10/12/26 | RCOE Conference Center
UCR Leadership Retreat on Graduate Education

Introduction

Chancellor Jack Hu opened the retreat with a clear message: graduate student success is as critical to UCR's mission as undergraduate education.

Hu said UCR aims to reach an overall enrollment of 35,000 students by 2035, but graduate enrollment has experienced a downward trend, declining from approximately 4,000 students in 2021 to 3,600 in fall 2025, a 10% decrease. (This represents about 13% of total university enrollment and an undergraduate-to-graduate ratio of 6.7:1.)

Hu said graduate students drive discovery, mentor undergraduates, and support institutional standing.

Provost Liz Watkins outlined an agenda organized around three breakout sessions, each followed by report-outs from the 10 tables. For session 1 (Identifying Challenges and Opportunities by Discipline) and session 2 (Envisioning, Achieving, and Sustaining Excellence), participants were arranged by academic discipline with university administrators distributed across tables. Seating was reassigned to mix disciplines for session 3 (Getting Started: From Vision to Action).

Graduate Dean Lidia Kos presented an overview of UCR's graduate enrollment, student outcomes, and institutional investment. Master's enrollment has declined from its fall 2021 peak, driven entirely by a drop in international students; domestic master's enrollment has grown. PhD enrollment has drifted down since 2019, mainly among domestic students.

UCR's median time to doctorate of 5.7 years is among the fastest in the UC system. However, its 10-year PhD completion rate (65.1%) is 8.2 points below the UC-wide rate of 73.3%, a gap driven by students who leave before finishing rather than by slow completion. Placement information is unavailable for 41% of recent PhD graduates, which limits the campus's ability to assess outcomes.

Campus core funding for graduate student support has grown 42% since 2021-22, to nearly $100M annually, with more than half of the increase going to TA salaries and benefits following collective bargaining. Of the $111.7M in total support for PhD students in 2024-25, 76% came from campus funds. Teaching assistantships were almost entirely campus-funded, and about half of PhD students hold a campus-funded teaching appointment, which ties doctoral support closely to undergraduate instructional needs. Campus-funded teaching appointments also support master's students, including those in self-supporting programs, whose tuition revenue stays almost entirely with the programs. Kos underscored the need to optimize graduate program structures and to leverage revenue-generating and self-supporting master's programs.

(For more details, please refer to the slides presented by Dean Kos.)

Breakout Session 1: Identifying Challenges & Opportunities by Discipline

Questions:

1. What are the most significant challenges your disciplinary area faces in graduate education and how do these challenges manifest at UCR?
2. Which of these challenges are national in scope and origin and which are specific to your programs at UCR?
3. What is currently working well in your programs at UCR to address these challenges?
4. Do you know of approaches at other institutions designed to address these disciplinary challenges that are worth exploring?

* *indicates written summary provided by participants.*

Table 1: Chemistry & Physics*

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origin:

- Year-to-year uncertainty in grant income/GSR funding causes defensive PhD under-enrollment due to a lack of a financial buffer (UCR-specific).
- Rigid TA coordination mechanics. Hard to offer TA positions to PhD students in other departments/units before hiring master's students (UCR-specific).
- Interdepartmental programs struggle with funding (UCR-specific).
- High acceptance rates make it challenging to identify who can succeed (UCR-specific).
- Rising overall student costs and the imperative to diversify funding sources (national).

3. What is working well:

- Job placement, competitive time to degree, student success elevates UCR's reputation (publications, awards, conference papers), excellent departmental staff support.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:

- More institutional support for large center grants, training grants, and industry matching funds.

Table 2: Computer Science & Engineering*

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origin:

- Multi-year approval timelines delay the launch of high-demand degrees, hurting master's recruitment (UCR-specific).
- Declining campus fellowship support (UCR-specific).
- No bridge funding between grants causes faculty to become conservative in admitting PhD students (UCR-specific).
- Rising support costs push PhD expenses near postdoc parity while grant funding lags (national).
- Restrictions on Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for international students may increase the cost of supporting students in summer (national).

3. What is working well:

- Robust PhD applicant pool and established international recruitment pipelines.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:

- Streamline BS+MS pathways using GPA-based automatic entry.
- Build formal pipelines with international universities.

Table 3: Engineering

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origin:

- Administrative red tape (UCR-specific).
- Reliance on individual PI grants rather than institution-wide training grants and fellowships (UCR-specific).
- Retention risks among high-performing early-career faculty (UCR-specific).
- Competition from online master's and regional CSU doctoral programs (national).

3. What is working well:

- High-caliber cohort of junior faculty.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:

- Form interdisciplinary faculty clusters to share equipment, infrastructure, and financial coverage for graduate students during grant lapses.
- Streamline student pipeline models (e.g., BS+MS and 3+1+1) with clearer admission pathways.
- Provide central administrative support to apply for training grants and institutional fellowship funding.

Table 4: Biomedical & Life Sciences

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origin:

- Declining academic readiness/prep in core areas like writing, math, and quantitative skills (national).

- Graduate cohort sizes tied to undergraduate TA needs rather than program-specific educational goals (UCR-specific).
- Funding silos create friction for colleges/programs and interdepartmental programs (UCR-specific).

3. What is working well:
   - Commitment to training biomedical scientists and public health leaders for the region.
4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:
   - Establish centralized prep "bootcamps" across programs to elevate student writing and quantitative skills.
   - Decouple graduate student support from TA lines.
   - Create a central "escrow" framework (via the Grad Division) to manage funding and administration for interdisciplinary programs.
   - Build industry partnerships to fund internships and update curricula to match workforce needs.

Table 5: Plant Sciences & Planetary Sciences*

1 and 2. Significant challenges and origin/scope:
- Administratively set "capacity-driven" recruitment targets rather than faculty-driven. Long tail in completion limits entry numbers for new cohorts (UCR-specific).
- Advancing to candidacy remains a major mental and structural hurdle (UCR-specific).
- Uncontrollable factors (e.g., weather, field conditions) create delays in field-based disciplines (national).
- Fewer campus endowments and fellowships to fill federal funding gaps (UCR-specific).
- Travel reimbursement and cash-advance constraints impose burdens on financially vulnerable students for attending conferences, etc. (UCR-specific).
- Insufficient administrative support hinders large institutional training grant applications (UCR-specific).

3. What is working well:
   - Strong departmental culture and community.
   - Frequent, structured touchpoints for students (e.g., Annual Mentoring and Evaluation forms, Geo 250, syllabi).

Table 6: Social Sciences*

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origins:
- Adapting to smaller cohort sizes driven by rising student employment costs and, in turn, rising education costs (national).
- Supporting student well-being, including mental health, work-life-academic balance, and preparation for a changing job market (national).
- Managing cohort sizes and course offerings without sufficient institutional data on the specific drivers of student completion versus attrition (UCR-specific).

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:
   - Refine recruitment practices to target well-prepared students who possess a clear understanding of program expectations.
   - Implement structured faculty mentorship training (e.g., CIMER models) and peer mentoring to improve time-to-degree, mental health, completion rates, and career placement. *[Note: The Graduate Division already runs CIMER-based mentor training for faculty and peer mentoring training for graduate students]*
   - Build intentional internal pipelines by better preparing UCR undergraduates for graduate study and establishing master's-to-PhD pathways.
   - Collect campus data regarding why students complete or leave programs to better inform cohort management/student support.

Table 7: Mathematics, Statistics & Economics

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origins:

- Early academic difficulties, fellowship loss, and first-year attrition (national and UCR-specific).
- Student use of AI tools without developing underlying skills essential to graduate education (national).
- Visa uncertainties hamper international student recruitment (national).
- Dependence on graduate students to meet undergraduate instructional demands rather than research capacity or applicant quality (UCR-specific).
- Uneven advising loads for faculty members (UCR-specific).
- Mismatch between program quality and external peer-assessment (e.g., *U.S. News* department chair reviews) (UCR-specific).

3. What is working well:

- Hands-on advising contributes to 5-year time-to-degree in math and statistics.
- "How to Succeed …" professional development courses.
- Economics tracks employment information for every student that graduates.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:

- Adapt dissertation assessment/requirement to emphasize students' research process and idea creation over AI outputs.
- Strengthen marketing and peer assessment efforts.

Table 8: Humanities

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origins:

- Incoming students' skills gaps in academic preparation and writing skills (national).
- AI makes writing samples harder to evaluate, a problem compounded by the removal of GRE requirements (national).
- Small cohort sizes make graduate seminars ineffective (UCR-specific).

3. What is working well:

- Excellent career outcomes (e.g., ethnic studies achieving a 90% PhD placement rate).
- Increased mentorship and a more structured path to completion.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:

- Prioritize recruiting applicants with existing master's degrees to bridge preparation gaps.
- Introduce candidate interviews into the admissions process to assess applicant fit and writing integrity.
- Explore biennial cohort admissions.

Table 9: Arts & Humanities

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origins:

- For dance, lack of fellowship opportunities mid-program delays dissertation writing and extends time-to-degree (UCR-specific).
- Balancing academic readiness while preserving inclusivity, e.g. providing access without requiring a master's degree (UCR-specific).
- Unstable job market/fewer academic jobs causes students and faculty advisors to intentionally prolong time-to-degree (national).
- Limited faculty expertise to prepare graduate students for non-academic career paths (UCR-specific).
- Fewer external grants and safety concerns around field research abroad (national).

3. What is working well:

- Strong national reputation and industry opportunities for TAs.
- Candidate interviews in graduate admissions process.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:

- Administrative support to help faculty design and launch 4+1 programs (particularly for students seeking teaching credentials).
- Campus funding to bridge federal and state funding gaps.

Table 10: Professional Schools*

1 and 2. Significant challenges and scope/origin:
- Market challenges and reduced federal funding for education (national).
- The University of California TA contract's 50% funding requirement for TAs is challenging for professional schools where grant sizes are typically smaller.

3. What is working well:
- School of Education has transitioned to a biennial PhD admissions cycle to manage costs.

4. Opportunities/approaches from other institutions:
- Undergraduate Learning Assistants modeled after UCI to assist with undergraduate instruction and reduce reliance on TAs.
- Compress required PhD coursework from two years to one, placing students earlier into research apprenticeships to accelerate independent scholarship and lower department costs.

Cross-cutting Themes: Although the tables represented very different disciplines, several challenges came up repeatedly, which suggests they are institutional rather than field-specific.

The most common was the link between doctoral cohort size and undergraduate instructional need. Tables in the sciences, mathematics, biomedical sciences, and the professional schools all noted that TA appointments, rather than research capacity or program goals, largely determine how many PhD students programs admit.

A related concern was funding instability. With no bridge funding between grants and declining campus fellowship support, faculty in several disciplines described becoming conservative about admitting students. Interdisciplinary programs were repeatedly described as facing structural funding barriers.

Many tables also cited insufficient central administrative support for large training-grant and center-grant applications, as well as multi-year approval timelines that delay new master's and combined BS/BA+MS programs.

Across fields, participants raised concerns about incoming students' preparation in writing and quantitative skills, and about how generative AI complicates both admissions evaluation and skill development.

Finally, several tables pointed to the need for better data on why students complete or leave their programs and where graduates are placed. Field-specific issues, such as weather-dependent fieldwork, practice-based degrees in the arts, and international recruitment pipelines in computer science, call for disciplinary responses. The shared challenges, however, point to campus-level solutions.

Lunch Presentation: Making the Case for Graduate Education

Professor Susannah Scott discussed the financial pressures facing graduate education across the UC system. Her central point was that the rising cost of supporting graduate student employees under the current collective bargaining agreement is not sustainable at current funding levels. At UCR, GSR costs are projected to grow about 5.1% a year, the highest rate in the UC system. Campuses will need to make intentional changes, including deliberate decisions about cohort size, rather than let cost pressures reshape programs by default.

Breakout Session 2: Envisioning, Achieving, and Sustaining Excellence

Questions:

1. Ten years from now, what does excellence in graduate education look like in your discipline and specifically in your programs at UCR?
2. What changes in recruitment, curricula, pedagogy, advising, career and professional development, assessment and evaluation, cohort size, funding models would help to achieve that vision?
3. How might master's programs be incorporated into your discipline's educational portfolio?
4. What common metrics should we use, as a campus, to evaluate the success of our graduate programs?

* *indicates written summary provided by participants.*

Table 1: Chemistry & Physics*

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Maintain excellence in research despite funding constraints. Remain internationally competitive with fewer graduate students.
   - Responsibly integrate AI into research enterprise while critically vetting outputs to avoid hallucinations and maintain rigorous critical thinking.
2. Key changes:
   - Teach pedagogy alongside laboratory research so graduate students are trained in both scientific discovery and the teaching responsibilities many will assume later.
   - Explore "teaching postdocs" in which postdocs are paid to design and lead courses.
3. Incorporation of master's programs:
   - Distinguish between state-supported vs. self-supported professional degrees.
   - Launch desirable niche master's programs (e.g., cosmetic chemistry, quantum information science) that fill specific regional industry needs.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Evaluating employment outcomes "post-postdoc" to measure long-term career success.

Table 2: Computer Science & Engineering

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Excellence will largely look the same, with program emphasis on skills and technological advancement that prepare students for industry.
2. Key changes:
   - Individual tech areas will change.
3. Incorporation of master's programs:
   - A PhD that builds on master's coursework, depending on practices at peer institutions.
   - Incorporation of more project management skills and working across teams at the master's level.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Better alumni tracking to determine long-term career progression and degree impact.

Table 3: Engineering

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Strong job placement alongside reduced time-to-degree and increased completion rates.
   - Ensuring students feel secure and clearly recognize the purpose and value of their degree.
2. Key changes:
   - Better faculty mentorship to improve degree completion and retention.
   - Required internships to build connection with industry and increase reputation.
   - Faster approval to streamline launch of new programs before trends shift.

3. Incorporation of master's programs:
    - Establish 3+2 articulation agreements with international institutions to build master's cohorts that continue to PhD.
    - Expand self-supporting master's degree programs and short-term (1–2 quarter) certificate programs.
4. Common metrics for success:
    - Career placement, initial starting salaries, and lifelong return on investment.
    - Program retention rates and time-to-degree completion.
    - Professional development activities (e.g., peer-reviewed publications, internships, and employer connections).

Table 4: Biomedical & Life Sciences*

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
    - Train industry leaders and mentors who stay engaged with UCR.
    - Integrate AI tools to advance education without compromising critical thinking skills, innovation, and creativity.
2. Key changes:
    - Establish clear metrics/expectations to reduce attrition and incentivize completion.
    - Design curriculum around societal needs and expand cross-disciplinary programs.
    - Incentivize faculty for outstanding commitment to graduate teaching and mentorship.
3. Incorporation of master's programs:
    - Expand 4+1 master's pathways.
    - Explore hiring master's graduates as TAs to decouple undergraduate instructional needs from doctoral cohort sizes.
4. Common metrics for success:
    - Placement to broad sectors, contributions to social mobility, timely advancement, student satisfaction with campus support systems, lifelong alumni engagement, and diversified funding.

Table 5: Plant Sciences & Planetary Sciences*

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
    - Graduates placed in positions that require a PhD.
    - Healthy, vibrant graduate student community. Interesting research.
    - Graceful "off-ramps" for students choosing to exit programs early.
2. Key changes:
    - Early advising interventions, higher quality mentorship, more CIMER-like opportunities, departmental learning communities.
    - Standardized recruitment practices.
    - Intentional professional development, including interview preparation, dedicated career courses, and involving industry/agency partners in student advising.
3. Integration of master's programs:
    - Develop BS+MS programs both as PhD recruitment pipelines and terminal degrees with good career prospects.
    - Expand internship access, funding options (e.g., Graduate Off campus fellowships), and career guidance for master's students. Design programs that deliver market value.
4. Common metrics for success:
    - Alumni career placement, program retention, time-to-completion rates, and exit survey feedback from graduating students.

Table 6: Social Sciences*

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):

- Placement in doctoral-level careers achieved within reasonable time with minimal misery (student + PI).

2. Key changes:
   - Utilize data-driven recruitment strategies.
   - Establish distinct career preparation pathways (academic vs. industry).
   - Incentivize high-quality faculty advising and develop mentoring teams to distribute the advising load and reduce reliance on single mentors.
3. Integration of master's programs:
   - Build structured master's-to-PhD internal pipelines.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Mentorship, attrition rates, reputation/ranking indices, exit interviews.

Table 7: Mathematics, Statistics & Economics

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Integration of AI tools across applied disciplines while preserving mathematical rigor.
2. Key changes:
   - Adopt shorter planning and program review cycles to respond to rapid developments in technology and job markets.
   - Require students to analyze and verify AI-generated research ideas.
3. Integration of master's programs:
   - Build on successful professional master's programs (e.g., statistics) while exploring 4+1 pathways.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Standard retention, graduation rate, time-to-degree benchmarks.
   - Career placement metrics for academic placements (enhancing institutional reputation) and industry placements (benefit to society).
   - Joint student-faculty publications.
   - Improving cost-effectiveness (median expenditure per student).

Table 8: Humanities

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Retain dissertation as benchmark of doctoral excellence.
   - Explore expanding full-time faculty as alternative to TA reliance.
2. Key changes:
   - Reinforce program standards and track progress to hold advisors and graduate students accountable to degree timelines.
3. Integration of master's programs:
   - Develop 4+1 programs (e.g., a combined master's in history with teaching certificate) that provide clear return-on-investment.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Alignment between programmatic training and career placement outcomes.
   - Implementation of mid-cycle (5-year) program reviews rather than waiting for 10-year review cycles.

Table 9: Arts and Humanities*

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Produce field-changing research and creative activity by supporting students who change the field and do solid work in existing areas.
   - Build a diverse student body reflecting California's demographics. Graduate intellectuals, skilled pedagogues, and creative leaders who shape media and cultural narratives.

- Elevate institutional storytelling and public engagement to communicate the value of public arts and strengthen program reputation.
- Hire and retain excellent faculty.

2. Key changes:
   - Maintain larger cohort sizes that combat loneliness and foster peer-to-peer exchange.
   - Move to funding models that offer more support for graduate student research, e.g. philanthropic and other sources.
   - Expand professionalization courses.
   - Standardize titles, administrative support, and financial compensation for faculty graduate advisors to reduce turnover and burn-out.
3. Integration of master's programs:
   - Align master's and 4+1 (BA+MA) pathways with state needs, particularly teaching credential programs.
   - Expand practice-based doctoral and master's (e.g. DMA) alongside standard PhDs.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Measure success by students' achievement of their own self-defined academic and professional goals established at entry.
   - Avoid relying on standard tenure-track job placement metrics or industry jobs, which fail to account for factors outside of the university's control.

Table 10: Professional Schools

1. Vision of excellence (10 Years):
   - Prioritize educational quality over cohort quantity. Ensure programs remain responsive to market demand and regional needs.
   - Establish a three-tiered PhD framework tailored to student career pathways: academic/research track; professional track; teaching track.
2. Key changes:
   - Reduce student cohort sizes to allow better mentorship during academic journey.
   - Implement mentoring milestones paired with annual convenings to review progress.
   - Streamline Senate administrative review processes to eliminate delays for new degrees.
3. Integration of master's programs:
   - Enroll master's and PhD students in foundational graduate seminars to sustain course viability and foster knowledge exchange.
4. Common metrics for success:
   - Alumni career placement rates and graduate job satisfaction.

<u>Breakout Session 3: Getting Started: From Vision to Action</u>

Questions:

1. What concrete actions should university-wide administrators and Senate-wide committees take this year toward achieving the visions discussed in Session 2?
2. What concrete actions should faculty and college leaders take this year toward achieving the visions discussed in Session 2?

**Session 3 combined interdisciplinary groups to synthesize university-wide strategies and partnerships.*

1. Actions for university-wide administrators and Senate committees:
   - Streamlining and expediting approvals for new master's programs:
     - Implement standardized template documents, preliminary review steps (e.g. early checks by Graduate Council), and transparent tracking mechanisms.

    - Provide dedicated staff support in Graduate Division to shepherd new programmatic proposals through committee review and manage quality control.
- Institutional grant support:
    - Increase central administrative staff support to assist faculty and departments in preparing, submitting, and managing major institutional training grants.
- Budget and policy measures:
    - Establish a central TA clearinghouse to match supply with demands across campus.
    - Address financial hurdles for interdisciplinary and joint-college programs.
    - Address graduate housing shortages and affordability barriers to strengthen student recruitment.
    - Explore alternative instructional staffing options, such as teaching postdocs, undergraduate learning assistants, or specialized teaching faculty to decouple TA reliance from PhD cohort size.
- Centralized market and feasibility analyses:
    - Fund central market research and feasibility studies to identify regional workforce demands and survey current undergraduates to identify new master's and certificate programs. [*NOTE: This practice has been in effect for the last five years. The provost's office pays for market surveys for new master's and certificate program proposals.*]

2. Actions for faculty and college leaders:
- Mentorship and advising:
    - Reward/incentivize faculty efforts in doctoral advising and mentoring by providing compensation or course relief and expanding professional development to help faculty build mentoring skills.
    - Improve post-candidacy advising to keep doctoral students on track through defense.
    - Implement mechanisms to identify struggling students early, while destigmatizing master's degree outcomes for students transitioning out of PhD programs.
    - Mentor graduate students on identifying and applying for external fellowships, grants, and foundation funding.
    - Incentivize timely degree completion by prioritizing financial support for students within standard time-to-degree timeframes.
    - Expand college-level research administration staff to ensure timely grant submission and competitive proposal preparation.
- Alumni relations and pride:
    - Build departmental pride and engagement through distinguished alumni awards, regular program newsletters, and active alumni networking events.
    - Maintain program-level alumni tracking and contact databases to support career placement, student recruitment, and philanthropic development.
- Reputation:
    - Encourage faculty and staff to nominate external academic colleagues who can speak to the university's academic strengths for the academic reputation surveys. [The nomination portal: https://ucr.gomovein.com. Detailed instructions: https://international.ucr.edu/document/qs-survey-contact-portal-guide]

3. Strategic partnerships:
- Connect charismatic faculty with UCR's Development teams to secure endowed chairships/fellowships and connect with prospective donors.
- Coordinate outreach with Communications and Marketing to share high-impact research, alumni, and student success stories for consideration in campus-wide news and promotional campaigns.
- Grant departments access to central Alumni Engagement's contact lists to leverage the strong mentor-graduate student bond.

- Improve the tracking of outcomes for students who graduate as well as for those who leave UCR without graduating. Collaboration between administrative units (Graduate Division, Alumni Engagement, Career Center) and academic units (departments, deans' offices) will be needed.

Closing Synthesis and Next Steps

Provost Liz Watkins closed the retreat by synthesizing the day's discussion into priorities for university administration and the Academic Senate, priorities for colleges and faculty, and areas that call for partnership between them.

Highest priorities identified:

1. **Support for new master's programs:** development support and central funding for market analysis to help faculty design and launch new master's and certificate programs, including 4+1 pathways and programs informed by faculty–industry relationships.
2. **Streamlined Senate approval processes** for new degree programs, paired with strategic Senate-level thinking about which programs to develop based on regional needs and surveys of current undergraduates.
3. **Training-grant support** at both the central and college levels, including staff support for faculty grant submissions.
4. **Better data on student outcomes,** including placement and the reasons students complete or leave, to inform program assessment.
5. **Improved mentorship,** with clearer expectations and compensation for graduate advisors and greater recognition of faculty mentorship by the administration and Senate.

Additional actions for university administration and the Senate: conduct a landscape analysis to learn from institutions that do this well; analyze the cost of instructional postdoc positions; develop a budget model that enables interdisciplinary programs; establish a centralized TA clearinghouse; and address graduate student housing.

Additional actions for colleges and faculty: inform students about available grants and fellowships; strengthen off-ramp structures and identify early signs that a student may not complete; prepare students earlier, beginning at recruitment; include student feedback in program assessment; prioritize funding by years in the program to create incentives for timely completion; and clarify the relationship between master's and PhD programs. The provost also called for rethinking undergraduate teaching support, including who teaches undergraduates, so that doctoral cohort sizes can be decoupled from TA needs and smaller cohorts supported with more fellowship funding.

Areas for partnership: coordinating with Development and Marketing & Communications to strengthen UCR's academic reputation and build pride among graduate alumni.

Next step: Participants were asked to report the retreat discussion back to their departments and to share with colleagues from other departments who were not in attendance.

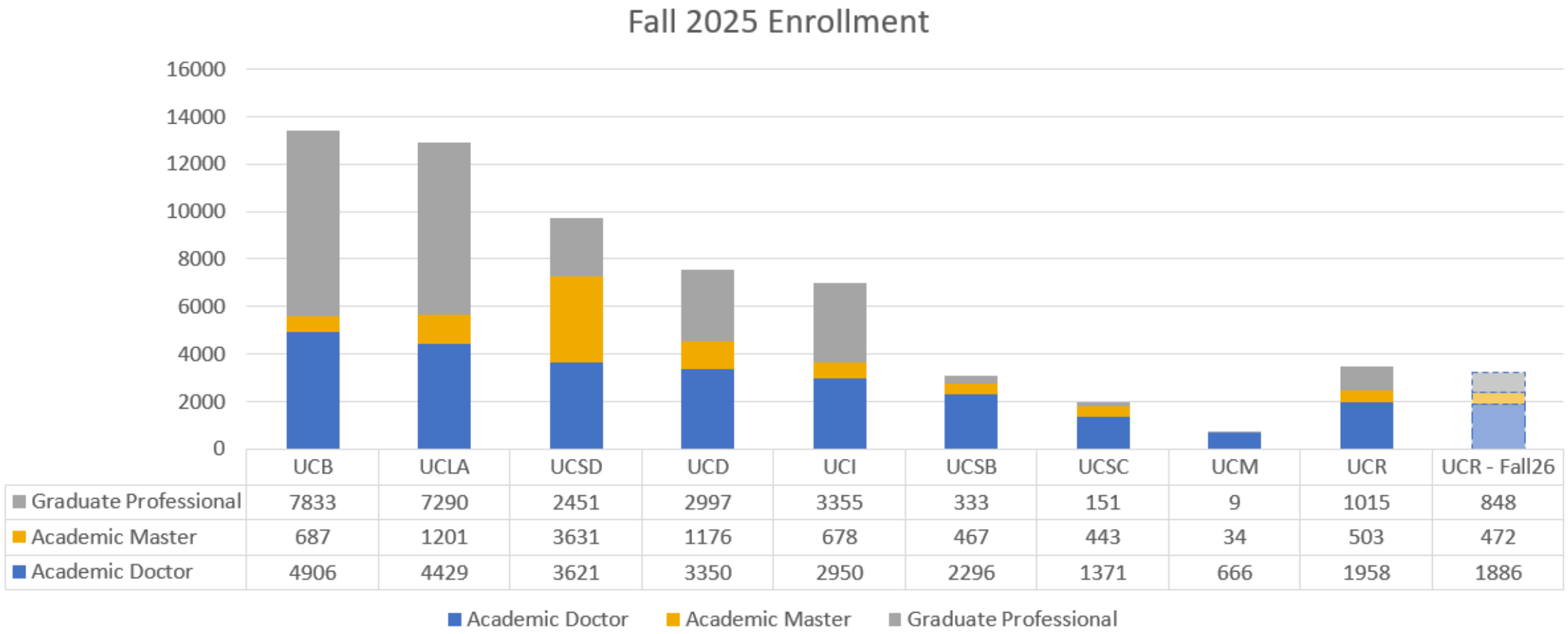
Chancellor’s Retreat
Graduate Education

October 12, 2026

UC RIVERSIDE

Enrollment

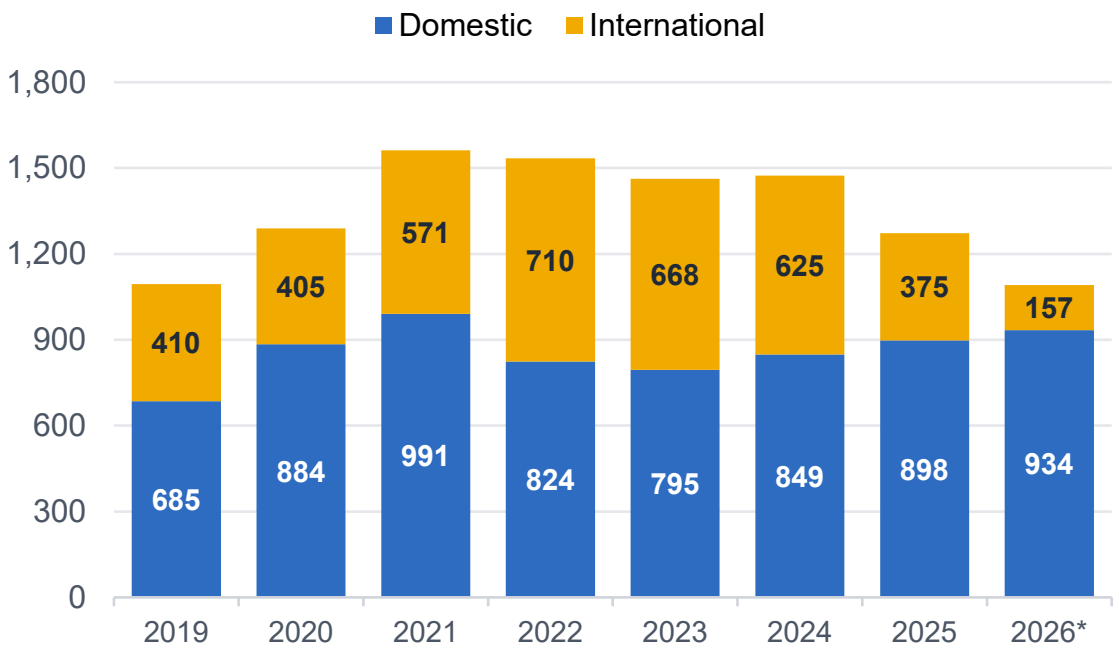
UC Graduate Enrollment



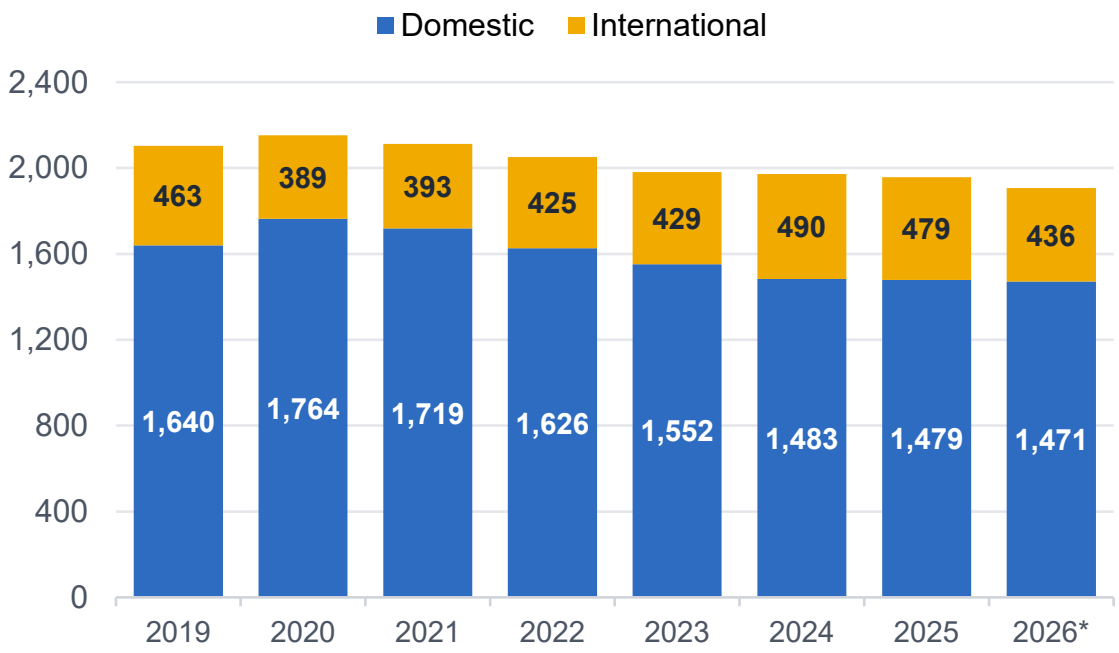
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Graduate Professional	7833	7290	2451	2997	3355	333	151	9	1015	848
Academic Master	687	1201	3631	1176	678	467	443	34	503	472
Academic Doctor	4906	4429	3621	3350	2950	2296	1371	666	1958	1886

Domestic versus International Enrollment

Master's programs



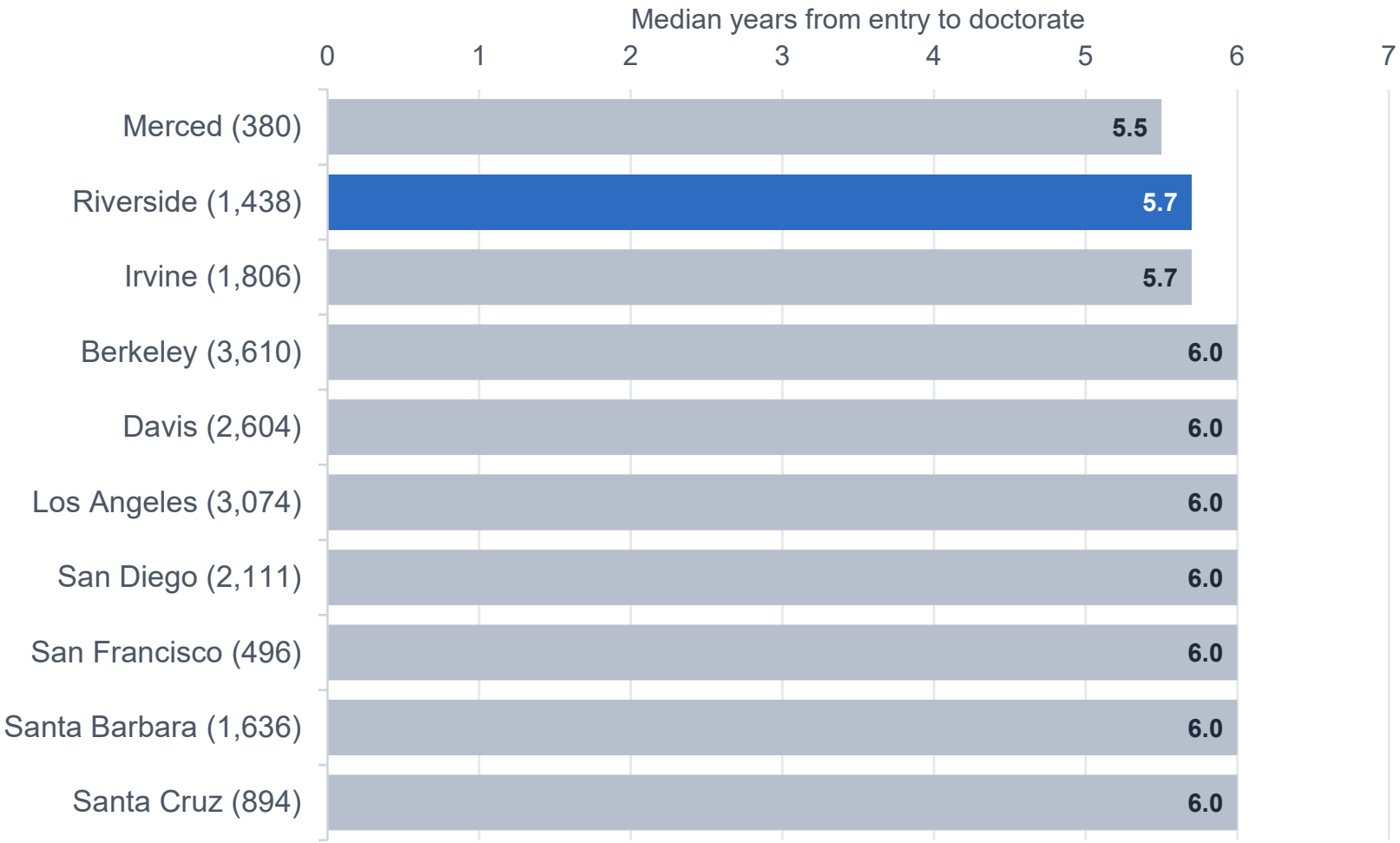
PhD programs



Source: UCR fall headcount in master's programs (academic, professional/PDST and self-supporting) and PhD programs by residency, 2019 to 2026 (*2026 preliminary). Residency reflects tuition basis, including all exemptions from nonresident tuition.

Student Outcomes

Median time to doctorate across the UC campuses



5.7 years

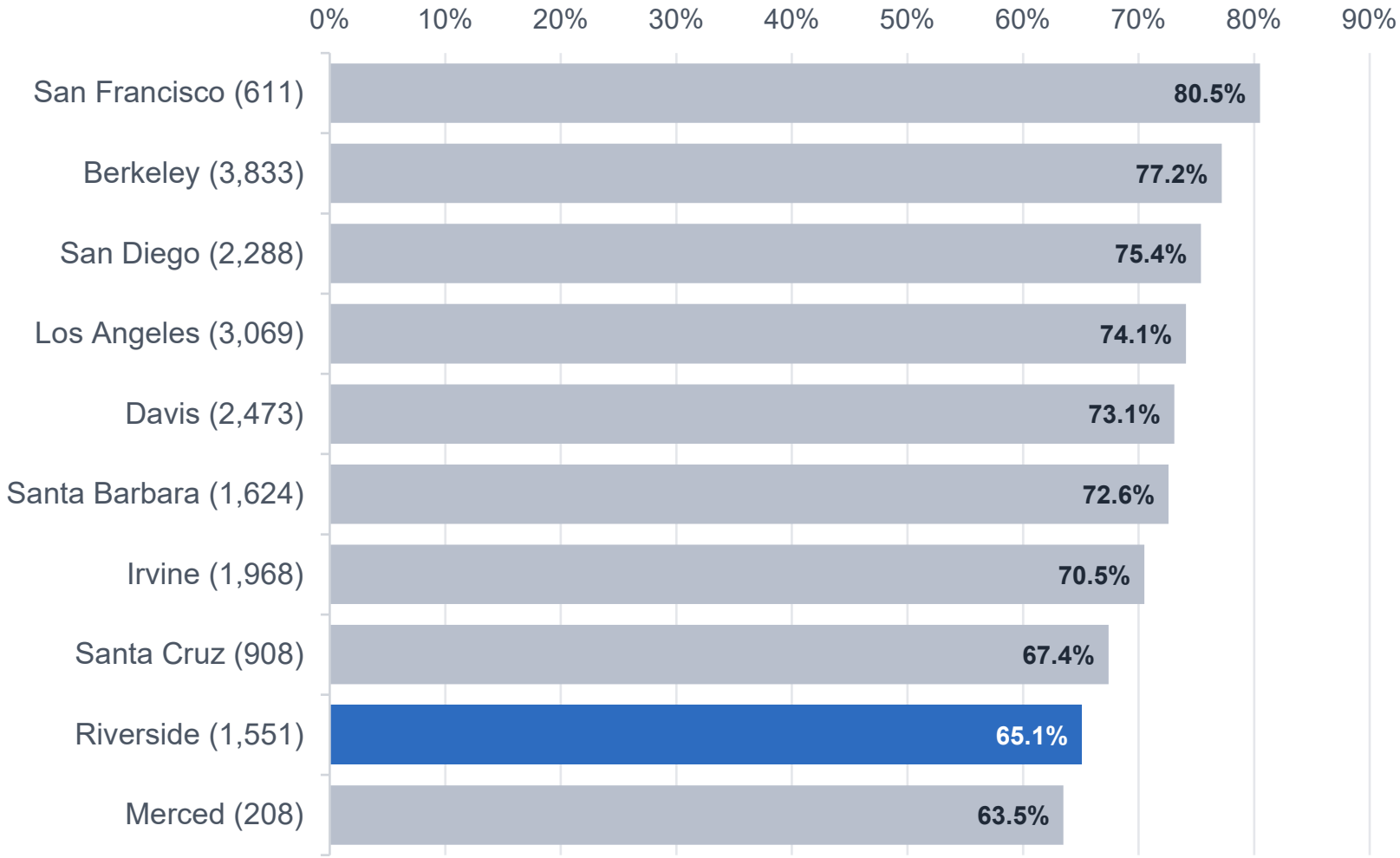
UCR median time to doctorate, tied with Irvine for second fastest; only Merced (5.5) is faster

7 of 10

campuses have a median of 6.0 years

Source: UC time to doctorate data, all disciplines, 2019–2023 graduating cohorts, median elapsed time to doctorate (years). Headcount (doctorates awarded) in parentheses. Covers graduates only; students who left without the degree are not included.

Ten-year doctoral completion across the UC campuses



65.1%

UCR's ten-year doctoral completion rate, 9th of 10 UC campuses

73.3%

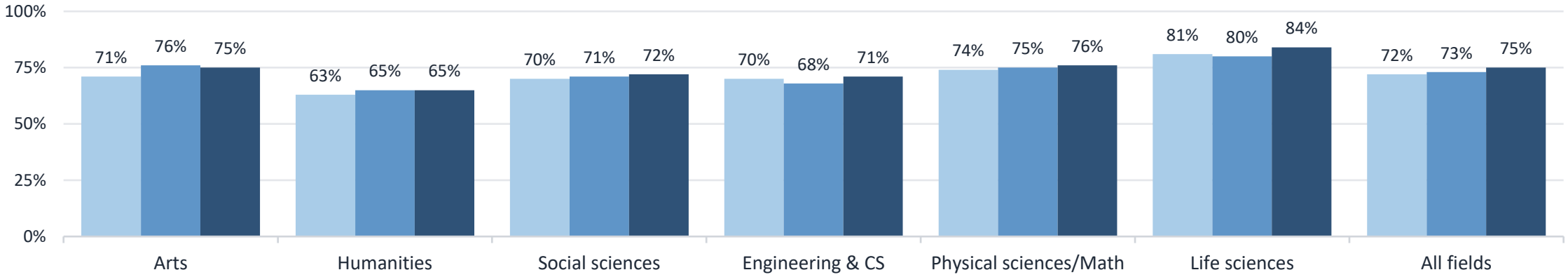
UC-wide, weighted by headcount

8.2 points below the UC rate

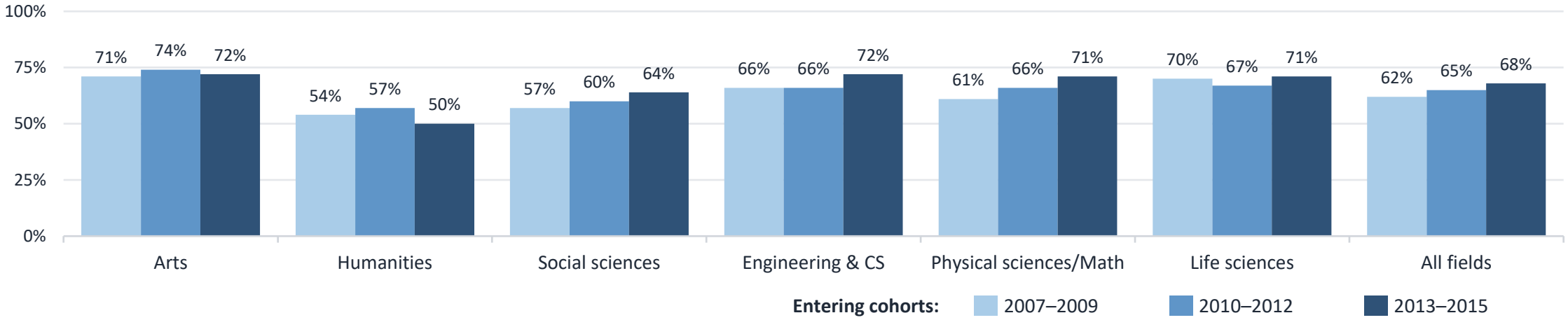
Source: UC doctoral completion data, all disciplines, 2010–2013 entering cohorts, ten-year completion rate. Headcount (entering doctoral students) in parentheses. UC-wide rate is weighted by headcount and computed from the campus figures.

Ten-year completion rate by discipline

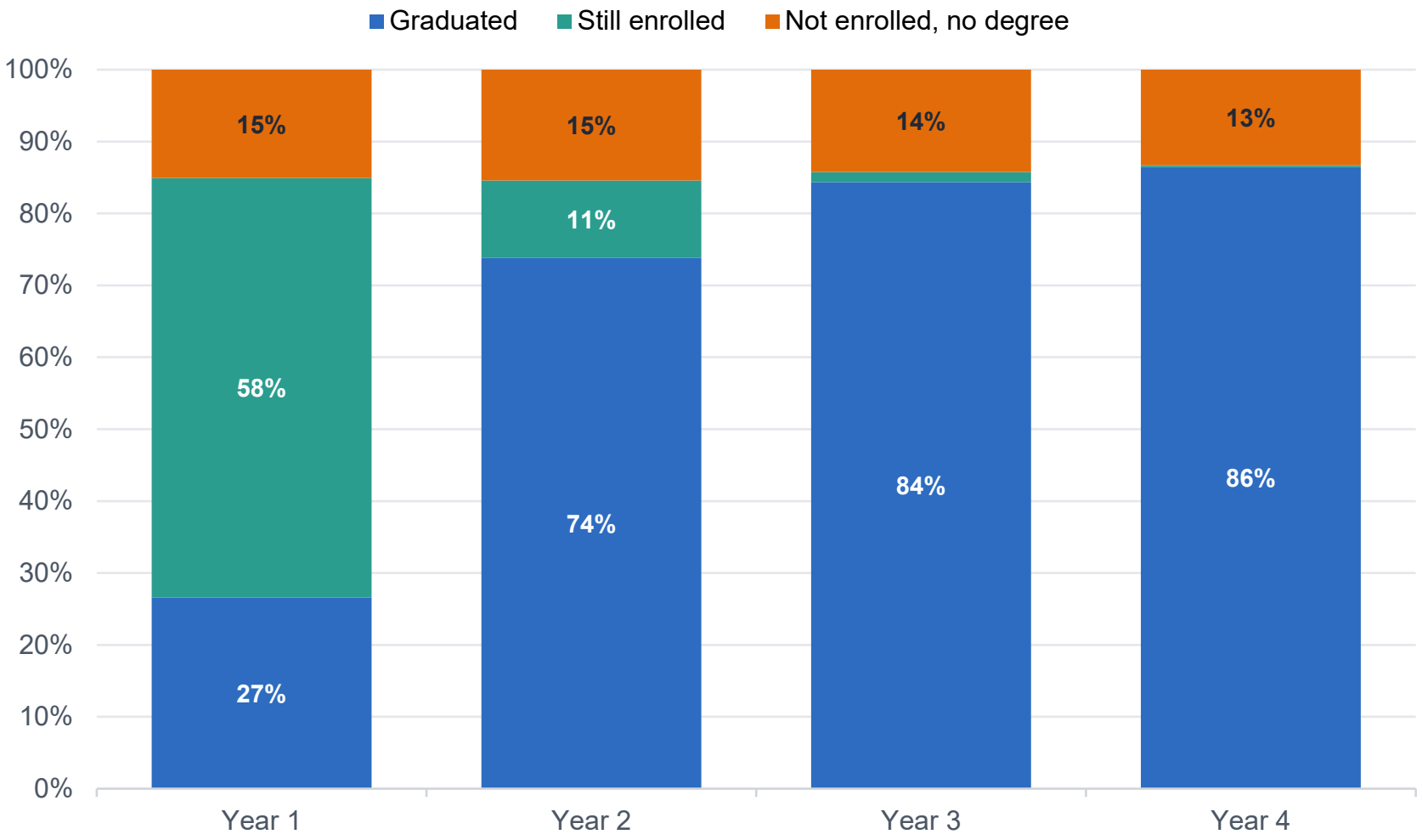
All UC campuses



Riverside



Master's students' progression



85%

still on track at the start of year 2 (2016–2023 entrants)

74%

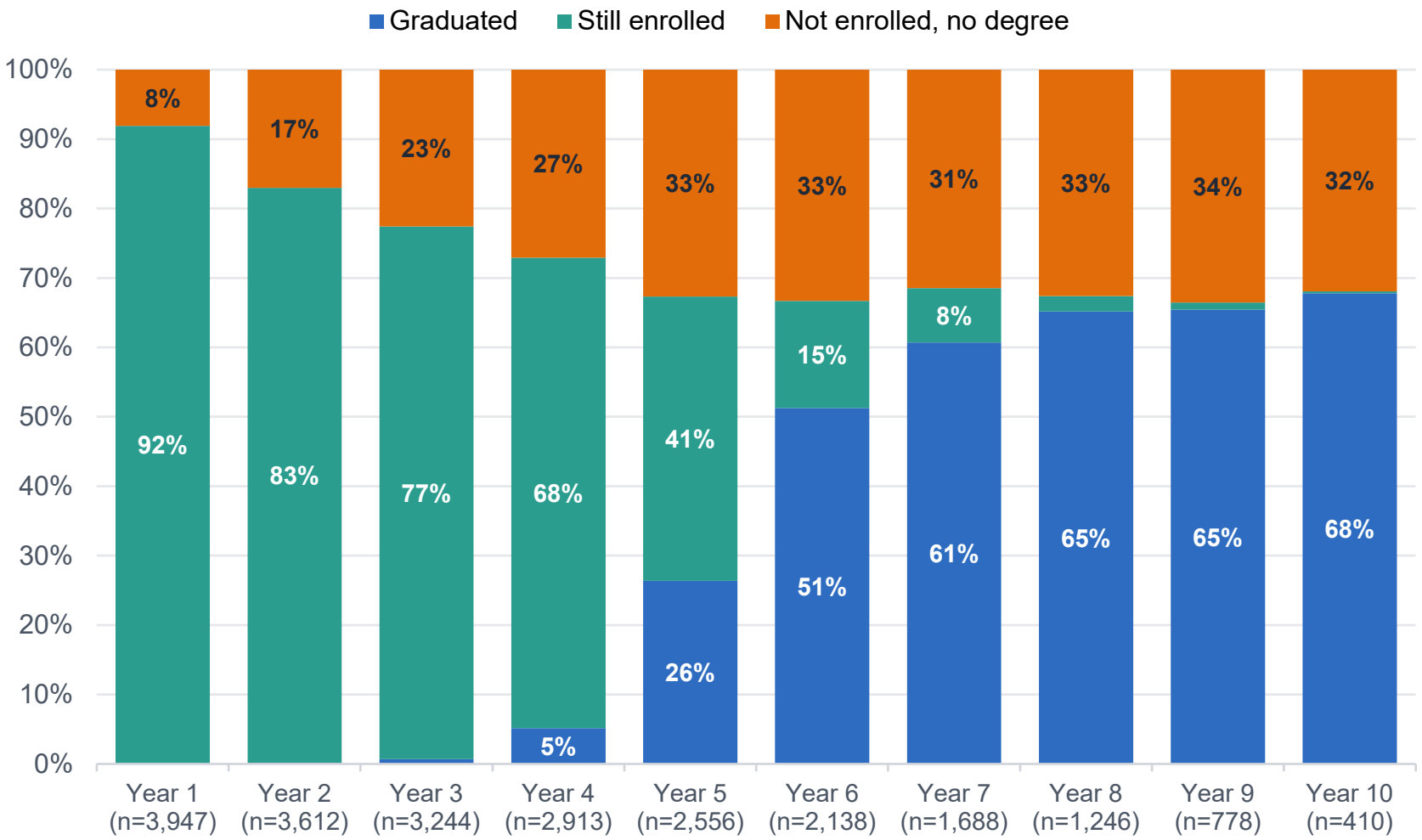
have the master's within 2 years (2016–2022 entrants)

86%

have the master's within 4 years (2016–2020 entrants)

Source: UCR Institutional Research (Dec 9, 2025). Master's students entering Fall 2016 or later. Each year uses the cohorts that have reached it: Year 1, 2016–2023 (n = 6,098); Year 2, 2016–2022 (n = 5,235); Year 3, 2016–2021; Year 4, 2016–2020 (n = 3,370).

PhD students' progression



92%

still on track at the start of year 2 (2014–2023 entrants)

83%

at the start of year 3 (2014–2022 entrants)

51%

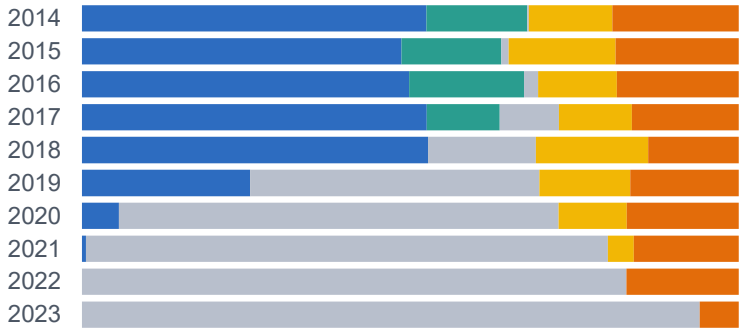
have the PhD within 6 years (2014–2018 entrants)

Source: UCR Institutional Research, Graduate Retention and Graduation Rates data file (Dec 9, 2025), all PhD programs. All students entering Fall 2014 through Fall 2023; each year includes every cohort that has reached it (n under each year), so later years rest on fewer, older cohorts. "Not enrolled" = left without the degree as of that fall.

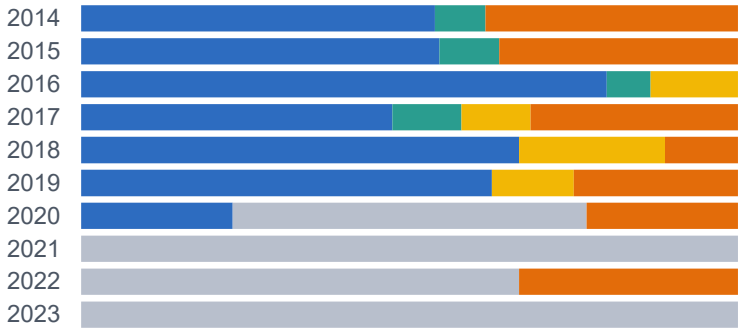
PhD programs success rate

Graduated within 6 years | Graduated after year 6 | Still enrolled | Left in year 3 or later | Left in years 1–2

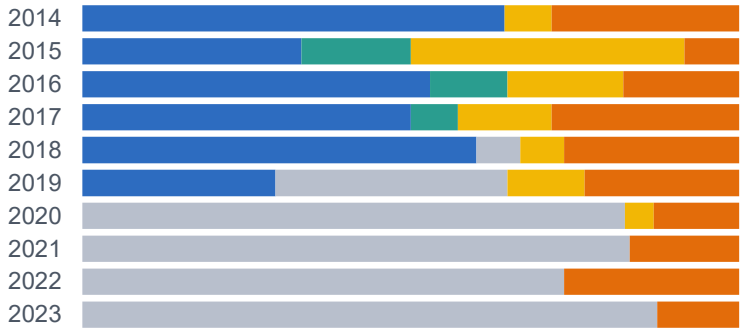
All UCR PhD n = 3,947



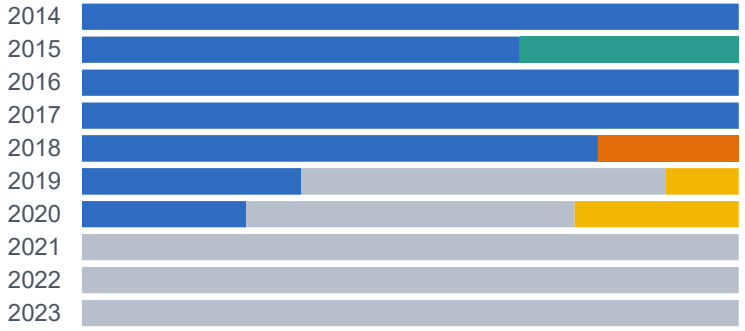
Mechanical Engineering n = 111



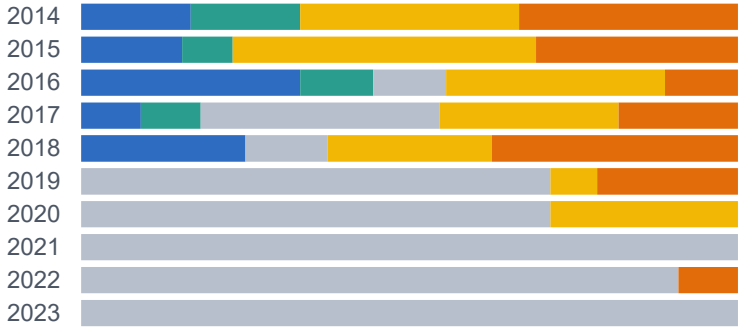
Mathematics n = 155



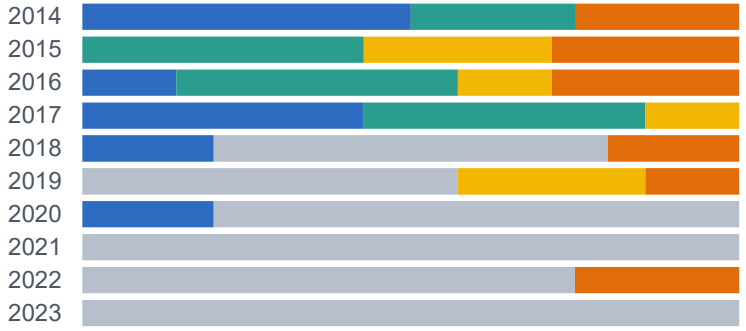
Biomedical Sciences n = 62



History n = 97

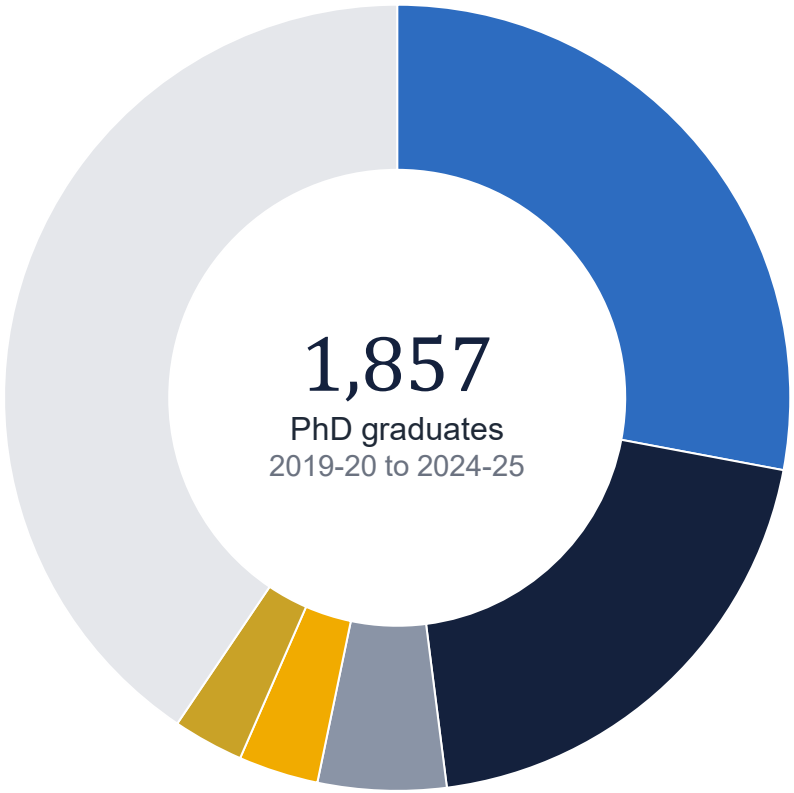


Comparative Literature n = 53



Source: UCR Institutional Research. All UCR PhD from the IR data file (Dec 9, 2025); programs from the IR dashboard by major, converted from percentages to student counts. Each bar is one entering cohort (Fall 2014 at top to Fall 2023 at bottom), shown as the share of its students in each status as of the latest data; n = students who entered 2014–2023.

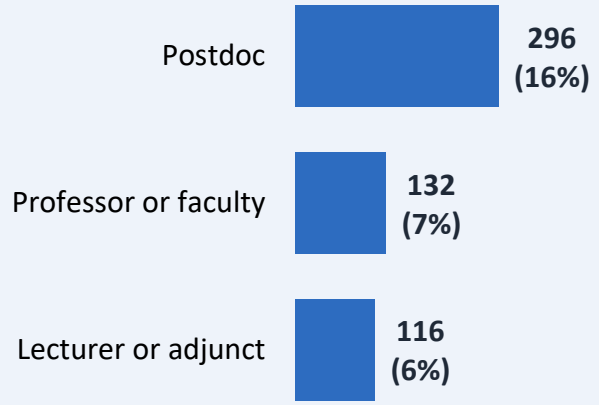
Doctoral placement



Employer	Graduates	% of all
Colleges & universities (4- and 2-year)	**519**	28%
Business or industry	**372**	20%
Other	**98**	5%
Government (non-military)	**61**	3%
Other institutions	**54**	3%
No placement information	**753**	41%

Academic positions held

graduates in each role (% of all 1,857 graduates)



Percentages are of all 1,857 PhD graduates, not only those in academia.

Positions are reported separately from employers, so some postdocs may be at labs, institutes or companies.

Sources: Graduate Program Report, PhD job placement by employer category (graduation years 2019-20 to 2024-25; current or first job, from Graduate Academic Affairs records, post-graduation and first-destination surveys); UCR Institutional Research, PhD degrees awarded by IPEDS academic year (Dec 9, 2025). Percentages are of all 1,857 graduates.

Funding

Campus investment in graduate student support

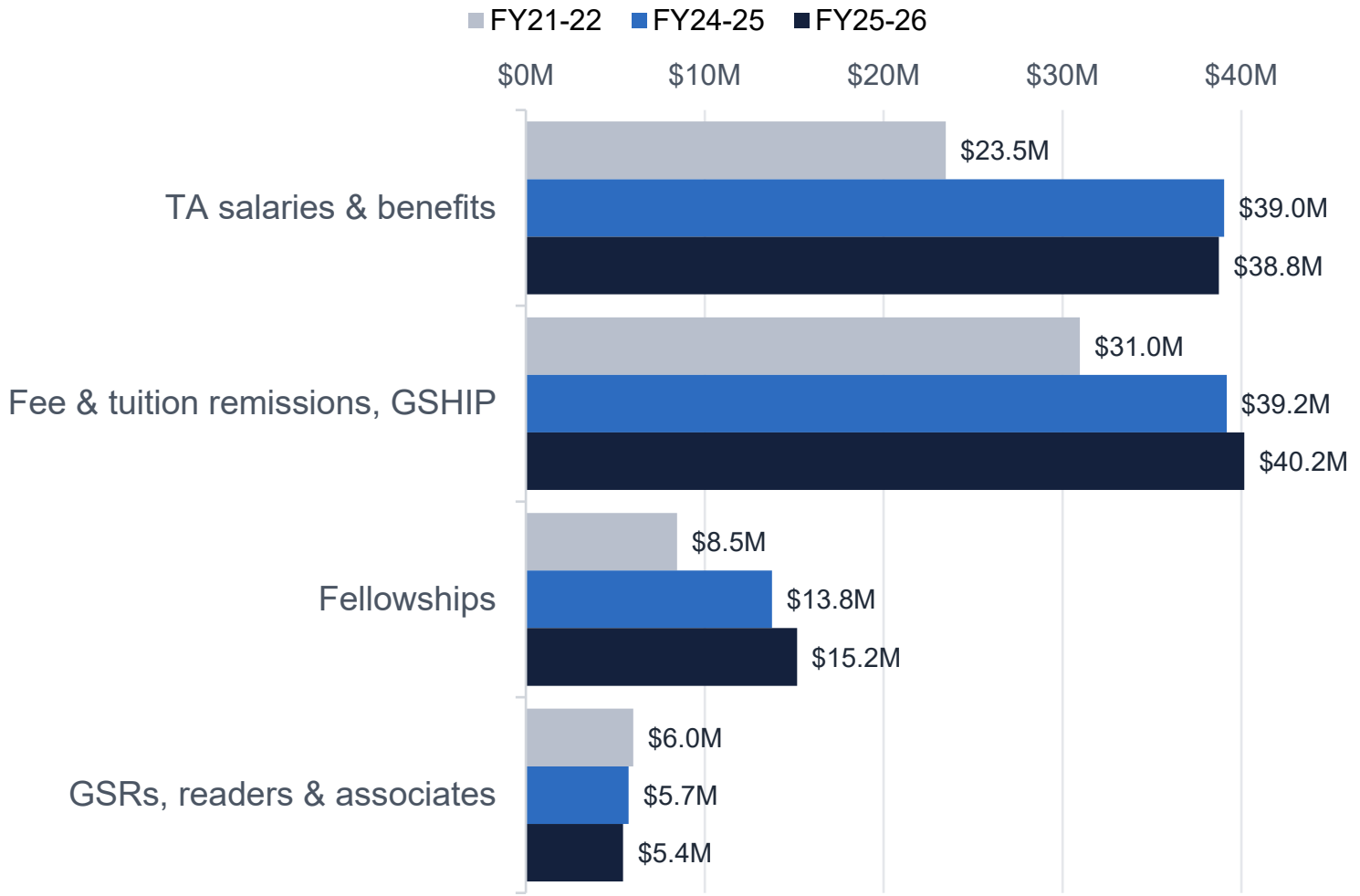
$68.9M → $97.7M

campus support for graduate students, FY21-22 to FY24-25

+$28.8M

an increase of 42%

More than half of the increase (+$15.6M) went to TA salaries and benefits. Support held at $99.5M in FY25-26.



Source: UCR core-funded graduate student support, FY20-21 to FY25-26 (Oracle Budget, Looker, UCRFStotals). Campus core funds only, all graduate students; salaries and benefits plus fee, nonresident and GSHIP remissions; excludes summer salaries. Nominal dollars.

Who pays for PhD student support? 3/4 by campus

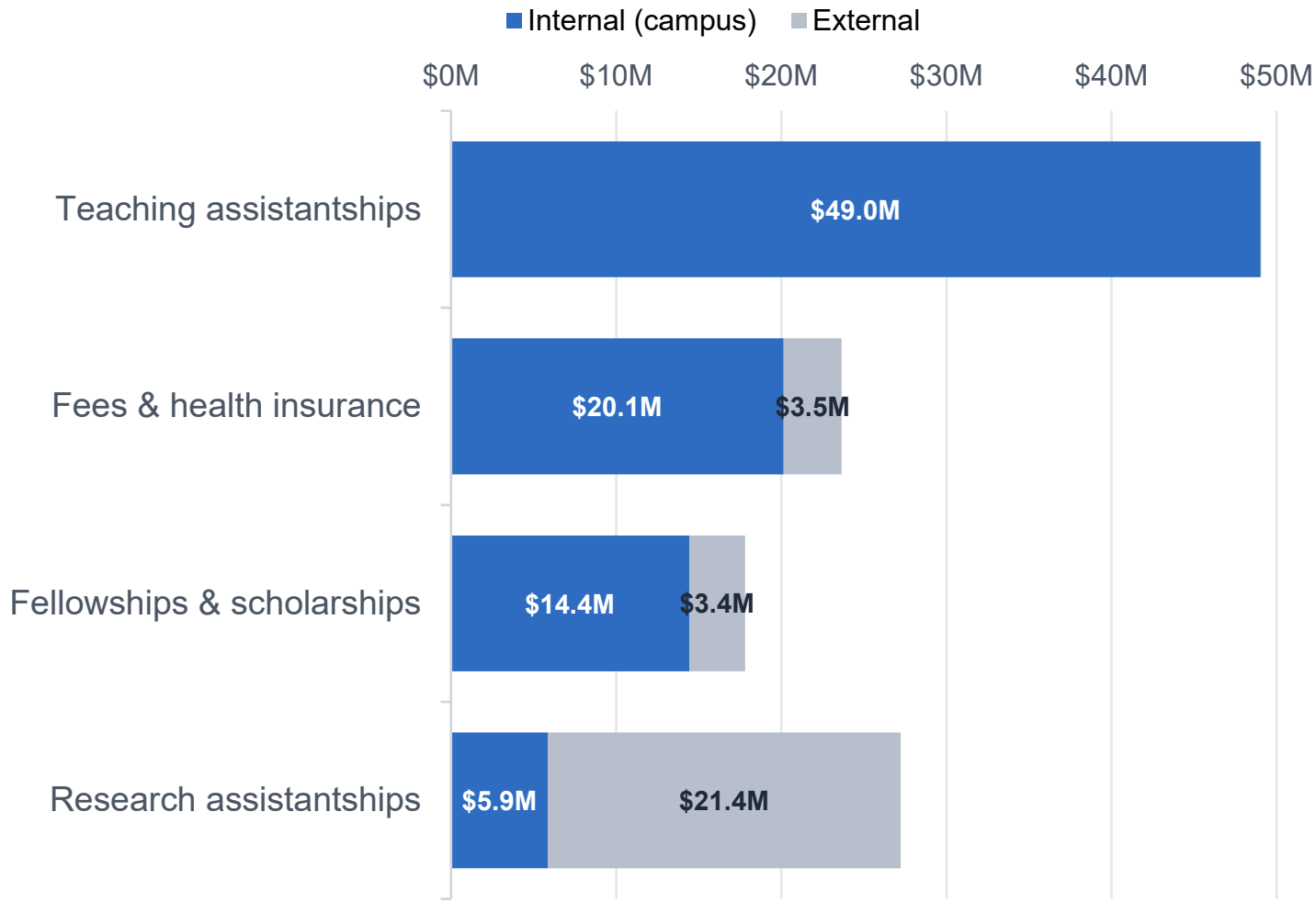
$117.7M total support for PhD students, 2024-25

$89.5M

76% campus funds (internal)

$28.3M

24% external funds (grants, contracts, outside fellowships)



Source: UCR Graduate Program Report, All Programs PhD, Funding for Fiscal Year 2024-25 (internal vs. external). Categories combined: each assistantship includes its tuition & fee remission. Totals from the report support-type table; the internal share (76%) matches the State + Institutional share in the report funding-by-source chart.

UCR employs master's students too, including in self-supporting programs

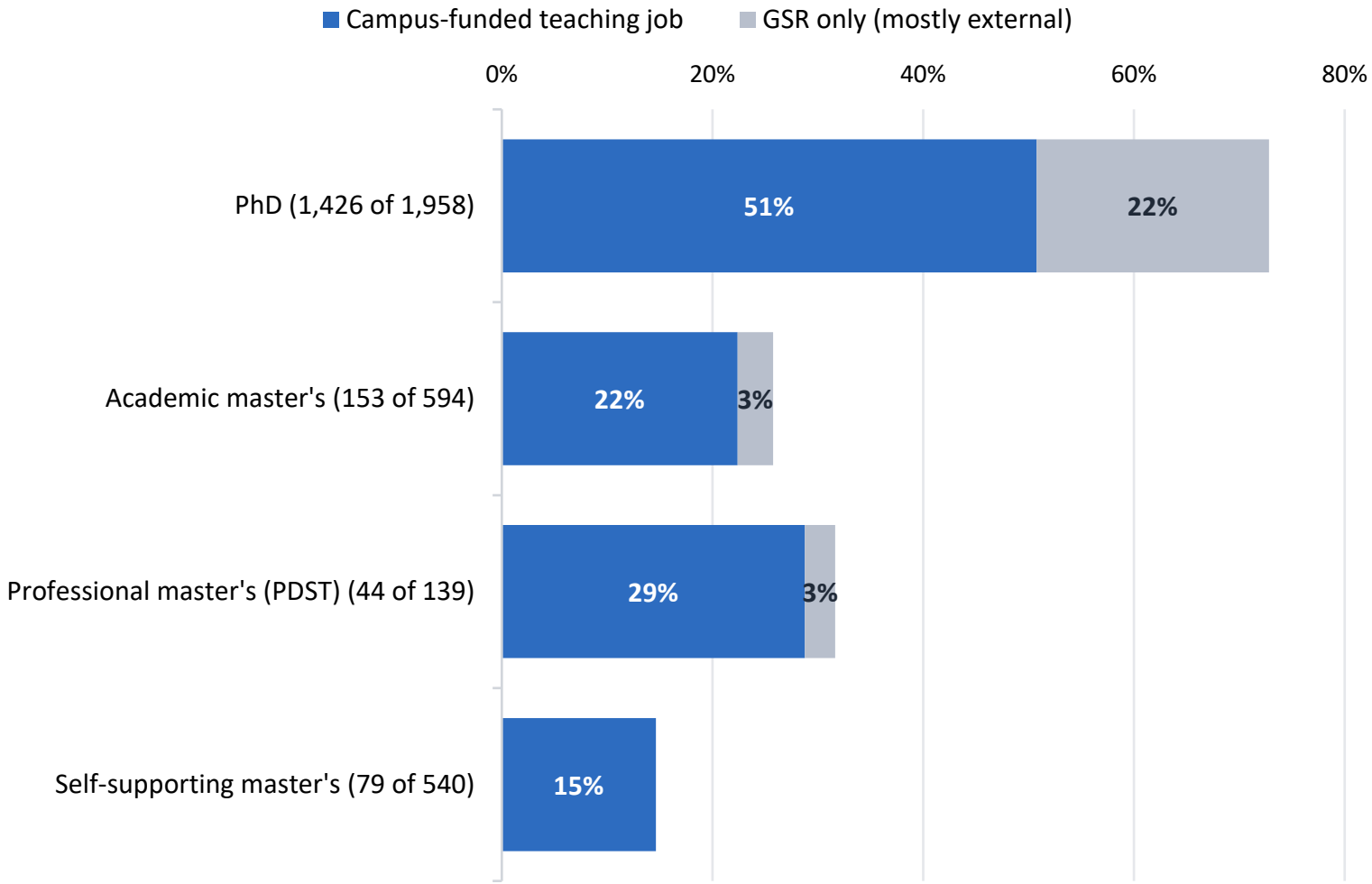
Graduate students in campus-funded teaching jobs, Fall 2025

252

master's students: 1 in 5 of all graduate students in these jobs

119

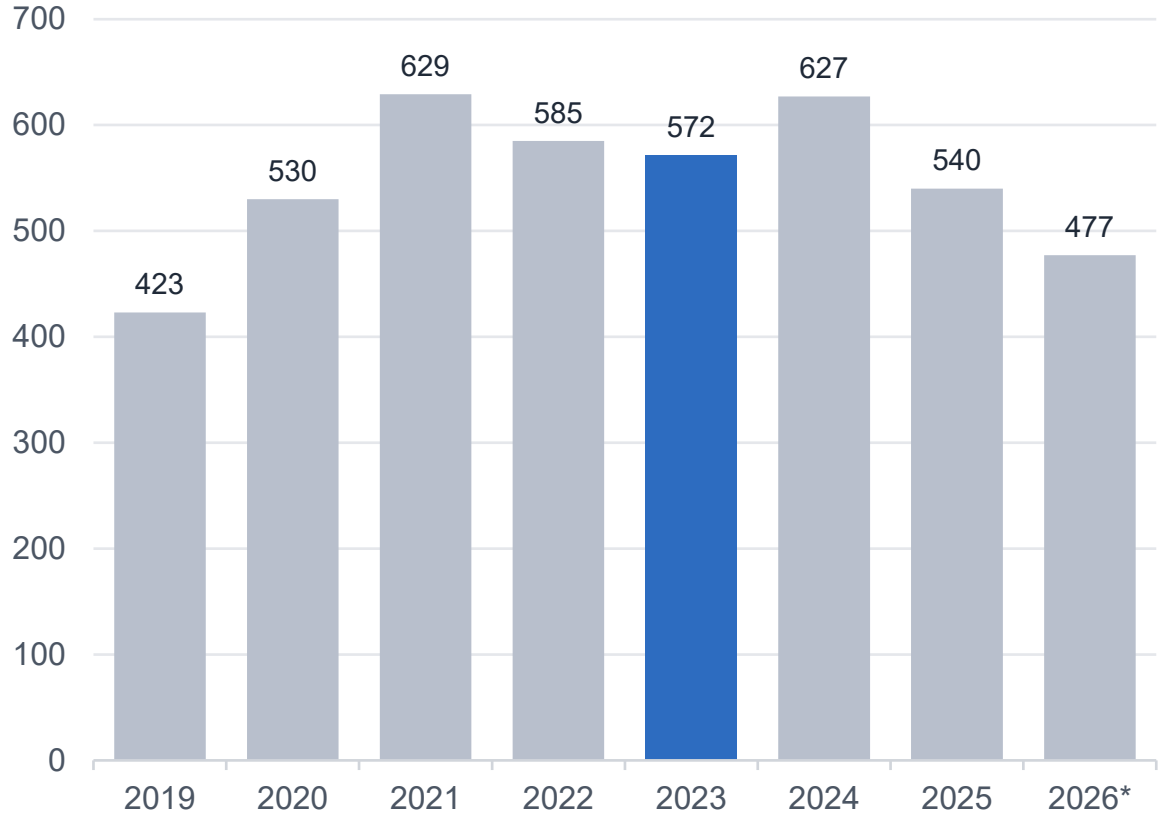
of them in professional or self-supporting programs, including 50 in the Professional MBA



Source: UCR student employment, Fall 2025 appointments (unique students), and Fall 2025 headcount by program type. Campus-funded teaching = TA, reader, tutor, Associate-In, teaching fellow; GSR = graduate student researcher, mostly grant-funded. Program types: self-supporting = PMBA, MSBA, MFin, MPAc; professional (PDST) = full-time MBA, MPP, MPH.

Self-supporting master's programs revenue flow

Fall headcount in self-supporting master's programs (blue = Fall 2023, the FY24 year)



FY24

$18.3M total revenue from 572 students, about $32K each

$17.7M stays with the College/School (97%)

$583K campus assessment (3%), split three ways:

- **$251K** Central campus
- **$221K** Graduate Division
- **$86K** Academic Senate

Enrollment is falling: 150 fewer students in Fall 2026 than in Fall 2024 (−24%). At the FY24 rate of about $32K per student, that is roughly $4.8M less revenue a year.

Sources: Graduate Council follow-up (Dec 12, 2024 meeting; updated Jan 14, 2025), FY24 self-supporting graduate degree program (SSGDP) totals and campus assessment allocation; UCR fall headcount in self-supporting master's programs, 2019 to 2026 (*preliminary). Revenue per student and the revenue change are estimates based on FY24 revenue divided by Fall 2023 headcount. Revenue is gross: programs pay their own costs and financial aid from it.