
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<td>Emily Penner</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Educational Inequality, Education Policy, K-12 Educational Interventions, Family &amp; Peer Impacts on Achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kylie Pepper</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Intersection of Arts, Computational Technologies &amp; Interest-Driven Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adriana Villavicencio</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Inequities in Education, Racial Equity Frameworks, English Learning &amp; Immigrant Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Warschauer</td>
<td>Professor, Digital Learning, Language &amp; Literacy, STEM, Learning Analytics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Reich</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Associate Dean of Graduate Program, Socio-Emotional Development, Parent-Child Interactions, Peer Networks, Social Affordances of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katherine Rhodes</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Mathematical Cognition, Language Ability, Cognitive Control</td>
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<td>Lindsey Richland</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Children’s Reasoning, Higher-Order Thinking, Mathematical Thinking, Executive Function</td>
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<td>Di Xu</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Economic Returns to Higher Education, Financial Aid to Higher Education, Effects of Governmental Policies &amp; Projects on Educational Equity &amp; Efficiency</td>
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Faculty and doctoral students at the UCI School of Education are addressing key issues that, collectively, address the entire lifespan of human development and learning. Students at the School of Education are encouraged to join faculty research labs, centers, projects, and initiatives so they too can contribute to cutting-edge research and launch careers of their own that help improve educational opportunities and outcomes.

More information on each of these labs, centers and projects, along with their directors, is available on the UCI School of Education website: http://education.uci.edu/centers.html

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<td><strong>California Teacher Education Research and Improvement Network (CTERIN)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Center for Creating Opportunities through Education</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Center for Learning in the Arts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Center for Research on Teacher Development and Professional Practice</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Development in Social Context Lab (DISC)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Writing Research to Improve Teaching and Evaluation (WRITE) Center</strong></td>
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Established in fall 2018, OCEAN is a network of research practice partnerships (RPPs) between K-12 schools and the School of Education. In each RPP, a School of Education faculty member and a doctoral student are matched with a local school. The entire team of K-12 educators, leaders, and researchers develop a research project that addresses key goals and needs of the local school community.

The schools then meet with one another to identify and address their common, complex problems. Orange County schools, alongside the School of Education, can mobilize to implement a measured, trackable improvement plan that identifies and disseminates effective practices to affect multiple schools simultaneously.

OCEAN provides doctoral students the experience of conducting targeted research that addresses the concrete, pragmatic needs of K-12 schools.

“Being a part of OCEAN has given me invaluable experiences in co-designing research for improvement with school partners. The most important lesson for me is learning how to communicate research to different educational stakeholders, such as the principal, teachers and district staff.”

Ha Nguyen, Third-Year Doctoral Student

Nguyen created a dashboard to facilitate conversations with teachers about school connectedness and students’ English language development.

“I hope my research will be used to start conversations; OCEAN is in an extraordinary position to have an impact in Orange County, California, and the United States – there aren’t many of these networks around.”

Yenda Prado, Fifth-Year Doctoral Student

Prado is collecting data to understand how an inclusive education model can be adapted to distance learning.

“Graduate students who have been trained in this network can go on to serve as faculty all over the country. At that point, they too can direct and steer similar initiatives in their respective communities, and improve education across the nation.”

June Ahn, Director, OCEAN and Associate Professor
STUDENT PROFILES

Doctoral students at the UCI School of Education study a wide range of issues that affect human learning and development. They are paired with leading faculty who share similar research interests and can help the doctoral student grow into a well-rounded academic.

The doctoral program student body is diverse – students historically matriculate from multiple countries and states. While not required, many of our students have years of work experience and/or additional post-baccalaureate degrees.

Our students serve as teaching assistants, graduate student researchers, mentors to undergraduates, and leaders of student initiatives across campus. Career goals vary, but one common thread exists – a desire to change the world for the better.

Before enrolling at the UCI School of Education, fourth-year doctoral student Melissa Dahlin taught preschool in Taiwan for five years, earned a master’s degree in International Educational Development at Columbia University, spent six years in Washington, D.C. in policy and evaluation work, and volunteered with the Homeless Children’s Playtime Project. When asked why she was pursuing a doctorate at UCI, Melissa explained, “The School of Education’s doctoral program is preparing me to return to the field with much stronger analytic skills and deeper content knowledge to do this work well.” For her doctoral studies, Melissa is focusing on childhood development, parenting, and early childhood policy. She complements her research work by serving as president of the Associated Doctoral Students in Education, a representative to Associated Graduate Students, a member of the School of Education’s Diverse Educational Community and Doctoral Experience committee, and a board member for the Orange County Association for the Education of Young Children.

Melissa Dahlin
Advisors: Associate Professor Stephanie Reich, Assistant Professor Jade Jenkins

Third-year doctoral student Hye Rin Lee is enriching her study of achievement motivation as a member of four different research teams. On a project with Distinguished Professor Jacquelynne Eccles and the UCI School of Engineering, Hye Rin is researching how to leverage YouTube to increase STEM persistence and identity. Research with Associate Professor Drew Bailey is examining associations between various motivational constructs. A project with Assistant Professor of Teaching Fernando Rodriguez aims to understand students’ motivation in an online context. Lastly, research with Dean Richard Arum on the Next Generation Undergraduate Success Measurement Project team is examining the undergraduate experience at UCI. In addition to her academic pursuits, Hye Rin appreciates the “close-knit community among graduate students” at the School of Education. Hye Rin is looking forward to continuing her research interests as a professor at a research institution.

Hye Rin Lee
Advisor: Distinguished Professor Jacquelynne Eccles

Second-year doctoral student Joseph Montoya chose to attend the UCI School of Education because of the close relationships with the local community and school districts. Joseph’s time as a high school biology teacher, Career Technical Education (CTE) department chair, and community college instructor encouraged his enrollment in the School’s doctoral program to explore STEM education and how CTE pathways include or exclude marginalized communities. Currently, Joseph is a graduate student researcher on an National Science Foundation-funded computational thinking grant, and is also working with researchers from the Center for Integrated Facilities Engineering at Stanford University to study workforce pathways from secondary to post-secondary education. When asked about his future plans, Joseph explains, “I would like to continue to do research in service to my community.”

Joseph Montoya
Advisors: Professor Mark Warschauer, Associate Professor Hosun Kang
Fifth-year doctoral student Melina Pinales came to the UCI School of Education with experience in childcare, where she developed a passion for addressing children's needs through policy implementation. Taking advantage of UCI’s interdisciplinary opportunities, Melina has fully engaged in her doctoral experience. She is Project Coordinator on Distinguished Professor George Farkas’s Reading One-to-One, a program that delivers research-based reading instruction to K-2 students in Santa Ana. In addition to providing data for her dissertation, Melina’s research findings are being used to inform school leaders of instructional practices that seem most promising in promoting students’ literacy skills, especially those who come from Spanish-speaking backgrounds. In addition to academics, Pinales appreciates the beautiful coastline that Orange County offers. “I absolutely love being near the beaches. Whether I’m cruising on a boat, having a picnic with my friends, doing yoga on the beach, or meditating alone while listening to the sound of the waves, there’s nothing that brings me greater joy and calmness than being near the water.”

Fifth-year doctoral student Christopher Wegemer is driven by three passions: “pursuit of social justice, love for teaching, and a desire to learn.” Christopher’s desire to learn led him to two bachelor’s degrees in Applied Physics and Electrical Engineering and two master’s degrees in Global and International Studies and Education. Love for teaching encouraged his teaching at an international high school and summer teaching in Honduras. A self-described “scholar-activist,” Christopher applied his leadership talents to a variety of social justice endeavors, including United Students Against Sweatshops, Workers’ Rights Consortium, and American University Preparatory Academy consulting. Christopher’s dissertation is building on his commitment to youth civic engagement. His research is drawing from his current work with a local high school, and with Dean Richard Arum’s Next Generation Undergraduate Success Measurement Project, examining the relationship among UCI students’ civic engagement, education, and psychological factors related to their coronavirus response and behavior.

Fifth-year doctoral student Ying Xu earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Chinese Linguistics and Literature, with a focus on human acquisition of language, from China’s Sun Yat-Sen University. In 2015, Ying joined UCI’s School of Education as a visiting scholar researching educational technologies to support diverse student learning. As a doctoral student, Ying has worked on a U.S. Department of Education grant supporting a language processing tool to make textual meaning more accessible. On one National Science Foundation-funded project, she is partnering with PBS Kids to develop interactive science animation videos. On another NSF project, Ying is exploring artificially intelligent conversational agents to support children’s language development and science learning through scaffolded conversations embedded within science animation videos. “I appreciate the depth of research carried out by the UCI School of Education students, researchers, and faculty, and I am deeply inspired by the School’s commitment to promoting inclusive excellence.”
Our alumni are trained in a multitude of approaches to studying learning, human development, and educational outcomes. This holistic approach makes our alumni attractive candidates for jobs in several industries – academia, nonprofit, and private business.

You can find our alumni leading research at education think tanks and nonprofits, working as professors at dozens of universities across the country, and heading up companies they founded.

Alumni of the School of Education’s doctoral program are currently employed across the globe, including more than a dozen states and China, Hong Kong, Kenya, and Korea.

For Dr. Tarana Khan, the opportunity to work with renowned scholar and Distinguished Professor Jacquelynne Eccles was the driving force for choosing the UCI School of Education. Now, Khan is using skills she learned as a doctoral student in her position with PBS SoCal’s Family Math Initiative. “Studying at the School of Education taught me how to be a conscientious researcher, how to present research in a way that is accessible and impactful, and how to look at data with a careful scrutinization.” Khan ventured to UCI from her home in Austin, Texas, expecting to find a culture of collaboration and support and was not disappointed. For her dissertation, Khan explored undergraduate beliefs about the malleability of their intelligence, their beliefs about the causes of their successes and failures, and how these beliefs impact motivation and achievement in school. Her findings – that an ability-focused component may be a crucial part of student motivation – have the potential to inform ongoing large-scale mindset interventions.

Tarana Khan, Ph.D. ’19
PBS SoCal Education Research and Evaluation Analyst

When researching doctoral programs, Dr. Hansol Lee was initially attracted to the School of Education’s unique curriculum design that promoted students’ research capabilities. In reflection, he cites additional benefits from the Ph.D. program’s balance across topics, research methods, professional development opportunities, annual benchmarks in place of qualifying exams, and wide-ranging opportunities for interdisciplinary research. Lee’s doctoral experiences included his dissertation work using a structure language data set to analyze second language acquisition, and three research opportunities where he studied formative assessments in mathematics, literacy accommodations for ELLs, and English for academic purposes. Lee graduated with 13 publications in different academic journals, including Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, Applied Measurement in Education, Child Development, Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, English Teaching: Practice & Critique, Language Learning & Technology, Modern Language Journal, and ReCALL.

Hansol Lee, Ph.D. ’19
Associate Professor of English, Korea Military Academy

Dr. Joyce Lin chose the UCI School of Education in large part because of Southern California’s ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. “In addition to studying with a multidisciplinary team of faculty, I wanted to conduct research with and serve the communities that I grew up in.” Lin’s doctoral research focused on how distal parenting contexts are related to the home environments of young children; her mixed-method dissertation specifically addressed how cultural values were related to experiences of physical punishment. In reflection, she is appreciative that her advisor, Associate Professor Stephanie Reich, was open-minded about career trajectories and recognizes that the School of Education prepared her well for her post-doctoral research in Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University. Opportunities to work with and mentor undergraduates in teaching and research at UCI helped her understand how much she loved working with undergraduates and solidified her desire for a tenure-track position at a teaching university.

Joyce Lin, Ph.D. ’16
Assistant Professor, California State University, Fullerton
About UCI

The University of California, Irvine is consistently recognized as a trailblazer in a broad range of fields, garnering national and international honors in every school. The campus’s diverse academic offerings paired with world-class leadership create an environment worthy of any passionate, dedicated scholar. Some points of pride include:

- **No. 1 University doing the most for the American dream** – *New York Times*
- **No. 1 Best College in the U.S.** – *Money*
- **No. 1 Best Value College, among public universities** – *Forbes*
- **No. 9 Public University in the U.S.** – *U.S. News & World Report*
- **1 of 65 leading research universities elected into the prestigious Association of American Universities**
- **Hispanic-, Asian American-, and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution**

Dr. Nestor Tulagan is a “Double Anteater” – he earned a B.A. in Psychology & Social Behavior at UCI and his Ph.D. in Education. For his dissertation, Tulagan worked with Distinguished Professor Jacquelynne Eccles, integrating two of her theories - Expectancy-Value and Stage-Environment Fit - to “explore the possibility that there may be an ‘optimal modulation’, between parents’ control and involvement in their kids’ development and adolescents’ growing desire to be in the driver’s seat of their lives.” In September 2020, Nestor joined the National Science Foundation’s Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowship program. He and Professor Sandra Simpkins are studying new research they developed in late 2019, focused on leveraging partnerships between math-based organized afterschool activities and Latinx families to enhance middle-schoolers’ math motivational beliefs and achievement.

Dr. Elizabeth Tunney designed the TLC Public Charter School as a site for excellence in teaching, innovation, research, and professional learning for inclusive education. The school features classrooms that bring together gifted students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, students who develop typically, and students with special needs for lessons and learning activities that have been thoughtfully differentiated and universally designed by teams of co-teachers to be accessible to all. “We emphasize care and friendship, and an arts-based, enriched education for students who have been historically marginalized due to race, income, language, or ability.” For her doctoral studies, Tunney chose UCI specifically to expand her understanding of teaching and learning in schools and focused on teacher learning and professional development for school improvement. “I am forever grateful for the support and flexibility I received for identifying and developing my own path as a doctoral student.”
Funding & Application Requirements

FINANCING YOUR PH.D.

Funding for doctoral students in the Ph.D. in Education program is guaranteed for five years. Doctoral students will be given a combination of Research Assistantships, Teaching Assistantships or Fellowships that will cover tuition, fees (including health insurance), and living stipend for the academic year. All support is contingent on meeting university and program expectations and standards in both academic performance and employment.

Additionally, UCI guarantees placement in on-campus housing for five years for individual students or families. Students must maintain good academic standing to continue to qualify for the guarantee.

Graduate students can receive up to $1,100 in financial support per quarter for eligible child-care expenses during the academic year (fall, winter, and spring quarters).

Students are also allotted a travel stipend to attend professional conferences.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The application for the Ph.D. in Education program opens September 8 for the following fall admission. The priority deadline is December 1. Applications received after December 1 will be accepted on a space-available basis. The application period will remain open until February 1.

Applications are reviewed holistically and in stages by admission committees. Committee members consider an applicant’s academic preparation, potential to succeed in the chosen field, match with the program goals, availability of faculty expertise, quality of supplementary materials, and personal story. An in-person, video, or telephone interview may be part of the process.

The School of Education welcomes diverse learners, innovative thinkers, returning students, dreamers, and others who want to make a difference in our world. We look forward to your application.

Additional Requirements:

- A baccalaureate degree with at least a 3.0 GPA
- Prior coursework or background related to the area of expressed interest
- GRE general examination within the past five years
- All international students are required to submit TOEFL or IELTS taken within the past two years

For more information, please email EducationPhdInfo@uci.edu

Fast Facts – Ph.D. Program

- No. 20 Graduate School of Education – U.S. News & World Report
- No. 10 Graduate School of Education, Public – U.S. News & World Report
- 5 faculty members elected to National Academy of Education, 10th most among schools of education in the nation
- Funding for travel to attend and present at national conferences
- 17 students awarded fellowships by the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program in the field of STEM Education and Learning Research since 2014, most in the nation
- $96 million+ - active grant funding, among all faculty
- 95 active grants among 39 full-time faculty

All Data as of June 2020
The UCI School of Education is located in the heart of Orange County, the nation’s sixth most populous county. Orange County is home to more than 500,000 K-12 students and 28 school districts, all of which partner with the School for research, teaching support and student interventions.

UCI is perfectly located in sunny Southern California, one hour south of Los Angeles, one hour north of San Diego, and 15 minutes to miles of Pacific coastline. Money Magazine ranked UCI the No. 1 college for beach lovers for good reason, citing the “…surfing at Huntington Beach, the boardwalk and pier at Newport Beach, peace and quiet at Corona del Mar, and the glamour of Laguna Beach.”

Orange County is also home to gourmet restaurants, world-famous attractions such as Disneyland and Knott’s Berry Farm, professional sports teams, a lively arts and theatre scene, and countless hiking and biking trails.

Irvine is a university-centered city, with graduate student housing available within walking distance of campus. For 14 consecutive years, the FBI ranked Irvine as the safest city in the country with a population of more than 250,000 people.