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Packard Fellowship Awarded to UCSB Biologist

Jonathan Levine, assistant professor of biology in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has recently been awarded a prestigious Packard foundation Fellowship for Science and Engineering.

The Packard Foundation Fellowship Advisory Panel, made up of distinguished scientists and engineers, invites the presidents of 50 leading research universities to nominate two young professors each from their institutions every year. This year the panel selected 16 fellows from 100 candidates. Candidates must be young faculty members in the first three years of their academic careers. The intent of the fellowship program is to provide support for unusually creative researchers early in their careers. The fellowship of \$625,000, paid over five years, may be used for any reasonable research expenditure.

"Jonathan is a truly remarkable young scientist whose research on the impacts of invasive plant species is on the cutting edge of our ecological understanding," said Alice Alldredge, chair of his department at UCSB. "This award recognizes both his excellence and the great relevance of his work to society."

Levine's work encompasses controls over the success and impacts of exotic plant invasions; species diversity and ecosystem function; mechanisms underlying rare plant persistence; determinants of commonness, rarity, and coexistence.

Putting his work into perspective, Levine explains that the invasion of species into new biogeographic regions is a process that has regularly occurred over geologic time.

Over the last millennium, however, the human-mediated transport of species across the globe has increased the rate of invasion several orders of magnitude. Although most invaders fail to establish in their new range, the fraction that succeed have collectively exerted tremendous ecological and economic damage. Through competition, predation, and the alteration of disturbance regimes, biological invasions have caused massive changes in ecosystem structure, and are second only to habitat destruction in threatening imperiled species in the U.S. In addition, from an economic standpoint, invasions cost the American economy tens of billions of dollars annually.

According to the Packard Foundation, 348 fellowships have been awarded over the past 16 years, totaling over \$202 million, to faculty members at 51 top national universities. It is among the nation's largest non-governmental programs designed to seek out and reward the pursuit of scientific discovery with "no strings attached" support. The fellowship program funds fellows' research in a broad range of disciplines that includes physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, astronomy, computer science, earth science, ocean science and all branches of engineering.

Related Links

[Jonathan Levine Web Page](#)

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