

Diversity | Inclusion | Community | Excellence

bioscience.ucla.edu

Fall 2020

Graduate Programs in Bioscience

Graduate Programs in Bioscience is a consortium of 11 Home Areas and their affiliated PhD 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, 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, Epigenomics & Transcriptomics](#)
- [Genetics & Genomics](#)
- [Immunity, Microbes & Molecular Pathogenesis](#)
- [Medical Informatics](#)
- [Molecular, Cellular & Integrative Physiology](#)
- [Molecular Pharmacology](#)
- [Neuroscience](#)
- [Physics & Biology in Medicine](#)

The GRE is optional for all home areas

Eugene 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. 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.



Valentina Alonso

UCLA Home Area: Immunity, Microbes & Molecular Pathogenesis

Undergraduate Institution: UC Riverside
Research Programs: NIH MARC

Valentina chose to come to UCLA not only because of the cutting edge research, but also because of the incredible faculty mentors that care about their students' well-being and success. Prior to coming to UCLA, Valentina worked in the lab of Dr. Adler Dillman on host-specific activation of entomopathogenic nematodes. Valentina credits the Competitive Edge program as a key to starting research early and building relationships with students and faculty. Valentina is currently in the lab of Dr. Manish Butte and looks forward to dedicating more time to research and growing as a scientist.

Fellowship Application Support & Incentive Program

Writing workshops, faculty writing coaches, and a library of successful proposals are some of the support services available to bioscience students. About 20% of students hold prestigious individual merit-based fellowships each year from programs such as the NIH National Research Service Award, the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship and the HHMI Gilliam Fellowship. As an incentive to encourage students to seek extramural fellowships, GPB offers an annual \$3k stipend bonus to Ph.D. students who have successfully competed for these prestigious awards.

Director for Recruitment & Inclusion



Dr. Diana Azurdia

Diana (she/her/hers) leads UCLA's effort to enhance diversity in the biomedical graduate student population. She earned her PhD in Molecular Biology & Biochemistry from UCLA and she graduated with a BS in Biochemistry from CSU Los Angeles. Diana is a first-generation Guatemalan-American and the first in her family to attend college. She credits much of her success to the influence of her mentors, who have shaped her focus on the propagation of effective mentoring of underrepresented students in STEM.

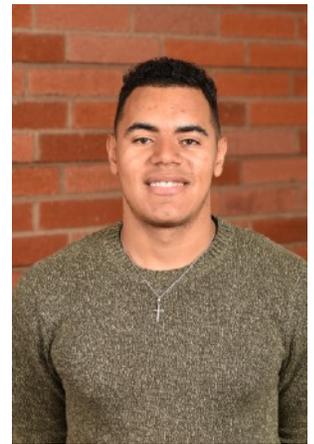
Email: dazurdia@mednet.ucla.edu

Fall 2020 Enrollment Facts

Total enrollment.....	84
California residents.....	45
Out-of-State students.....	28
International students.....	11
From underrepresented backgrounds.....	23

Timmie Britton

UCLA Home Area: Immunity, Microbes & Molecular Pathogenesis
Undergraduate Institution: University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Research Programs: HHMI XROP



In the summer of 2018, Timmie spent 10 weeks as a researcher in the HHMI EXROP program at Harvard University under the supervision of Dr. Matthew Waldor. The title of his project was "Elucidating the Role of the BOLA Family Homolog Protein, IbaG, in *Vibrio cholerae* morphogenesis, viability, and colonization." Timmie says that "Graduate Programs in Bioscience has made significant efforts to provide an inclusive and supportive experience to people of color like myself, especially during these difficult times. I am grateful for that." Some reasons Timmie chose UCLA were the location, weather, and funding opportunities. Timmie is doing his dissertation work in the lab of Dr. Huong Ton-That, studying the "Characterization of an Ancient Bacterial Electron Transport System in the Virulence of Oral Opportunistic Pathogens".

Lesly Palacios Castillo

UCLA Home Area: Molecular Cellular & Integrative Physiology
Undergraduate & Masters Institution: Cal Poly Pomona



Lesly became highly interested in studying the biology and physiology of health and disease while teaching a laboratory course in Human Physiology at Cal Poly Pomona. Lesly says she chose UCLA because of its reputation of consistently being at the "forefront" of science, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of the MCIP program, and the outlets to create community with programs such as Competitive Edge and Grad School Hacks. Attending Grad School Hacks provided Lesly a, "sense of normalcy as I got to know that other people's experiences were very similar to mine." One of Lesly's first year highlights was rotating in Dr. Mark Frye's laboratory where she investigated the role of Tdc2 neurons in wide-field motion tracking of *Drosophila melanogaster* using flight simulators. She looks forward to becoming more independent in the Frye lab, as well as drafting and writing about her project.

Kevyn Hart

UCLA Home Area: Genetics & Genomics
Undergraduate Institution: UC Santa Cruz

While at UC Santa Cruz, Kevyn performed undergraduate research in the lab of Dr. Angela Brooks analyzing copy number variation data and completed a senior thesis titled, "Contribution of RBFOX1 Deletions to the Cancer Phenotype". Kevyn chose to attend UCLA because the school offers great research opportunities and she was easily able to find a variety of labs that she could see herself in. Kevyn credits the Competitive Edge program as helping her get a jump start on research and keeping her on track with regular program check-ins. One of her biggest highlights thus far is joining Dr. Donald Kohn's lab for her dissertation work. Kevyn looks forward to taking on her own project this year and seeing how she will further grow as a researcher.



Manuel Mora

UCLA Home Area: Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology
Undergraduate Institution: UC Davis
Research Programs: McNair's Scholars, Project RAISE, MESA, EOPS

Manuel (He/him/his) transferred from Santa Ana Community College to UC Davis where he worked with Clark Lagarias, and received his undergraduate degree in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology in 2019. Manuel chose to come to the Molecular Biology Interdepartmental Doctoral Program (MBIDP) at UCLA because of the opportunity to work extensively with the director of his Cellular and Developmental Biology home area and fellow graduate students. Manuel values the importance of good mentorship during the process of developing one's project, and a strong support system within the cohort to support the advancement of his academic goals. Manuel enjoys spending time outdoors, either jogging or biking, and stopping for the occasional "Cool Plant Pictures" that he'll take along his trips. In the Braybrook Lab, Manuel is exploring the relationship between cell expansion and nutrient availability using genetic and advanced 'omic' approaches.



Bioscience PhD Facts

Research Excellence

UCLA is among the nation's top recipients of research funding (over \$1B awarded in 2019-2020).

Opportunity

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

Flexibility

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

Support

All PhD students receive full financial support during the course of their study, including a living allowance (\$34,000 in 2020-2021), all tuition and fees, and student health insurance.

Training Opportunities

[Grad School Hacks](#)

Workshops provide students with strategies for effectively integrating into PhD programs and labs, as well as a space for sharing experiences with peers and building community.

["Get Connected" Quarterly](#)

A curated list of events that enrich the graduate student experience through career & professional development.

[Entering Mentoring Program](#)

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

[Scientific Excellence Through Diversity](#)

A student-organized seminar series that brings outside scientists and UCLA diversity associations together to celebrate the value of diversity in scientific enterprises.

Aileen Nava

UCLA Home Area: Human Genetics

Undergraduate Institution: Cal State Fullerton

Research Programs: CIRM Bridges to Stem Cell

As an undergraduate student at Cal State Fullerton, Aileen worked in the lab of Dr. Alison Miyamoto engineering a green fluorescent fusion protein of the Notch-1 receptor before starting her CIRM internship at Stanford. Aileen specifically chose UCLA for her graduate studies because of the world-renowned faculty in the fields of human genetics, genomics, and bioinformatics. Additionally, Aileen chose to accept UCLA's admission offer because GPB had more diverse faculty compared to the other institutions she was accepted into. She also credits the Competitive Edge program for welcoming her with open arms and showing her that UCLA sincerely cares about the health and well-being of all its community members. Aileen is excited to start conducting research in the lab of Dr. Valerie Arboleda, where she will investigate various aspects of rare neurodevelopmental disorders.



Edgar Reyes

UCLA Home Area: Immunity, Microbes & Molecular Pathogenesis

Undergraduate & Master's Institution: CSULA

Edgar began his research career at Cal State University, Los Angeles, in Dr. Raymond E. Garcia's atherosclerosis and lipoprotein laboratory. He then went on to receive his master's degree in Chemistry in Dr. Jamil Momand's cancer research lab at CSULA. Edgar worked at UCLA as a research associate prior to admission to GPB. Through this experience, Edgar was able to holistically analyze UCLA and establish a great community that would help him grow as a scientist. At UCLA, Edgar credits his Home Area Director and Student Affairs Officers in "helping answer questions and being readily accessible throughout the academic year." Edgar says the Grad School Hacks seminars have helped him maintain focus and practice great mental exercises that have helped with managing stress and pressure. Additionally, Edgar says that, as a gay Mexican immigrant, it was very difficult to find a comfortable home for his graduate studies. He is happy that he found a great family within the MBI. Edgar works in the lab of Dr. Steven Dubinett on the "Evaluation of inflammation-dependent regulation in pulmonary disease."



Our commitment to dismantling inequity in our PhD programs

Our society has witnessed too many instances of police brutality and injustices in conjunction with the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Latinx, and Native communities. We recognize and acknowledge that these events are rooted in centuries of systemic and structural racism and we want to reaffirm our commitment to examine and advance our own practices targeted at dismantling racial inequalities in our graduate program.

Graduate Programs in Bioscience (GPB) commits to evolving and implementing culturally aware mentor training, unconscious bias training, restorative justice programming and practices, and to examining our own student outcomes data to uncover where inequities continue to exist.

IBLAQ Alliance

In order to foster community in the virtual space, we have organized a community of Indigenous/ Black/ Latinx/ Asian/ Queer (IBLAQ) graduate students, postdocs, faculty, and allies into a STEM campus-wide Alliance. We organize virtual social gatherings during the academic year as a way to foster a sense of belonging and provide a respite from lab and academic work.

The principal aim of the IBLAQ Alliance is to provide a safe space for underrepresented and marginalized communities in the Biosciences and across STEM at UCLA.

Student Groups

Graduate Programs in Biosciences proudly supports our student organizations:



AMEBA: The Association for Multi-Ethnic Bioscientists' Advancement, AMEBA, is a graduate student group sponsored by Graduate Programs in Bioscience at UCLA. The goal of AMEBA is to create an equitable environment to promote the advancement and retention of PhD students in the GPB. They aim to provide our members with skills & experiences, they

seek to build a community, and they work to promote diversity in the sciences via academic development, professional development and outreach.

BSB: Black Scholars in Bioscience is a student initiated program that aims to foster community, provide professional development, and outreach opportunities amongst postdoctoral scholars, graduate students, and faculty.



SACNAS at UCLA: Society for the Advancement of Chicanos & Native Americans in Science is dedicated to increasing the numbers of underrepresented students in higher education and in science. This group is open to undergraduates, graduate students, transfer students, community college students, post-docs, faculty and staff who share a common concern about equal access to education, who have interest in outreach, and/or are in need of opportunities in academic leadership and participation.



Visit Us



Fee Waivers

- Waivers of the application fee are available for applicants who a) participate(d) in eligible research programs or b) demonstrate financial need as described here: <https://grad.ucla.edu/admissions/research-requirements/>
- In the application, on the Plans for Graduate Study page, select one or more of the programs in which you participated and upload a letter from the program director confirming your participation.

Undergraduate Summer Research

Applications due: Feb. 3, 2021

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.

bioscience.ucla.edu/spur-labs

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