

California-Denmark Innovator Fellowship Program Summary

UC Davis will send top scholars outbound to learn from Denmark's world-famous innovation ecosystem, and top universities in Denmark will send scholars to UC Davis for six months. UC Davis and Denmark are looking to learn from each other by establishing a bridge of talent through top scholars interested in pursuing ventures related to food, nutrition and planetary health.

The program is staggered such that the selected Danish scholars will meet and connect with incoming UC Davis students in fall, attending events, speakers and networking opportunities together. These Danish fellows will then depart for UC Davis in January. When UC Davis fellows return and resume research in their labs in April, they will get to reconnect with their Danish counterparts on the Davis campus for the Spring quarter, again attending speakers, events and professional development opportunities together.

You can learn more about Denmark's exceptional innovation ecosystem [here](#), and especially their leadership in the food sector [here](#).

Research in Denmark (Winter 2026)

Selected UC Davis fellows will be placed in a lab that is part of the Danish multi-university initiative, the [Center for Sustainable Agrifood Systems](#).

Participating Universities include:

- [Aarhus University](#) (AU)
- [Technical University of Denmark](#) (DTU)
- [University of Copenhagen](#) (KU)
- [Aalborg University](#) (AAU)
- [IT University of Copenhagen](#) (ITU)
- [Roskilde University](#) (RUC)
- [University of Southern Denmark](#) (SDU)

For the inaugural year, at least one fellow will be placed in the lab of [Dr. Peter Jensen](#) at Danish Technical University. Professor Jensen is head of innovation at DTU Food and his lab conducts applied research and innovation on microbial systems, biorefining, green biomass, food and beverage technology, precision fermentation, accelerated cheese ripening and plant based foods. Most of the research is done in collaboration with companies and includes pilot and demonstration studies.

The Jensen lab is but one example of a lab, and opportunities exist in almost all fields related to food and planetary health, including Chemistry, AI, metabolic health, fermentation, food science, nutrition, environmental science, food & ag engineering and much more. The [DTU Center for Biosustainability](#) is also available to host. If you, as an applicant, are aware of a specific lab at a certain university in Denmark that interests you, you are welcome to articulate this in your application and the selection team can assess the possibility.

Exploring Commercialization in Denmark (Spring 2026)

For another three months fellows will take part in startup activities hosted by a leading incubator or accelerator. Fellows will be at either Novo Nordisk's BioInnovation Institute, or DTU's Skylab, learning how Danish companies are born and scale. BII's vision is "to support world-class life science innovation that drives development of new solutions for the benefit of people and society."

During their time at BII or DTU Skylab, fellows may engage in a variety of activities including:

- Performing technical due diligence that draws on their academic expertise and research: fellows can help their host business incubator understand the scientific feasibility of companies they are supporting.
- Assisting and supporting business developers in their startup support (status calls, defining milestones and next steps)
- Building start-up deal-flow through attending conferences and reaching out to business incubators, universities, and other sources
- Assessing potential investments or start-ups: attend deal-flow assessment meetings where they will learn how to assess a company that will have market impact, societal impact, and financial return for the investor.
- Conducting market and business validation. Fellows will learn and apply general business principles to understand if there is a market for the products or services proposed by a start-up.
- Creating market landscape analyses and investment theses. Fellows may be given an opportunity to write their assessment of a market landscape as defined by their host.
- Determining the patentability and commercial potential of inventions from researchers.

- Assessing the potential of pre-commercialization research discoveries, and thus gaining experience on what is required for translating research discoveries.

Fellows will also have the opportunity to visit and tour top Danish institutes including:

- [Novo Nordisk](#)
- [Kalundberg Biotech Cluster](#)
- [Novonosis](#)
- [Carlsberg Research Laboratory](#)
- [Arla Innovation Center](#), and more.

Connecting in California (July 2026)

After return from Denmark in June 2026, fellows will resume their research in their labs at UC Davis. However, they will remain part of the program by reconnecting regularly with Danish fellows who will be on the UC Davis campus through June. During this time, UC Davis IIFH will organize regular meetups, speakers and excursions, which UC Davis fellows get to attend and participate. IIFH opportunities, including our Partner Summit, provide unparalleled opportunities to build on your network. *Please note a fellow's UC Davis research appointment is not covered for Spring, but funding for professional development, excursions and more continues to be provided.*

At the end of the program, a summit colloquium will bring together Fellows and their research and commercialization networks from both Denmark and California. During this time, fellows will get to showcase their groundbreaking research, meet leaders, continue steps toward a startup if desired, and explore opportunities to further build connections between the Danish and UC Davis ecosystems.