

Alumni Profile

Alberto J. Lopez – Interdepartmental Neuroscience Gateway Program



Career

Please provide a brief overview of your career path since graduating from UCI.

I am about to start a postdoctoral fellowship in the Calipari lab at Vanderbilt University.

How do you hope to make a difference?

I hope that my research findings will eventually be translated into relevant therapeutics. Also, as an underrepresented minority, I hope that I as I progress in my career, I am able to give other underrepresented students similar opportunities that were given to me.

Your Time at UCI

When did you attend UCI?

2013-2018.

What program were you in?

I entered through the INP and then joined Neurobiology and Behavior.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

A combination of great neuroscience (with strength in my field of interest, molecular underpinnings of addiction) and geography.

Reflections

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

First, I decided to pursue a graduate degree because of the intellectual rigor and training you receive in completing your Ph.D. As a Ph.D. student/candidate, you are being trained to think critically and push the current body of knowledge in a way unique from every other form of graduate school. Second, acquiring a Ph.D. was the natural career progression and allowed me to perform and pursue my own research interests.

Alumni Life

What book or podcast would you suggest to someone who is just getting started with their graduate career at UCI? (Examples – Podcast: *Happier with Gretchen Rubin*; Book: *Who Moved my Cheese*)

Book: Moneyball by Michael Lewis

Relevant quote: “If gross miscalculations of a person’s value could occur on a baseball field, before a live audience of 30,000, and a television audience of millions more, what did that say about the measurement of performance in other lines of work? If professional baseball players could be over- or undervalued, who couldn’t?”

What advice would you give to a current graduate student as they look towards their future careers?

Be honest with yourself. Don’t convince yourself of a career path because you think it is what other people want/expect of you. If there’s a particular aspect of life as a graduate student that makes you unhappy, then that will continue to be a thorn as you move on in your career. (i.e., if you don’t enjoy bench work, you will likely be unhappy as a staff scientist). That isn’t to say don’t develop skills, hone weaknesses, or go outside of your comfort zone. But be honest about the aspects of your work that you enjoy, which aspects you dislike, and choose a career path (that doesn’t necessarily have to be in academia) that has the right balance of those things.