



## Message from the Dean



As 2015 comes to a close, now is a good time to reflect on all of the highlights of the year. With this year being the official 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary for the University, the calendar was filled with celebratory events. Among some of the highlights were the delivery of this year's commencement by five-time Olympic Diving Champion Greg Louganis, the unveiling of a monument to commemorate our renaming as The Francisco J. Ayala School of Biological Sciences, the Festival of Discovery and a lecture by Nobel Laureate Professor Mario Molina. These events exemplify the growth that our university has undergone since its founding to become one of the world's premier universities.

Some of the events surrounding the 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, along with a collection of accomplishments and features unique to the Ayala School will be detailed in this year's annual Dean's Report. We are diligently working on the report, and will have it available in January. Happy holidays, and I wish you all a fantastic 2016!

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## News and Highlights

### Professor Named One of OC's 100 Most Influential People of 2015

Professor Anthony A. James, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, has been named one of OrangeCounty's 100 Most Influential People in recognition for his work on developing malaria-blocking mosquitoes with the potential to eliminate the insect's ability to transmit the disease to humans. [Read more.](#)



### STUDENT CORNER



Calling all Bio students! Send us your selfie representing the Ayala School with pride in a lab, out with friends, where you study, etc. and you could be featured in our next newsletter! Send photos to [bioweinfo@uci.edu](mailto:bioweinfo@uci.edu) or tag the Ayala School page on Facebook #ayalaschool.

### STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



**Stephanie Tu**

Stephanie is a member of the Campuswide Honors Program, a Regents'

## Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program



The all new Ayala School Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program has been developed in partnership with the School of Physical Sciences and University Extension. The program is specifically designed for students who have successfully completed an undergraduate degree in a non-science discipline and are now seeking a post baccalaureate program to help them complete the required basic core courses for health professions admission. The main goal of the program is to equip students with the competitive advantage that will result in acceptance into medical school or another allied health program. [For more information about the program, click here.](#)

## Has Gene-Editing the Human Germline Found Common Ground?

On December 1-3, the International Summit on Human Gene Editing kicked off its first meeting at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington D.C. The meeting was the first step in establishing its goals for the next year. The committee's report will provide underlying principles that may be adopted by any nation considering the development of guidelines for human gene-editing research. On hand during the meeting was UCI Professor of Developmental and Cell Biology and expert on human development, Peter J. Donovan. Professor Donovan has authored a piece on this emerging technology that was featured in the Huffington Post. [For more information follow the link.](#)



## Ayala Alumni Maintain Ties Through Mentor Program



One of our most precious resources is time. Many of our alumni have chosen to donate their time back to the school through the Ayala School Mentor Program. The mentor program has been invaluable in delivering career development that cannot be replicated within the classroom. Every Fall, the program hosts its annual Mentor Program Kick-off Reception. The mentor program continues to be an engaging way in which Ayala School alumni choose to give back.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor to Ayala School students, please contact Brian Han at [brian.han@uci.edu](mailto:brian.han@uci.edu). If you're interested in giving to the Ayala School, please contact Andrew DiNuzzo at [adinuzzo@uci.edu](mailto:adinuzzo@uci.edu). For more information visit <http://bio.uci.edu/mentor>.

Scholar, UCI Alumni Association Endowed Scholar, and Phi Kappa Beta member. Stephanie is also an undergraduate researcher in the lab of Professor Sheryl Tsai, in the department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, where she also previously worked as an NSF REU Summer Undergraduate Research Fellow. After graduation, Stephanie intends to take a gap year before entering medical school. [Read more.](#)

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



**Vicki Thomas**  
**Executive Assistant to the Dean**

It is with great excitement that we introduce, the new Ayala School Executive Assistant to the Dean, Vicki Thomas. In her role as Executive Assistant, Vicki oversees calendaring and all administrative duties for the Dean. Though Vicki is new to her current position, she has been involved with the UCI campus for many years, not just as an employee. [Read more.](#)

## The Ayala Family Celebrates Thanksgiving

The Ayala School once again played host to a special Thanksgiving lunch for its international students. Held on November 24 in the Pacific ballroom at the Student Center, the event played host to 90 students, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Michael Leon, and several student affairs officers and featured a traditional American Thanksgiving dinner. [Read more.](#)



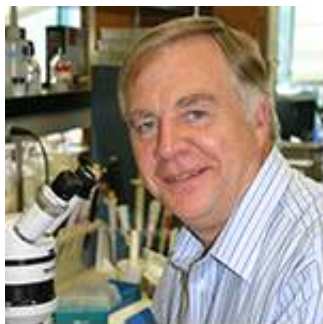
## Professor Gives His Thoughts on the Male vs. Female Brain



In a feature published by the New York Times, Professor Larry F. Cahill, Neurobiology and Behavior, provided his expert opinion on a groundbreaking paper recently published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. In the paper, the authors ask the question, "Are the brains of men and women truly different?". [Read more.](#)

## Research in the News

### Sea of Change



The OC Register recently explored the history of the Salton Sea along with the potential environmental ramifications of its drying. Inside, the author cited director of the Salton Sea Initiative Professor Timothy J. Bradley, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Professor Bradley and his colleagues provided a detailed account on ways the Salton Sea could be saved. The Salton Sea is located south of Riverside county and is the largest lake in

California. [Read more.](#)

### Playing 3D Video Games Can Boost Memory Formation

In a recent study by Professor Craig Stark, Neurobiology and Behavior, it was discovered that individuals who played three dimensional video games saw a boost in the formation of memories. The playing of certain video games has been known to improve hand-eye coordination and reaction time, however, their effect on memory retention has been less explored. The finding by Professor Stark and colleagues has the potential for helping people suffering from age-related memory loss or dementia.

[Read more.](#)



## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



### Emma N. Flores Ph.D. Class of '06

Emma N. Flores, Ph.D. graduated with a degree in biological sciences from UCI in 2006 and has recently returned to direct the new NIH-BEST program, Graduate Professional Success in Biomedical Sciences ([GPS-BIOMED](#)) which aims to provide supplemental training to UCI biomedical PhD students and postdoctoral scientists interested in pursuing careers in the life sciences. [Read more.](#)

## Happy Holidays!





## Green Tea Impairs Development, Reproduction in Fruit Flies



New research from the lab of Professor Mahtab Jafari reveals that excessive consumption of green tea adversely affects the development and reproduction of fruit fly populations. Professor Jafari and colleagues investigated the effects of high levels of green tea by subjecting fruit fly embryos and larvae to increasing doses of green tea polyphenols. [Read more.](#)



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