Graduate Programs in Bioscience

Graduate Programs in Bioscience is a consortium of 10 Home Areas and their affiliated Ph.D. programs, organized to provide the best possible research training and professional development for graduate students pursuing Ph.D.’s in the life and biomedical sciences. Students are offered the flexibility to pursue their interests across the wide range of bioscience fields. At the same time, they benefit from individually tailored education in smaller training communities, defined by today’s research themes, not traditional departments.

Home Areas

- Biochemistry, Biophysics & Structural Biology
- Bioinformatics
- Cell & Developmental Biology
- Gene Regulation
- Genetics & Genomics
- Immunity, Microbes & Molecular Pathogenesis
- Molecular, Cellular & Integrative Physiology
- Molecular Pharmacology
- Neuroscience
- Physics & Biology in Medicine

2016 Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship Recipients

UCLA Graduate Programs in Bioscience is committed to diversity and inclusion. Our commitment is central to cultivating a community that nurtures creativity and intellectual curiosity. These core values enhance research training and promote research innovation. In this edition of our newsletter, we proudly celebrate students who received the prestigious Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship. These students recently completed their first year of training and are shining examples of the diverse talent in the UCLA bioscience community.

Marcus Alvarez

UCLA Home Area: Genetics & Genomics
Undergraduate Institution: UC Los Angeles
Research Programs: NIH IMSD

As a graduate student, Marcus is continuing in the lab of his undergraduate advisor Dr. Paivi Pajukanta. His passion for science and skill in the lab have resulted in four publications to date. He is currently working on a new project analyzing transcriptomic mechanisms of dyslipidemia. Marcus chose to stay at UCLA because he enjoys the “collaborative environment, with a breadth of sciences concentrated close together on campus.” First-year highlights include getting to know faculty more personally and meeting students from other disciplines. “The best help came from faculty and other students.”

Taylor Brown

UCLA Home Area: Immunity, Microbes & Molecular Pathogenesis
Undergraduate Institution: UC Los Angeles
Research Programs: NIH-MARC, NIH-IMSD, HHMI-EXROP, BISEP

As an undergraduate, Taylor conducted research in the lab of Dr. Heather Christofk where she investigated human and herpesvirus ribonucleotide reductase. Taylor is currently working in Dr. Elissa Hallem’s lab on factors affecting the development and infectivity of parasitic nematodes. Last year, she found the support of her home area director...
and grant writing workshops very useful. By pursuing her Ph.D., she hopes

to help create a better world for minorities in science. “I hope that one day
my future mentees will look at me and think, ‘It is possible; if she can do it, I
can do it too.’”

Anthony Jones

UCLA Home Area: Molecular Pharmacology
Undergraduate Institution: Cal State Dominguez Hills
Research Programs: NIH MBRS RISE

As an undergraduate, Anthony conducted research in the
lab of Dr. Kenneth Rodriguez where he designed
an independent project that studied “Aloe vera and
nopal cactus for possible health treatments by comparison of antioxidant
properties and free radical inhibition.” He currently conducts research in
the lab of Dr. David Shackelford. Anthony chose to come to UCLA because
he “believed it would be a great place to flourish as a researcher and a
person.” As a first year graduate student, Anthony found the workshops in
the Competitive Edge program to be particularly useful. Another highlight
was the opportunity to see “many leaders in the cancer field present their
research by simply attending seminars on campus.” “I am looking forward
to deepening my understanding in my field and making a meaningful con-
tribution to the existing body of research.”

Andrew Lopez

UCLA Home Area: Biochemistry, Biophysics &
Structural Biology
Undergraduate Institution: UC Irvine
Research Programs: NIH MBRS-IMSD, NIH PREP

As a post baccalaureate researcher, Andrew worked in
the lab of Dr. Ronald Breaker at Yale University on “ri-
oswitches in Bacillus anthracis using RNAseq” which helped him devel-
oped an “appreciation for the complex dynamics of science.” Andrew cur-
cently conducts research in the lab of Oliver Fregoso where he investigates
the effects of variable HIV Vpr on cell cycle arrest. He has “found support at
UCLA at every corner, “from having a writing coach for [his] NSF GRFP ap-
lication, to having an amazing diversity director.” “UCLA has made my first
year an amazing experience. Although the road hasn’t been easy, I know I
made the right choice coming here.”
Cynthia McKee

UCLA Home Area: Molecular, Cellular & Integrative Physiology
Undergraduate Institution: Cal Poly Pomona
Research Programs: NSF LSAMP, McNair Scholars, Sally Casanova Predoctoral Scholars

Cyn’s undergraduate research experience “contributed to increased self-reliance, telling a story through scientific data, and learning how to balance time spent in the lab with academic and social responsibilities.” She currently conducts research on muscle stem cells in the lab of Dr. James Tidball. Cyn chose to attend UCLA based on her “research interest in muscle regeneration, campus wide resources such as the wide variety of core technology centers, and the mentorship and collaborative environment.” As a first year graduate student, Cyn found the on-campus fitness centers and local hiking trails to be very useful for exercise and stress relief.

Jessica Ochoa

UCLA Home Area: Biochemistry, Biophysics & Structural Biology
Undergraduate Institution: Whittier College
Research Programs: Department of Homeland Security Summer Research Team Program

Jessica’s undergraduate research on C. elegans with Dr. Sylvia Vetrone inspired her career goal to “work as a research scientist and as a mentor to other young curious minds.” She currently conducts research in the lab of Dr. Todd Yates where she studies supramolecular protein structures. In her first year she found support from the the Maximizing Success in the First Year workshops and her program’s faculty and student retreat. “I was most impressed by the numerous resources and the endless list of talented PIs [at UCLA] who are so open to collaboration. I was also attracted to its proximity to LAUSD schools, because the ability to conduct outreach with this particular community is very important to me.”

Mariel Rios

UCLA Home Area: Neuroscience
Undergraduate Institution: New York University
Research Programs: NIH BP ENDURE

Mariel studied an animal model for Anorexia Nervosa while an undergraduate in the lab of Dr. Chiye Aoki. She received the Cajal Neural Science Thesis Prize and her first publication based on the project she designed. She is currently conducting research on the development of the prefrontal cortex under the mentorship of Drs. Susan Bookheimer and Carrie Bearden. Mariel appreci-
Christopher Robles
UCLA Home Area: Genetics & Genomics
Undergraduate Institution: UC Santa Cruz
Research Programs: NIH MARC, NIH Academy Fellows, Broad Institute Summer Research Program

Christopher conducted research for two years at the NIH National Human Genome Research Institute under Dr. Larry Brody. His research on congenital heart defects was pivotal to his growth as a scientist. He currently conducts research on depression in East Asian populations in the lab of Dr. Sriram Sankaraman. As a first year graduate student he participated in the Competitive Edge summer transition program, which he found to be “really useful in building a community with other students.” He looks forward to continuing his research and “learning new biological and analytical concepts.”

Kamal Singhrao
UCLA Home Area: Physics & Biology in Medicine
Master’s Institution: University of Alberta
Undergraduate Institution: UC Santa Barbara
Research Programs: Staff Researcher at UCSB & UCSF

Kamal’s work as a staff researcher at UCSF with Dr. Jean Pouliot and Dr. Neil Kirby, was “the most pivotal project for [his] development as a scientist.” The project addressed imaging methodology for adaptive radiotherapy and resulted in a patent, three conference presentations, and a feature on the cover of Medical Physics. Kamal currently conducts research on magnetic resonance in the lab of Dr. John Lewis. He says: “Just think about nothing but winning. And you will.”

Undergraduate Summer Research

SPUR-LABS
Applications due: February 1, 2017

The UCLA SPUR-LABS summer program provides a rigorous research training experience for undergraduates with interests in a broad range of bioscience disciplines. Exceptional research training, integrated with professional development activities, will prepare students to succeed in leading PhD and MD/PhD programs.

Website: bioscience.ucla.edu/spur-labs
Email: spurlabs@mednet.ucla.edu