SAN MARCOS — Cal State San Marcos has received a $100,000 donation to establish an endowment that will support fellowships for low-income and first-generation postgraduate students in the College of Humanities, Arts, Behavioral and Social Sciences.

The donation from Rancho Santa Fe residents Rick and Ann Hein is a matching gift challenge that will launch the Hein Family Fellowship Endowment.

The Heins said that because graduate-level study often precludes outside work, fellowships will give students flexibility and freedom to focus on their research. More than half the Cal State San Marcos student body received some financial aid in the 2011-12 school year, the university said. Of the more than $1.5 million awarded in institutional scholarships, less than 4 percent went to graduate students.

“For many years we’ve witnessed the really good things happening at CSUSM, especially for low-income students, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college,” Rick Hein said in a statement.

“We understand that the financial burden can be difficult, especially for graduate students, so now that we’re in a position to give back this is just the right thing to do.”

An endowed gift means that the Heins’ donation will help provide permanent support to present and future graduate students, the university said.

For more information on contributing to the challenge donation, call University Advancement at (760) 750-4400.