Rosalina Aranda, UC Merced

As the Operations Manager for the Office of Business Development at UC Merced since October 2015, Rosalina Aranda, supervises Business Development activities related to intellectual property management. She ensures the quality of monitoring and compliance of accounting practices of the office. She is responsible for communication and outreach to stakeholders and industry related to intellectual property management as well as the quality of business operations related to intellectual property management. Practices Business Development activities related to industry alliances and new venture formation. Responsible for monitoring and compliance of accounting practices related to industry alliances and new venture formation. Manages communication and outreach to stakeholders and industry and the overall public relations activities of the Office of Business Development. Manages the overall business operations of the office and provides internal feedback to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development.

Oyindamola Asaaju, UC Merced

Asaaju Oyindamola is a graduate of Home Science and Management from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) Nigeria. She received her Bachelor of Science from FUNAAB. She currently works with the IITA Youth Agripreneurs; a group of youths who have taken Agriculture as a Business. This business group has been able to not only create jobs but empower youths through trainings on skill acquisition and business development. Prior to this time, she received hands-on training on baking agro-based products. She currently leads one of the Agripreneur groups in the South-south region of Nigeria.

Acheampong Atta-Boateng, Yale University

I am a researcher in Berlyn’s Plant Morphology and Ecophysiology lab at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. My research translates basic understanding of plant-environment feedback mechanisms into novel agro applications that improve crop yield. My focus is developing organic plant stimulants (e.g Tapovan™, Shoot™) as specialty fertilizers and next generation non-contact plant stimulants.

Cara Baird, UC Merced

Cara Baird is the Business Development Associate for the Office of Business Development at UC Merced.

Ms. Baird leads a team of market research interns that conduct market research for faculty members at UC Merced. This market research is conducted
to determine commercial potential for faculty research, and is used to inform decisions made by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development in regards to prosecution of intellectual property rights.

She is also the lead advisor to startups at the UC Merced Venture Lab, a university affiliated business incubator. While she was an undergraduate student, Ms. Baird assisted the program director with the development of the Venture Lab program, which launched in October 2015.

Kakhaber Bakhtadze, UC Davis
Mr. Kakhaber Bakhtadze is a professional geographer from Georgia, who has worked for more than 15 years in the field environmental protection and socio-economic development. His area of work covers South Caucasus and Middle East countries. As a Programs Manager, he led more than 40 international projects related to water, land, air, forest, and mineral resources management. Mr. Bakhtadze headed, and is one of the authors of, the natural disaster risk atlas for Georgia. In 2014 the parliament of Georgia adopted the national forest policy concept, of which Kakhaber Bakhtadze was a contributor. From 2012 Mr. Bakhtadze is a member of IUCN ecosystem management commission. From 2015 Kakhaber Bakhtadze is founder and board member for the NGO “Environment and Development” (ED). He is a Hubert H Humphrey Fellow for 2015-2016 in the field of Environmental Policy, Natural Resources Management, and Climate Change.

Victor Bensasson, HM. Clause
Victor Bensasson has expertise in International Business Management in the pharmaceutical and agricultural, seed vegetable sectors. For the past five years, he has held positions with the Finance and R&D Departments at HM.CLAUSE a vegetable seed company part of the LIMAGRAIN group, the second largest company in the sector. He joined the company as Reporting & Budget Manager in the Financial Planning & Analysis Dpt. In 2015, he accepted a position with the Global Management team of R&D, working in the Innovation, Intellectual Property, and R&D Strategy Unit. In this role, he employs his business and financial expertise to elaborate strategies that convert business strategies into R&D plans. Victor started his career in the pharmaceutical sector where he was a business analyst. He holds a master in Management & Commerce International from the University of Avignon (France) and a Bachelor in Business & Administration from the University of Lincoln (UK).

Christina Cogdell, UC Davis
Christina Cogdell, Ph.D., researches the intersection of biology with design and architecture historically and in the present. She is finishing her second book, Toward a Living Architecture, exploring how theories of self-organization and emergence in complex biological systems affect architecture today. Chapters address architectural education in relation to material computation, morphogenesis, postgenomics, and visions of growing living buildings using tissue engineering and synthetic biology. This work continues that of her first book, Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s, which won the 2006 Edelstein Prize for best book on the history of technology. She has published her research in the journals Technoetic Arts, American Art, Design and Culture, Volume, Design Issues, and American Quarterly. Her next project focuses on the history of energy, materials, and design, with a critical eye toward contemporary biodesign and its possibilities of creating new materials for design production using less energy with less environmental impact. Christina is a UC Davis professor in the Department of Design.

Zhenghao Fei, UC Davis
Zhenghao Fei is a Ph.D. student in Biological Systems Engineering, University of California Davis, where his research focus on agricultural robotics. He got his bachelor’s degree in Biosystems Engineering and also another bachelor’s degree in entrepreneurship management in Zhejiang University, one of the top 3 universities in China. During his college time, he is always an active guy who has great interest in agricultural technology entrepreneurship and once won the Gold Award in 2014 China College Students’ Entrepreneurship Competition and 4th in the 2014 ASABE Robotic Design Competition. He wants to integrate high technology into traditional agricultural industry and make the world better.

Arshia Firouzi, UC Davis
Arshia Firouzi is an Electrical Engineering student at the University of California, Davis, set to graduate June of 2016. His undergraduate research consists of gravitational lensing analysis for the Department of Physics at UC Davis, geothermal and evaporative cooling techniques for increased efficiency of HVAC systems at the Western Cooling Efficiency Center, and his current project- the development of an in-vivo MEMS medical device. Arshia is interested in electrical-biological interfaces, electronic system performance in extreme environments, and EM wave interactions in ionic media. Originally from Southern Illinois, he developed a passion for backpacking and hiking which he continues to enjoy after having moved to Northern California. He also plays soccer and chess at both a competitive and recreational level. To relax, Arshia reads a variety of nonfiction, science fiction, and fantasy novels.
Ag Entrepreneurship Academy  
Participant Biographies  
April 25-27, 2016

Eric Giannini, UC Davis  
Eric graduated Magna Cum Laude from Saint Mary's College of California before continuing his education as a Fulbright fellow at the Kazan State University in Kazan, Tatarstan. After traveling around the world, Eric began developing iOS apps in Objective-C & Swift and teaches those languages at the Hacker Lab in Sacramento, CA. He is an aspiring agriculturer whose favorite Greek of fresh farming and harvest is the moisture loving pre-Socratic materialist, Thales to whose lucrative algorithms on ripening Mediterranean olives, Aristotle attributes the discovery of futures & options.

Alex Greenspan, UC Davis  
Alex Greenspan is a PhD candidate in the Department of Plant Pathology at UC Davis. His dissertation research focuses on applying insights gained from microbial ecology and population genomics to improving the process of symbiotic nitrogen fixation in the crop chickpea—both of which are vital to the functioning of subsistence agriculture in much of the developing world. This research has involved collaboration and field work in diverse locations including India, Ethiopia, and Turkey. Alex became interested in pursuing this line of research in college when the 2007-2008 world food crisis made apparent the inextricable links between agriculture in the developing world and in the developed. Alex is attending the 2016 Ag Entrepreneurship Academy in the hopes that fostering innovations in industrial agriculture can benefit the global agricultural system.

Miku Jha, AgShift  
Miku Jha is the founder and CEO of AgShift. Miku is a passionate entrepreneur and product executive with a proven track record of successfully launching and scaling products across multiple start ups and companies such as VMware and IBM.

As part of Senior leadership and Product team, Miku helped build and scale multiple storage, mobile software startups into well-known global companies. She was instrumental in growing the storage business as a Founding engineer at Ariodata, which was acquired by Xyratex Inc. She helped grow and scale mobile business and product at Worklight, which was acquired by IBM. She has lead several mobile and IoT initiatives at IBM – under Mobile First portfolio. She was responsible for successful execution of Mobile virtualization initiative at VMware under the office of the CTO.

At AgShift, Miku manages a nimble team of farmers, agronomists, researchers and technologists driven by a single passion – to empower Small-scale growers with insights and data – which results in bigger profits, better
environment and better lives. AgShift is First data intelligence platform built for Small-scale farms.

James Kawagoe, UC Davis
James is a first year graduate student pursuing a PhD at UC Davis in the Agricultural and Environmental Chemistry graduate group. He got his B.A. In Chemistry at Tabor College in Hillsboro, KS. Currently he is developing dose-mortality standards for ethyl formate fumigations of brown marmorated stink bugs.

Sam Oeurn Ke, UC Davis
Mr. Ke has been working in the field of agricultural and rural development since 2009. He began working for the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) in 2013. He has worked mostly in extension and rural business sectors. He has advanced professional training in Managing Development in Rural Region in Germany and holds a Master of Science in Integrated Management of Agricultural and Rural Development (GIDAR) from Royal University of Agriculture in Cambodia.

Mr. Ke has worked with diverse stakeholders in Cambodia, from the national level to local levels. Working with and helping the impoverished communities is his favorite job. He speaks fluent Khmer, English and German. His main focus during the fellowship year will be on Post-harvest management and seed production, specifically tomato seed production. These topics are very important for Cambodia in order to improve its commodity quality and higher yield of agricultural production. Creating new growing techniques is his curiosity!

Meghan Klasic, UC Davis
Meghan Klasic is a first-year PhD student at UC Davis in the Geography Graduate Group. The focus of her research is integrating climate change planning into the management of water resources. She has a BS in Environmental Science from Dickinson College and an MS in Environmental Planning and Management from Johns Hopkins University’s Whiting School of Engineering. Meghan spent ten years as a program analyst and policy expert at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC. At EPA, Meghan served as the National Coordinator for Drinking Water Operator Certification for two years and the National Coordinator for Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Tracking and Implementation for six years. Meghan is dedicated to reducing knowledge-action gaps between science and policy
and educating the public about the importance of water quality. In her free time, Meghan enjoys homebrewing, networking via social media, and traveling with her fiancé and their two bulldogs.

Sacha Laurin, UC Davis
Sacha Laurin is founder of Kombucha Couture, a sustainable vegan leather design company based in Davis, California. She combines knowledge and love of fermentation and dairy science, as Head Cheesemaker for Winters Cheese Company with her vision for developing probiotic clothing. She grows sheets of kombucha cellulose from tubs of fermented tea which is then dried and can imitate canvas, leather or silk. Laurin won first prize at the Sacramento Film and Music Festival 2013 for a dress she created from bacterial cellulose and was invited as Featured Designer at Sacramento Fashion Week in 2014. Kombucha Couture recently showcased at Pierre Cardin during Paris Fashion Week 2015. Sacha studied dairy science at the Vermont Institute of Artisan Cheese, and completed Artisan Cheesemaking certification at College of Marin. She has been cheese judge for the State Fair since 2011. She instructs and consults on cheese and kombucha internationally and is passionate about developing kombucha textile.

Andrew Leach, UC Davis
Andrew Leach is a first-year dual-masters student at UC Davis. He is pursuing an MBA with the Graduate School of Management focused on strategy and marketing and an MA from the Geography Graduate Group in landscape design and development. He has a BS in Natural Resources from Cornell University and an MPA in Environmental Science and Policy from Columbia University. Prior to coming to UC Davis, Andrew spent six years as a GIS Analyst for an environmental think tank in Washington, DC researching international deforestation and agricultural development. Andrew is passionate about finding solutions at the intersection of business and community that enhance human well-being and natural systems. In his free time, Andrew loves to go hiking and camping with his fiancé, Meghan, and their two bulldogs, Franklin and Winston."
Tania Pozzo, UC Davis

Tania Pozzo was born on September 21, 1977, “the day of spring, love and students,” in the highest city of Bolivia - Potosi. After receiving her Bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry from the University of San Andres in La Paz, Tania was driven to pursue higher education abroad but was limited by the scarcity of opportunities in Biotechnology within her home country.

Luckily, the Bolivian University launched a collaborative research agreement with Lund University in Sweden. Tania began working with Professor Bo Mattiasson, who mentored her to achieve an academic scholarship from the Swedish Institute that enabled her complete the International Masters program in Bio and Food Technology. She continued with an interdisciplinary PhD project to develop enzyme-based, sustainable technologies.

In September of 2013, Tania became a Postdoc at the University of California-Davis and she was awarded the 2014 International Scholarship of Excellence from the UNESCO- L’Oreal foundation for Women in Science. Her current research is in the area of plant-microbe interactions, where she investigates molecular mechanisms between maize and its microbiome.

Peter Scheurman, UC Merced

Dr. Peter Schuerman is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development at the University of California, Merced.

Dr. Schuerman is the founding member and architect of UC Berkeley’s Industry Alliances Office, an office which nearly tripled industry support in its first year. He reinvented the licensing and intellectual property management program in The Texas A&M University System’s Office of Technology Commercialization, leading again to unprecedented revenues from both licensing and industry alliances. He subsequently served as Director of Innovation Management for Texas A&M AgriLife Research, one of the members of The Texas A&M University System.

Dr. Schuerman’s work focuses on optimizing the way that universities partner with businesses. He got his start at the University of Florida’s Office of Technology Licensing, and subsequently joined the Office of Technology Transfer at Rice University. He has a bachelor’s degree in Botany from Colorado State University and a Ph.D. in Genetics from UC Davis, and is a USDA Postdoctoral Fellow. His blog on realizing the potential of technology transfer can be found at www.negotiatethefuture.com.
John Shepard, UC Davis

John Shepard is passionate about intelligent systems and using them to enhance the quality of our lives. He believes robotics, IoT, and data science can revolutionize the capabilities of our civilization. John enjoys the coupling between engineering models and business models. He is currently employed as an agricultural roboticist at UC Davis and previously consulted in the Silicon Valley for NASA, LLNL, Google, SpaceX, and various other organizations. This spring, he will finish his PhD in mechanical engineering at Santa Clara University. His research focuses on collaborative multi-robot systems for multi-faceted tasks like harvesting, construction, and colonization. When not consumed by his latest ideas, he finds inspiration in rock climbing, cooking through science, and spirited discussions.

Keshav D Singh, UC Davis

Dr. Keshav D. Singh is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Entomology & Nematology at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, University of California, Davis CA. He has an expertise in Hyperspectral Imaging (HSI) system. He is working on applied use of remote sensing technologies in studies of host selection by selected insects and abilities to assess crop health via reflectance profiling (detection of crop responses to biotic stressors). To assist with novel insight into improved calibration and processing of airborne remote sensing data to enhance classification accuracy and to promote the use of emerging UAS (unmanned aerial systems) technology in precision agricultural applications. Prior to joining UC Davis, he was an Assistant Professor at JECRC University, Jaipur, India where he taught "Engineering Physics" at Graduate level (B.Tech.), and "Remote Sensing, Astrophysics, GTR and Cosmology" at postgraduate level (M.Sc.). Prior to this, he also worked on “Hyperspectral Remote Sensing” as a Ph.D. graduate student at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Mumbai. He did his Master of Technology (MS) in Engineering Physics and Bachelors in Physics (Hons.) with specialization in Astrophysics.

Robert Sisson, UC Davis

Robert Sisson is interested in food production information technology. He is CEO and co-founder of PestScope, a company which creates realtime, crowdsourced pest pressure maps. Pest Control Advisors use them to reduce guessing about nearby insects, disease and weeds when writing precision crop protection prescriptions.

At IBM, Robert sold, designed and installed information systems for hospitals, governments and businesses in the central and silicon valleys. At Arthur Andersen he led tax, audit and business consulting projects for growers, co-ops and technology firms.
In 2015 he was a member of winning Apps for Ag Hackathon teams 'Ag for Hire' at UC Davis and 'Swarm' at West Hills College Coalinga. He participated in Hacker Lab's Startup Hustle and Davis Roots Build Your Own Business. In 2016 Robert attended the Thought For Food Global Summit and presented as a Capitalize semi-finalist.

He holds a BS (Biology), MBA (Marketing/Finance) and MS (Health Services Administration) from Stanford.

Dustin Smith, UC Davis
Dustin Smith studied at the University of California, Davis where he studied Toxicology. Now he has started his own business focused around a Raman spectrometer. He hopes to take advantage of non-destructive spectrometry to observe biological systems. Dustin strives to find sustainable agricultural practices that stabilize organic food production to decrease the cost of eating organic produce for Californians.

Gurkern Sufi, UC Davis
Gurkern grew up locally in Sacramento and initially came to Davis with the intention of pursuing medicine after graduation. While attending school he was highly interested in research focused towards manipulating biology and served as president of the Synthetic Biology Club for two years. In 2015 he graduated from the University of California Davis with a B.S. in Biotechnology and an emphasis in Bioinformatics. As an undergraduate Gurkern participated in research projects with the Plant Sciences Department, California National Primate Research Center, and the UCDMC Cardiology Electrophysiology Lab and wanted to continue working as a researcher. Following graduation he has been actively involved with a partner in researching and developing a micromedical device. His primary involvement with this project is integrating the biological components into the manufacturing process and understanding issues the device could face with bio-compatibility and applications.

Atefeh Taheri, UC Davis
Atefeh Taheri received her BSc in chemistry (2006) and MSc in analytical chemistry with honors (2008) from Sharif University of Technology. She then moved to the U.S. and obtained her PhD with Gerald J. Meyer at Johns Hopkins University in 2013. Atefeh is currently a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California Davis with Louise A. Berben. Her research at UC Davis is focused on the electrocatalytic conversion of CO2 and proton into fuels using metal clusters.
Hui Ean Teh, UC Davis
Hui Ean Teh is currently pursuing her PhD degree in Food Science. Her dissertation research focuses on environmental-friendly methods of extracting oil from seed waste sourced from the fruit and vegetable processing industry. She is very interested in venturing into the food industry, especially in product development area, where she can apply her extensive research skills and experience from bench to market. She would like to learn more on how to explore the potential market in the food business and attract consumer interests for novel food products and processing techniques through the Ag Innovation Entrepreneurship Academy. She aspires to be a successful entrepreneur in the food industry in the near future.

Andrew Tom, UC Davis
Andrew Tom is a Senior Environmental Science and Management major. After serving as a president and regional officer for a collegiate community service club, he has aspirations to apply leadership to new business and organizational contexts. Andrew hopes to better serve agricultural producers and consumers through responsible business ventures solving complex environmental problems. Currently, Andrew is a member of the CA Association of Environmental Professionals and the San Jose Chapter of Net Impact. His passions include specialty coffee and responsible data science. Upon his graduation in June 2016, he plans on returning to the South Bay Area to network with environmental professionals currently serving his local community.

Ryan Tom, UC Davis
Ryan is an undergraduate in psychology with hopes to make commodities more equitable for their producers. He’s currently reviewing literature to develop modules for a new coffee course at UC Davis. Furthermore, as a team member at Temple Coffee Roasters, he believes in the Direct Trade model for more equitable commodities. Finally, with some background in marketing, he believe that effective marketing can differentiate a company’s position in the market and that the market is large enough for several companies to thrive. Consequently his interests lie in ethical branding, regional branding, specialty coffee, low-cost sustainable innovations, and nation’s international reputation.
Millicent Yeboah – Awudzi, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

Millicent Yeboah-Awudzi is a second year master’s student in the Department of Food Science and Technology, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana. After completing her first year master program course work, she received in 2015, a scholarship from Borlaug LEAP program to conduct her research at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

As a Borlaug LEAP Fellow, her current research focused on utilizing under-valued crops to help increase its’ nutritional value. Her goal is to create a prepared food snack that will help boost the nutrient consumption of women and children while promoting local agriculture systems, reducing post-harvest loss, and creating a sustainable product. She will be working in particular with the Bambara groundnut, a local legume that is high in protein and other nutrients, and lower-grade milled rice. Millicent also into the production and selling of a local beverage called “sobolo” in Ghana.