CULTIVAMOS EXCELENCIA

Graduate Research Mentor Bios

by Elizabeth Gonzalez, Ph.D.

An essential part of the mission of the Cultivamos Excelencia Undergraduate Scholars Program is to foster strong mentorship relationships based on mutual reciprocity. During the spring semester, undergraduate and graduate students will nurture relationships that will play a crucial role in each of their academic success and personal growth. Cultivamos Excelencia is happy to welcome 10 UCSC graduate students to the team. We look forward to their contributions to our collective effort.

“As scientists, the footprints we leave for the next generation are likely those of our student” - Dr. Ed Fenimore, Los Alamos National Laboratory
GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A MENTOR

1. The mentor/protégé relationship is an intimate relationship built on trust. Select a mentor that you feel comfortable speaking and working with.

2. There is a difference between an advisor and a mentor. Your advisor informs you which courses to select, the requirements for school, etc. A mentor is more involved in issues that are specific to you and your research.

3. Make sure you know the mentor’s work to gain a sense of their research interests and methodological preferences. Take a course, check out their publications, and/or search for their work using Google Scholar.

4. A recommended, but not required suggestion to selecting a mentor is either enrolling in the professor’s course or choosing a mentor with whom you have previously taken a course.

5. Don’t limit your options based upon race, gender, age or even research topic. Differences can sometimes be very beneficial. Your mentor may research a different topic but use the same theoretical framework or methodology as you. The same applies to their theoretical framework or methodology. You may not find a mentor whose work is exactly the same as your unique project. As long as your mentor is familiar with your topic, theory, and methodology and you are comfortable working together, you will be fine.

6. Remember, when you are trying to find a mentor, you will need to share with them why they should invest their time and resources in you. Share your CV, personal statements, and any pertinent information with them.

7. Be aware of her/his time commitments. Try and select a mentor that is involved with other activities but not so involved that they don’t have time for you.

8. As with any meeting, be considerate of their time. This means being at a meeting on time, and contacting your mentor prior to any appointments if you must reschedule.

9. Know what the mentor’s expectations are. What do they consider a heavy workload, quality work, and sufficient meeting time? These things will become important as your research progresses.

10. Find out what other students think about working with the mentor.

11. Clearly explain how the mentor will be working with you. It is important that you explain it to them.

12. Only submit drafts that have been carefully proofread.


14. Accept critiques of your work in a professional manner. Ask how for techniques on how to improve and clarify suggestions made to you.

15. Follow your mentor’s advice. If they recommend readings, articles, or conferences, make sure to follow through with her/his suggestion, even if it means explaining why the literature or travel opportunity is not consistent with your goals.

16. Update your mentor about your progress on a regular basis.
“As a woman in a STEM\(^1\) field with a distinct passion for computer science (a traditionally male-dominated field), I hope to serve as a role model for students daunted by a lack of representation in their chosen area of study.

I am a marine ecologist most interested in the early life history of fishes. I earned my BS in Marine and Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami where I also completed work on tuna and salmonids for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. After graduating, I went on to work for the United States Geological Survey at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland; Besides early life history, I am also interested in migration, feeding ecology, and bridging the gap between classic computer science and field ecology through innovative bioinformatics, modeling, and “Big Data” analysis. My PhD work will focus on the distribution, connectivity, and diversity of eel populations along the coast of California and Central America. A large part of my work will focus on the unique larval form of eels known as a “leptocephalus.”

\(^1\) STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
NEDA NAMIRANIAN, B.A.

Ph.D. Student, Psychology

nnamiran@ucsc.edu

“Working as a Graduate Research Mentor, appeals to me because I feel it would allow me to continue to use and develop my mentoring skills, analytical and research abilities while serving student populations who come from diverse backgrounds.

I am a third-year psychology graduate student. I work with Dr. Nameera Akhtar. My field of research is broadly related to language and cognitive development in young children and specifically bilingual language and cognitive development in preschoolers. I am excited about joining the Cultivamos Excelencia team and look forward to working with my mentees!”
ABIGAIL WALSH, M.A.

Ph.D. Student, Psychology
abwalsh@ucsc.edu

“\textit{I truly believe that by mentoring others I will become a better researcher}”

Abby is currently a second year doctoral student at University of California Santa Cruz. Her previous research has focused on gender expression and representation, mother-child relationship and learning experiences, diversity and inclusion in the classroom, and mindfulness. Her current research focuses on how gender representations in children’s media and literature influence children’s gender development. In addition to her academic pursuits Abby has combined her love of research with her spirituality and has complete over 500 hours of training as a Registered Yoga Teacher. Abby is happy to join Cultivamos Excelencia as a mentor for the second year.
“To be an effective STEM educator, I need to continue building experience in sharing science topics with underserved communities. In this way, I would likely gain as much from the experience as the students I would mentor.

I am a fourth year PhD candidate studying paleobiology in the Earth and Planetary Sciences Department at UCSC. I study marine invertebrates, particularly the bivalves (clams). I use the growth bands in their shells (similar to tree rings) to answer questions about how their growth varied in ancient times and in the present, and what that says about how their environment has changed. In my work, I have traveled to Israel to gather specimens of giant clams from the Red Sea, the Italian Alps to gather specimens of unusual Jurassic oysters, and also use statistical models to understand how and why bivalves choose their season of growth. My undergraduate degree was in Environmental Studies at University of Southern California, with an emphasis in Biology. I have broad interests in sustainability in addition to my studies of marine organisms, and also am very interested in science education.”
Larissa is interested in bringing concepts of social justice to her teaching, and aims to improve diversity in STEM by mentoring students from diverse backgrounds.

Larissa is pursuing her Ph.D. in Computer Engineering at The University of California, Santa Cruz. Her research interests are in computer networking, protocol design, wireless networks, mobility modeling, and Big Data. She is very interested in once again being a Graduate Mentor in the Larissa had a wonderful experience mentoring Isidro during the Spring quarter (2016) and is very excited to continue participating in the program.
“My years of classroom teaching prepared me to consistently strive for cultural competency and to seek new and better ways of reflecting on my practice.”

“I’m in my second year of the MA program in Literature at UC Santa Cruz, which means that I’ll be finished with the program in June (once I write my thesis, fingers crossed!) I also work on campus as the Grad Student Education Coordinator at the university’s Cantú Queer Center. Before UCSC, I worked for five years as a middle school teacher in Oakland and Alameda; I also have experience teaching high school and leading discussion section as a TA for the lower division required course in Literature. I’m hoping to be accepted to a PhD program in English for next fall and eventually to teach college; I’d also like to work as an advisor to college students or in student services at a college or university. I got my teaching credential at Mills College in Oakland (go Cyclones), my BA at Brandeis University in Waltham, MA (go Judges), and my high school diploma at Rio Americano High School in Sacramento (go Raiders).
“Community colleges allow for opportunities that would otherwise go undiscovered simply because of lack of exposure.

Currently, I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California Santa Cruz. I have a non-traditional background and there are many others who have experienced similar adversity. I believe that I can make an impact through teaching and mentoring students who are interested in science, however, have not yet had the opportunity to explore their options in research roles. My research work is at NASA Ames Research Center. My research interests involve the interactions between microorganisms and metals. My dissertation research is a NASA-funded project that involves genetically engineering microorganisms to aid in the break-down and separation of the chemical elements contained in e-waste (waste electronics).
DIANA RUIZ, B.S.

Ph.D. Candidate, Ecology & Evolutionary Bio
dmadriga@ucsc.edu

“Being first-generation meant self-teaching, balancing part-time job, seeking understanding from a community that undervalues my field, and assimilating to academic culture.

I am a PhD Student in the department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UC Santa Cruz. My current research focuses on seabird conservation planning. Using a type of computer model called population viability analysis, I am attempting to predict extinction risk for over 100 seabird species and assess various management strategies to offset their decline. This involves computer programming skills, database management, and report writing. Previously, I have developed a short-term public policy analysis to determine the impact of domestic water use on public water supply… As a mentor for detained high school girls through the Youth Justice Institute, I prided myself on helping each young girl form a post-high school plan. In Santa Cruz, I have undergone cultural, legal, and mentoring training to become a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) serving foster children. I have lived with and engaged tribal communities in conservation.
JENNIFER REGARLADO, M.A.

Ph.D. Student, Statistics & Applied Mathematics
jnregala@ucsc.edu

She is a mother to an 8-year-old son, who reminds her to stay humble and keep working hard every day.

Jennifer is a 1st year PhD student in the Statistics and Applied Mathematics department at UC Santa Cruz. She previously studied at UCLA and CSU Northridge where she earned a B.S. in Pure Math and Statistics, and at CSU Northridge, earning her M.A. in Math Education. She taught in the Los Angeles area for 9 years before deciding to pursue her doctorate degree. Research interests are in education and the environment. Her future goals are to be a professor in statistics, collaborate with environmental agencies, and to maintain a happy and healthy family.
“Women, Latinos and other minorities are widely recognized as underrepresented in many research fields – a trend that becomes more pronounced at higher levels in academia. For me, reversing this trend is critical to the advancement of research and, as such, is a primary goal of mine as I pursue my own academic career.

I am currently a PhD student in Environmental Studies studying agroecology, sustainable farming and food systems. As part of an interdisciplinary research program, I perform research across disciplines in both the social and natural sciences. The social science element of my research examines how the effects of climate change may influence farmer livelihoods and farm management decisions. For the natural sciences component of my research, I am studying the effects of climate change on ecosystem services provided by insects (i.e. pollination, pest control). I am particularly strong mentor for any student in the field of natural sciences (ecology, conservation, biology, evolution) but I am also well suited to mentor students in research that involves interviews, participant observation, surveys or economic analyses (generally falling into the fields of sociology and economics).”