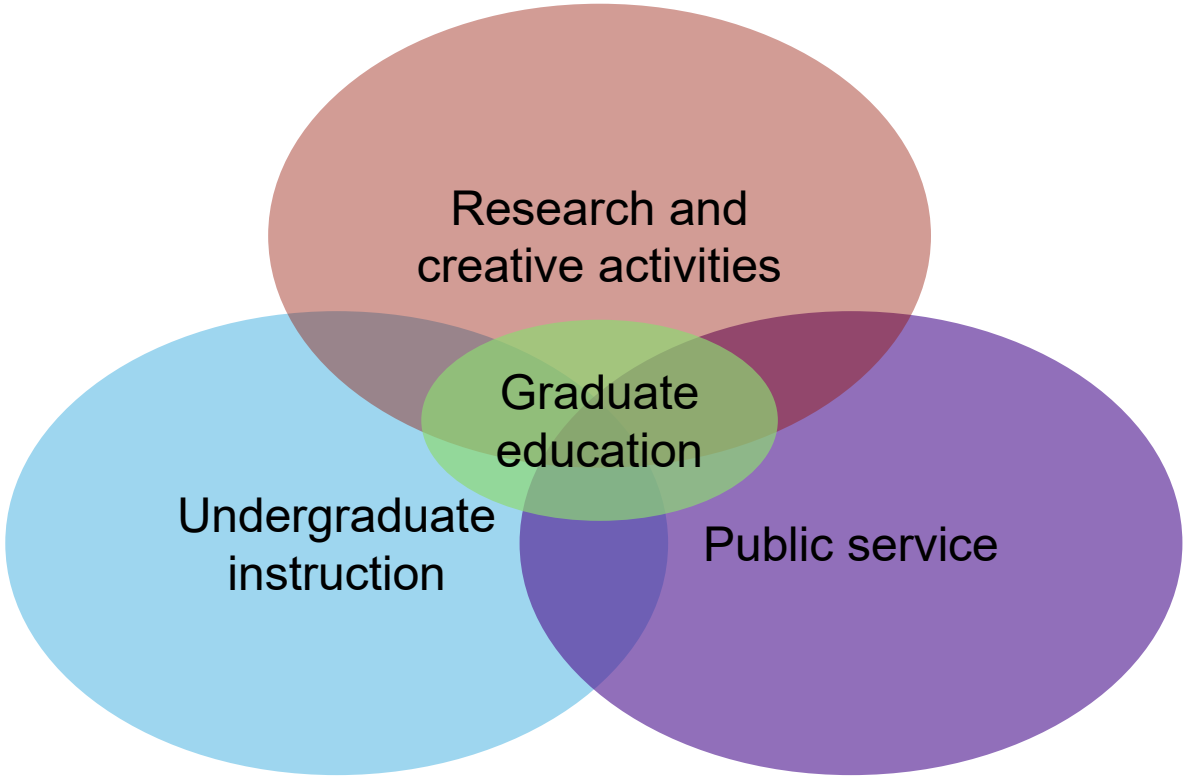
Making the case for *more* graduate education at UCR

Susannah Scott, Chair, Systemwide Academic Senate
UCR Leadership Retreat, October 12, 2026

Why is UCR involved in graduate education?

The University of California, Riverside will transform the lives of the people of California, the nation, and the world through the **discovery, communication, translation, application, and preservation of knowledge** – thereby enriching the state's economic, social, cultural, and environmental future.



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The age-old apprenticeship model

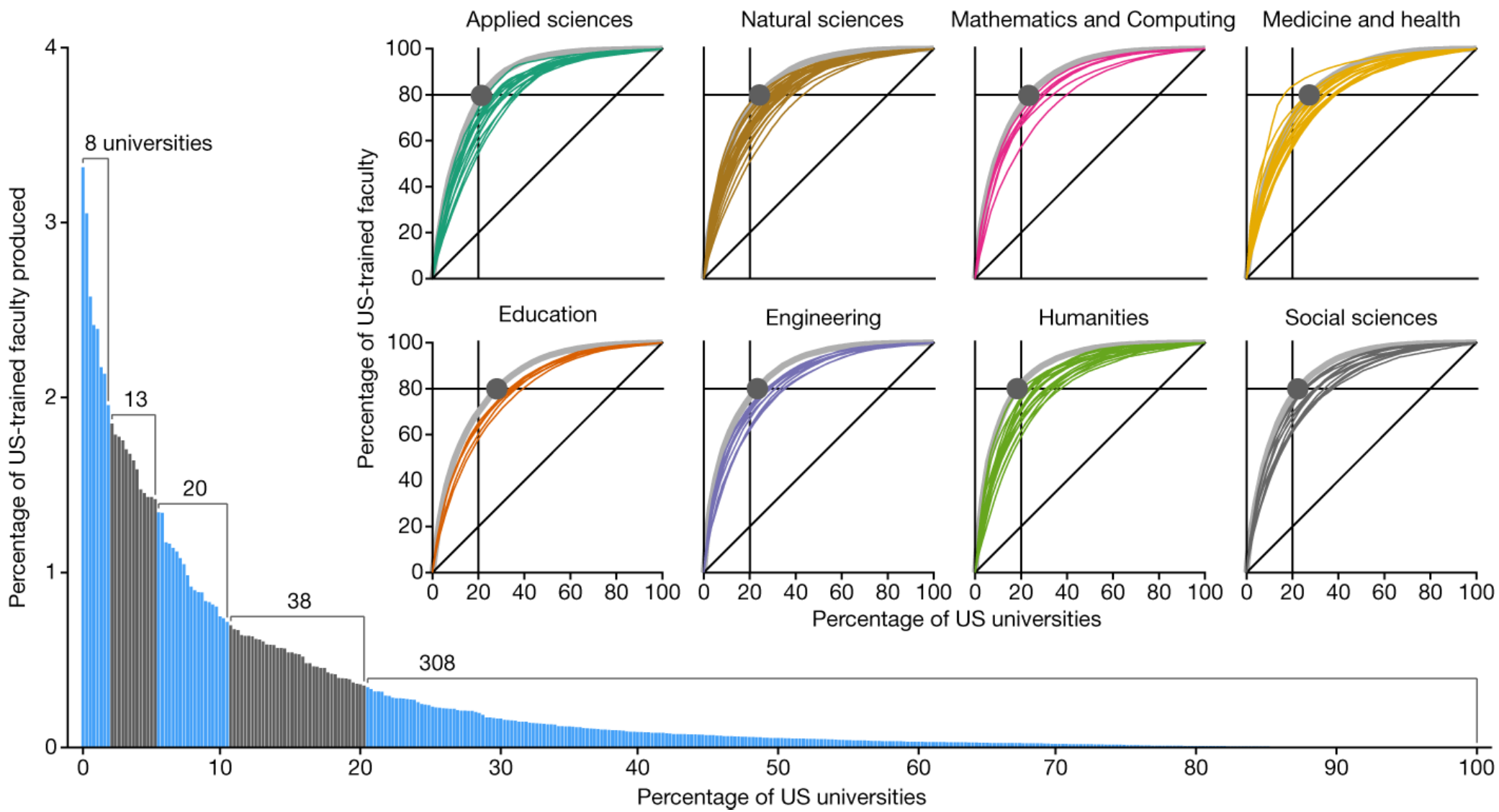
H. Weiditz, *An Alchemist*, woodcut, ca. 1520



What future career(s) are we are training our doctoral student apprentices for?

Quantifying hierarchy in US faculty hiring

Wapman, Zhang, Clauset, Larremore. *Nature* **2022**, *610*, 120.



Future of Doctoral Programs at the University of California

Challenges, Opportunities, and Potential Paths Ahead

Academic Planning Council, 2025

Cochairs: Susannah Scott, UC Santa Barbara

Gillian Hayes, UC Irvine

Recommendations

Intended for all PhD/MFA programs, across all campuses.

Make grad education more student-centered, accomplishment-focused, time-efficient.

R1: Define academic expectations

R2: Understand, consolidate, and steward financial resources

R3: Manage PhD/MFA enrollments

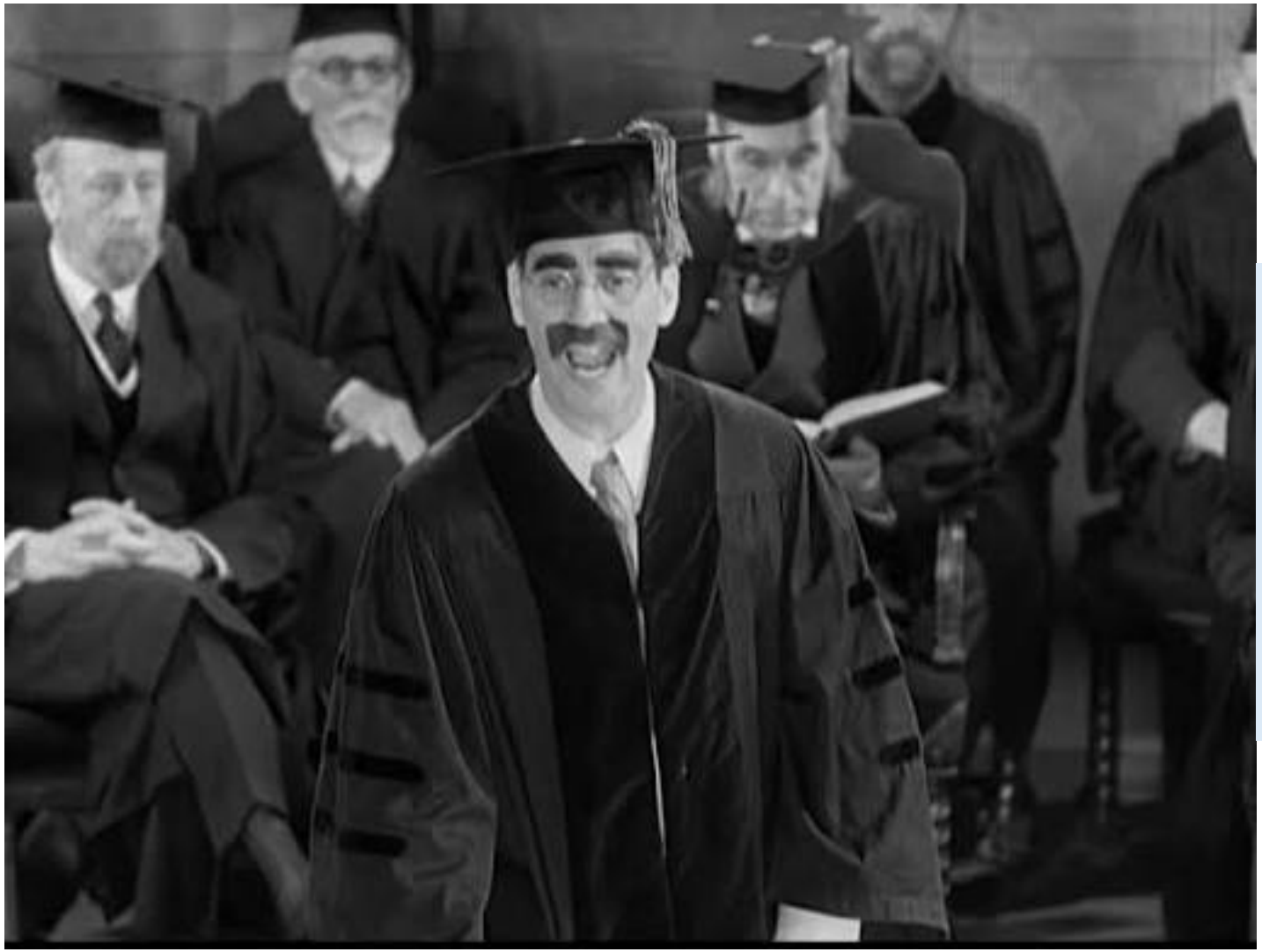
R4: Re-evaluate graduate pedagogy

R5: Strengthen advising and mentoring

R6: Diversify career preparation



Do we need to change?



Groucho Marx, in *Horse Feathers* (1932).

"Your proposition may be good

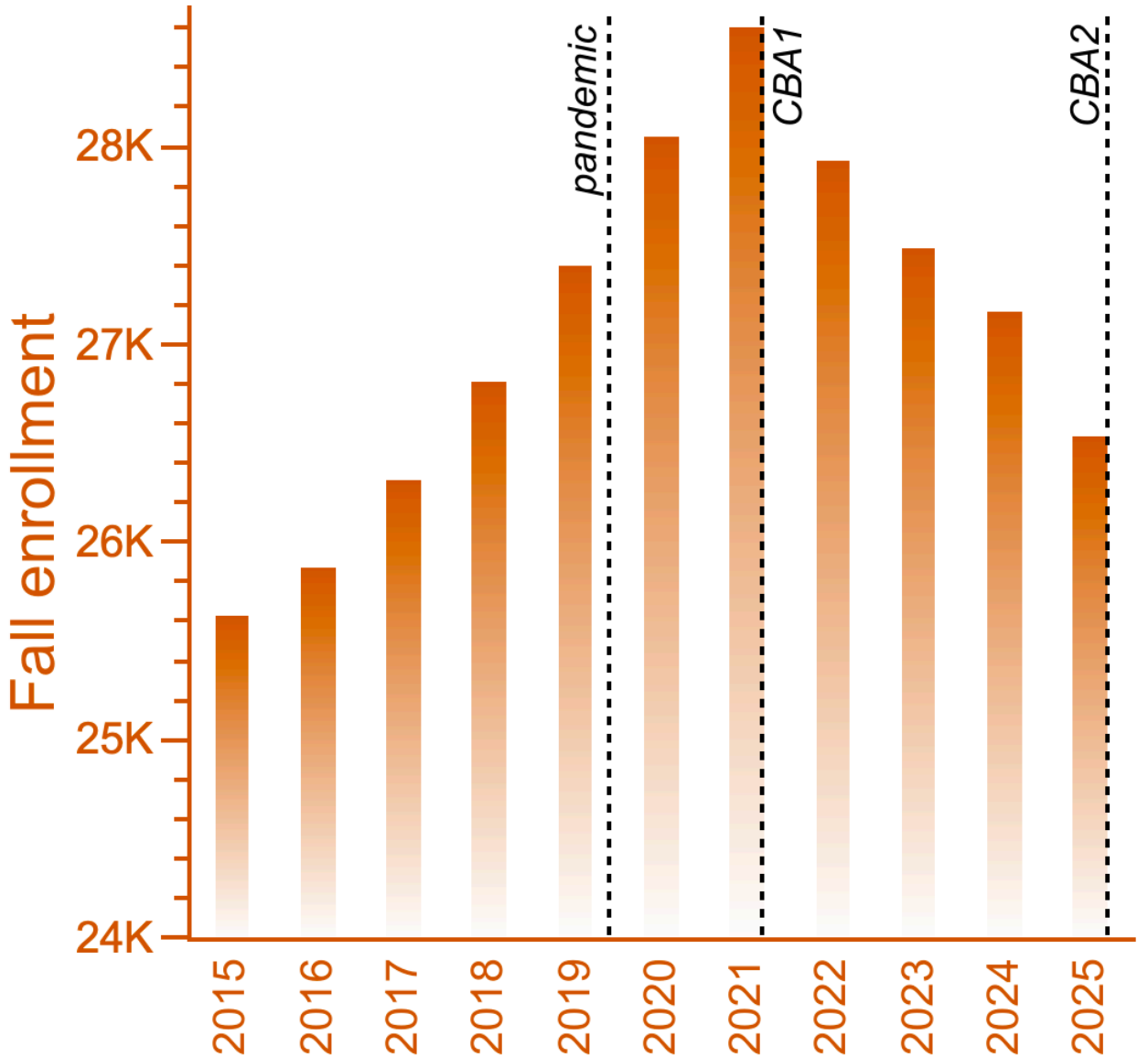
But let's have one thing understood:

Whatever it is, I'm against it.

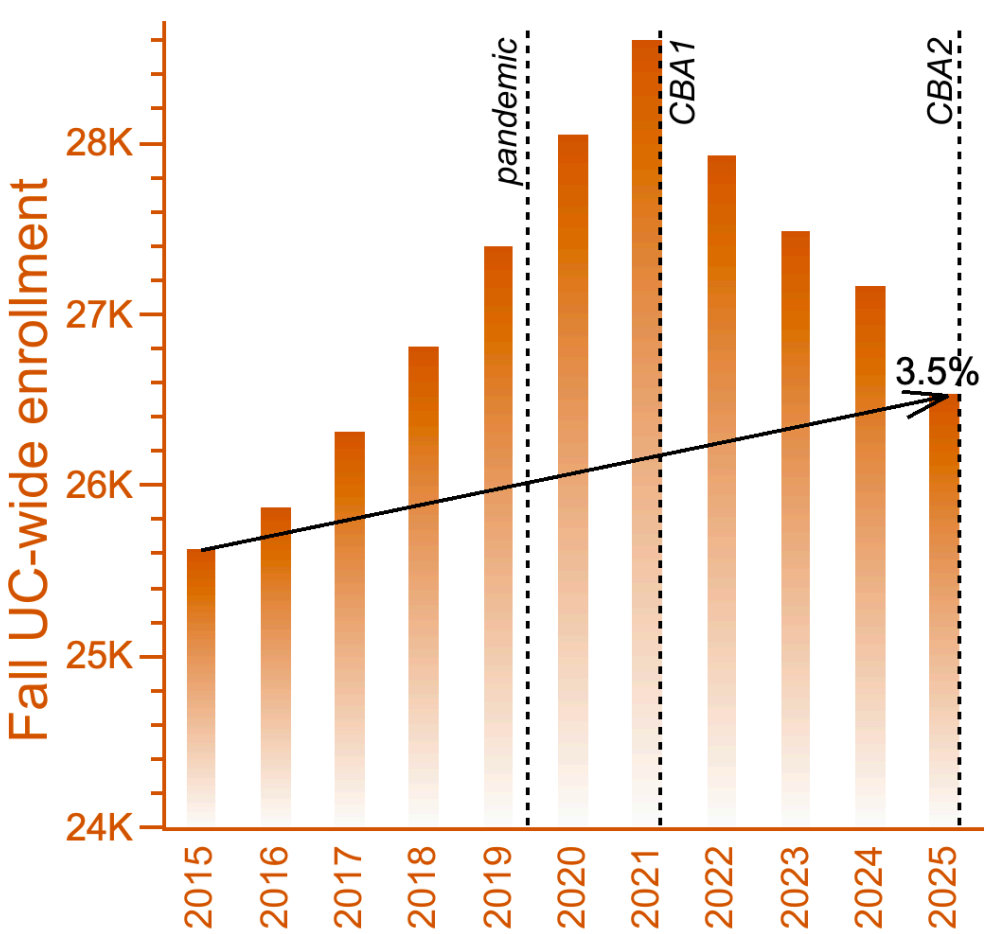
And even when you've changed it or condensed it,

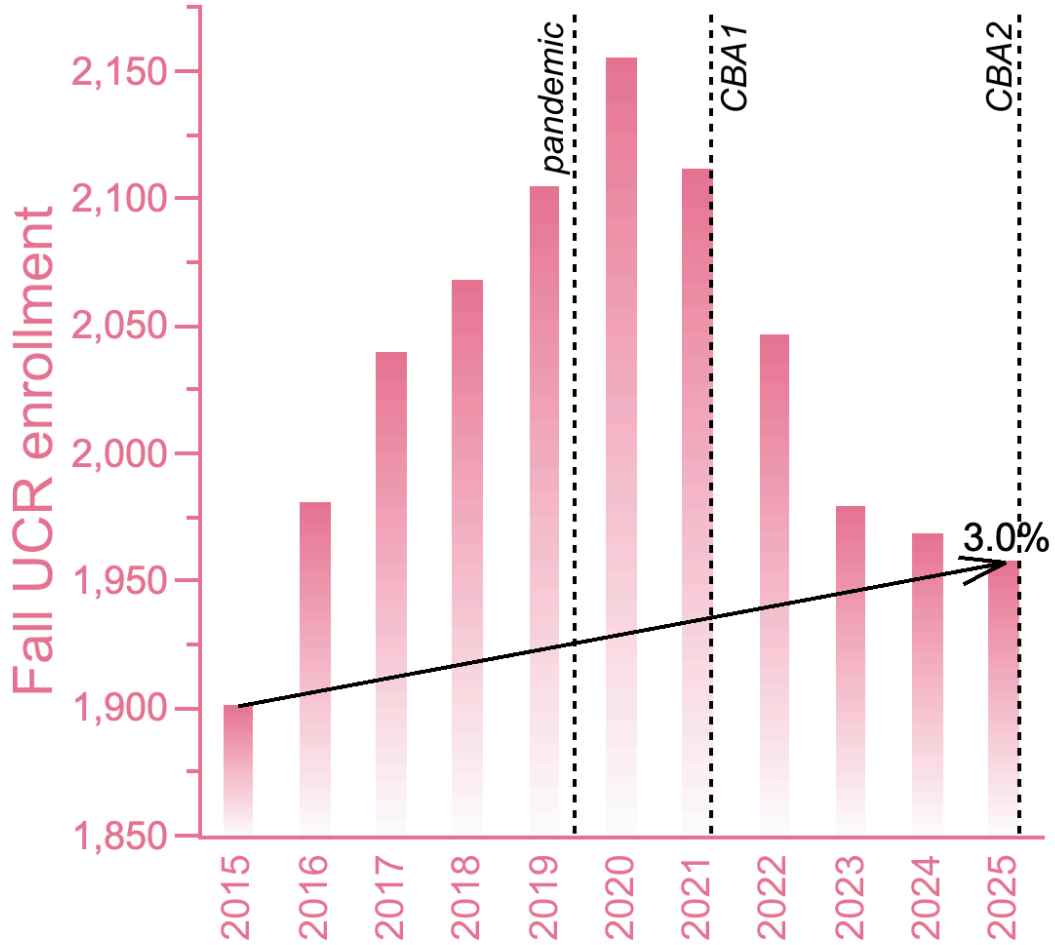
I'm against it!"

Trends in doctoral enrollment: UC-wide

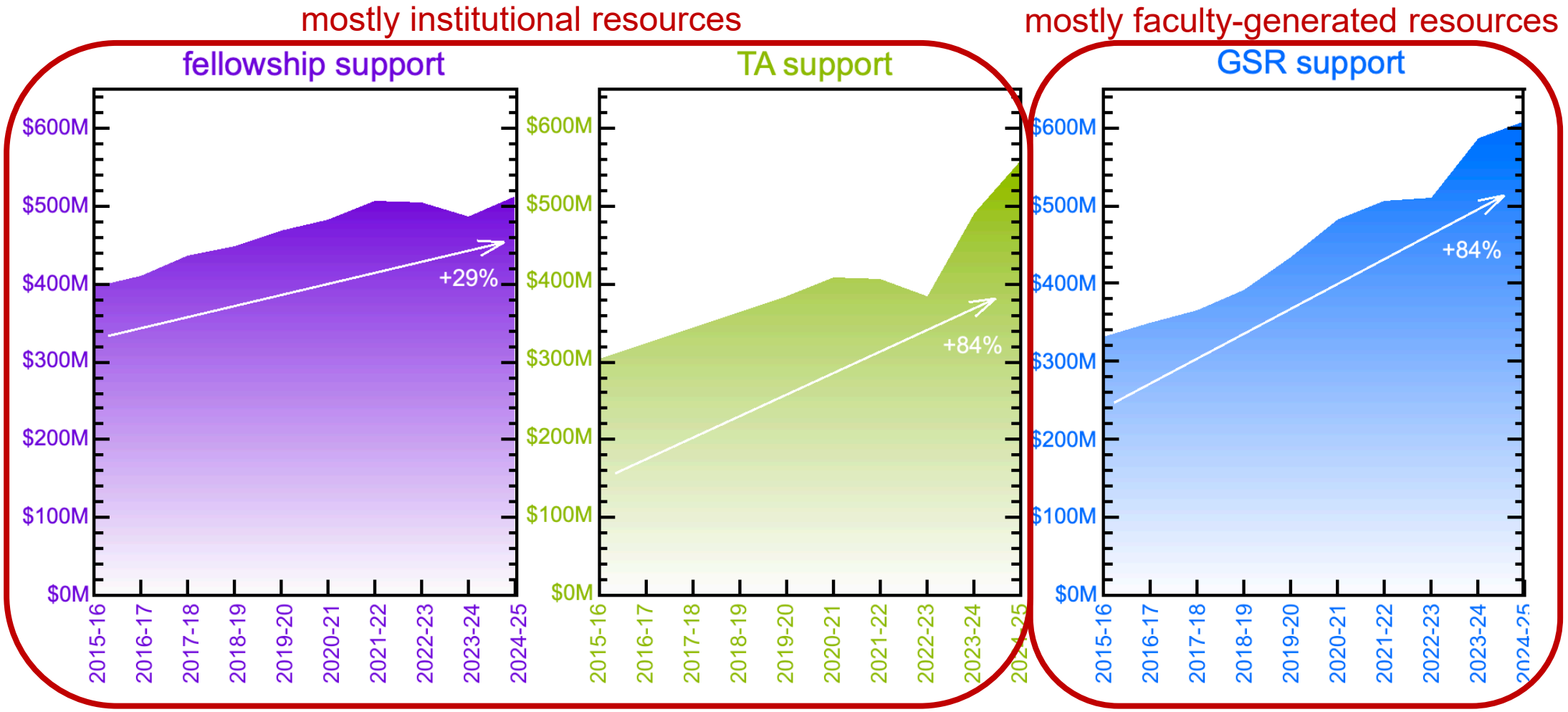


UC-wide vs. UCR

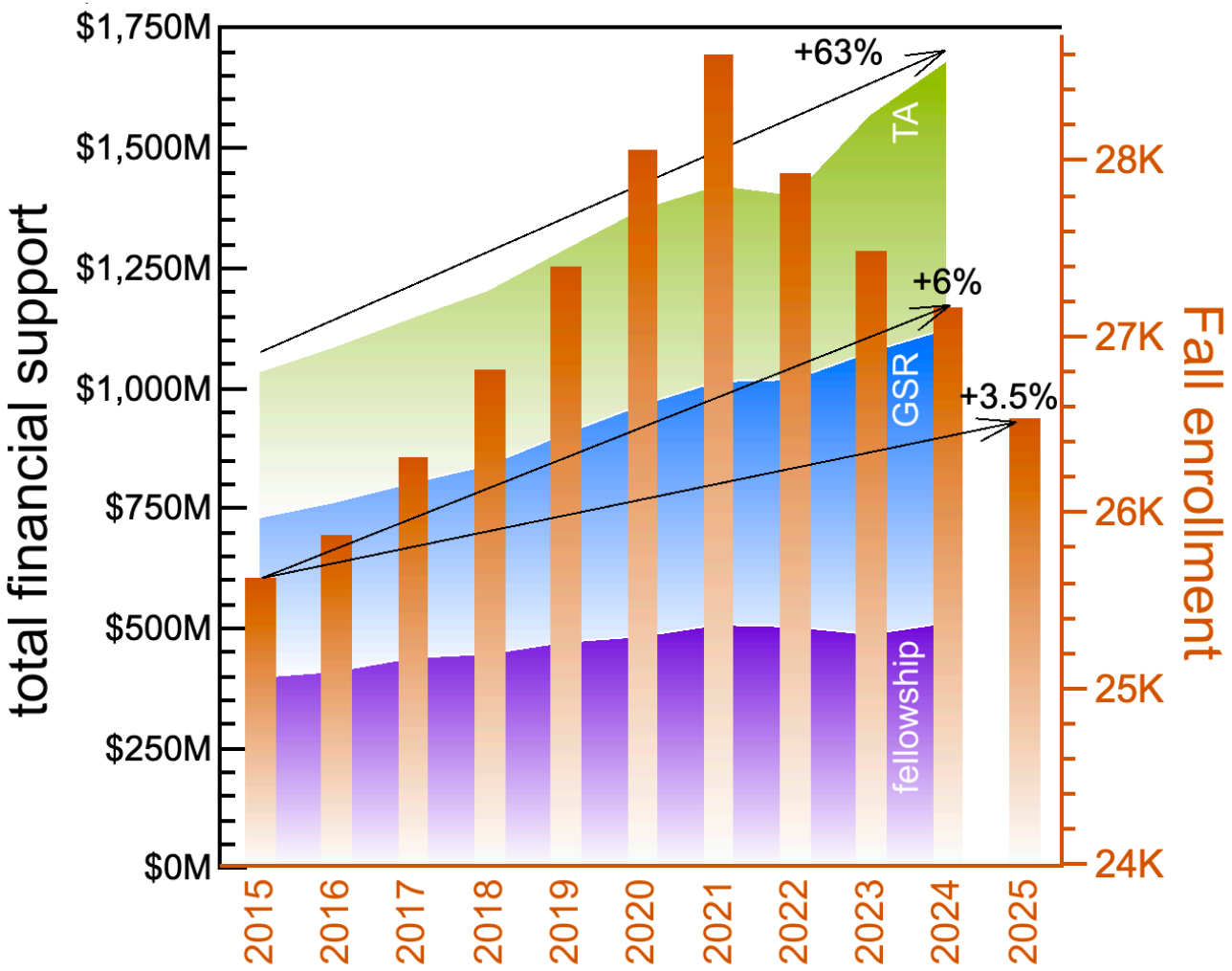




Trends in doctoral student support: UC-wide



Effect of cost on enrollment: UC-wide



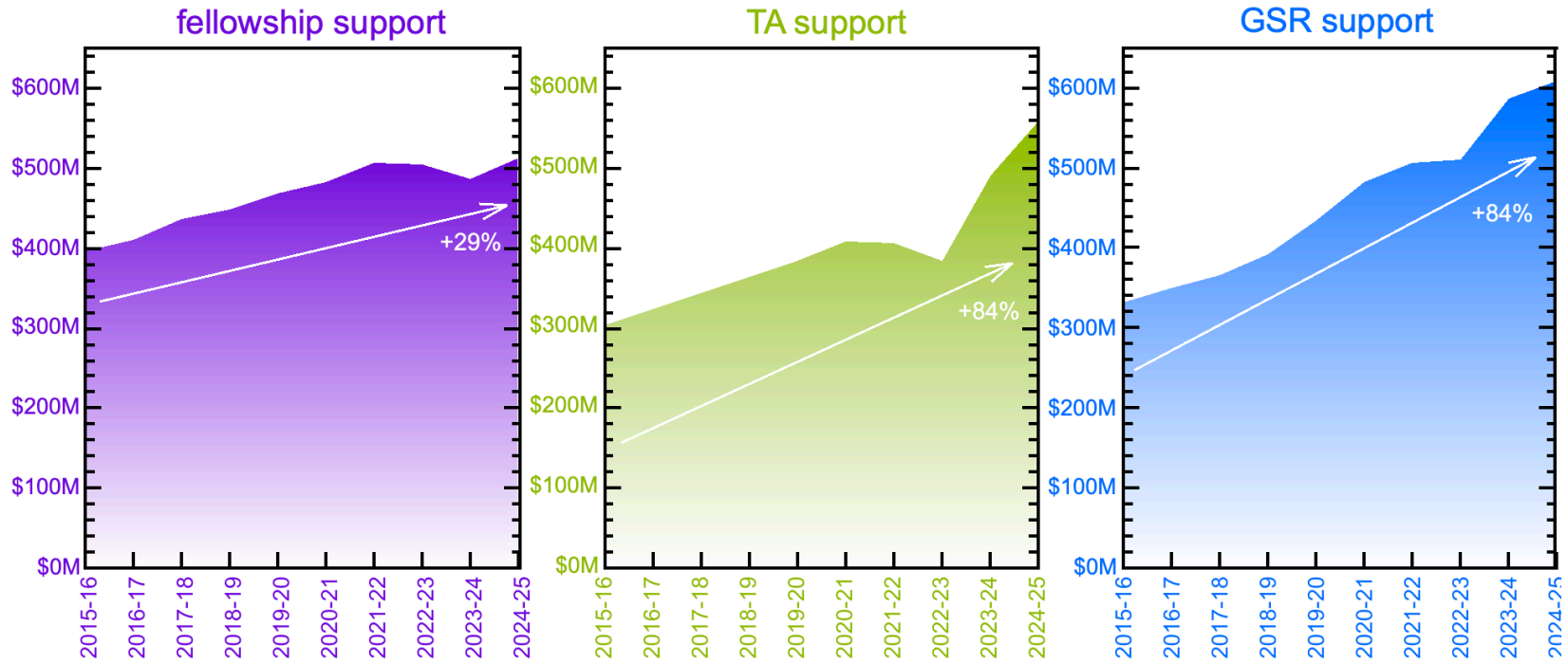
From 2015 to 2024, CA CPI increased 32%.

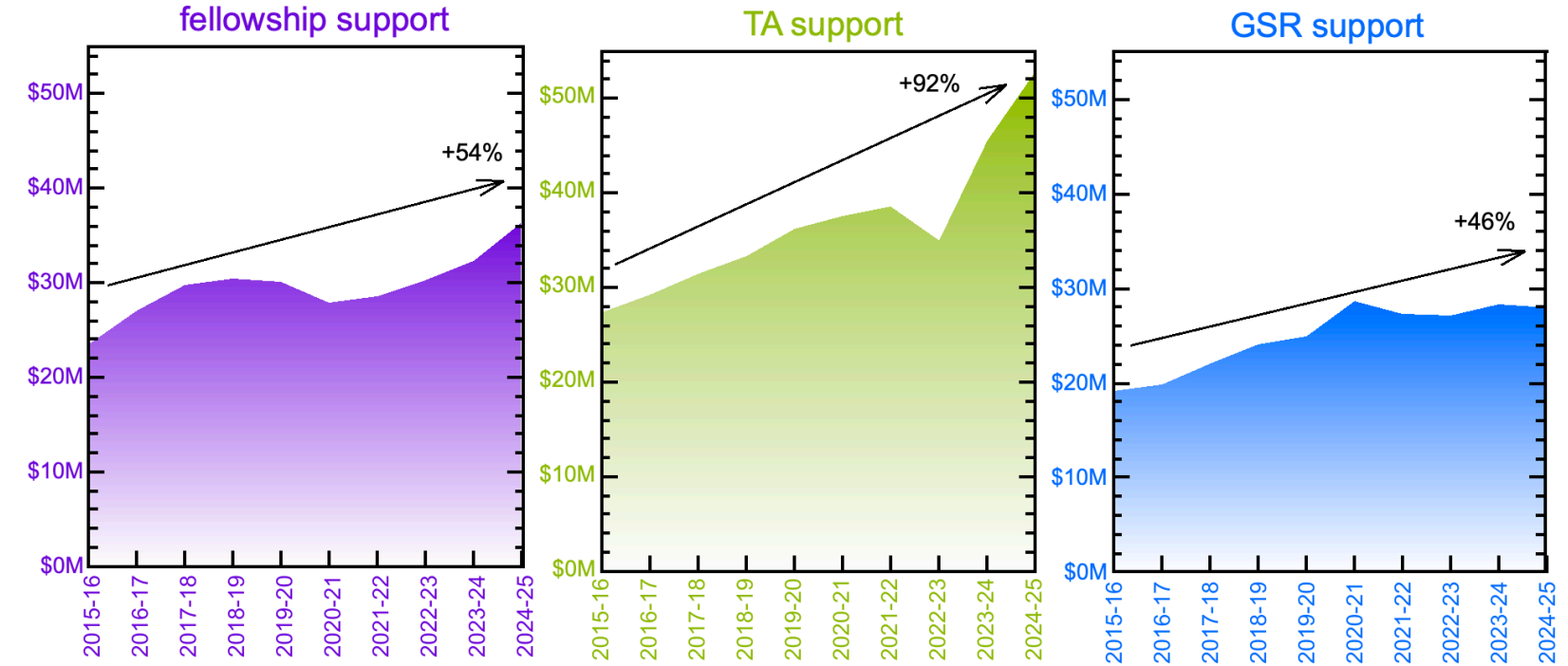
UC core funding increased 42% in the same period.
Undergraduate enrollment increased by 19%.

UC

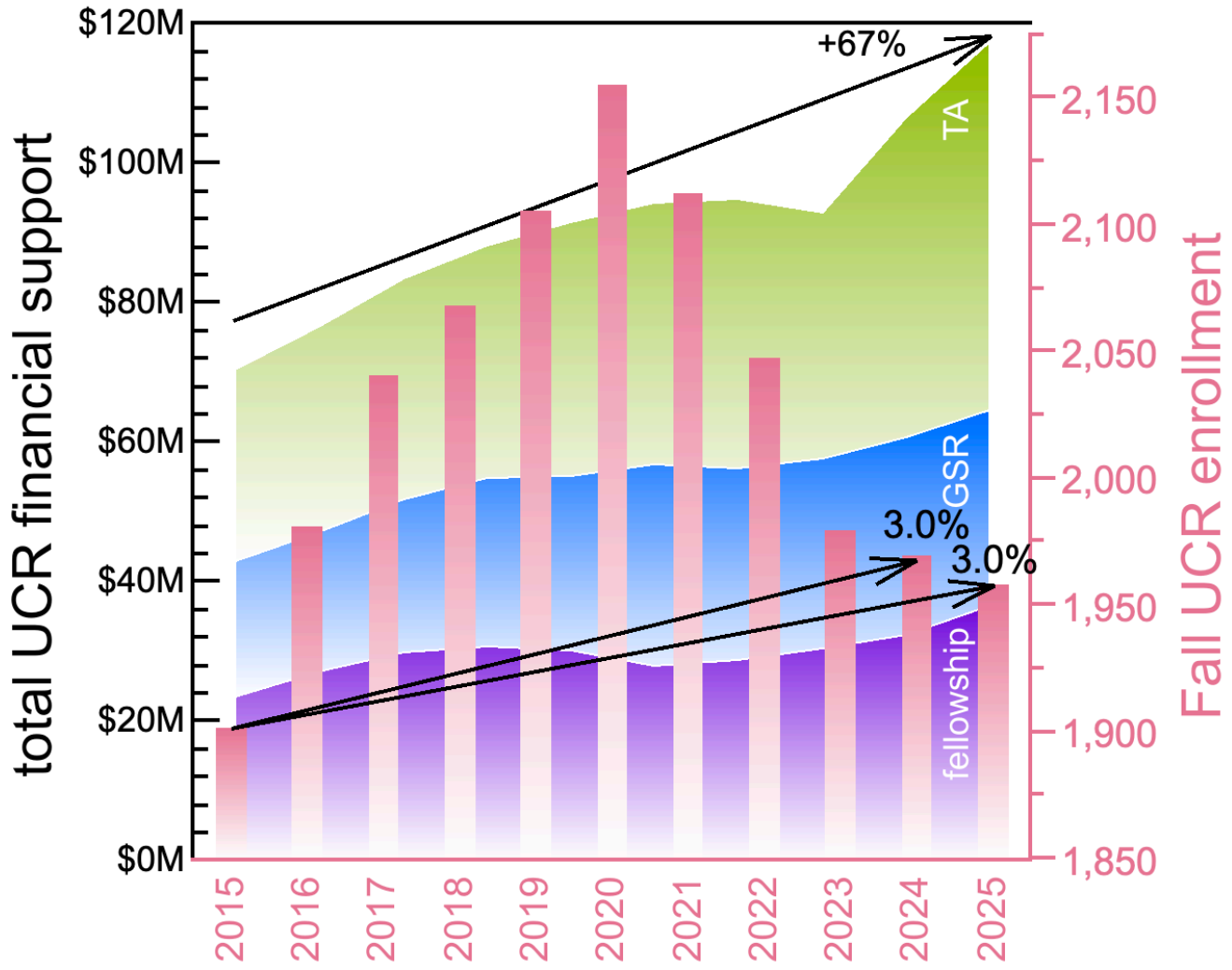
vs.

UCR


fellowship support
$600M
$500M
$400M
$300M
$200M
$100M
$0M
+29%
2015-16
2016-17
2017-18
2018-19
2019-20
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
TA support
+84%
GSR support
+84%


fellowship support
$50M
$40M
$30M
$20M
$10M
$0M
+54%
2015-16
2016-17
2017-18
2018-19
2019-20
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
TA support
+92%
GSR support
+46%

Effect of cost on enrollment - UCR

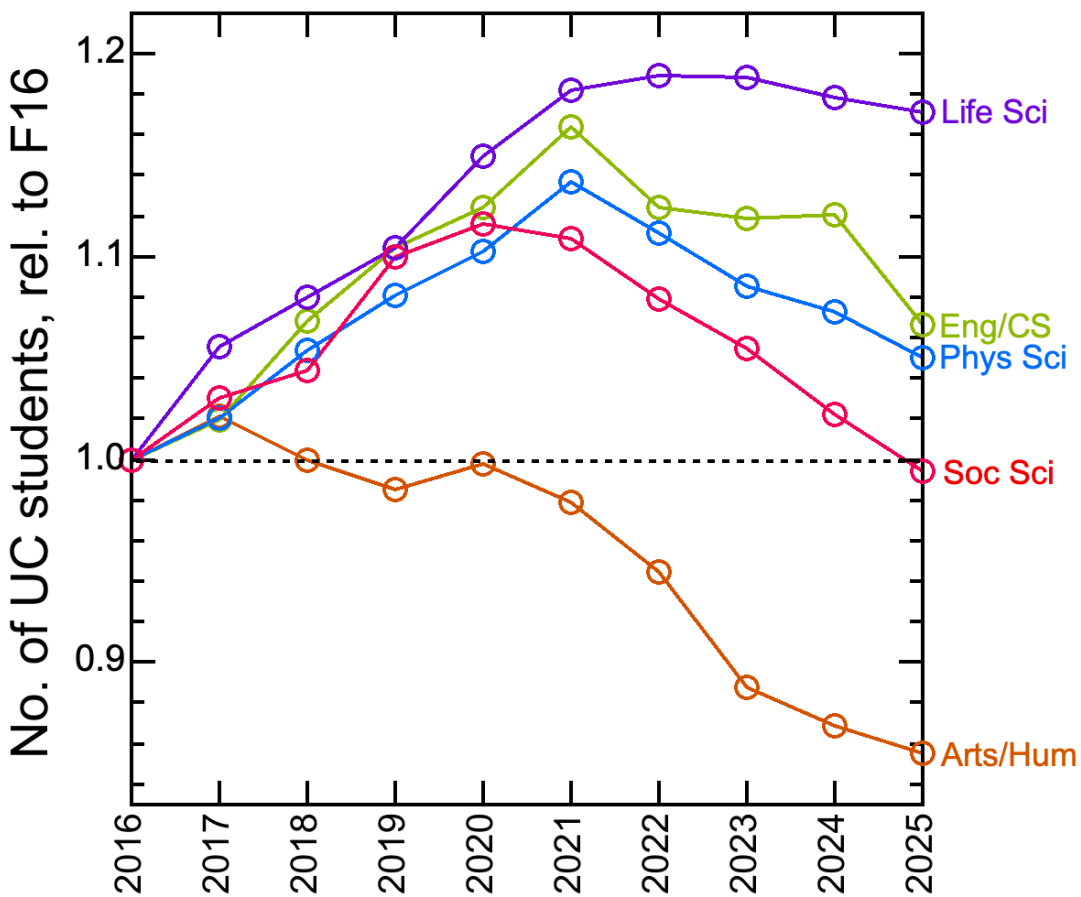


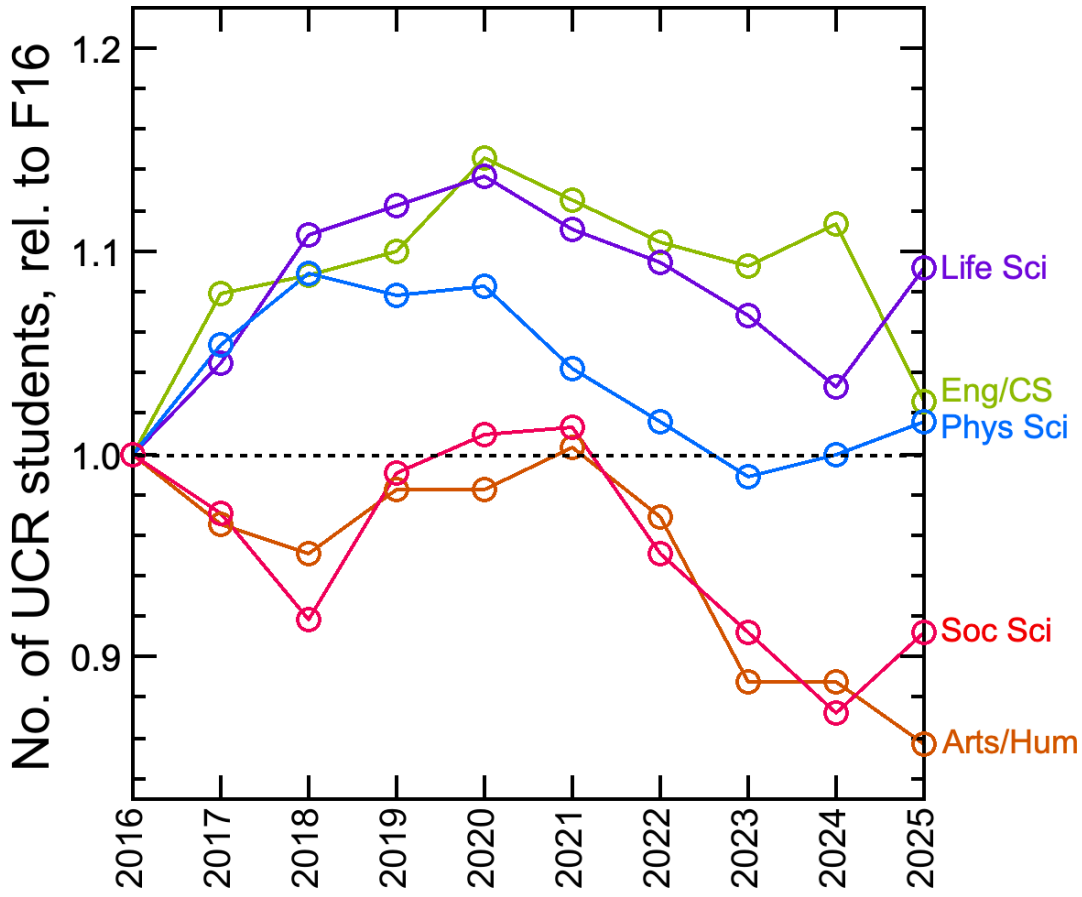
UC doctoral stipends

- Preceding CBA1, the average doctoral stipend increased at roughly the rate of inflation.
- The average stipend increased sharply following CBA1.

Doctoral enrollment by discipline

UC-wide vs. UCR





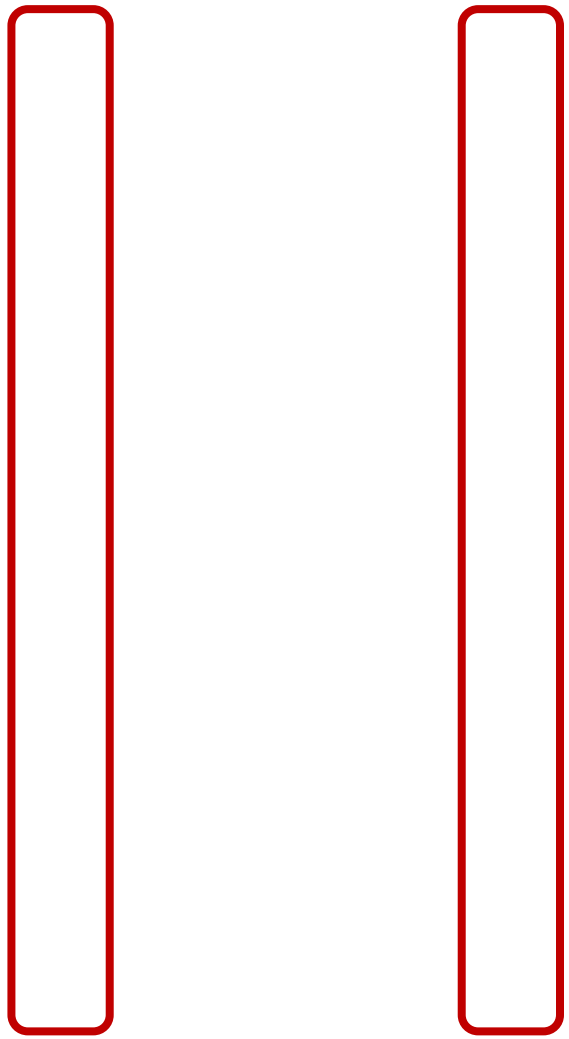


Where do we go from here?

CBA2: Changes to GSR payscale

- Step 1 catches up with Step 2, then is eliminated in 2029.
- Steps 2-6 become steps 1-5 on new payscale.
- A unified payscale for GSRs/TAs, with two new steps (6,7).

Campus use of GSR salary steps (S26)



GSR experience-based increases

Students appointed at steps 1 and 2 receive annual experience-based increases.

Campus use of TA salary steps (S26)

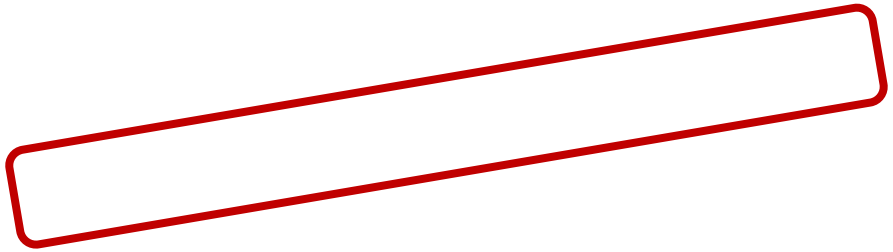


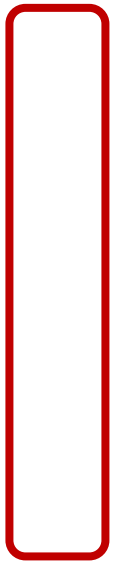
CBA2: Changes to TA pay scales

- CBA1 created two payscale tiers for TAs.
- In CBA2, Tier 1 increases much faster than Tier 2.
- In 2029, the two scales will merge.
- At that time, TAs will be placed at steps 4-6 on a unified ASE payscale.

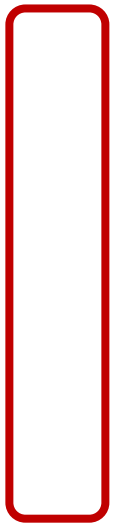
TA experience-based increases

Possible scenarios: TAs





Possible scenarios: GSRs



What about CBA3?



We can still shape the future of graduate education,
but the constraints have gotten tighter.

Faculty need to talk about this…



The bold ideas

Intended to stimulate broad discussion and debate about fundamental premises and structures.

B1: Target dramatic reductions in time-to-degree across all PhD/MFA programs

B2: Exercise more central oversight

B3: Decouple graduate curricula from undergraduate-focused departmental structures

B4: Explore new types of PhD/MFA programs

B5: Create graduate programs that span multiple campuses

B6: Fully decouple academic effort from employment and other forms of financial support

B7: Engage more substantively with industry, government, and the community

B8: Innovate in cost control and revenue generation related to PhD/MFA education

UC Adaptation to Disruption (PLUS)

Recommendations

0. Preserve shared governance and disciplinary flexibility
1. **Support Innovation and Experimentation:**
    a. pilot programs
    b. assessment
2. Strengthen Expectations and Accountability.
3. Ensure Continued Program Quality and Sustainability.
4. **Align Faculty Incentives with Evolving Doctoral Program Structures.**

Making a case for expanding graduate education at UCR



not in many of its current formats…

…but, could it be much more

student-centered
individually-tailored

academically-focused
time-efficient

centrally-managed AND operationally distributed

????

Supplemental slides

R1: Define academic expectations

The UC, and every PhD/MFA program it offers, must clearly define academic expectations for its graduate students, particularly as they are distinct from any other relationships these students may have with the University.

R1a. Articulate clear expectations, in the form of syllabi or other written expectations, for all PhD/MFA student learning outcomes.

R1b. Have PhD/MFA students attest to their specific intellectual/creative contributions.

R1c. Explicitly recognize faculty advising of PhD/MFA students as a contribution to the educational mission of the University.

R2: Understand, consolidate, and steward financial resources

The UC, and all of its PhD/MFA programs, must endeavor to support its PhD/MFA students with resources appropriate to successful and timely degree completion.

R2a. Develop stable and sustainable funding models for PhD/MFA education.

R2b. Incentivize faster completion of academic milestones.

R2c. Consider resources that support PhD/MFA students in their academic endeavors more holistically.

R2d. Build public support long-term for PhD/MFA education.

R3: Manage PhD/MFA enrollments

The UC must more actively manage its PhD/MFA enrollments, while centering student success, disciplinary opportunities and challenges, inclusion and community, program and applicant quality.

R3a. Size PhD/MFA programs based on student interests and the availability of resources, as well as workforce opportunities, rather than on the University's need for people to teach and to perform research.

R3b. Control graduate admissions and yields more intentionally .

R3c. Assist graduate programs in collecting, disseminating, and using post-degree placement data.

R4: Re-evaluate graduate pedagogy

The UC must address its graduate pedagogy as a priority in the design of itsPhD/MFA programs, aligning it with the academic and career goals of our students.

R4a. Evaluate, regularly and rigorously, all PhD/MFA programs for their scholarly, career, and community outcomes.

R4b. Improve academic readiness and promote academic belonging in graduate programs.

R4c. Accelerate skills acquisition in research study design and academic writing.

R4d. Assess academic progress at least annually and establish smaller, more frequent milestones.

R4e. Create more, and more accessible, exit paths for PhD programs.

R5: Strengthen advising and mentoring

Advising and mentoring partnerships, the cornerstones of UC's PhD/MFA programs, must be enhanced, incentivized, broadened, and assessed.

R5a. Acknowledge advising/mentoring as a partnership, and provide training for both faculty and graduate students in their respective roles.

R5b. Support PhD/MFA students in identifying a different faculty advisor, when a match proves unsuccessful.

R5c. Build mentoring networks across the broader university community.

R5d. Recognize faculty appropriately for their contributions to advising and mentoring.

R6: Diversify career preparation

The UC must better prepare its PhD/MFA students for a wide variety of post-graduation careers, including and beyond the academy.

R6a. Develop comprehensive campus and systemwide career counseling and professional development opportunities.

R6b. Require goal-driven career planning shortly after advancement to candidacy.

B1: Target dramatic reductions in time-to-degree across all PhD/MFA programs

B1a. Set firm time limits for graduation.

B1b. Establish pre-doctoral bridge programs.

B1c. Implement “one in-one out” PhD admissions.

B1d. Require a Master’s degree to advance to PhD study.

B1e. Embrace AI-augmented personalized learning, research training, and autonomous research.

B2: Exercise more central oversight over PhD/MFA programs

B2a. Make budgets more responsive to program health.

B2b. Redistribute resources for PhD/MFA education across multiple departments.

B2c. Reconfigure existing PhD/MFA programs.

B3: Decouple graduate curricula from undergraduate-focused departmental structures

B3a. Create interdisciplinary PhD/MFA hubs based on research project rotations.

B3b. Organize faculty into graduate groups, as a prerequisite to chairing dissertation committees.

B4: Explore new types of PhD/MFA programs

B4a. Explore advanced teaching programs and awards.

B4b. Explore programs that purposefully prepare a broader range of students for more types of professional careers outside the academy.

B4c. Allow graduate students to tailor PhD/MFA curricula to their individual interests.

B5: Create graduate programs that span multiple campuses

B5a. Encourage multi-campus PhD/MFA courses and programs across the UC.

B5b. Explore national/global PhD collaborations and co-tutelle programs.

B6: Fully decouple academic effort from employment and other forms of financial support

B6a. Establish a universal basic stipend for graduate students.

B6b. Create a "pay-it-forward" model for PhD/MFA funding.

B6c. Prohibit the use of outcomes from paid work as evidence of academic progress and accomplishment.

B7: Engage more substantively with industry, government, and the community

B7a. Adapt enrollments and graduate student funding to workforce needs.

B7b. Embed fieldwork and creative residencies in graduate programs.

B7c. Encourage new kinds of public-private sector partnerships.

B7d. Cultivate closer relationships with government and its agencies.

B8: Innovate in systemwide approaches for cost control and revenue generation related to PhD/MFA education

B8a. Provide graduate students with flexible benefits and advantages.

B8b. Create graduate student cooperatives.

B8c. Allow (and even incentivize) trading of credits between UC campuses.