Ph.D. Positions Available in AI, Control, and Aerial Robotics (Fall 2026)
UC San Diego & San Diego State University

Job Title	Ph.D. Positions Available in AI, Control, and Aerial Robotics (Fall 2026)
Department	Joint Doctoral Program in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering https://www.engineering.sdsu.edu/admissions/joint-doctoral/mechanical-aerospace
Institution	UC San Diego & San Diego State University San Diego, California
Date Posted	Sep. 19, 2025
Application Deadline	Dec. 1, 2025
Position Start Date	Aug. 15, 2026
Job Categories	Graduate Student
Academic Field(s)	Aerospace/Aeronautical/Astronautics Robotics
Job Website	https://junchen.sdsu.edu/opening.html
Apply Online Here	https://www.engineering.sdsu.edu/admissions/joint-doctoral/mechanical-aerospace
Apply By Email	
Job Description	

Two fully funded Ph.D. positions are available for Fall 2026 through the Joint Doctoral Program (JDP) in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at UC San Diego and San Diego State University (SDSU).

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About the PI:
Dr. Jun Chen is an Associate Professor in the Aerospace Engineering Department at SDSU. His research focuses on dynamics, control, optimization, and artificial intelligence, particularly in data-driven modeling, decision-making under uncertainty, and AI-empowered autonomy for large-scale networked dynamical systems. Applications include air traffic control and management, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) traffic management, and autonomous air/ground vehicle systems. Dr. Chen received his Ph.D. and M.S. in Aerospace Engineering from Purdue University and a B.S. in Aeronautics Engineering from Beihang University.

Research Focus Areas:
We are seeking highly motivated students to join our lab in one or more of the following areas:
• Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) for Autonomous Systems
• Physical-AI: bridging physics-based modeling and learning-based methods
• Aerial Robotics, including UAV control, autonomy, and swarming
• Computational Optimal Control & Stochastic Optimization
• Safe and Scalable Autonomy under Uncertainty
• Distributed Control and Computing for Networked Systems

Qualifications:
Ideal candidates should have:
• Strong mathematical background (control theory, optimization, probability, etc.)
• Solid programming skills in Python, C++, Julia, or MATLAB
• Experience or coursework in one or more of the following:
• Dynamics and control
• Machine learning or reinforcement learning
• Modeling and simulation
• Robotics or UAV systems
Postdoctoral researchers and visiting students/scholars are also welcome to apply.

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Application Instructions:
If interested, please email Prof. Jun Chen at jun.chen@sdsu.edu with:
• Your CV
• Transcripts (unofficial accepted)
• A brief statement of interest (optional but encouraged)
More details about Dr. Chen's research can be found at: https://junchen.sdsu.edu

EEO/AA Policy

Affirming Equal Opportunity

All university programs and activities are open and available to all regardless of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin. Consistent with California law and federal civil rights laws, SDSU provides equal opportunity in education and employment without unlawful discrimination or preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. Our commitment to equal opportunity means ensuring that every student and employee has access to the resources and support they need to thrive and succeed in a university environment and in their communities. SDSU complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the California Equity in Higher Education Act, California's Proposition 209 (Art. I, Section 31 of the California Constitution), other applicable state and federal anti-discrimination laws, and CSU's Nondiscrimination Policy. We prohibit discriminatory preferential treatment, segregation based on race or any other protected status, and all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in all university programs, policies, and practices.

SDSU is a diverse community of individuals who represent many perspectives, beliefs and identities, committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and intellectually vibrant environment. We cultivate a culture of open dialogue, mutual respect, and belonging to support educational excellence and student success. Through academic programs, student organizations and activities, faculty initiatives, and community partnerships, we encourage meaningful engagement with diverse perspectives. As a higher education institution, we are dedicated to advancing knowledge and empowering individuals to reach their full potential by prioritizing inclusive curriculum development, faculty and staff training, student mentorship, and comprehensive support programs. SDSU excellence is built on merit, talent, diversity,

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accessibility, and equal opportunity for all.

Contact Information

Please reference Academickeys in your cover letter when applying for or inquiring about this job announcement.

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