IGCC | UC INSTITUTE ON GLOBAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

2026–27 IGCC Dissertation Fellowship Competition

Application Deadline: 12:00 p.m. PST, Friday, February 6, 2026

Overview

The University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) will award up to **7 dissertation fellowships** and **one Herb York Fellowship** for the 2026–27 academic year.

The Herb York Fellowship honors IGCC's founding director, Dr. Herbert F. York, and is supported by the York family.

Fellowship Details

- **Award amount:** $15,000 (nine-month stipend)
- **Eligibility:** Doctoral students enrolled in the University of California, including JD/PhD, MD/PhD, and MD with thesis programs.
- **Advance to candidacy:** Required by June 30, 2026 (NO EXCEPTIONS).
- **Citizenship:** Open to all nationalities.
- **Usage:** Awards cannot cover UC student fees, tuition, or health insurance.

Questions? Email Marie Thiveos Stewart at mthiveos@ucsd.edu

or call 858-822-4959

About IGCC

The UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) is a research network comprised of scholars from across the University of California and the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories who produce and use research to help build a more peaceful, prosperous world. IGCC focuses on challenges that can lead to wide-scale conflict that can potentially be mitigated by global cooperation. IGCC's portfolio includes both traditional security issues—defense innovation, strategy and deterrence, nuclear weapons policy, and security cooperation—and emerging and non-traditional challenges including climate change, geoeconomics and great power competition, and threats to democracy. In each of these areas, IGCC builds diverse, multidisciplinary research teams that analyze the causes and consequences of global conflict—and help develop practical solutions.

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Purpose of the Fellowship

The Dissertation Fellowship is IGCC's oldest program designed to bolster the capabilities of the next generation of engaged scholars and peacemakers. Now in its 40th year, the fellowship provides grants and mentorship to University of California doctoral students whose research closely tracks to current global security priorities and IGCC's mission and core themes.

The fellowship aims to support the most exciting new research on global security emerging from the University of California; to facilitate intercampus exchange, collaboration, and mentorship; and to provide a platform for engaged junior scholars to share what they are learning with audiences outside the academy.

IGCC supports dissertation research that tracks closely with IGCC's mission and core research themes. The proposed dissertation research must have one of the following themes as an integral part of the project:

1. China and the Indo-Pacific
2. Climate Change and Security
3. Defense and National Security
4. Geoeconomics and Great Power Competition
5. Global Threats to Democracy and the Rise of Illiberal Regimes
6. Nuclear Security
7. Science, Technology, and Innovation

Thoroughly review the research theme descriptions in the attached appendix.

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Evaluation of Proposals

The IGCC Dissertation Fellowship competition welcomes applications from students in all academic disciplines, with an emphasis on multidisciplinary approaches and policy relevant research.

Proposals will be evaluated on both **relevance** and **research quality**.

To meet the relevance criteria, the proposed research must:

1. **Fit within one or more of IGCC's research themes.**

   IGCC research covers a broad array of topics, from the implications of China's global rise and the role of science, technology, and innovation in competition among great powers; to the security implications of climate change and the drivers of democratic threat and resilience globally. Our lens is security, and our focus is global. IGCC will consider studies of *domestic* processes, provided they have *clear international relevance*. Applicants focusing on single-country domestic issues should explicitly demonstrate how domestic factors contribute to or are affected by international conditions, either as causes or consequences.

2. **Align with IGCC's mission.**

   IGCC's mission is to, not only advance academic research, but to inform decisionmakers outside academia. For this reason, applicants should explain how their research advances academic understanding and can inform policy or audiences outside academia.

Note: Proposals that do not clearly meet these relevance criteria will not be considered.

Quality is generally determined by the required elements listed in the application. Reviewers will:

1. **Assess the intellectual merit and research contribution**

   Proposals should have a compelling problem statement and a justification of the research's relevance to academic or policy communities. A proposal should position itself within existing debates while offering a fresh perspective.

2. **Evaluate the research design and methods**

   Ensure that the research design matches the research questions and identify risks and challenges. The timeline and milestones should be achievable within the timeframe proposed.

3. **Assess writing quality and presentation**

   The proposal should present a concise, well-structured narrative with clearly outlined data collection methods. It should use precise language and communicate effectively to both expert and non-expert audiences.

4. **Review the applicant's academic performance**

   Review transcripts and GPA for consistency and rigor; look at coursework related to the dissertation topic, showing that the applicant has a solid foundation in the subject area; assess whether the student has taken a balanced mix of theory, methods, and elective courses, especially those that align with the dissertation's demands.

5. **Review recommendation letters**

   Letters should strongly endorse the applicant and the proposed project.

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Review Committee

Proposals are evaluated by the IGCC Steering Committee, which is composed of representatives from each UC campus and the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories. Initial review will exclude the committee member from the applicant's home campus.

For a list of current committee members, visit: IGCC Steering Committee.

Because the **review committee** is composed of scholars from across the social sciences, submissions should:

- Avoid excessive disciplinary jargon.

- Be written in a way that is accessible across disciplines.

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How to Apply

A **complete application** includes the following:

1. **Applicant Information**: Complete the web form.

2. **Abstract**: Provide a concise 250-word summary on the web form.

3. **Relevance Statement** (1,000 words): Demonstrate how your research aligns with IGCC's research themes and the Institute's focus on global security. Explain how your research advances academic understanding *and* can inform policy or other audiences outside academia.

4. **Proposal Narrative** (PDF upload, max 1,500 words):

   o **Research Problem and Goals**: What questions will your research answer and why are they important?

   o **Design and Methods**: Detail your research design, models, and methods (e.g., archival work, interviews, statistical analysis).

   o **Fellowship plan**: Specify how IGCC funds will support your research.

   o **Timeline**: Provide progress to date and your schedule for completion.

   o **Literature Review/Citations**: Demonstrate knowledge of the relevant literature through footnotes or a bibliography (not included in the word limit).

   o **Appendix**: Optional (max 2 pages). Include models, sample questions, or data sources.

5. **Curriculum Vitae** (PDF upload).

6. **Transcripts**: Upload a transcript or a copy of your academic record (unofficial transcripts are acceptable).

7. **Two Letters of Recommendation**:

   o One letter must come from your advisor.

   o Letters must be sent from the writer's official university email on department letterhead.

   o Applicants are responsible for confirming receipt by emailing **mthiveos@ucsd.edu**.

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Submission Deadline

All materials must be submitted online by **12:00 p.m. PST on Friday, February 6, 2026**. Late or incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

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Award Notification and Duration

- Awards will be announced in **July 2026**.
- Fellowships are for **nine months** (October–June) and cannot be deferred or renewed. Unspent funds must be returned to IGCC.

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Additional Guidelines

- **Concurrent Awards**: Fellows may accept additional grants that cover UC tuition and fees. IGCC reserves the right to adjust award amounts in cases of cost-sharing.
- **Administration**: Fellowship funds are administered through your graduate department's business office, not IGCC. Payment schedules and disbursements follow local campus procedures.
- **IRB Approval**: All projects involving human subjects must have IRB approval before receiving funds.

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Contact Information

For questions or assistance, please contact:

Marie Thiveos Stewart

Email: mthiveos@ucsd.edu

Phone: 858-822-4959

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APPENDIX: IGCC Research Priorities Descriptions

1. **China and the Indo-Pacific:** China's rise as an advanced technological, innovation, and industrial powerhouse is one of the most profound developments of the 21st century and promises to reshape the global economic and technological order. Issues emanating from China and the Indo-Pacific region more broadly—including the implications of North Korea's nuclear program and shifts in global supply chains—have implications for global security**.**

   IGCC will consider proposals on the implications of China's rise and shifting geopolitical dynamics in Asia for the economic competitiveness and national security of the United States and the rest of the world, including geoeconomics, geopolitics, national security, the environment, defense modernization, technology, and innovation.

2. **Climate Change and Security:** Global climate change is expected to challenge international governance systems, force a reimagining of the roles of militaries and defense communities, spark migration and border disputes, disrupt global trade, prompt conflict within and between countries over scarce resources, and threaten social cohesion and economic stability.

   IGCC will consider proposals on a range of themes related to this priority, including the impacts of climate change on:
   - Migration, Refugees, and Border Disputes
   - Trade and Global Value Chains
   - Energy Security, Food Security, Water, and Infrastructure
   - Political Violence, Radicalization, Fragility
   - Militaries and the Defense Community
   - International Governance and Finance

3. **Defense and National Security:** The international security landscape is rapidly changing. Old definitions of what international security means, and the role that states play, are evolving, while challenges proliferate beyond traditional domains.

   In this category, IGCC will consider proposals on a range of traditional, as well as emerging, defense and national security issues, including:

   - Defense transparency and security cooperation
   - Defense technology and innovation, including the role of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence
   - Professional military education
   - Challenges and opportunities in the maritime environment
   - The nature and employment of military power and the nature of the evolving military landscape at the global and regional level
   - Civil-military relations
   - Arms competition

4. **Global Threats to Democracy and the Rise of Illiberalism:** Continuity and change have characterized much of democracy's turbulent history. This research theme explores patterns of democratic continuity, crisis, adaptation, and resilience. Sub-themes of interest include how the spread of open information technology, economic globalization, and rising authoritarian powers are driving democratic backsliding in some cases, and democratic resilience in others.

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In this category, IGCC will accept proposals on: challenges to democratic representation; challenges to elections; technology and democracy, including how different types of technology can harm and strengthen democracy; the rise of authoritarian states, and the authoritarian turn in international relations; the potential effects of climate change on democracy; and state repression, protest movements and human rights, including how struggles over human rights within a nation might spill over to affect international security.

5. **Geoeconomics and Great Power Competition:** Great power competition, primarily between the United States, China, and Russia, but also to a lesser extent with other emerging power centers, has returned to the global center stage. Strategic competition today extends beyond the traditional domains of military and defense, to include economic, business, financial, technological, geostrategic, and political spheres.

   Under this theme, IGCC will accept proposals related to:
   - The economic sources of national security; security dimensions of industrial policy and trade relations; economic statecraft; economic instruments such as trade, investment, and sanctions to promote and defend national interests; the effects of economic actions by other countries and international institutions on a country's geopolitical goals; and the use of economic instruments to produce beneficial geopolitical results.
   - Global and regional multilateral institutions; role of rising powers; and public versus public/private partnerships in governance.

6. **Nuclear Security:** Nuclear proliferation persists as a threat, but with a new twist, as non-state actors become more prominent and China, Iran, and North Korea intensify efforts to become full-fledged nuclear weapons states. The dual-use nature of nuclear technology in weapons development as well as civilian energy production and other civilian technologies makes nuclear issues a persistent policy concern.

   As part of this priority, IGCC will consider proposals related to: Proliferation, rules and norms, nuclear nonproliferation regime, international cooperation on monitoring and enforcement of nonproliferation, state behavior, threats from non-state actors, the weakness of the nonproliferation regime, and how the regional threat environment influences nuclear proliferation.

7. **Science, Technology, and innovation.** New technologies, particularly cyber, AI and quantum computing, are creating new arenas for competition where international governance structures have not yet emerged and traditional security concepts, such as deterrence, are inadequate.

   In this category, IGCC will consider proposals on a range of technology areas that have relevance for global security and cooperation. These include: energy and climate-related technologies, biotech, nuclear technology, autonomous weapons, artificial intelligence, remote sensing, cyber technology, hypersonic vehicles, additive manufacturing, stealth, and precision guidance, among others.