



Graduate Programs in Bioscience

Equity | Inclusion | Community | Excellence

Website: bioscience.ucla.edu

Fall 2022

Graduate Programs in Bioscience

Graduate Programs in Bioscience is a consortium of 11 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, 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](#)
- [Medical 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.

Gabriel Rojas Bowe

(he/him/his)

UCLA Home Area: Neuroscience

Undergraduate Institution: University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras

Research Programs: NIH MARC



Prior to coming to UCLA, Gabriel was a MARC trainee in Puerto Rico, studying the role of the prefrontal cortex in mediating active avoidance and approach/avoidance conflict. Gabriel chose UCLA because of the support for graduate students and his confidence that he would be cared for by the people around him in the lab. He also knew that sunny LA would be amazing for his mental health and overall wellness during graduate school. During his first year, he enjoyed participating in the GradSTRIVE program because the mentor he was paired with offered crucial insights into various topics that really helped him make important decisions, such as what classes to take and how to decide on a thesis lab. Additionally, being able to find community in his cohort was a highlight. In the Fall, Gabriel looks forward to working in Dr. Anne Churchland's lab on a project titled, "Multisensory learning in typical and ADHD model mice".

**Connect
with us**

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Instagram:
[instagram.com/gpbu-
cla/](https://www.instagram.com/gpbu-cla/)

Director for Recruitment & Inclusion



Dr. Diana Azurdia

Diana (she/her/ella) 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 2022 Enrollment Facts

Total enrollment.....	87
California residents.....	53
Out-of-State students.....	22
International students.....	12
From underrepresented backgrounds.....	26

Melissa Emami

(she/her/hers)

UCLA Home Area: Cell and Developmental Biology (CDB)

Undergraduate Institution: UC Irvine

Research Programs: NIH IMSD

Prior to coming to UCLA, Melissa was a part of the "Minority Health and Health Disparities International Research Training Program", which gave her the opportunity to gain first-time exposure to studying zebrafish models abroad in Dr. Robert Hindges' lab at King's College London. Melissa came to UCLA to pursue graduate coursework due to the overwhelming support during interviews. During Melissa's first-year rotations and classes, she had the pleasure of working with many faculty members; she found their advice and support to be invaluable. Additionally, she credits GPB faculty for being quick to implement changes for students in need. Another highlight of her first year was having the opportunity to learn new technical skills and make many new friends. In the Fall, Melissa will continue to work in the lab of Dr. Alvaro Sagasti on a project titled, "Investigating interactions between migratory cells and sensory axons in zebrafish epidermis".



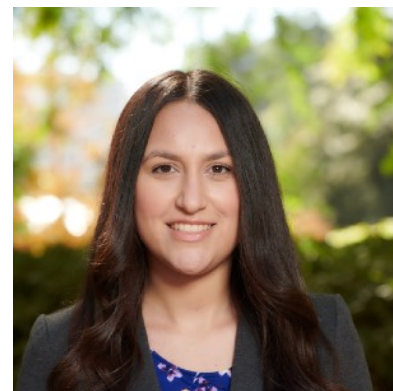
Lorna Mendoza

(she/her/ella)

UCLA Home Area: Molecular, Cellular, & Integrative Physiology (MCIP)

Undergraduate Institution: UCLA

Lorna conducted her undergraduate research in the lab of Dr. Andrea Hevener at UCLA. This experience helped her understand how significant the benefits of exercise training are on the health of human metabolism and how natural human variation can impact how the human metabolism responds to exercise. She credits the support she received from the MCIP faculty during her application and interview process, as well as the outstanding research opportunities provided by UCLA as the main reasons she chose to stay at UCLA for her Ph.D. Additionally, she has enjoyed the support of GPB's Grad School Hacks workshops, connecting with other graduate students at graduate student events, and having the opportunity to learn from some of the most knowledgeable research advisors in the field of medicine. In the Fall, Lorna is looking forward to conducting research in the lab of Dr. Aldons Lusic on a project titled, "IPA for the treatment of atherosclerosis".





Blake Miranda (he/him/his)

UCLA Home Area: Neuroscience

Undergraduate Institution: UC Irvine

Research Program: UCI UROP

Blake was an undergraduate researcher at UCI examining, "Pattern separation ability as an early predictive risk factor for Alzheimer's disease dementia". This project introduced him to the power of machine learning methods for improving diagnostic accuracy in diseases with extraordinarily

heterogeneous etiologies. He credits UCLA's world-class facilities and faculty in Neuroscience as the perfect opportunity to explore his interests in the field in a structured and high-caliber manner. Blake noted one of the most helpful resources during his first year has been his Student Affairs Officer, who has been incredibly helpful in every possible way and made navigating the transition to grad school less intimidating. He also credits the Behavioral Wellness Center as a great support system for students who deal with mental health struggles. One of the highlights during his first year was making friends that understood the unique sacrifices graduate students made in order to pursue academic dreams during the pandemic. In the Fall, Blake will continue to work in the lab of Dr. Avishek Adhikari on a project titled, "Discrete periaqueductal gray neural ensembles encode fear conditioning".



Keionna Newton (she/her/hers)

UCLA Home Area: Neuroscience

Undergraduate Institution: University of Washington

Research Programs: McNair's Scholars

Keionna was a McNair Scholar at the University of Washington, "investigating where and how kappa opioid receptors produce reactive oxygen species in the brain using a novel fluorescence imaging technique" in Dr. Charles Chavkin's lab. This particular project allowed her to contribute

something entirely new to the neuropharmacology field and from it, she acquired her independence and grew as a scientist. Keionna came to UCLA because of the collaborative atmosphere between the different labs on campus, cutting-edge research, and the resources on campus such as the GradSTRIVE program, inclusive student groups, medical benefits, and student resource centers. She found that the people at UCLA were very warm and welcoming and she quickly identified her support system and community. Keionna also had positive experiences with her lab rotations and made lasting connections with several faculty who have supported her growth and continued learning. In the Fall, she will continue to work in the lab of Dr. Lindsay De Biase on a project titled "Investigating microglial modulation of dopamine neuron physiology in health and disease".

Bioscience PhD Facts

Research Excellence

UCLA is among the nation's top recipients of research funding (over \$1.7 Billion awarded in 2021-2022).

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 (\$37,500 in 2022-2023), 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.

[Leadership Training Program](#)

This series of interactive workshops is designed to help trainees thrive in a research environment, deal with conflicts, and be effective leaders and team members.

[Mentorship Training](#)

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

[Scientific Excellence Through Diversity](#)

A student-run seminar series for outside speakers that celebrates diversity in the scientific ecosystem.

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.

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 or are appointed to federally funded training grants.. As an incentive to encourage students to seek extramural fellowships, GPB offers an annual \$3500 stipend bonus to Ph.D. students who have successfully competed for these prestigious awards.

Jose Soto (he/him/his)

UCLA Home Area: Cell and Developmental Biology (CDB)

Undergraduate Institution: UC Riverside

Research Programs: NIH MARC

Prior to coming to UCLA, Jose was in the lab of Dr. Morris Maduro working on using a FRET-based Biosensor to Measure ATP in the *C. elegans* intestine. This project marked Jose's first independent role in the lab. Jose was initially frustrated by not getting positive results and almost left research. The experience taught him to persevere in the lab. He chose to come to UCLA and be part of the Graduate Programs in Bioscience (GPB) because he felt it had the best research community and support out of all the institutions where he interviewed. In his first year, Jose enjoyed getting to know different labs during his rotations. He also liked going out with his cohort members to BJ's in Westwood to catch up with each other outside of the lab and enjoy themselves. In the Fall, Jose looks forward to settling down into his new lab and working on his dissertation in the lab of Dr. Aparna Bhaduri on a project titled, "Metabolic Influences on Neuronal Differentiation in Cortical Organoids".



Sari Terrazas (she/her/hers)

UCLA Home Area: Gene Regulation, Epigenomics & Transcriptomics (GREAT)

Undergraduate Institution: University of Alabama, Birmingham

Research Programs: McNair's Scholars

As an undergraduate, Sari studied the anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory effects of estrogen under Dr. Samantha Giordano-Mooga. Sari never really saw herself as a scientist, but having such encouraging mentors, she gained the confidence to pursue it. She chose UCLA because it is a leader in research and she felt that GPB supported work-life balance and overall student happiness. Sari wanted a place she could thrive both professionally and personally. Sari appreciated having a mentor through the GradStrive program and the student groups such as AMEBA that helped foster a sense of community during her first year. In the Fall, Sari is looking forward to getting involved in the Biological Sciences Council, mentoring undergraduate students, and to hit the ground running on her current project under Dr. Grace Xiao, "Functional roles of 3' UTRs and their associated proteins in RNA metabolism".



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 and 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, SACNAS, 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



Booth #622

ERN Emerging Researchers National Conference in STEM

Undergraduate Summer Research

Bioscience Scholars 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.

Applications due: Feb. 4, 2023

bioscience.ucla.edu/spur-labs

Contact: spurlabs@mednet.ucla.edu

Brain Research Institute Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (BRI-SURE) program is for students currently attending a HBCU or participating in MARC research programs. BRI SURE is an 8 to 10-week, summer research-training program for students interested in pursuing research careers in Neuroscience or Physiology. The program is designed to provide in-depth research experience to prepare participants for Ph.D. and M.D./Ph.D. graduate programs.

Applications due: starting Dec. 15, 2022

bri.ucla.edu/outreach/bri-sure-summer/

Contact: brisure@ucla.edu

Bruins-In-Genomics (B.I.G.) Summer Research Program is an 8-week full-time immersion program for undergraduates interested in learning how to read and analyze genes and genomes. Through this program students will have the opportunity to experience graduate-level coursework, and learn the latest cutting-edge research, tools and methods used by leading scientists to solve real-world problems.

Applications due: Jan 2- March 1, 2023

<https://qcb.ucla.edu/big-summer/>

Contact: BIGSummer@ucla.edu