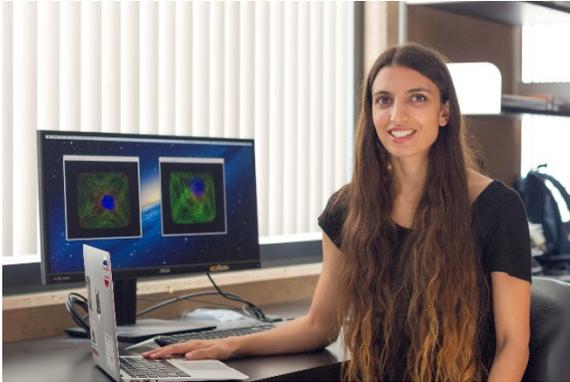


## Student Profile

### Tessa Morris – Mathematical, Computational and Systems Biology PhD Program



#### Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

*I decided to pursue a graduate degree because I wanted to perform research that could potentially save or change lives. I also wanted to be in an environment where my passion for mathematics and biology would flourish.*

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

*My undergraduate research professor said UCI stood out as a place that was leading the field in interdisciplinary research. I applied to the Mathematical, Computational, and Systems Biology Program because it provides the opportunity to experience the numerous and unique ways labs combine mathematics, biology, and technology.*

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

*The goal of my research is to understand how the structure of heart cells affects how well the heart functions. A major component of our effort is improving how we analyze images of heart cells, which is where I use my mathematical and computational skills. This research is important because the more we understand about heart function, the better we can treat different heart diseases.*

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

*Outside of research, I take advantage of living in Orange County by going hiking, swimming, and running. I also enjoy playing board games with people from my program and discovering the new ways my cat can be both adorable and annoying.*

#### Reflections

What are you most proud of accomplishing (so far) in your graduate program?

*I am proud that after a year of working on my project, I was able to present my progress at the Mechanobiology Conference here at UCI and the World Congress of Biomechanics in Dublin.*

What is your most memorable moment/experience at UCI to date?

*My most memorable experience at UCI was the Center for Complex Biological Systems Retreat my first year. My cohort wrote and performed a live skit, where we called on faculty to*

answer Family Feud style questions.

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

*My advice for new graduate students in my program is to immerse themselves in each lab that they spend time in, and make sure that they enjoy the research field, environment, and research goals of the principle investigator of the lab.*

### **Career**

How do you hope to make a difference?

*I hope that my research can lead to the development of new treatments and therapies for human diseases or disorders. I also hope to foster excitement for science and learning in individuals I mentor and my community.*