

# ESCAPE

EARLY STUDENT CAREER AND PLANNING EXPO

Saturday, April 29, 2023  
9:30 AM - 3:00 PM  
SSC Multipurpose Rooms, 1st Floor



Welcome to ESCAPE, a career workshop for CNAS undergraduate students to explore careers in the sciences. This is an opportunity for you to engage with UC Riverside alumni about careers in biotech, government, academia, health professions...and beyond!



# Agenda

<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	Check-In
<b>10:00 a.m.</b>	Welcome & Keynote Address Connie Nugent, Divisional Dean, CNAS Kathryn Uhrich, Dean, CNAS Wajdie Ahmad, Biopharma Executive
<b>10:35 a.m.</b>	Industry & Government Panel John Perchorowicz, Ph.D. - Moderator Debora De La Riva, Ph.D., U.S.D.A. Lisa Dong, Esri Lisa Scholl, Northrop Grumman Carlos Torres, AbbVie Bruce Zanin, Former Agriculture Minister
<b>11:35 a.m.</b>	Academia & Research Panel Sean Gallagher, Ph.D. - Moderator Samantha Byers, Riverside School District Sonia Diaz, Chaffey College
<b>12:25 p.m.</b>	Lunch
<b>1:15 p.m.</b>	Mentoring Table Hop
<b>2:20 p.m.</b>	Raffle

## Keynote Speaker



**Wajdie Ahmad is a Biopharmaceutical executive with over 23 years of industry experience.**

Wajdie is the Co-Founder in three early-stage Biotech startups and is an active investor and board member in the biotech/pharma sector.

Most recently, Wajdie served as the co-founder and Chief Operating Officer at Bonti from its inception in 2015 until the company was acquired by Allergan (NASDAQ:AGN) in October 2018 for the upfront payment of \$195 million (> 6x multiple on invested capital in 3 years) and subsequent milestone payments.

At Bonti, Wajdie was tasked with building and managing the Finance, HR, Legal, IT, and R&D operations (CMC and non-clinical), along with the company's clinical programs. In addition, Wajdie was instrumental in helping to raise over \$36 million in three structured financing rounds.

Prior to Bonti, Wajdie worked at Allergan for over 13 years in various roles, with increasing responsibility within the Biologics manufacturing and development groups, focusing on the development, characterization, manufacturing, clinical testing and commercializing of neurotoxins, which includes Botox and other biologics programs.

Wajdie received his B.S. in Biology from UC Riverside, and his M.B.A. in Management from UC Irvine.

## Industry & Government Panelists



**John Perchorowicz, Ph.D., RTTP - Moderator  
Seasonal Base Camp Manager/Facilities Unit Leader,  
USDA; Board member & treasurer for the AUTM  
Foundation**

John Perchorowicz, Ph.D., earned his B.A. and M.A. in Biology from UC Riverside before earning a Ph.D. in Photobiology at Brandeis University in 1979.

Throughout his career, John has served as Vice President and Board Member for the Southern Arizona Rescue Association, a member of the UC Riverside College of Natural & Agricultural Sciences' Board of Advisors, and a base camp manager/facilities unit leader for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). He also currently serves on the board of the Mt. Lemmon Fire District in Summerhaven, AZ. John's professional specialties include customer relations, directing, goal setting, marketing, proposal writing, research, technology evaluation and commercial planning.



**Deborah De La Riva, Ph.D.  
Entomologist, USDA-APHS-PPQ**

Dr. Deborah De La Riva is an entomologist working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS), in the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program. She works at the San Diego Plant Inspection Station, located at a

port of entry on the California-Mexico border. Her main duties are to identify plant pests arriving in baggage from travelers coming through the airport or land border. Other duties include serving as her program's ant and termite expert and outreach coordinator. Deborah obtained her Ph.D. in Entomology from UC Riverside in 2016 for her research investigating the impacts of habitat pollution on ant communities. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, camping, gardening, spending time with her dogs and goats, and teaching others about the fascinating world of insects.



**Lisa Dong  
Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs Advertising &  
Promotion, Esri**

Lisa Dong graduated from UC Riverside in 2019 with a B.S. in Environmental Sciences. After that, she took a deep dive into the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) field and started working for Esri, the

Environmental Systems Research Institute, in January 2020. For the past three years, she has moved between various technologies, from Desktop to Enterprise to Geodata, and worked as a support analyst, helping other users troubleshoot and resolve various issues. In her spare time, she loves gardening (tomatoes are her favorite), eating, going to conferences and connecting with others.



**Lisa Scholl**  
**Senior Manager of Pricing & Estimating, Northrop Grumman**

Lisa Scholl earned her B.S. in Applied Mathematics from UC Riverside in 2016, and earned an M.S. in Engineering, Data Science in 2020. As the Senior Manager of Pricing & Estimating at Northrop Grumman, Lisa manages first time quality sole source and competitive proposals for aerospace Department of Defense contracts. Lisa also served as Principal Proposal Analyst at Northrop Grumman, providing proposals for major government contracts. Prior to joining Northrop Grumman, Lisa also worked as an Inventory Specialist for Aero Trader, managing and updating the inventory control system for North American B-25 Mitchell cabling, fittings, and hardware, along with lighting systems for different aircraft.



**Carlos Torres**  
**Senior Manager, Regulatory Affairs Advertising & Promotion, AbbVie**

Carlos Rojas Torres is a first generation Mexican American alumnus of UC Riverside. He graduated in 2015 with a B.S. in Microbiology. Prior to starting his career in the pharmaceutical industry, Carlos held jobs around Riverside, including food delivery, Yogurtland, and as a teacher's assistant in the Riverside Unified School District. His first job in the pharmaceutical industry was as a Quality Control Microbiology Tech at Gilead Sciences, where he was in charge of testing the clean rooms where medicines are manufactured. Carlos currently works at AbbVie, and working within the advertising and promotion realm of regulatory affairs has been something he has been passionate about since he first learned about it at Gilead. Carlos is also the CEO of a small business called Yo Sabo: The Game, a card game that embraces the different experiences Spanish speakers had growing up!



**Bruce Zanin**  
**Former Agriculture Minister, Counselor to EU & China**

Bruce Zanin earned his B.S. in Environmental Science at UC Riverside in 1979 before earning an M.S. in International Agricultural Development/Agricultural Economics at UC Davis. As the senior USDA official in the European Union (EU) and China, Bruce led high-performing, multicultural teams in engagement on complicated agricultural trade and policy issues, including sanitary and phytosanitary access and climate change mitigation. Bruce also directed agricultural trade offices in embassies in Beijing and Mexico City, and served as African Food Security Advisor to the Department of Defense. He also served as Associate Peace Corps Director-Albania for non-governmental organization, small business development, and agroforestry.

## Research & Academia Panelists



**Sean Gallagher, Ph.D. - Moderator  
Vice President/Chief Technology Officer, Research & Development, Analytik Jena US**

Sean Gallagher earned a B.A. in Biology at Claremont McKenna College before earning his Ph.D. in Plant Physiology, Cell Biology & Botany at UC Riverside. Sean also served as a Postdoctoral Scholar in Plant Science Photobiology at Stanford University from 1985-1987. Sean is an executive leader with over three decades of experience across the life sciences industries, including research & development, instrumentation, technical marketing, and regulatory compliance. He has played an integral role in product development and launching domestic and international distribution and sales channels to generate over \$140 million in sales over the last 10 years. As Vice President/Chief Technology Officer at Analytik Jena US, Sean delivers executive leadership across global research and developing for imaging and laboratory products. In his spare time, Sean enjoys visiting the California Botanic Garden, and is excited about the garden's ongoing efforts in conservation biology and community outreach.



**Samantha Byers  
Science Educator, Riverside Unified School District**

Samantha Byers is currently a science teacher at Arlington High School, where she teaches Biomedical Science, AP Chemistry, and Chemistry courses. She started her secondary educational career in 2021 at UC Riverside, where she pursued a teaching credential and M.Ed while student teaching Physics. Previously, she was a Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. student at UC San Diego, where she conducted research in the fields of microbiomes, pharmacology, and immunology. She received her B.S. in Biochemistry from UC Riverside, and was involved with Supplemental Instruction, organic chemistry research, and the CNAS Science Ambassadors. Samantha has used her previous careers to integrate meaningful real-life applications into her classroom while also discussing multiple career options with her students.



**Sonia Diaz  
Associate Professor of Biology, Chaffey College**

Sonia earned her B.S. in Biology at UC Riverside in 2002, followed by her M.S. in Animal Physiology and Ph.D. in Physiology in 2012. She is a full-time faculty member at Chaffey College, where she teaches courses in Human Physiology, Introduction to Anatomy & Physiology, Beginning Medical Terminology, and the Microbiology Lab. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her two children, husband, and dogs, and loves going hiking, running, being outdoors, gardening and eating! She also enjoys reading about the history of biology and crime novels, and enjoys making decorations for holidays and parties.



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