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Enrollment Continues to Climb at UC Merced

The university sees largest graduate and freshman classes in its eight-year history with the opening of the Fall 2012 semester

MERCED, Calif. — The University of California, Merced, began its eighth academic year with 5,760 undergraduate and graduate students, up nearly 11 percent to a new high, according to data released today (Sept. 27).

The increase proves that demand for UC Merced grows, despite a difficult economic environment. Space constraints forced the university to limit undergraduate enrollment for the first time ever this year, though graduate enrollment and research have not been affected.

[Graduate student](#) enrollment hit 329, an increase of 26.5 percent over last year. Overall, graduate students comprise nearly 6 percent of the student body. The campus's ultimate goal is for graduate enrollment to reach 10 percent of the total student population by 2020.

"Graduate students are integral to our mission as major research university and will help attract increased research funding while enhancing UC Merced's growing contribution to the San Joaquin Valley, state and society as a whole," said Acting Dean of Graduate Studies Chris Kello. "We made a concerted effort this year and allocated significantly more resources to graduate support to boost the numbers even more in the coming years."

Graduate degrees offered are:

- Applied Mathematics
- Biological Engineering and Small-scale Technologies

Quick Facts

- UC Merced's total enrollment for the 2012-13 academic year is 5,760.
- Graduate student enrollment has increased nearly 27 percent.
- About 31 percent of undergraduate students are from the San Joaquin Valley, 27.8 percent from the greater Los Angeles area and 21 percent from the San Francisco Bay Area.

- Cognitive and Information Sciences
- Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
- Environmental Systems
- Mechanical Engineering and Applied Mechanics
- Physics and Chemistry
- Psychological Sciences
- Quantitative and Systems Biology
- Social and Cognitive Sciences
- World Cultures

Undergraduate enrollment

The campus saw a 3.6 percent increase in freshman students consistent with the university's efforts to manage enrollment growth carefully, but still attracted its largest freshman class ever — 1,495. New transfer student enrollment decreased by 25 percent as a result of a change in admissions criteria.

University officials continue to be pleased with the academic quality of the class, as well as the diversity among UC Merced's freshmen, reflecting the campus's commitment to fostering a culture of excellence through a diversity of people, ideas and perspectives. The university has enrolled 19 new students who were awarded the UC Regents' Scholarship based primarily on their academic and personal achievements.

"In addition to setting new marks for overall enrollment, this year we welcomed the largest and most competitive class in our history," said Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management J. Michael Thompson. "We are pleased that an increasing number of high school seniors are recognizing the remarkable opportunities available for students at UC Merced and joining the campus community."

Of this year's class, 99 percent are from California. Undergraduate students from the San Joaquin Valley represent the largest single segment on campus at 31.2 percent, while 27.8 percent hail from the greater Los Angeles area and 21.2 percent from the San Francisco Bay Area.

"Our primary focus has been to create an exceptional opportunity for California students to receive a UC education," said Thompson.

First-generation freshman student numbers continue to rise steadily — up from 60 percent in 2011 to 65.5 percent in 2012. The campus enrolled an estimated 62.5 percent Pell Grant-eligible freshmen in 2012-13 compared to 59.7 percent in 2011, representing students with the highest

level of financial need, and expects to distribute nearly \$100 million in financial aid and scholarships during the academic year.

Top five undergraduate majors are:

- Biological sciences
- Psychology
- Mechanical engineering
- Management
- Computer science and engineering

View student statistical data on the [Institutional Planning and Analysis website](#).

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UC Merced opened Sept. 5, 2005, as the 10th campus in the University of California system and the first American research university of the 21st century. The campus significantly expands access to the UC system for students throughout the state, with a special mission to increase college-going rates among students in the San Joaquin Valley. It also serves as a major base of advanced research and as a stimulus to economic growth and diversification throughout the region. Situated near Yosemite National Park, the university is expected to grow rapidly, topping out at about 25,000 students within 30 years.