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## PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT



SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

MILLENNIUM  
FOUNDATION



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### SUPPORTING STEM RESEARCH AND GRADUATE EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

#### I. SUMMARY

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San Diego State University is announcing doctoral research support program for young Georgian scholars. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of State and implemented by the San Diego State University (SDSU).

Distinguished Professor of Biology Dr. Walter Oechel of San Diego State University (PI) and Dr. Halil Guven, Dean San Diego State University Georgia (Co-PI) have been provided U.S Embassy federal award, the purpose of which is to implement a project “Supporting STEM research and graduate education in Georgia” in partnership with SDSU’s main campus. This project aims to strengthen the quantitative and qualitative research skills and academic writing skills of young Georgian scholars; raise collaborating Georgian scholars’ research capacity to international standards; increase interaction between Georgian and American academics and researchers, and mentor and coach Georgian scholars for publishing research papers in Georgian and Western academic peer-reviewed journals in STEM fields.

**Under the program, young Georgian scholars matriculated in a Ph.D. program at a Georgian accredited University, will be given an opportunity for an initial visit of 3 (three) months at San Diego State University.**

There is provision for an extension for another 3 (three) months based on research performance in San Diego State University. In addition, it may be possible for the stay at SDSU to be extended beyond 6 (six) months if the Georgian candidate is selected by the SDSU mentor to work on a mutually agreed research project which will be financed by the SDSU mentor at the SDSU main campus. In this case, the SDSU mentor may be involved in the ongoing research of the scholar as they bring new skills and insights back to their Georgian labs.

The selection of the candidates will be on a competitive basis. Depending on the number of meritorious proposals. The program will support up to 18 Georgian Ph.D. students. The maximum duration of the program is expected to be from 3-24 months.

Covid disclaimer: This call is based on best information available on the likely situation of the Pandemic in Fall 2021 and is subject possible new restrictions. Successful applicants are encouraged to get vaccinated for COVID before coming to the US, or as soon as possible after arrival in the US.

Please see application details in the program guidelines.

**The application submission process is open from March 15. The Deadline for submitting applications is April 19.**

**Informational session about the program will take place March 19, 2021 at 8:00 pm GST via Zoom. (<https://SDSU.zoom.us/j/89669148817>)**

SDSU and SDSU Georgia are open for questions between March 19-25, 2021. The applicant shall submit questions (if any) through Zoom chat or via email [sigproject.sdsu@gmail.com](mailto:sigproject.sdsu@gmail.com). The responses will be available publicly before March 31 on the project website: [www.sig.sdsu.edu.ge](http://www.sig.sdsu.edu.ge)

## II. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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### A. Program Overview

The program “Supporting STEM Research and Graduate education in Georgia” is open to all potential applicants matriculated as a graduate student at any accredited Georgian university and designed to provide them with the opportunities to:

1. Identify and develop new contacts, which will promote further collaboration between Georgian and U.S. scientists.
2. Explore new research approaches using the facilities of modern and well-equipped U.S. laboratories.
3. Receive training on modern scientific equipment.
4. Advance the grantees’ research activities and increase their exposure and visibility in the international research community.
5. Continue research collaboration with newly established U.S. partners.
6. Strengthen the quantitative and qualitative research skills.
7. Develop academic writing skills of young Georgian scholars.
8. Help raise Georgian scholars’ research capacity to international standards.
9. Mentor and coach Georgian scholars for publishing research papers in Georgian and Western academic peer-reviewed journals in STEM fields; participation in international conferences
10. Improve scientific English proficiency of program participants.
11. Expand Georgian researchers’ capacity to use quantitative and qualitative methods in STEM-related research topics, mastery in academic writing and possibly developing an analytical paper, and communicate research findings to educators, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.
12. Develop and/or improve research library use (digital and hard copy) capabilities.

### B. Fields available at San Diego State University for which the candidates can choose to apply:

1. Math and Science Education -- Susan Nickerson, Co-Director ([snickerson@sdsu.edu](mailto:snickerson@sdsu.edu))
2. Computational Sciences - Jose Castillo, Director ([jcastillo@sdsu.edu](mailto:jcastillo@sdsu.edu))
3. Engineering Sciences - Mechanical & Aerospace - Temesgen Garoma Ararso, Director ([tgaroma@sdsu.edu](mailto:tgaroma@sdsu.edu))

4. Engineering Sciences - Electrical and Computer - Temesgen Garoma Ararso, Director  
([tgaroma@sdsu.edu](mailto:tgaroma@sdsu.edu))

5. Engineering Sciences – Structural - Temesgen Garoma Ararso, Director ([tgaroma@sdsu.edu](mailto:tgaroma@sdsu.edu))
6. Engineering Sciences – Biomedical - Temesgen Garoma Ararso, Director ([tgaroma@sdsu.edu](mailto:tgaroma@sdsu.edu))
7. Cell and Molecular Biology-Marina Kalyuzhnaya, Director ([mkalyuzhnaya@sdsu.edu](mailto:mkalyuzhnaya@sdsu.edu))
8. Ecology-Walter Oechel, Director ([woechel@sdsu.edu](mailto:woechel@sdsu.edu))
9. Geography-Piotr Jankowski, Director ([pjankows@sdsu.edu](mailto:pjankows@sdsu.edu))
10. Geophysics - Kim Olsen, Director ([kbolsen@sdsu.edu](mailto:kbolsen@sdsu.edu))
11. Public Health: Global Health & Health and Behavioral Sciences – Heather L. Corliss, Co-Director ([hcorliss@sdsu.edu](mailto:hcorliss@sdsu.edu))
12. Language and Communication Disorders – Tracy Love-Geffen, Director ([tlove@sdsu.edu](mailto:tlove@sdsu.edu))
13. Clinical Psychology -- Vanessa L. Malcarne, Co-Director ([vmalcarne@sdsu.edu](mailto:vmalcarne@sdsu.edu))
14. Physical Therapy -- Mitchell J. Rauh, Director ([mrauh@sdsu.edu](mailto:mrauh@sdsu.edu))

Some of the programs might be Interdisciplinary and have heavy STEM components. For more information on the programs listed above, please visit: [www.sig.sdsu.edu](http://www.sig.sdsu.edu)

Successful applicants will be required to obtain U.S. visas within three months of receiving the award; if the applicant cannot obtain a visa within three months of receiving an award and initiate travel within four months of receiving an award, the grant will be terminated. In such a case, the award will be offered to the next top-ranking applicant in a pool of meritorious applicants specifically identified for this purpose by expert peer review.

### **C. Eligibility Requirements**

Proposal must meet each of following eligibility requirements:

1. The applicant must be a Georgian citizen currently residing in Georgia.
2. The applicant must have official status as a Ph.D. student at a Georgian university.-
3. The research proposed by the applicant should be a topic in STEM fields (Chemistry, Computer Science, Ecology and Environmental Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Biology, Interdisciplinary Studies, and any Interdisciplinary Program containing a heavy STEM component)
4. The applicant must have a proficient working knowledge of English, both written and spoken.
5. The applicant must be able to travel to the United States and stay continuously to conduct research for 3 (in case of possible extension up to 24) \*\* consecutive months during the period of 1 September 2021– 30 October 2022.
6. Have a mentor at SDSU willing to supervise the candidate’s research and studies at SDSU.

Applications that do not meet these eligibility requirements will not be considered for funding.

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*\*\* Only selected candidates (and not their spouses or any other family members) are supported by this program.*

### **III. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS**

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Each proposal will be screened for eligibility and completeness upon receipt.

All applicants who pass eligibility screening will be interviewed by the selection committee, comprised of SDSU and Georgian faculty to assess the applicant's English Language proficiency. English language capability will be evaluated by the three level grading systems: "Advanced-A," "Intermediate-B," and "Beginner-C". Applicants who are judged to have inadequate English language skills will be ruled ineligible.

When all external written reviews have been received, a panel of scientists will be convened to consider all applications and external reviews and make a rank applicant.

The final decision will be announced on by the end of May.

### **IV. APPLICATION PROCESS**

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**Applicants must submit proposals to SDSU Georgia by April 19.**

Any proposal that is not submitted in the manner described below may be deemed ineligible. Applicant is responsible to act with honesty and integrity throughout the admissions process. Research the admission prerequisites before applying and be responsible and accountable for the documents submitted (Diploma, Transcripts, etc.).

#### **Submission of applications to SDSU-Georgia**

**Completed applications must be received by SDSU-Georgia no later than April 19. All the documents must be submitted as one file through [www.sig.sdsu.edu.ge](http://www.sig.sdsu.edu.ge)**

Proposals submitted in multiple files will not be accepted. Georgian apostille certification (provided by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia) of the official transcripts is considered mandatory.

Each application must contain all the elements described below. All proposals should be typed single-spaced; in a font size  $\geq 10$  points; with margins of 2.5 cm on the sides, top, and bottom. All pages including forms should be numbered consecutively in the bottom right corner. Proposals cannot exceed 20 pages. All documents for the application should be in English (if in Georgian, should be translated and apostilled.).

- 1. Letter of Intent (Form A):** The letter of intent should include basic information about the applicant and should clearly describe and justify the importance and feasibility of the proposed project. What is the specific research to be carried out and why is the proposed research important? The Research Rationale should describe a scientific problem to be

addressed by the grant. The text should provide clear justification for the importance of the research. A description of any future **for** collaboration with the applicant after his or her return to Georgia. The proposed mentor(s) at SDSU should be listed and justified.

**2. Diplomas and Official Transcript (a complete representation of a student's academic records (Bachelors, MA, Ph.D.) from University (apostille required).**

**A confirmation of the communication with the potential mentor.** To obtain such, Georgian student needs to get in touch with SDSU professor through email. **The Principal Investigator of the Project, Dr. Walter Oechel must be copied (in Cc) on correspondence.** But before that, applicant shall get familiar with research ongoing at San Diego State University and select one that has common interests and points of contact with his/her project. The detailed information on the ongoing research was provided by the program directors during the Mini Course III, which took place January 27-29, 2021. Seminar recordings, as well as the slides presented, are gathered on the project website: [www.sig.sdsu.edu.ge](http://www.sig.sdsu.edu.ge)

After being short-listed, candidate must provide an official confirmation letter from SDSU mentor expressing his his/her readiness to work and supervise Georgian student during his/her stay in the U.S.

**3. Curriculum Vitae (preferably up to 5 pages).** Include the full name, date, and place of birth, contact address, information on the applicant's education, prior and current employment, research experience, participation in conferences, honors received, and research interests.

**4. Publications, if such exist (maximum 2 pages).** A statement indicating the applicant's total number of publications and full citations for up to 15 publications most relevant to the proposed research topic.

**5. Information on Prior Professional Visits Abroad (if applicable).** Include information on doctoral or postdoctoral training abroad and attendance of international conferences, including papers presented at international meetings.

**6. Two Signed Letters of Reference.** The students will have letters of recommendation. sent directly to the SDSU-Georgia office. One letter must come from the applicant's current supervisor; the other letter should come from a person with whom the applicant has worked in his/her major field, such as a thesis advisor, professor, or employer.

- Mastery of fundamental knowledge in the applicant's field.
- Potential within his/her field.

**7. Project Narrative:** The Project Narrative should clearly describe and justify the importance and feasibility of the proposed project.

- a) **Research Rationale (up to 2 pages).** What is the specific research to be carried out and why is the proposed research important? The Research Rationale should describe a scientific problem to be addressed by the grant. The text should provide clear justification for the importance of the research.
- b) **Research Plan (up to 5 pages, including tables and figures).** How will the proposed research be carried out? Clearly describe the methods and approach to be used in carrying out the proposed research. Indicate clearly how each project objective will be

accomplished. Also indicate the plans for publishing the results in international peer-reviewed journals.

- c) **Research Milestones/Timeline (1 page).** At the conclusion of the Research Plan, provide a one-page project timeline that clearly indicates the significant steps in carrying out the proposed research during one year of support from the grant. Include goals to be accomplished on the visit to the U.S. and goals to be accomplished upon return to Georgia.
- d) **References Cited (up to 1 page).** Provide a list of references cited in the project narrative.

### **Changes after Submission**

All proposals must be complete when submitted. Any proposal not containing all required elements as indicated in this Program Announcement may be ruled ineligible. No modifications may be made to any proposal or requested by the applicant once it has been received.

**The competition results will be announced on approximately by the end of May.**

### **Confidentiality**

San Diego State University, San Diego State University Georgia and representatives from Georgian Universities will treat all proposals as confidential material and require all panelists and reviewers to respect the confidentiality of proposals.

## **V. INFORMATION SESSION**

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Informational session will take place March 19, 2021 at 8:00 pm GST via Zoom. (<https://SDSU.zoom.us/j/89669148817>)

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