



UNIVERSITY
OF
CALIFORNIA

Ahmet Palazoglu
Chair, Assembly of the
Academic Senate
Faculty Representative,
UC Board of Regents

Academic Senate

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1111 Franklin Street
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senate.universityofcalifornia.edu

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July 23, 2026

Katherine S. Newman
Provost and Executive Vice President
University of California

Re: Approval of UCLA Master of Population Data Science (MPDS)

Dear Provost Newman:

In accordance with the Universitywide Review Processes for Academic Programs, Units, and Research Units (the "Compendium"), and on the recommendation of the Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs ([CCGA](#)), the Academic Council has approved the UC Los Angeles division's proposal to establish a self-supporting Master of Population Data Science (MPDS).

Because this is a new degree title, and the Assembly of the Academic Senate is not meeting within 30 days of CCGA's approval, Council must approve the program per [Senate Bylaw 125.B.7](#).

I am enclosing CCGA's report on its review of the new program, and respectfully request that your office complete the process of obtaining the President's approval.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Ahmet Palazoglu
Chair, Academic Council

cc: Academic Council
UCLA Division Chair McEvoy
UCLA Senate Division Executive Director de Stefano
Director of Academic Planning and Policy Corona
Institutional Research and Academic Planning Analyst Wilson
Senate Executive Director Lin



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COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE AFFAIRS

Partho Ghosh, Chair

pghosh@ucsd.edu

July 9, 2026

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Ahmet Palazoglu
Academic Senate Chair

Dear Chair Palazoglu,

At its July 1 meeting, CCGA reviewed the proposal for a self-supporting Master of Population Data Science from the Los Angeles Division. After discussion, the proposal was approved 10-0-1.

The Department of Economics at UCLA proposes a new two-year interdisciplinary Masters of Population Data Science (MPDS), which will allow participants to develop the skills required to answer demographic questions using social science theory and statistical rigor. The MPDS would be the first of its kind in the United States, and would expand the university's reach and relevance by training students to deliver impactful solutions for the broader community. It also would help fill a critical workforce need for professionals skilled in demography who can leverage big data to design solutions, evaluate policy, and have a meaningful impact on government, business, nonprofit organizations, and academia. The MPDS program is closely aligned with UCLA's growing strengths in data science, offering a rigorous curriculum at the intersection of statistical methodology, computational tools, and population research. By focusing on socio-economic and demographic applications, MPDS would fill an important niche that would complement training provided in the Master of Science in Applied Statistics and Data Science (MASDS), the Master of Social Science (MaSS), and the Master of Data Science and Health (MDSH).

CCGA secured four reviewers, all of whom enthusiastically recommended the proposed program for approval. The reviewers were consistently positive about the rigor and balance between demographic theory and applied data science. They did make some constructive suggestions for the proponents to consider as they launch the MPDS program, although none

of them was considered an impediment to its approval. UCPB felt that the proposal's market research was strong and that the MPDS degree may be very appealing to international students. It recommended that CCGA approve the program, which plans to be fully self-supporting by its third year. The Lead Reviewer's report and UCPB's analysis are both attached to this letter.

As you know, CCGA's approval is the last stop of the Academic Senate's systemwide review and approval process except when the new degree title must be approved by the Senate. I submit this proposal for your review; please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions regarding it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Ghosh', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Partho Ghosh
CCGA Chair

cc: Academic Senate Chair Palazoglu
Academic Senate Vice Chair Scott
Academic Senate Executive Director Lin
Academic Senate Assistant Director LaBriola
Director of Academic Planning and Policy Corona
Institutional Research and Planning Analyst Wilson
CCGA Members
UCLA Dean of the Graduate Division Kite
UCLA Senate Executive Director de Stefano
UCD Senate Associate Director Le

Summary of UCLA self-supporting professional Master's degree program in Population Data Science (MPDS)

Lead: Joe McFadden
June 26, 2026

The UCLA Department of Economics has proposed a two-year, on-campus, self-supporting professional Master's degree program in Population Data Science (MPDS). The program would be the first of its kind in the United States, providing an interdisciplinary training in demography, computational social science, data science, and statistics. As pointed out in the external review letters, "The explosion of new data available at various scales has generated a need for retooling the statistics, programming, and machine learning techniques of demographic analysts. With the dramatic expansion of data science programs, a partnership with demography would seem to be a natural development." The proposed program is expected to be attractive to students with quantitative skills and analytical interests and should place them well in consulting, industry, government, and non-profit organizations. External reviewers stated that a professional program of this type would be filling a clear need.

The program will be a Plan II Master's degree with 13 required courses and 3 electives (48 units total), with a capstone project. The course work will be organized in topical areas of Demography, Statistics/Data Science, Professional Skills (e.g., coding, data management, AI, data visualization), and a Research Seminar on Demography and Data Science in Action. The UCLA campus is very well positioned to offer this new program. The Economics Department itself is highly ranked and the MPDS program would be staffed in cooperation with the California Center for Population Research (CCPR), a large center for demographic research and training. Many of the faculty proposing the new degree program are already working together, which would enhance interdisciplinary training and support the mentorship of the capstone projects.

The proposal was reviewed by UCLA Academic Senate committees and councils, and by campus administrators. The reviewing agencies supported the establishment of the proposed graduate program. During that process, the initial review by the UCLA Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) expressed a concern about an expected reliance on international students (projected at ~70%) who would have to pay high fees. The proponents' response memo to those concerns was considered by the Graduate Council to be thorough and convincing as to the financial viability of the MDPS program. The University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB) noted the concerns that had been raised about international enrollment projections by UCLA CPB. However, UCPB assessed that the market research was strong and that, in reality, the MPDS degree may be very appealing to international students. The program plans to be fully self-supporting by its third year, and the Dean of Social Sciences has committed reserve funding for the deficit years before that time. UCPB recommended that CCGA approve the program.

The external reviewers enthusiastically recommended the proposed program for approval. They were consistently positive about the rigor and balance between demographic theory and applied data science. A comment from a non-UC reviewer highlighted the overall strength and promise of the proposed program: "This is an unusual opportunity for any university: to be the first in the U.S. to offer a particular masters degree, and one that is unusually appropriate for the

moment. Many employers – private, government, and nonprofit – require demographic analyses for varied purposes. Moreover, new data sources – “big data” – mean that typical demographic training using survey and census data is not enough. Analysts need programming skills beyond basic statistics and econometrics. Moreover, employers need more than analysts: they need storytellers. Analysts need to be able to interpret data (and the methods they used) in ways that different audiences can understand and appreciate. The MPDS proposes to bundle together those skills (demographic, data science and statistics, and professional) in a way that is predicted to produce highly employable and well-paid graduates.”

The external reviewers made some constructive suggestions for the proponents to consider as they launch the MPDS program, although all of them made it clear that they recommend approval of the program. The suggestions included:

- considering students who have majored in fields such as engineering that train students in quantitative analysis but who may be interested in demographic research
- thinking ahead about sophisticated job placement services, perhaps engaging alumni networks
- evaluating whether students who would be attracted to the program would prefer a degree pathway that is not full time
- monitoring the faculty staffing and incentive structure over time given that faculty would be teaching on an overload basis



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UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND BUDGET (UCPB)

Robert Brosnan
rjbrosnan@ucdavis.edu

May 8, 2026

Partho Ghosh, Chair, CCGA

RE: UCLA Master of Population Data Science (MPDS) Self-Supporting
Graduate Degree Program Proposal

Dear Partho,

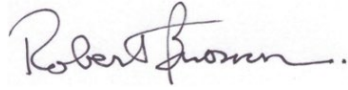
UCPB discussed the UCLA Master of Population Data Science (MPDS) during its May meeting. Faculty agreed that the program served an interesting niche at the intersection of demography, economic demography, population health, and data science not otherwise met at the UC.

The program plans to be fully self-supporting by year three, and the Dean of Social Sciences has committee reserve funding for the preceding deficit years.

Faculty compensation, indirect costs, and return-to-aid plans all appear in line with other self-supporting programs. The market research appears to support projected salaries for graduates. UCPB did note a concern that was shared by the UCLA CPB: the program plans to enroll 15 percent California residents, 15 percent domestic non-residents, and 70 percent international students. The degree may, in reality, be very appealing to international students. In the past year, federal actions against student visas have led to decreasing international applications to the UC. If the program relies heavily on a student population discouraged from coming to the United States, it may find self-supporting status a high bar to clear.

Because the College of Social Sciences has agreed to support the program, and they will likely follow its path to self-sufficiency closely, UCPB recommends that CCGA approve the proposed program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Brosnan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert Brosnan

Chair

Cc UCPB

UCPB Proposed Self-Supporting Professional Degree Program Review

Name and Location of Program: UCLA Master of Population Data Science (MPDS) — Department of Economics, Division of Social Sciences, UCLA

Lead Reviewer(s): Jenny Liu

Academic Justification

The Master of Population Data Science (MPDS) is a proposed 20-month, 48-unit, on-campus self-supporting graduate professional degree program offered by the UCLA Department of Economics. The program trains professionals in demography with integrated skills in data science, enabling graduates to apply big data methods to population research and policy. The program fills a recognized gap: **no current U.S. master's program combines training in demography, computational social science, and modern data science methods in a single degree.**

The program is interdisciplinary, drawing on faculty from Economics, Sociology, Public Health, Geography, Political Science, and Statistics. It has received letters of support from the departments of Biostatistics and Statistics and Data Science, and MOUs with six participating departments and the California Center for Population Research (CCPR). External endorsements have been provided by senior scholars including the President-Elect of the Population Association of America, the Co-Editor of the journal *Demography*, and the Chair of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine Committee on Population.

The program was approved unanimously by the Graduate Council (9-0-0, December 5, 2025) and by the Legislative Assembly (135-11-21, February 5, 2026), clearing the required two-thirds supermajority.

Planning and Budget Overview

1. Proposed Initial Tuition and Rate of Increase

The proposed tuition is \$1,350 per unit × 48 units = **\$64,800 total program cost**, in 2027 dollars (accounting for inflation from the \$1,250/unit benchmark in 2025 dollars).

Students pay \$32,400 per year over two academic years.

Assumes a 3% annual inflation rate on costs.

Enrollment growth (30 → 40 → 50 → 60 students per entering cohort) is the primary driver of revenue growth rather than tuition increases.

2. Target Enrollments for Years 1–3

Year 1 (Fall 2027) 2029)	Year 2 (Fall 2028)	Year 3 (Fall 2029)
30 students (entering class) 50 students (entering class)	40 students (entering class)	
30 FTE (Y1 cohort in residence) (Y2+Y3 cohorts)	~70 FTE (Y1+Y2 cohorts)	~90 FTE

In steady state (Year 4+), the program targets 60 incoming students per year with two cohorts in residence simultaneously.

3. Projected Net Revenues for Years 1–3

5-Year Budget Plan (Appendix M, Tab A-Summary, September 23, 2025 version):

Metric:	Year 1 (FY 2027-28)	Year 2 (FY 2028-29)	Year 3 (FY 2029-30)
Gross Revenue	\$972,000	\$2,336,040	\$3,093,584
Financial Aid (10% of revenues)		\$97,200	\$233,604
Net Revenue (after all expenses)	\$(450,599)	\$436,375	\$951,085
Recharges & Taxes as % of net revenue:			
(negative bc of start-up year)~		2.0%	~3.6%

Negative net revenue in Year 0 (-\$576,553)

Projected to be self-supporting by Year 2 (meets three-year break-even requirement).

Dean of Social Sciences committed reserve funding to backstop deficit Years 0-1.

By Year 5 (60 students entering), gross revenue = \$4.375M with net revenue of approximately \$1.77M. The program's long-term Department share of net revenue is projected at approximately \$1.19M by Year 5.

4. Proposed Indirect Cost Rate (IDC)

The program uses the UCLA campus Central Administrative Recharges rate of 4.8% (applied to the prior year's total of Uses/Expenses and the Dean/Department portion of net revenue). This is the standard 'base' central service recharge assessed to all SSGPDPs.

Under the OP stress test overhead rate is 26%, the program would break even by Year 2.

Detailed Areas of Review

5. IDC Rate Determination and Space Needs

The 4.8% UCLA Central Administrative Recharges estimate is applied.

Uses existing space and includes rental costs of \$6,000/month in direct expenses for rentable office and classroom space.

6. Proposed Uses of Net Revenue and UC Mission Benefits

Net revenue allocated as:

- (a) 10% of gross revenue to student financial aid
- (b) 10% of the Department's net revenue put into a rolling reserve fund;
- (c) remaining Department share reinvested in the MPDS program
- (d) Dean of Social Sciences receives 11% on the first \$3M and 10% on the next \$1M of net revenue (beginning Year 4).

Plan to have 2 new TA positions for PhD students in state-supported Economics and related programs.

7. Mitigation of Negative Impacts on State-Funded Programs

Will do mixed enrollment for elective courses, following UCLA's APB formula for computing transfers to state-supported programs for students taking state-supported classes (estimated at \$1.46M over 5 years).

Faculty teaching loads are compensated on an overload basis (no new FTEs planned, though will pay for a couple of Adjuncts).

8. Faculty Composition and Compensation

Estimate 83% of units (40/48 units; 13/15 courses) will be taught by UC Senate faculty in person; the rest will be engaged by adjunct faculty or lecturers with industry expertise.

All Senate faculty will teach on an overload basis, compensated at 20% of their 9-month salary up to a \$50K cap. One-time course development stipends of \$10,000 (new course) or \$5,000 (adapted course).

Adjunct faculty are paid \$50K per course.

Faculty mentoring capstone projects are compensated at \$4,000 per student per three-quarter sequence.

Faculty serving on committees are compensated at \$100/hour (100 hours budgeted per year = \$10,000/year).

The program director receives two administrative summer months per year.

Faculty are primarily ladder-rank Senate faculty.

9. Accessibility, Diversity, and Return-to-Aid

Budget 10% of revenue to student fellowships (return-to-aid).

Total program cost (\$64,800) seems to be within range of other data science programs nationally (\$34,670–\$83,995 range).

10. Market Analysis, Price Point, and Student Composition

Market analysis shows strong demand for similar data science programs at UCLA.

Projected student composition: ~15% CA residents, 15% domestic non-residents, 70% international students (modeled on MaSS and MASDS programs).

Estimates heavily rely on international student enrollment (~70% of admissions)! Proposal notes OPT eligibility for STEM-designated programs, which adds to the possibility that graduates can remain in U.S. after graduation.

11. Relevant Consultation and Assessment from Lower Levels of Review

— Department of Economics Senate Faculty approved May 2025.

— College Faculty Executive Committee endorsed June 2025.

— SSGPD PAC reviewed and endorsed (Nov 2025). Initial concerns about curriculum, training, budget, and resources were satisfactorily addressed by the department.

— Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) did not endorse (Oct 2025); concerns of enrollment viability, dependence on international students, and high tuition.

— Legislative Assembly approved Feb 2026

— Office of Academic Planning and Budget Resource Analysis approved (Oct 2025).

12. Other Planning and Budget Concerns

UCLA CPB did not endorse. Concerns about the viability of self-supporting degree programs reliant on international enrollment and the ability to meet enrollment targets over two years.

Key issues:

- (a) [major] Break-even assumes 30 students in Year 1 and 40 in Year 2, but heavy reliance on international student demand.
- (b) [minor] Marketing costs seem to be high (\$150,000 in Year 1. \$100,000 yearly afterward)
- (c) [minor] Similar programs across campuses, and somewhat similar already at UCLA. Is there a need for more coordination?
- (d) [major] Can faculty accommodate additional student supervision?

13. Academic Quality or Related Concerns to Flag for CCGA

The capstone project could be a heavy workload for faculty (60 students per cohort), though compensated at \$4,000 per student.

14. Areas the Three-Year Review Should Capture

Should review for:

- (a) Actual vs. projected enrollment by year and by student origin (CA, domestic non-resident, international).
- (b) Distribution of fellowships for intended purpose
- (c) Self-supporting after Year 2.
- (d) Faculty workload: whether overload compensation is creating retention issues or displacing research activity.
- (e) Student outcomes: placement rates, salary data, and time to degree.
- (f) MOU compliance and coordination across departments.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The MPDS proposal follows the guidelines for SSGPDPs and has received broad approval from UCLA faculty and administrators. Although the assumptions and program estimates are reasonable, there are several risks to consider.

The primary outstanding concerns are: (1) enrollment concentration risk from heavy international student dependence (~70%) in an uncertain policy environment; and (2) faculty workload to effectively mentor and supervise students.