

Student Profile

Erik Gonzalez-Leon – Biomedical Engineering PhD Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

I wanted to be involved in innovative ventures that push the boundaries of knowledge, but also be able to lead the teams embarking on said ventures. I felt that a graduate degree would give me the skills needed to do so, all while stimulating my research curiosity and my innate love of challenges.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

UCI has a great biomedical engineering program, and the southern California weather is hard to beat! Upon arriving I also learned that there's plenty of entrepreneurship and biomedical industry opportunities in the Irvine/Orange County area, which is a huge perk! Plus, who doesn't love Peter the

Anteater?

If you are conducting research, how would you explain your research and its significance to your grandparent?

My grandparents, like most, experience joint pain and discomfort. I would explain that my research is focused on repairing or replacing soft tissues in the knee joint, namely the knee meniscus, and that repairing or replacing these tissues could prevent or slow the onset of osteoarthritis. Not only could this alleviate and prevent further joint pain, but it may lead to them being more spry and mobile, leading to a better quality of life!

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

First and foremost, I love to travel. Seeing the world has always been a goal of mine from a young age, and nothing is more stimulating to me than experiencing new cities, countries, and cultures. Also, I love finding new places to grab a bite to eat and keeping active by playing basketball.

Reflections

What advice do you have for a new graduate student in your program?

Patience and persistence are key! It's easy for one to get caught up in the stress of their classes or be disappointed by the ups and downs of research, but that's part of the process! Don't let small obstacles get in the way of your long-term goal. Research is a slow process, and that's okay! Additionally, don't be afraid to blow off some steam by indulging in a hobby or passion, life is about balance!

Career

How do you hope to make a difference?

I hope that my research helps contribute to the clinical translation of tissue engineered fibrocartilages such as the meniscus. Also, I aim to serve as an example to aspiring scientists, especially those in underrepresented groups, so that they are not afraid to pursue a STEM career and believe that they can achieve anything they put their mind to!