

April 2025

International
Scholars

Monthly Newsletter

Happy April!

Thank you so much for Professor Ertem Tuncel for speaking about their journey at the Meet & Greet on February 26th! And thank you so much for all who attended.

Reflecting on our Meet & Greet on March 26, learn about our speaker, Dr. Marine Megemont, on page 2!



Scholar Introduction!

My name is Dr. Anil Bhatia, and I currently serve as a Research Specialist-III at the UCR Metabolomics Core. I am a dedicated scientist with a deep passion for metabolomics, analytical chemistry, and natural product research. My academic journey began in India, where I earned my Ph.D. in Applied Chemistry from the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute in 2015.

Over the years, my work has encompassed both targeted and untargeted metabolomics, lipidomics, and method development using advanced analytical platforms including NMR, LC-MS, and GC-MS. I have had the privilege of holding postdoctoral positions at renowned institutions such as the University of Missouri–Columbia and the University of Texas–Austin, where I contributed to projects in high-throughput metabolic profiling and cancer research. In 2019, I joined UCR—and from the very beginning, it felt like home. The vibrant, supportive community at UCR, combined with the city, natural beauty and cultural diversity, has made Riverside a truly special place for me. It is not just where I work—it is where I have found a deep sense of belonging.

My wife, **Dr. Swati Srivastava**, shares a similar academic path. She completed her Ph.D. in Biotechnology at CSIR-CIMAP in India and went on to pursue postdoctoral research at both the University of Missouri and UCR. She is currently an Assistant Project Scientist in the Department of Biological Sciences at UCR, where her research focuses on the *C. elegans* model system. Our personal journey in Riverside has been just as fulfilling as our professional lives. In 2021, we bought our first home—a milestone that marked the beginning of countless cherished memories. In 2022, we welcomed our first daughter, Shail, and in 2024, our second daughter Sia was born. These precious additions to our family have added even more joy and purpose to our lives.

Together, Swati and I have built a life rooted in science, family, and community. We are grateful for the opportunities, friendships, and experiences that Riverside and UCR have given us. This city has nurtured our dreams, supported our growth, and surrounded us with positivity. It is where our story continues to unfold—and it is the place we proudly call home.



Upcoming ISS Events

Scholar Coffee Hours

What: Meet to chat with other scholars – bring your own beverage and make some friends!

When: Fridays 11AM - Noon

Where: Outside of The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

April Meet & Greet

Where: HUB 265

When: April 30, Noon – 1pm

Please come meet our new scholars! As always, we will provide lunch!



Check this out!

Please fill out the feedback form on the ISS activities:

<https://forms.gle/H2ciS3T4sqbHqrTK6>



This Month's Spotlight

Dr. Marine Megemont

Postdoctoral Researcher
Molecular Cell & Systems Bio Dept



We asked some questions to Dr. Marine Megemont, who spoke at the International Scholars Meet & Greet on March 26th! Follow her story below.

1. Please tell us a little bit about your background (before coming to UCR).

I grew up in the French countryside, in the Auvergne region, which is west of Lyon. It's a really green area, with beautiful landscapes – lots of lakes and mountains that are old dormant volcanoes. I did all my studies, from undergrad to PhD, at the local university, Université Clermont Auvergne. My PhD was in neuroscience, and I studied chronic migraine. After finishing my PhD, I felt a strong desire to experience living in a different country and to broaden my perspectives. The postdoctoral research opportunity offered by Dr. Yang at UCR seemed like the perfect fit for me, aligning with my research interests and providing the chance to live and work in the United States.

2. Please briefly describe your role at UCR.

I am a postdoctoral researcher in neuroscience within the Department of Molecular, Cell, and Systems Biology (MCSB) at UCR. My research focuses on a specific aspect of neural communication: how the neuromodulator Norepinephrine influences the way our brains process and integrate sensory information, particularly the sense of touch. This involves a combination of behavioral studies and neurophysiological recordings. We work with mouse models, training them to perform relatively simple tactile tasks. While the mice are engaged in these tasks, we use a variety of advanced techniques to record the electrical activity of their brains. This allows us to correlate their behavior – how they respond to sensory input – with the underlying neural activity. A key part of my work also involves manipulating the activity of specific groups of neurons. By using techniques like optogenetics or chemogenetics, we can selectively activate or inhibit certain neurons and then observe how these changes in neural activity affect the animal's behavior.

3. How did you get into biology?

I've always loved biology, for as long as I can remember. It's kind of surprising, because no one in my family is in science – they're all in business. But they were always really supportive, even if they didn't really get what I was studying. I think I just find it really interesting to understand how the human body works. And then, in college, I got really fascinated by the brain, and how much we don't know about it!

4. What are some of your favorite memories at UCR?

Most of my favorite memories at UCR are connected to the International Student Services office. I came to UCR at a really weird time, March 2020, right when COVID hit. So, when the ISS started having in-person events again, I went, and that's how I met the people who are now my close friends here. The coffee hours are my favorite – I try not to miss them. They provide a great opportunity to connect with other international scholars, share experiences, and build friendships. The potluck parties that Makbule organizes are also among my favorite experiences. They're always a lot of fun and a great way to experience different cultures (by culture I mean food !!).

5. Do you have any advice for incoming international scholars?

Riverside, and the surrounding area, has a lot to offer for those who are willing to explore. And, importantly, the international community at UCR provides a strong and supportive network for new arrivals. Culture shock is definitely a real experience, and it can be challenging, particularly in the beginning. My advice to incoming international scholars is to not isolate yourself. Make an effort to connect with other people, get involved in campus activities, and take advantage of the various resources that are available, especially the International Student Services. They are an invaluable source of support and information. If you enjoy outdoor activities, you've come to the right place! There are numerous beautiful hiking trails, beaches, and mountain areas within easy reach of Riverside. And if you happen to arrive in March, I highly recommend checking out the wildflowers. Sycamore Canyon, which is very close to campus, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, a bit further away, are excellent places to see them. Joshua Tree National Park, which is about an hour's drive from Riverside, is also a fantastic destination for a weekend camping trip. And if you're craving a beach day, you can even take the Metrolink train directly to San Clemente! It drops you off right on the beach – super convenient!



Cultural Conversation Class!

If you or your spouse is interested in participating in the Cultural Conversation Class to help improve your English and to meet new friends. Thank you to those who came to our last class and helped us make it successful!

Where: HUB 367

When: Every Tuesday, 9-10 AM

Our instructor is Candace Jorgensen, who has experience living in other cultures, which adds depth to her teaching the Cultural Conversation Class for international scholars and their families. She also holds a master's degree in education with emphasis on teaching English to speakers of other languages.



What to do This Month in Riverside



All We Imagine as Light (Screening)

Come watch the Indian film that won a Grand Prize at Cannes Film Festival in 2024!

Where: Culver Center of the Arts (UCR Arts, Downtown Riverside)

When: April 19, 2025 1pm / 3pm

<https://events.ucr.edu/event/all-we-imagine-as-light>



California Citrus Festival

Live music, citrus tasting, kids activities, cooking and painting demonstrations. There will be food and drinks!

When: April 5, 2025

Where: California Citrus State Historic Park

<https://www.californiacitruspark.com/>



Riverside 10th Annual Art Market

100 artists and artisans, art and other activities for children, art demonstrations, entertainment, food, beer and wine, and much more.

When: April 12, 2025

Where: White Park in downtown Riverside

<https://riversideartmuseum.org/event/riverside-art-market-2025/>



Cinco de Mayo Celebration

Features live entertainment, food vendors, and crafts!

When: April 26, 2025 12pm-8pm

Where: Villegas Park

<https://www.riversideca.gov/calendar/event/cinco-de-mayo-celebration-1?date=Saturday%2C%20April%2026%2C%202025>

Frequently Asked Questions

I need to leave the U.S. and ISS has not signed my DS-2019 document! Is that OK?

Please know that you do not need a travel signature on your DS-2019 document to either remain in or to depart the U.S. You do need a valid travel signature to return to the U.S. in J-1 status. A valid travel signature must be no more than twelve months old on the date that you return to the U.S.

If you are departing the U.S. soon and know that your travel signature will expire by the time you expect to return to the U.S., please contact our international scholar advisor at makbule.koksal@ucr.edu. If your DS-2019 is going to expire soon, please consult with your department to extend your stay and then contact our scholar advisor.

What will happen if I end my UCR appointment early and/or depart the United States and do not intend to return to the U.S. for my J program?

If you are a scholar and you depart the U.S. early (more than 15 days before your DS-2019 end date) and you do not intend to return to the U.S. for the remainder of your J program, please discuss this with your faculty sponsor. Please also email our advisor so that she can advise you on the steps and the visa implications of ending your program early.