



Happy almost May!

Thank you so much for Dr. Marine Megemont for speaking about their journey at the Meet & Greet on March 26th! And thank you so much for all who attended.

To recap our Meet & Greet on April 30, learn about our speakers, Dr. Anil Bhatia and Dr. Swati Srivastava, on page 2!



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

May Meet & Greet

Where: HUB 265

When: May 28, 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. Anil Bhatia and Dr. Swati Srivastava**

Specialist / Assistant Project Scientist

Botany and Plant Sciences Dept / Molecular Cell & Systems Biology



We asked some questions to Dr. Anil Bhatia and Dr. Swati Srivastava who spoke at the International Scholars Meet & Greet on April 30th! Follow their stories below.

Dr. Anil Bhatia:**1. Please tell us a little bit about your background (before coming to UCR).**

Before joining UCR, I completed my Ph.D. in Applied Chemistry at the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute in India, where my research focused on natural product chemistry and the profiling of plant metabolites. Following my doctorate, I undertook postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Missouri and the University of Texas, gaining extensive experience in metabolomics-based cancer research and high-throughput metabolite analysis using cutting-edge mass spectrometry platforms.

2. Please briefly describe your role at UCR.

At UCR, I work as a Research Specialist-III at the Metabolomics Core Facility. My responsibilities include supporting a wide variety of research projects through advanced mass spectrometry-based metabolomics and lipidomics analyses. I specialize in method development, instrument optimization, data interpretation, and training researchers in metabolomics techniques. Additionally, I contribute to grant writing efforts and collaborate with researchers across multiple departments.

3. How did you get into your field?

My passion for analytical chemistry and plant-based natural products initially sparked my interest in metabolomics. During my Ph.D., I became fascinated by the power of small molecules to reveal intricate details about biological systems and their underlying processes. This curiosity deepened as I explored how metabolite profiles could reflect physiological and pathological states. The integration of mass spectrometry and bioinformatics in metabolomics opened new dimensions for comprehensive biological analysis, which further fueled my enthusiasm for the field. Motivated to expand my expertise, I pursued postdoctoral research opportunities, where I worked on diverse projects involving high-throughput metabolite analysis, biomarker discovery, and the application of metabolomics in cancer and plant research. These experiences solidified my commitment to advancing metabolomics as a critical tool in both basic and translational research.

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

Some of my favorite memories at UCR involve collaborating with talented researchers from various disciplines and mentoring students in metabolomics techniques. I truly enjoy the vibrant academic atmosphere, enriched by engaging seminars, thought-provoking research discussions, and the strong sense of community fostered through cultural events. Highlights include the Friday Coffee Hour, picnics organized by the International Affairs Office, and memorable gatherings like the party hosted at Makbule's place—each of which made my experience here both professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling.

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

For international scholars, I would recommend staying curious, open-minded, and enthusiastic about learning. Take the initiative to connect with your peers, find mentors, and make the most of the many resources UCR provides, such as the Cultural Conversation Class. Adapting to life in a new country can be challenging, but building a strong support network can ease the transition and help you feel more at home. Don't be afraid to ask questions, participate in campus activities, and embrace new experiences—it will greatly enrich both your professional journey and personal growth.

Please see the next page for the Q&A with Dr. Swati Srivastava!



Dr. Swati Srivastava

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

Before coming to UCR, I completed my Ph.D. in Biological Sciences at CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal & Aromatic Plants, India, where I investigated the neuromodulatory and anti-aging properties of thymol using *Caenorhabditis elegans*. Before joining UCR, I gained postdoctoral research experience at the University of Missouri-Columbia where we developed cell-penetrable, in vivo activable mini-chaperones (CPIAMC) peptides to suppress protein aggregation and assessed in vivo cytotoxicity using *C. elegans*.

2. Please briefly describe your role at UCR.

I am currently an Assistant Project Scientist in the Department of Molecular, Cell and Systems Biology (MCSB) at UCR. My research focuses on understanding how small RNAs function as molecular switches to regulate gene expression and protect cells from genetic damage and viral infections. Specifically, I study the molecular and genetic roles of PIR-1, manage independent experiments, analyze data, write manuscripts, and mentor junior researchers.

3. How did you get into your field?

My interest in molecular biology started during my undergraduate and master's studies in biotechnology. Working with model organisms like *C. elegans* during my Ph.D. gave me hands-on experience in studying genes, aging, and disease processes. This foundation and passion for understanding the molecular mechanisms of life naturally led me into research areas focused on RNA biology, gene regulation, and aging.

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

Some of my most memorable experiences at UCR come from the small, everyday moments — brainstorming new ideas with lab mates, troubleshooting experiments late into the evening, and celebrating research successes together. I also enjoyed the diversity on campus, where I met people from all over the world and learned different perspectives both inside and outside of science. The feeling of being part of a global research community made my time here truly special.

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

Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone — both in the lab and in life. Ask questions, make connections early, and be open to different ways of thinking and working. It's normal to feel overwhelmed at first, but with time, you'll find your rhythm. Most importantly, enjoy the journey: the friendships you build and the experiences you gain will stay with you far beyond your time at UCR.



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



9th Sikh Studies Conference

The 9th Dr. Jasbir Singh Saini Chair in Sikh Studies Conference brings together leading scholars, activists, and artists to explore the theme "Precarious Futures: Sikhs and Sikhi(sm) in an Uncertain World."

When: May 9th-10th, 2025, 9am-

Where: CHASS Interdisciplinary Building, Symposium Room, INTS 1113

<https://shorturl.at/B2kNu>

Riverside's Inland Empire PRIDE Festival

You will enjoy performances by unique entertainers, dance to the beat of up-and-coming LGBTQIA+ performers, experience LGBTQ History of Inland Empire, and enjoy over 120 LGBTQIA+ oriented and friendly organizations and companies. Eat, shop, drink, and dance!

Where: White Park, Downtown Riverside

When: May 10, 2025 12pm-9pm

<https://www.riversideprideie.org/event/riversides-inland-empire-pride-festival-2025/>



Spring Climbing Competition

With categories for Men's Beginner, Men's Advanced, Women's Beginner, and Women's Advanced, there's a place for everyone to climb, compete, and have fun!

When: May 15, 2025, 5-9pm

Where: Student Recreation Center, The Rock

<https://events.ucr.edu/event/spring-climbing-comp>



UCR Orchestra

UC Riverside Department of Music presents UCR Orchestra!

When: Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 1, 2025 at 3 p.m

Where: University Theater

<https://events.ucr.edu/event/orchestra-spring-2025>

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.