

## Diversity | Inclusion | Community | Excellence

[bioscience.ucla.edu](http://bioscience.ucla.edu)

Fall 2015

### 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 PhDs 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, benefitting 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

### Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship 2015 Recipients

UCLA Graduate Programs in Bioscience is committed to diversity and inclusion. Our commitment is central to cultivating an atmosphere that nurtures the growth, creativity, and intellectual curiosity of our graduate students. This core value serves to enhance the educational experience and training of our students, as they acquire the skills needed to thrive and produce innovative research ideas. We proudly celebrate our exemplary students who are the recipients of the prestigious Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship, a four-year diversity fellowship that supports entering PhD students interested in a research career and teaching at a college or university. These students have successfully completed their first year of graduate school, are beginning their second year, and are a shining example of the diverse talent in the Bioscience community.

#### Kadidia Adula

**Undergraduate Major:** Biology

**Undergraduate Institution:** Brooklyn College, CUNY

**Research Programs:** MARC, SMART, LSAMP

**Home Area:** Neuroscience



As a PREP postbac, Kadidia conducted research in the lab of Dr. Patrizia Casaccia at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. This gave Kadidia the opportunity to work on her own research project for two years looking at the effects of HDAC1 post-translational modifications on neuronal survival. She also looked for early markers of Multiple Sclerosis in patient Cerebrospinal fluid, which resulted in her first publication. Kadidia is currently working in Dr. Alvaro Sagasti's lab on neuronal development. She decided to pursue PhD training at UCLA because of the "large faculty and the diverse areas of neuroscience they explore," as well as "the innovative and high-quality research being conducted." In her first year as a graduate student, Kadidia received the UCLA Deans Scholarship, Cota-Robles Fellowship, and Bridges to the Doctorate scholarship. Kadidia is looking forward to passing her qualifying exams and officially becoming a PhD candidate.

## Welcome to our New Associate Director for Recruitment & Diversity



### Dr. Diana Azurdia

Dr. Diana Azurdia directs the UCLA Bridge to the Doctorate and Entering Mentoring training programs and serves as the SACNAS Chapter Advisor. She has directed several programs that broaden participation in science, served as adjunct faculty in the Chemistry & Biochemistry Department at CSU Los Angeles and performed postdoctoral research in the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, investigating the role of Wnt/beta-catenin signaling on histone modification and its role in metastasis and proliferation of triple-negative breast cancer cells. She earned her PhD in Molecular Biology & Biochemistry from UCLA, where she was a NIGMS Predoctoral Fellow (F31), and graduated with a B.S. in Biochemistry from CSU Los Angeles, where she was a NIH MARC trainee. Dr. Azurdia is a first-generation Guatemalan-American and the first in her family to attend college.

## Adam Gomez

**Undergraduate Major:** German, Biology and Biochemistry

**Undergraduate Institution:** New Mexico State University

**Research Programs:** MARC

**Home Area:** Molecular, Cellular & Integrative Physiology



As an undergraduate, Adam conducted research in the lab of Dr. Shelley Lusetti, where he studied DNA repair mechanisms. Adam is currently conducting research in Dr. Chentao Lin's lab, studying mechanisms of Cryptochrome function in regulating DNA transcription. He chose to attend UCLA because he was "very impressed by the facilities, the faculty, and the other applicants" when he interviewed. He is looking forward to an exciting career in academia or biotechnology after completing his graduate training.

## Fall 2015 Enrollment Facts

**Total Enrollment:** 67

**California Residents:** 35

**Out-of-State Students:** 18

**Underrepresented Groups:** 16 (24%)

**International Students:** 15

## Matilde Miranda

**Undergraduate Major:** Biology (Cell & Molecular Biology emphasis)

**Undergraduate Institution:** San Francisco State University

**Research Programs:** MARC, MBRS RISE, LSAMP

**Home Area:** Cell & Developmental Biology



As an undergraduate, Matilde conducted research in Dr. Laura Burrus' lab, studying cell development, and published her first paper. Matilde currently conducts research in the lab of Dr. Bill Lowry on the metabolism of aging and its relationship to the onset/progression of squamous cell carcinoma. She chose UCLA because it has, "the resources and the community I need to thrive while challenging my scientific knowledge. I genuinely feel that I can develop into an innovative researcher throughout my PhD journey here. Most importantly, as part of the UCLA team, I am given the strength to persevere past any obstacles I have and will encounter." Matilde serves on the UCLA SACNAS Chapter Board and is dedicated to outreach. As a first year graduate student Matilde received the NSF Bridge to the Doctorate scholarship, Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship, and NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. She is looking forward to immersing herself further into molecular biology and making discoveries that will fuel her passion for research.

## Shawntel Okonkwo

**Undergraduate Major:** Biology (Physiology emphasis)

**Undergraduate Institution:** San Francisco State University

**Research Programs:** MARC, LSAMP, Bridges to the Baccalaureate

**Home Area:** Gene Regulation



As an undergraduate, Shawntel performed research in Dr. Daniel Hart's lab at UCSF, where she identified another role for a general transcription factor (TAF3) in human red blood cell development, which resulted in her first publication. Shawntel is currently carrying out research on RNA biology and transcriptional regulation in the lab of Dr. Tracy Johnson. When asked why she decided to come to UCLA, she explained, "I felt as though at UCLA, relative to other campuses, I would never run out of resources or support to achieve whatever goal I set for myself. Also, I received the impression that the faculty and staff were particularly invested in the success and livelihood of their students." In her first year as a graduate student, she was awarded the Eugene V. Cota-Robles fellowship and the LSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate fellowship. Shawntel is looking forward to passing her oral qualifying exam, advancing to candidacy, and delving deeper into her research project.

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## Jerrell Tisnado

**Undergraduate Major:** Chemistry (Biochemistry emphasis)

**Undergraduate Institution:** San Diego State University

**Research Programs:** IMSD, LSAMP

**Home Area:** Biochemistry, Biophysics & Structural Biology



As an undergraduate, Jerrell conducted research in Dr. Carl Carrano's lab, where he analyzed the affects of boron on iron transport proteins, which culminated in two publications. Jerrell is currently conducting research on gene therapy in the lab of Dr. William Gelbart. Jerrell decided to come to UCLA because he "felt a very welcoming atmosphere from the staff and students...in addition to the cutting edge and highly collaborative scientific research being performed."

Jerrell initially found the transition from undergraduate study to graduate level coursework challenging, but the support he received from faculty provided him with time for one-on-one discussions that helped him successfully complete his first year. Jerrell also received faculty support preparing and submitting research proposals and personal statements for extramural funding. In his first year, he was awarded the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship, NSF Bridge to Doctorate scholarship, and Cota-Robles fellowships.

## Bioscience PhD Facts

### Research Excellence

UCLA is among the top institutions in relation to research funding (\$1.03B awarded in 2014-2015).

### Opportunity

Over 400 basic science and clinical faculty are potential mentors to students in the program.

### Flexibility

Students can rotate with any Bioscience faculty member, provided one is in their Home Area, and can change Home Areas if evolving research interests dictate.

### Support

All PhD students receive full financial support for during the course of their study, including a stipend (\$31,500 in 2015-16), all tuition and fees, and student health insurance.

## Bioscience-Wide Training Opportunities

### Maximizing Success in the 1st Year

Workshops designed to help incoming Bioscience students acclimate and thrive during the first year of their graduate programs. Sessions provide students with strategies for effectively integrating into PhD programs, labs, and departments, as well as a space for sharing experiences with peers and building community.

### "Get Connected" Events

A quarterly curated list of events designed to enrich the academic experiences of graduate students through career and professional development opportunities.

### Entering Mentoring Program

Mentorship, leadership and diversity sensitivity training for graduate students and post-doctoral trainees.

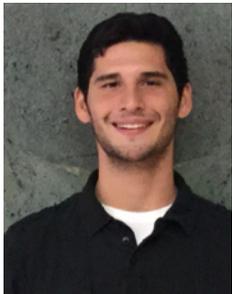
## Guillaume Urtecho

**Undergraduate Major:** Genetics

**Undergraduate Institution:** UC Davis

**Research Programs:** MARC, HHMI XROP

**Home Area:** Gene Regulation



Guillaume was a summer undergraduate researcher at University of Washington and spent three years doing research at UC Davis, where he developed novel biotechnologies for plant breeding, leading to his first publication. Guillaume is currently creating platforms for studying genetic architecture and applying high-throughput gene synthesis techniques in the lab of Dr. Sri Kosuri. Guillaume's decision to come to UCLA was influenced by "the cutting-edge research that is happening all around campus" and "the casual but hardworking culture" of southern California. When asked about his first year experience Guillaume responded, "the highlight of my first year was walking into my third rotation lab late one Sunday evening. I was exhausted after studying for exams and dreading the week of classes to come. However, when I stepped into lab and began working I was struck by an incredible wave of satisfaction." As a first year student he received the Eugene V. Cota-Robles fellowship and the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship. He's looking forward to focusing on his research, going to conferences, making exciting discoveries, sharing his work, and getting a cat.

## Undergraduate Summer Research

### SPUR-LABS

**Applications due: February 1, 2016**

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

### Highlights

- Hands-on research experience with a UCLA faculty member
- Training in a world class research environment
- Academic and professional development advising
- Workshops on career skills, science writing, and presentation
- Individualized guidance on applying to graduate school
- Networking with bioscience students and faculty

**Website:** [bioscience.ucla.edu/spur-labs](http://bioscience.ucla.edu/spur-labs)

**Email:** [spurlabs@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:spurlabs@mednet.ucla.edu)

## Contact Us

**UCLA**

## Graduate Programs in Bioscience

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## Visit Us



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