

FEBRUARY 2024

BIOSCI EDI NEWSLETTER

The EDI newsletter for the School of Biological Sciences



Feb
2024

UC San Diego
SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

CONNECTIONS: INCLUSION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES PRESENTS

JASMIN REVANNA
PHD CANDIDATE @ UCSD
SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES & SALK INSTITUTE FOR BIOLOGICAL STUDIES

CHRISTINA TOWERS, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
SALK INSTITUTE FOR BIOLOGICAL STUDIES

INCLUSION ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

THURS NOV 30
2:30-4PM
UC San Diego
Pacific Hall 3500

HOW CAN WE MAKE SCIENCE A PLACE FOR EVERYONE?

Join Dr. Christina Towers and Jasmin Revanna to discuss inclusive practices and initiatives at the UCSD School of Biological Sciences, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, and beyond!

Networking and refreshments to follow.

On November 30th, 2023, Assistant Professor Christina Towers and graduate student Jasmin Revanna led a conversation on the theme of inclusion in the workplace and in science. Community members in the School of Biological Sciences learned about the speakers' journeys to science and the initiatives they founded at UCSD/Salk. They also discussed their own journeys and inclusive practices in small groups afterwards. Connections is founded and supported by the School of Biological Sciences EDI committee and organized by Asama Lekbua, the graduate student representative on the committee.



UCSD'S STARS PROGRAM - EMPOWERING STUDENTS IN RESEARCH AND BEYOND

The Summer Training Academy for Research Success (STARS) program at UC San Diego is designed for community college students, undergraduates, recent college graduates, and master's students across all disciplines. It is a vibrant eight-week summer research academy. Participants in the program gain hands-on research experience through involvement in a faculty mentor's research project. For those at the junior level or above, a GRE preparation course is also provided. To aid in the transfer and graduate school application processes, informative workshops and instruction sessions are conducted, including guidance on applying for prestigious fellowships such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research and Ford Fellowships. Moreover, students get the opportunity to present their research at the UCSD Summer Research Conference. We celebrate the recent success stories of STARS students from Professor Julian Schroeder's laboratory.

Morgan Sinkfield, from Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA), is set to begin a postbaccalaureate program at the University of Pennsylvania in August 2023. Jada Bezie, also from XULA, will commence her Ph.D. journey at UC Davis in September 2023. Lauryn Gist-Reed, another XULA alumna, started her Ph.D. at UCSD's Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) in September 2022. Jelani Lyda, from Howard University, started her Ph.D. at UCSD in 2019.

Congratulations to each of them for their accomplishments and ongoing commitment to excellence in research.

If you would like to get involved and help mentor a STARS student in your lab, please scan the QR code to [visit the website](#)



THE GOEDEL FAMILY TECHNOLOGY SANDBOX: EMPOWERING BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The recently completed Goeddel Family Technology Sandbox will serve all biological researchers on the UC San Diego campus with a dedicated ~5000 sq. ft. of space in Bonner Hall that will house specific equipment enabling any research group to access the advanced technologies and associated expertise for their research goals, and will provide a space for industry collaborations, equipment demonstrations and training courses.

This will accelerate life sciences and biomedical research, broaden available experimental platforms, enhance competitiveness for external funding, and enable technological advances.



We are excited to announce that Assistant Professor, Uri Manor, will serve as the Faculty Director for the Goeddel Family Technology Sandbox. Uri's passion for technology innovation makes him an ideal candidate for this role. As a person born with severe-to-profound hearing loss, Uri has always been fascinated by the biological mechanisms of health and disease. As a beneficiary of hearing aids, without which his life would be entirely different, Uri has a deep-seated gratitude and enthusiasm for the power of technology to treat disease and make the world a better place for everyone. Uri's research is thus perhaps unsurprisingly focused on the development and application of new technologies that facilitate a better understanding of how biological systems work in health and disease, and the treatment thereof. Major areas of focus are deep learning-based imaging methods, the cytoskeleton, and organelle dynamics in neurodegeneration, hearing loss, and cancer. In his free time, Uri enjoys spending time with his family, listening to stand-up comedy, long bike rides, running on the beach, playing guitar, and photography.



ENLACE SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM AT UC SAN DIEGO

ENLACE is another summer research program at UC San Diego. The objective of ENLACE is to stimulate the involvement of high school and university students, as well as teachers and researchers, in scientific and engineering research, while fostering cross-border friendships between the United States and Latin America. The program offers participants the unique opportunity to join a research laboratory at UC San Diego in an area of their particular interest.

The eligibility criteria include current enrollment in the 11th grade for high school students. We celebrate the success story of former ENLACE participant, Salvador Cruz Matus, who conducted his research in the Julian Schroeder lab. Salvador began his Ph.D. journey at North Carolina State University in September 2020 and has been the recipient of the prestigious NSF Fellowship.

If you would like to mentor an ENLACE student please scan the QR to visit the website below



DESIREE JOHNSON'S TRAILBLAZING PATH IN SCIENCE AND DEI ADVOCACY AT UCSD



Former UCSD Biological Sciences standout, Desiree Johnson (B.S. 2018, M.S. 2020), recently embarked on her Ph.D. in Neuroscience at Harvard Medical School, having shone as a beacon of excellence at UCSD. She was awarded a prestigious Graduate Prize Fellowship during her recruitment, and Desiree's journey is marked by academic excellence and a steadfast commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

At UCSD, she not only excelled academically but also played a pivotal role in the Banghart Laboratory within the Department of Neurobiology. Her invaluable contributions extended beyond her Master's Degree, as her post-baccalaureate work as a Research Assistant in the group was funded by an NIH BRAIN Initiative Diversity Supplement. Desiree's exceptional research output earned her a first-author publication (Ma & Johnson, et al., *Nature Methods*. 2023 May 20(5):682-685) and authorship on additional publications through multiple collaborations within the lab.

Desiree's dedication to fostering a diverse community was evident during her five-year tenure on the Biological Sciences DEI committee, where she served as the Master's Student Representative. As a founding contributor to the quarterly Connections event, she emphasized the importance of personal narratives and backgrounds in shaping scientific careers, showcasing her leadership within the community.

During challenging times, notably the University closure due to Covid-19 and the civil unrest following the George Floyd protests and Black Lives Matter movement in June 2020, Desiree emerged as a reassuring voice at the first online Connections event. Alongside Professor Gentry Patrick (UCSD Neurobiology), she provided a calming presence, embodying resilience and strength, and instilling a sense of hope for the future. Desiree continued to organize the Connections event until her move to Boston in the summer of 2023.

UCSD is grateful for Desiree's profound impact on the community and wishes her continued success in Boston and beyond.



NEW DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVES: TORRELL FOREE

Dear School of Biological Sciences Community,

I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Director of Diversity Initiatives for the School of Biological Sciences at UC San Diego. It is an honor to join the school and have the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of diversity and inclusion at UC San Diego.

As the Director of Diversity Initiatives, my primary goal is to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all members of our community. I am committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of our work. In my previous role, I worked in Diversity Initiatives and Resource Centers as the Assistant Director of Diversity Education and Campus Partnerships at California State University, Fullerton. Prior to CSUF, I served as the Coordinator for Multicultural Programming in the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs at Iowa State University. At every stop in my career thus far, I made it a point to seek out opportunities where I can directly engage in equity-minded work. This work is both engaging and personal to me, and I'm excited about the prospect of working with all of you to accomplish great things in the future!

I look forward to getting to know each and every one of you and working together to make the School of Biological Sciences at UC San Diego an inclusive and welcoming place for all.

Sincerely,
Torrell Foree
Director of Diversity Initiatives
School of Biological Sciences
UC San Diego





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LEARN MORE!

BIOSCI EDI FUNDS

The School of Biological Sciences welcomes applications for funding projects aimed at addressing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues in the Division and the UC San Diego campus.

RECENT GRANT RECIPIENTS

SIPBUR

The "Science Isn't Perfect But You Are (SIPBUR) Seminar Series," funded by the EDI committee, aims to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion in academia. It focuses on Underrepresented Minority (URM) graduate students in science, addressing their need to feel valued and integrated. SIPBUR features PhD-holding URM speakers to inspire URM graduate students and facilitate dialogues between them and faculty. This approach not only supports URM students but also fosters broader discussions on equity and inclusion, benefiting all participants (\$1000 funded).

BUMMP

The Biology Undergraduate and Master's Mentorship Program (BUMMP) at UCSD focuses on supporting historically underserved biology students. It provides mentorship, scholarships, and professional development to enhance their STEM careers. The EDI committee has awarded \$6,000 to BUMMP for scholarships and promotional materials. This funding will support merit-based scholarships for low-income, first-generation, and historically underserved students in STEM, and helps to create a sense of community. These efforts are important for the retention and success of these students in STEM fields.

SACNAS

The SACNAS chapter at UC San Diego was granted \$1,500 for their initiative, "Fireside Chats with Faculty." This monthly series aims to feature Hispanic/Native American faculty from diverse research areas in Biology, including Biochemistry, Biophysics, Bioengineering, and Bioinformatics. The program consists of a 30-minute talk by an invited faculty member, highlighting their career path and current research. This is followed by a Q&A session, led by a SACNAS officer, to deepen student understanding and engagement. The event also includes time for networking and community building. This setting is designed to facilitate interactions between faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students to help undergraduates engage with faculty early in their academic journey.