

Student Profile

Michelle Nuño – Statistics PhD Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

I decided to pursue a graduate degree because I realized that with a Ph.D. I could teach and do research, two things I am passionate about.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

I chose to come to UCI because not only does UCI have a great Statistics program, but everyone I met when visiting the campus was very friendly. After receiving my acceptance letter from UCI, I received e-mails from several professors and graduate students congratulating me and offering to answer any questions I might have. That made me feel as though I was already part of the department.

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

My research focuses the development and application of statistical methods for more efficiently identifying biomarkers of disease and for identifying factors that impact health outcomes. Specifically, my work is motivated by the search for early markers of Alzheimer's disease and treatments that can modify the disease process. Statistical models and designs play a key role in achieving these goals, but generally rely upon multiple assumptions for drawing valid scientific conclusions. Such assumptions often fail when analyzing real-world data. My research is focused on developing and theoretically justifying modifications of commonly used statistical methods for biomarker identification that provide robust scientific conclusions under minimal assumptions.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

Outside of research I love dancing Salsa and Bachata.

Reflections

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

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to write a chapter on survival analysis with my advisor for the Handbook of Statistics.

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

My most memorable experience at UCI was the day when I advanced to candidacy. I was very nervous that morning, but when I got to the room I saw that so many of my classmates had come to support me. This made me feel special and reminded me that we are all here for each other.

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

Don't give up. At times, graduate programs can seem intimidating, but hard work pays off and as long as you put in the effort you will be okay. I would also say to look for help. We've all been through the same thing so we know that it can be difficult and we want to help make it a little easier.

Career

What do you see yourself doing in five or ten years?

I see myself as a research professor. I love seeing students start to understand topics that they once thought were very difficult. I also get excited when I see that they are genuinely interested in Statistics and want to learn more about it. With research, I like knowing that I'm contributing to the advancement of science.

How do you hope to make a difference?

I hope to introduce students of any age to the possibility of attending graduate school and becoming involved in careers in the STEM fields. If it hadn't been for my teachers and professors, I may not have had some of the opportunities that led me to a Ph.D. program. I want to do the same for my own students in the future. I also hope that my research can help contribute to our knowledge of various diseases and assist the development of cures for them.