



Happy April!

Thank you so much for Dr. Giulia Palermo for speaking about their journey at the Meet & Greet on March 25th.

Ahead of our Meet & Greet on April 29th, learn about our speaker, Dr. Zachary Macdonald, on page 2.

Upcoming ISS Events

Scholar Coffee Hours

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

Where: Outside of The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

When: Fridays 11:00 AM - Noon

March Meet & Greet

Please come meet our new scholars!

As always, we will provide lunch.

Where: HUB 265

When: April 29th, Noon – 1:00 pm

ZACHARY MACDONALD

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CONSERVATION GENOMICS AND
BIODIVERSITY

Q&A WITH
APRIL MEET
& GREET
GUEST
SPEAKER

Learn
about his
story

Dr. Zachary MacDonald will be speaking at the International Scholar Meet & Greet on April 29th! Learn more about his story below.

Could you please tell us a little bit about your background (before coming to UCR)?

I was born in Canada and spent most of my childhood and adult life there. Growing up in western Canada gave me the chance to spend a great deal of time in wilderness, and that early exposure to large landscapes and relatively intact ecosystems shaped the way I think about biodiversity. I completed both my undergraduate degree and PhD at the University of Alberta, which was a wonderful place to study because it sits close to vast northern landscapes where there is still so much to explore. My undergraduate training was in environmental economics and policy, while much of my PhD focused on theoretical ecology before I shifted into conservation genomics. That transition happened once it became clear to me just how powerful whole-genome sequencing could be for answering applied conservation questions.

What is your role at UCR?

I run a conservation genomics and biodiversity lab at UCR. My research focuses primarily on the conservation of rare, threatened, and endangered insects, particularly butterflies and damselflies. Broadly, my lab uses genomic data, field biology, and ecological modeling to better understand biodiversity and help inform conservation decisions. A major part of what excites me about the work is that it sits at the intersection of discovery and application: we are often studying poorly understood organisms while also trying to generate knowledge that can directly support their conservation.

How did you get into your field?

I think most children begin life with at least some innate affinity for biodiversity. From this perspective, a lot of us start life in this field, and I just didn't leave. What drew me specifically to insects was that they seemed like the least bureaucratic way to study living things (fewer research permits, etc) and, in my view, the group with the greatest potential for discovery. Insects are extraordinarily diverse, and there is still so much basic natural history, ecology, and evolution left to uncover. That combination of accessibility and immense unknowns made the field impossible for me to resist.

What are some of your favorite memories at UCR?

I have only been at UCR for about six months, and it has been a whirlwind of getting both family and professional life established. Like many people here, I have moved around quite a bit, so it has been exciting to settle in one place and finally get a nice fish tank. Professionally, my favorite memory at UCR so far has been teaching Entomology 100 and watching students slowly realize just how much potential for discovery there is within entomology and biology more broadly.

Do you have any advice for incoming international scholars?

Take personal responsibility for understanding your own requirements and timelines. It is important not to assume that any one university office or external firm has the complete picture. Different parts of the process are often handled by different people. You really do have to be your own advocate and make sure that things are moving in the right order. At the same time, the university's international support staff (i.e., the amazing Makbule) can be incredibly valuable, especially when it comes to helping you understand what questions you should even be asking. I have felt very fortunate to have thoughtful support at UCR, and that guidance makes a real difference. The main thing is just to stay engaged, organized, and proactive throughout the process. It's not a fun part of our jobs, but there is no getting around it. The amazing staff of the international office make things much better than they would be otherwise.

Scholar Photo Request

Hello, scholars!

Have you taken any wonderful photos lately?

The ISS Office is seeking photograph contributions. We would love to feature the adventures of our active scholars in a new section of the monthly scholar newsletter.

Please email photographs you would like us to highlight.
internationalscholars@ucr.edu



UCR Night at an Angels Game



Movie night



The Lone Cypress



RIVERSIDE

International Affairs

Contact us at: internationalscholars@ucr.edu



Exploring Japan with Ivana Petkovic Stephanie and Milan
exploring Arizona

Happy Cinco De Mayo!!!

Let's highlight the holiday Cinco de Mayo. Meaning "the fifth of May", it marks the unlikely victory of the Mexican army over French forces in the battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. To everyone celebrating Cinco de Mayo, we hope it is a good one!



IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM THE ISS OFFICE

Scholars who are already at UC Riverside are advised to avoid international travel unless absolutely necessary.

H-1B visa holders seeking a new visa are currently subject to increased social media vetting, which may result in significant delays in visa processing.

April Event Photos



Cultural Conversation Class

If you or your spouse is interested, please participate in the Cultural Conversation Class to help improve your English and to meet new friends. Thank you to the regular attendees for helping us make CCC successful!

Student Services Building 2nd Floor, Conference Room

Every Tuesday, 1-2PM

Instructor Sandra Ingram

Sandra Ingram is a Riverside native whose interests include cross-cultural communication, visiting national parks, and theater arts.

This Month in Riverside

3D Modeling Lego Lightsaber

On May the 4, get your chance to become a jedi or sith and create a lego lightsaber!

When: May 4, 2026 2PM to 3PM

Where: Orbach Library : Room 122



Women's Volleyball vs UC San Diego

Come watch UCR's Women's Volleyball team as they take on UC San Diego

When: Saturday May 9, 2026 10 AM

Where: SRC Arena



UCRARTS: ARTSWALK

Bring friends and family and enjoy a amazing performance of Latin American Music from our UCR Latin American Music ensemble free of charge!

When: May 7, 2026 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Where: Culver Center: 3834 Main Street Riverside CA 92501



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's office at internationalscholars@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 advisors so that they can advise you on the steps and the visa implications of ending your program early.