

Student Profile

Jessica Sanchez – Cellular and Molecular Biosciences Gateway PhD Program



want to pursue a career in STEM.

Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

Discovering my passion for science as a first generation undergraduate student led me to pursue a Ph.D. As a scientist I can use my curiosity and skills to answer important questions that impact society. The challenge and significance of pursuing a graduate degree would allow me to accomplish my goals of contributing to the scientific community and becoming a mentor for Latina/o students working in STEM fields or who

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

Working in a research lab at UCI for a year before entering graduate school gave me the opportunity to experience the collaborative and supportive environment that UCI offers. The faculty and students are dedicated to working together to further advance our understanding of science. Being a part of the strong well-established Neuroscience department at UCI I knew, would allow me to conduct essential cutting edge research surrounded by scientists that share the same passion.

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

My research focuses on Alzheimer's Disease which is the most common age-related disease that affects around 6 million Americans. This disease results in brain cells dying which leads to difficulty learning and memory loss. My project involves investigating how the body's immune system, which protects against diseases, helps reduce the negative effects of Alzheimer's Disease. This research will hopefully help us understand how to either prevent or treat this serious disease.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

Outside of research I dedicate my time to my family, specifically my nephews and niece, who I enjoy teaching to and exploring nature with. I also enjoy playing various types of video games when I have the spare time.

Reflections

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

I would advise incoming graduate students that the most important aspect to focus on during your first year is your rotations and choosing the lab that is the best fit. Being interested and excited about the research being conducted in the lab is of course important but I believe that choosing the best mentor and lab environment is more crucial. Students need to be surrounded by faculty and other students who can mentor and support them in order to have an overall successful graduate career.

Career

How do you hope to make a difference?

I hope to make a difference by becoming a principal investigator and educating for the diversity in STEM research fields. It is very important to me that I be the mentor for other minority students seeking to advance to higher education. My experiences as a first generation Latina have allowed me to gain the tools I need to help others reach their educational goals. I wish to use my personal and research experiences to help other first generation underrepresentative students successfully find their path in a STEM career no matter what challenges they face.