

A microscopic image of several cells, likely oocytes or early embryos, showing a blue cytoplasm and a green nucleus. The cells are arranged in a cluster, with one cell in the center and others surrounding it. The background is dark, making the fluorescent cells stand out.

Impact

2026 Annual Report for the UCLA Center
for Reproductive Science, Health and
Education



Director's Message

The scientific landscape for reproductive health has rarely been more dynamic, or more consequential. Discovery is accelerating, from the earliest events of human development to the genomic architecture of pregnancy and disease. At the same time, the environment for this work shaped by evolving science policy, uneven access to care, and persistent gaps in what we know about the body across the reproductive lifespan is a reminder of why a center like ours is needed. The Center for Reproductive Science, Health and Education was founded to meet this moment: to advance rigorous science, to train the people who will carry it forward, and to bring credible knowledge into the conversations where it matters most.

This year, that mission came to life with impact across discovery, education, and public engagement.

At the heart of the Center is our community of scholars. We were proud to welcome a new cohort of Reproductive Health and Science Research Fellows, selected from a competitive, campus-wide pool spanning the medical school, life sciences, and physical sciences. Their work ranges from foundational studies of early human development to large-scale genomic analyses of risk in pregnancy, a portfolio that reflects both the breadth of reproductive science and the collaborative spirit that defines UCLA.

We also brought exceptional voices to campus. In the fall, we welcomed California Surgeon General Dr. Diana Ramos for a conversation on advancing maternal, reproductive, and child health across the state. In the spring, we hosted National Medal of Science awardee Dr. Teresa Woodruff, whose talk on oncofertility reminded us of the human stakes of this research. Our seminar series showcased the depth of reproductive, maternal, and sexual health science across UCLA, and our science communication course, expanded this year to two sections to meet student demand trained undergraduates to translate complex science into accessible, evidence-based fact sheets. Under our Associate Director, Stephanie Kiesow-Edoh, our podcast continued

to reach new audiences with candid conversations on the science and lived experience of people who work in this ecosystem.

We took meaningful steps to grow, as well. We launched an Early Career Advisory Board to ensure undergraduate voices help shape the Center's direction; introduced our first Women's Research Pilot Program, in partnership with the UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute and the Iris Cantor–UCLA Women's Health Center, to seed innovative faculty research; and helped establish ReGEN, the UCLA Reproductive Health and Gender Equity Network, uniting centers across the social sciences, public health, and law to advance reproductive science, rights, and justice together.

None of this happens alone. I am deeply grateful to our Fellows, faculty, and staff, to our partners across UCLA and beyond, and to the donors and friends whose generosity makes this work possible. The questions we take on are among the most fundamental to human health and too often the most overlooked. I am more convinced than ever that, together, we can change that.

With gratitude,

Amander T. Clark, PhD

Founding Director, UCLA Center for Reproductive Science, Health and Education
Professor, Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology

CRSHE Reach and Engagement



Meet Our 2026-2027 Center for Reproductive Science, Health and Education Fellowship Winners

We are thrilled to introduce the 2026-2027 CRSHE Reproductive Health and Science Research Fellows! This exceptional group of scholars representing postdoctoral and graduate student scholars and a project scientist were selected from a competitive pool of applicants from across the UCLA campus including the medical school, life sciences and physical sciences. In this round, the awarded CRSHE fellows are conducting innovative and impactful research across the fields of reproductive science and maternal health, including from foundational discovery science in early human development to large scale genomic analyses to identify health risks during pregnancy. Each fellow brings a unique perspective and passion to advancing knowledge and driving meaningful change in their specific areas of research.



Amanda Collier

Assistant Project Scientist, Biological Chemistry, DGSOM
Mentor: Professor Kathrin Plath, PhD

Amanda's research focuses on signaling mechanisms governing lineage specification and developmental timing during early human embryo development.



Peter Cullimore

Graduate Student, Biochemistry, Physical Sciences
Mentor: Professor Margot Quinlan, PhD

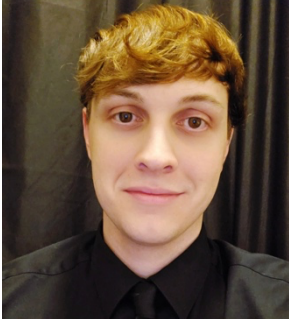
Peter's research focuses on elucidating the importance of the oocyte actin mesh in maintaining fertility.



Shreya Kordale

Graduate Student, Biological Chemistry
Mentor: Assistant Professor Debora Sobreira, PhD

Shreya's research focuses on dissecting cell-type-specific regulatory mechanisms in polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome.



Mark Larsen

Graduate Student, Cell and Developmental Biology

Mentor: Professor Amander Clark, PhD

Mark's research focuses on understanding early human germline development using human stem cell models.



Max Levenson

Graduate Student, Environmental and Molecular Toxicology IDP

Mentor: Professor Patrick Allard, PhD

Max's research focuses on uncovering epigenetic mechanisms of environmental reproductive toxicants.



Andrew Mead, PhD

Postdoctoral Scholar, Molecular Immunology & Molecular Genetics

Mentor: Professor Peter Bradley, PhD

Andrew's research focuses on characterization of novel apicoplast biogenesis factors to combat congenital toxoplasmosis during pregnancy.



Stephanie Orchanian, PhD

Postdoctoral Scholar, Integrative Biology and Society

Mentor: Professor Elaine Hsiao, PhD

Stephanie's research focuses on investigating interactions between the gut microbiome and the treatment efficacy of SSRIs during pregnancy.

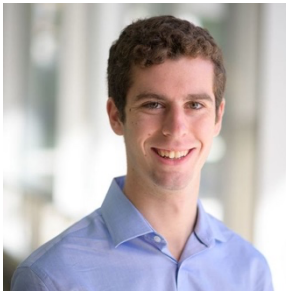


Victoria Rodriguez, PhD

Postdoctoral Scholar, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Mentors: Drs. Beth Karlan, MD & Dana Chase, MD

Victoria's research focuses on the impact of treatment-induced menopause on quality of life and mental health among gynecologic cancer survivors.



Paul Vander

Graduate Student, Integrative Biology and Society

Mentor: Associate Professor Stephanie Correa, PhD

Paul's research aims to understand how circulating estrogens influence energy balance, towards the goal of improving treatment options for post-menopause metabolic dysfunction.



Lingyu Zhan, PhD

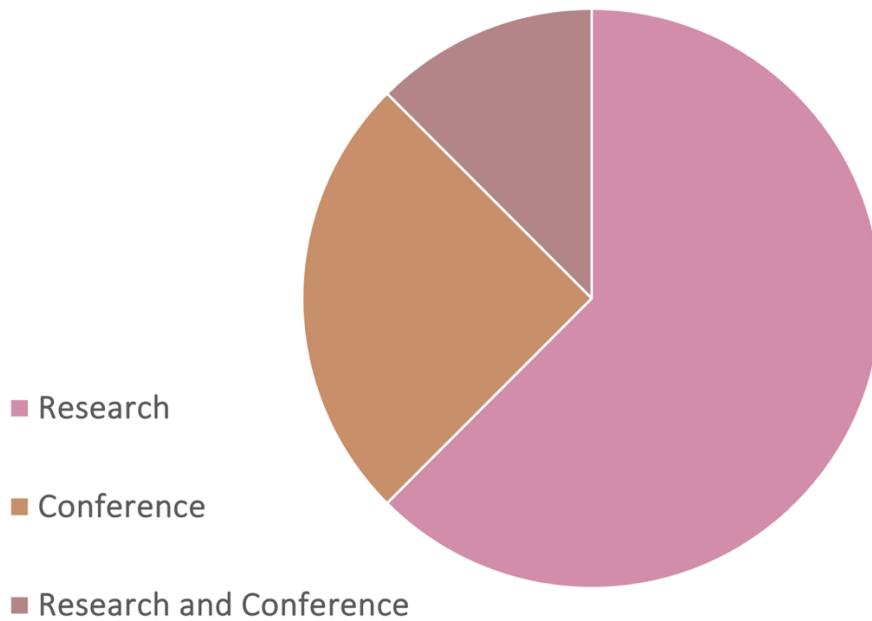
Postdoctoral Scholar, Psychiatry

Mentor: Professor Roel Ophoff, PhD

Lingyu's research focuses on the genetic architecture of maternal neuropsychiatric disorders with a focus on rare and structural variations.

Below, we report how our most recent 2025-2026 CRSHE Fellows have used their funding. At the CRSHE we provide flexibility to the awardees allowing the fellows to determine how to best to utilize the funds for their project and career needs. As illustrated below, some fellows allocated their funds toward research related expenses – such as purchasing tools, materials or data sets to support their projects – while others prioritized travel to academic conferences. Several fellows opted for a combination of both. While most fellows use their stipend on research related expenses, travel to scientific conferences to present their research is extremely valuable for networking and receiving critical feedback.

Funding Allocation Overview: 2025-2026 Fellows



Reproductive Science Public Engagement

Distinguished Speaker Events

Fall 2025

One of the highlights of Fall 2025 was welcoming California Surgeon General, Dr. Diana Ramos, for a thought-provoking conversation on advancing the health and well-being of Californians. Drawing on her leadership and expertise, Dr. Ramos discussed the importance of policies that strengthen reproductive, maternal, and child health and shared her vision for creating healthier communities across the state. We were honored to host this extraordinary discussion and grateful for the opportunity to learn from her insights. For highlights of the event, please visit the following link:



<https://lifesciences.ucla.edu/2025/11/california-surgeon-general-speaks-at-ucla-on-states-proactive-approach-to-improve-maternal-health/>

To view the event feature in the Daily Bruin, please see here:

<https://dailybruin.com/2025/10/29/state-surgeon-general-discusses-adverse-childhood-experiences-effect-on-pregnancy>

To view the event recording, please follow the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfTcKASPOug>

Spring 2026

We were thrilled to welcome Dr. Teresa Woodruff, National Medal of Science Awardee and champion of women's health research for her talk titled: Oncofertility: Bench to Bedside to Babies. Professor Woodruff's insights, experiences, and remarkable oncofertility research sparked meaningful conversations and left us all motivated to advance reproductive science and remember the impacts of this research for the community. For more information on the event, please see news coverage by UCLA Life Sciences the following link:

<https://lifesciences.ucla.edu/2026/04/crshe-woodruff-2026/>



The event was also featured by the Daily Bruin. Please see here:

<https://dailybruin.com/2026/04/15/teresa-woodruff-raises-awareness-about-oncofertility-in-speaker-series-lecture>

To view the event recording, please see the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnTKB_rNX88&feature=youtu.be

Reproductive Science Education

Reproductive Science Seminar Series

Over the previous two years, our seminar series highlighted the outstanding work of students, postdoctoral fellows, and clinical fellows. This year, we welcomed an exceptional group of UCLA professors, who shared their expertise and insights with our community. The seminars are designed to foster learning and discussion, with each session featuring a 40-minute presentation followed by a 20-minute interactive discussion. These conversations encouraged thoughtful engagement and meaningful exchange between speakers and attendees while at the same time showcasing the depth and breadth of science in reproductive, maternal and sexual health across the campus.



2025-2026 List of Seminar Speakers:



Stephanie Correa, PhD

Associate Professor, Integrative Biology and Physiology

Talk Title: Estrogen Signaling in the Hypothalamus Aligns Thermoregulation with Reproductive State

This seminar highlighted research from the Correa Lab on how fluctuating estrogen levels regulate signaling pathways and neural activity within estrogen-sensitive regions of the hypothalamus. The work demonstrated how estrogens coordinate activity across multiple brain regions and neural circuits to adjust energy balance in response to the changing metabolic demands of different reproductive states.



Patrick Allard, PhD

Professor, Institute for Society & Genetics

Talk Title: From Worms to Policy-Making: A Journey in Deciphering the Impact of Environmental Exposures on Reproduction

This seminar focused on research investigating environmental exposures that disrupt reproduction and the biological mechanisms through which they exert their effects. Dr. Allard also discussed how expertise in reproductive biology can be applied to environmental chemical regulation, highlighting opportunities to contribute to policy and public health efforts in California.



Margot Quinlan, PhD

Professor, Chemistry & Biochemistry

Talk Title: Using Actin to Put Your Head and Heart in the Right Place

This seminar explored Dr. Quinlan's research on how oocytes develop and are organized to produce viable gametes. She described her lab's work spanning single-molecule biochemical studies to whole-organism research, illustrating how findings at different biological scales contribute to understanding oocyte development. The seminar concluded with an overview of the lab's ongoing and related research directions.



Molly Fox, PhD

Associate Professor, Anthropology

Talk Title: Mothers, Minds, and Matriline

This seminar examined how human infants' prolonged dependence has shaped the evolution of cooperative caregiving, with support extending beyond mothers to include grandmothers and other relatives. Drawing on evolutionary anthropology and psychobiology, Dr. Fox discussed how cooperative breeding and matrilineal support influence human development, highlighting examples from her research on the role of social support in shaping developmental outcomes.



Chuchu Zhang, PhD

Assistant Professor, Physiology

Talk Title: Neural Mechanisms of Nausea

This seminar explored the neural mechanisms underlying nausea, focusing on how the brain detects nausea-inducing signals and generates aversive responses. Using advanced genetic and molecular techniques, Dr. Zhang identified specific excitatory and inhibitory neuron populations in the area postrema that regulate nausea, as well as the neural circuits and clinically relevant receptors involved. These findings provide a foundational understanding of nausea circuitry and could inform the development of more effective therapies for treating nausea caused by disease or medications.



Karen Sears, PhD

Professor Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and Molecular Cell and Developmental Biology

Talk Title: Unlocking the Secrets of Long Life: What Bats Can Teach Us About Healthy Aging

This seminar examined why bats can live exceptionally long lives with few signs of aging despite their high metabolic demands. Using newly developed DNA methylation clocks to estimate the ages of wild bats, the researchers showed that bats maintain healthy aging through enhanced genome maintenance, stable antioxidant defenses, and selective regulation of cellular repair pathways. These findings provide new insights into the evolutionary mechanisms that promote longevity and healthy aging in mammals.



Sriram Sankararaman, PhD

Professor, Computer Science, Human Genetics, and Computational Medicine

Talk Title: Insights into the Evolutionary and Genetic Architecture of Human Complex Traits from Biobank-Scale Data

This seminar explored how large-scale biobank datasets are transforming our understanding of the relationships between evolution, genetics, and complex traits. Dr. Sankararaman presented research on the impact of Neanderthal DNA inherited through ancient interbreeding on modern human traits, as well as new methods for studying how genetic effects vary depending on environmental and genetic context. His findings highlight the significant roles of archaic introgression, gene-environment interactions, and gene-gene interactions in shaping human trait variation beyond simple additive genetic models.



Kathrin Plath, PhD

Professor, Biological Chemistry

Talk Title: Exploiting X Chromosome Dosage and Blastoids to Model Human Development

This seminar highlighted how human pluripotent stem cell-derived embryo models (blastoids) are being used to study the signaling pathways that direct early human cell fate decisions. Dr. Plath also discussed complementary studies in mouse and human systems investigating how X chromosome dosage is established and regulated during development. Together, this work provides new insights into the molecular mechanisms that control cell identity during early development.



Vibha Singhal, MBBS, MPH

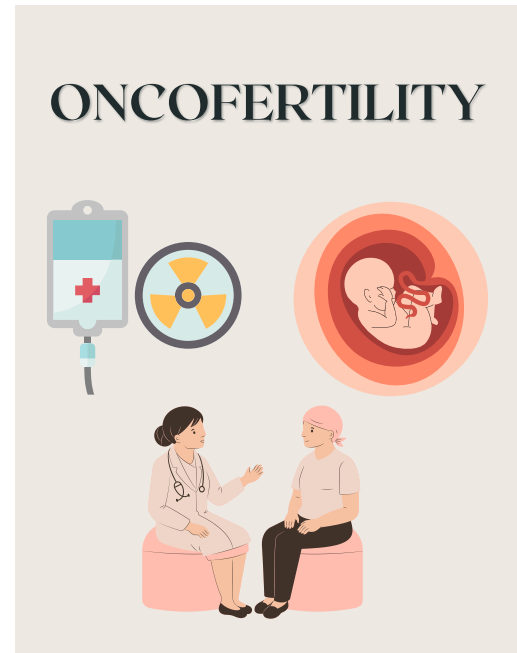
Associate Professor, Pediatrics

Talk Title: GLP-1 Analogs and the Next Generation: Promise, Risk, and the Unknown

This seminar reviewed the growing use of GLP-1 receptor agonists, such as Ozempic and Wegovy, and their transformative impact on obesity treatment. Ms. Singhal focused on our limited understanding of how these medications affect male and female fertility, as well as their potential effects on offspring and future generations. The talk also summarized current evidence and highlighted ongoing research aimed at addressing these important reproductive health questions.

Reproductive Science Communication and Research

During the Winter 2026 quarter, we offered our science communication course designed to equip students with the skills to develop impactful, evidence-based fact sheets on timely and relevant topics related to reproductive science, maternal and sexual health. Due to strong student interest, the course expanded from one to two sections. We also mentored volunteers who wanted to participate beyond the one quarter offering. Throughout the course, students selected topics that reflected both novel developments in reproductive science research and emerging scientific issues featured in the news. To view the reproductive fact sheets created by UCLA students and volunteers, please click here: <https://reprohealth.ucla.edu/fact-sheets/>



Reproductive Science Podcast

This year, our Associate Director, Stephanie Kiesow-Edoh, continued to expand the podcast series with engaging new episodes exploring a wide range of topics, including perceptions of menstruation, environmental toxins and reproductive health, placenta accreta spectrum disorders, reproductive science, and the development of the Center. The series featured an outstanding lineup of professionals, researchers, and

thought leaders who shared their expertise and perspectives on these important issues. We are grateful to our guests for contributing to these meaningful conversations and look forward to continuing the discussion in future episodes. To learn more and listen:

<https://reprohealth.ucla.edu/podcast/>



Early Career Advisory Board

One of the center's stakeholders are talented and passionate undergraduate students. To ensure that the CRSHE is meeting the needs of this key group, the Center launched the early career advisory board in the Spring quarter. The advisory board advises the center on UCLA undergraduate activities in reproductive health, education and science. The inaugural board is overseen by Associate Director Stephanie Kiesow-Edoh and co-chaired by Grace Brewer (2026)

and Amanda Lyons (2028). Members of the Board are selected from a competitive candidate pool and committed to meeting monthly throughout the academic year. This year the advisory board focused on identifying undergraduate clubs on campus focused on reproductive health and the group designed and conducted their first undergraduate student survey with Professor Jeffrey Maloy on attitudes towards reproductive science education and research at UCLA. Stay tuned for outcomes from this important work.



Research Funding Opportunity

We are excited to share that, in collaboration with the UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute and the Iris Cantor-UCLA Women's Health Center, we launched the first Women's Research Pilot Program earlier this year. The program was created to support innovative scientific research from faculty focused on reproductive, maternal or sexual health. We are thrilled by the strong interest and outstanding proposals submitted, and the review process is now underway. We look forward to announcing the inaugural awardees soon and supporting the impactful work ahead. Learn more here: <https://reprohealth.ucla.edu/funding-opportunities/>



Building Community Through ReGEN

While building and advocating for reproductive science on the UCLA campus, we were thrilled to formalize our center's relationship with three additional elite centers at UCLA; the Center for the Study of Women, Barbara Streisand Center (Social Sciences), The Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health (Public Health) and The Center for Reproductive Health Law and Policy (Law). Together we created a cross disciplinary campus collective called UCLA Reproductive Health and Gender Equity Network (ReGEN) and hosted our first campus-wide meeting to identify



research, education and public engagement activities that would benefit our shared stakeholders. The mission of ReGEN is to advance reproductive science and care, reproductive rights, and reproductive justice. This is an interdisciplinary collective that convenes, connects, and amplifies UCLA faculty, staff, and students dedicated to reproductive and women's health locally, nationally and internationally.

Newsletters

To catch up on our activities on a quarterly basis, we are happy to share our 2025–2026 newsletters below. These issues highlight recent events, important updates, and upcoming opportunities, and we've truly enjoyed connecting with our community through each edition. Please find newsletters from this past academic year listed below.

- Fall 2025 Newsletter: <https://reprohealth.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2025/12/CRSHE-Fall-2025-Newsletter.pdf>
- Winter 2026 Newsletter: <https://reprohealth.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2026/03/CRSHE-2026-Winter-Newsletter.pdf>
- Spring 2026 Newsletter: <https://reprohealth.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2026/06/2026-CRSHE-Spring-Newsletter.pdf>

If you are interested in learning more about the activities of the Center, getting involved in the science, education or public outreach of the Center, or supporting initiatives that you care about where science and education can make a difference, we welcome you to get in touch with us.

<https://reprohealth.ucla.edu> or crshe@ucla.edu