



Happy New Year!

To begin the new year on a positive note, let us congratulate our fellows - Dresden Smith and Briana Savage - for receiving the [Dissertation Completion Fellowship Award](#). Congratulations!

In this quarter's newsletter, you'll find some new information about post doctoral opportunities and a resource document: Strategic Approaches for Navigating a Shifting Postdoc Landscape. You'll also find a list of UCR produced podcasts including a new series from the SOE: Education in Motion. Finally, check out what your Scholar Network officers have put together for Winter 2026 to bring student-led community to your graduate program experience.

Pictured above: School Psychology faculty and graduate students at their Fall 2025 social.

Upcoming Events

SOMOS SOE

Date: January 15th

Time: 12:00pm - 1:00pm

Location: 1357 Sproul Hall

[RSVP Link](#)

Program Caption: Join us for a powerful SOMOS SOE celebration as we unveil our new mural and welcome award-winning author Duncan Tonatiuh, creator of the acclaimed book *Separate Is Never Equal*. This special event honors culture, storytelling, and community while shining a light on the histories and narratives that shape our educational spaces today. Come experience the mural for the first time, hear from an influential voice in Latinx literature, and connect with the SOE community in an uplifting and inspiring environment.

Contemporary Codices: Picture Books and Social Justice

Appetizers, refreshments, and moderated discussion with Duncan Tonatiuh, Dr. Xochitl C. Chavez, and Dr. Miguel Zavala.

Date: January 15th

Time: 4:30 - 6:00PM

Location: UCR Alumni and Visitors Center

[RSVP](#) to Alumni Center event by January 9th

Third Annual SOE Research Conference

Date: Friday, January 30, 2026

Time: 9am - 3pm

Location: Third Floor of the HUB

[RSVP here](#) by January 23rd

Black in SOE

Date: February 5th

Time: 11:00am - 1:00pm

Location: 1212 Sproul Hall

[RSVP Link](#)

Program Caption: Join us as we celebrate Black History Month with an inspiring and thought-provoking conversation led by Dr. Antar Tichavakunda. Drawing from his powerful research on Black student life and Black joy, Dr. Tichavakunda will highlight key lessons about cultivating belonging in an increasingly polarized and contentious higher education landscape. He will explore what it means to intentionally create joyous, affirming spaces for Black students and introduce his innovative concept of “green books” for higher education, offering guidance on how campuses can foster environments where Black joy, safety, and thriving are prioritized. This is a transformative conversation you will not want to miss as we uplift Black stories, scholarship, and community.

Scholar Network - News & Events

Join your [Scholar Network officers](#) and colleagues at the upcoming Winter 2026 events:

Panel Discussion with Drs. Alice Lee and Amos Lee:

This event is an opportunity to help graduate students navigate the hidden curriculum of academia. Drs. Alice Lee and Amos Lee will join us to share their perspectives on the academic world and how to navigate its challenges. The second half of the discussion will focus on applying for conference funding, specifically focused on students attending AERA. Please join us on **January 22nd from 7-9 PM over Zoom**.

[Zoom Registration Link](#)

Winter Quarter Social:

Please join us for our Winter Quarter social! We will be meeting at the **Taco Station at 7 PM on February 5th** for some **good food** and better company! This is a free event, so please come and enjoy some time hanging out with fellow graduate students and faculty!

[RSVP Link](#)

Study Check-In:

Please join us for a study day as the quarter comes to an end! Whether you need a quiet place to finish assignments, read, or catch up with fellow SOE students, this study day will provide it all! It is not required for everyone to stay the entire time. Walk-ins are always welcome! Please join us on **February 19th from 9 AM - 3 PM in HUB 379!**

[Study Check-In RSVP](#)

Black Graduate Student Association

The mission of the Black GSA is to foster a vibrant and inclusive space that promotes the academic, professional, social, and cultural well-being of Black graduate students at UCR. We are committed to honoring the intersectional identities within our community, addressing systemic inequities, and empowering members to lead and advocate for positive change. Additionally, the Black GSA strives to mentor and inspire future generations of Black students, ensuring a legacy of excellence and representation in graduate education and beyond.

If you have any questions, email us at officialblackgsaucr@gmail.com.

[Link Tree](#) and [Instagram](#)



Did You Know...?

UC Riverside is home to a growing network of podcasts that highlight the creativity, scholarship, and community impact of our campus community. These podcasts cover a range of topics from sustainability to policy and neurodivergent student experiences. Below are various podcasts where you can hear the diverse Highlander community in conversation:

- [Education in Motion](#) - The series explores how educators move systems forward and push for more equitable outcomes. Led by UCR School of Education faculty and scholars, the podcast connects theory to practice and shows how that practice improves lives and

strengthens communities.

- [Healthy Disruptions Podcast](#) - Explores health inequities in Southern California through conversations about both medical and non-medical factors that influence health.
- [Policy Chats](#) - Brings listeners into conversations about public policy issues with policymakers and community leaders.
- [Feminist Friday Podcast](#) and the [Persist Podcast with Denise Davis](#) - Two podcast series from the Women's Resource Center that discusses topics like gender, equity, culture, and identity through conversations with campus community trailblazers leading change on and beyond campus.
- [Autism Goes to College](#) - Shares the stories of neurodiverse students as they navigate college life, craft their own paths, tackle various challenges, and redefine what college success looks like for them.
- [Across the Cline](#) - Science podcast series where experts from different disciplines engage in conversations that bridge scientific perspectives on various complex issues.
- [The Creator State](#) - Spotlights social innovation, art, and entrepreneurship by interviewing creative changemakers about their journeys.

These podcasts embody UCR's commitment to amplifying diverse voices, bridging scholarship with lived experience, and fostering conversations that connect scholarship to real-world impact beyond the classroom. Tune in to hear UCR community members spark inquiry, collaboration, and dialogue that drive discovery and inclusion.

You can find the above podcasts on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), or through their UCR department websites.



Community Resource

This winter, get involved in the Riverside community through outdoor activities, festivals, and trivia and game nights. Explore these winter activities to experience Riverside's vibrant local culture, connect with the community, and make the most of the season.

On Saturday, January 10, 2026 the [Citrus Heritage Run](#) will take place where locals celebrate Riverside's rich agricultural heritage with a scenic race through historic orange groves. Runners can choose from a full marathon, half marathon, 10K, or 5K route.

Additionally, from mid-February through early March, the [Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival](#) returns, which is one of Riverside county's most beloved annual celebrations. The festival activities include carnival rides, live performances, historical exhibits of Riverside county, and other family-friendly activities that highlight the Coachella Valley's rich desert culture.

Lastly, for a fun evening close to campus, head to downtown Riverside to [Hangar 24 Brewing](#) for their Student Nights & Trivia Nights. At Hangar 24 Brewing, you can enjoy live a DJ, games, and a laid-back atmosphere that's perfect for taking a break and unwinding with friends.

Fellowship & PD Opportunities

[UCR Grad Division Dissertation Year Fellowship](#) - Campus fellowship for doctoral students to support dissertation completion (\$10,000 stipend; *January 8, 2026*).

[HFG Emerging Scholars Award](#) - Scholarship award for doctoral candidates in their final year of dissertation writing whose research addresses violence in some capacity (school to prison pipeline, policing in schools, etc.) (\$25,000 stipend; *Applications due February 1, 2026*).

[OAR Graduate Research Grant](#) - Grant for Master's students and PhD candidates who are conducting autism research as part of their degree program (\$1,000 stipend for Master's students, \$2,000 stipend for PhD

candidates; Applications due February 2, 2026).

[Jeanne S. Chall Research Fellowship](#) - Grant for doctoral students conducting literacy or reading research (e.g. vocabulary, beginning reading, text readability) (*\$5,000 stipend; Applications due February 2, 2026*).

[James Madison Fellowships](#) - Fellowship for Master's students studying social studies education who plan to teach at the secondary level (*\$24,000 stipend; Applications due March 1, 2026*).

[AAHHE Graduate Student Fellowship programs](#) - Fellowship that supports Latinx doctoral students studying higher education with professional development, mentorship, and networking opportunities (*Stipend amount varies; Applications due in March 2026*).

[PEER Institute Field Schools](#) - Field schools offering intensive workshops and collaborative programs to support graduate students and postdocs in education research, especially in discipline-based education research (DBER) (*Fully funded workshops; Application deadlines vary based on the field school*).

Upcoming Conferences

[American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Annual Meeting](#)

Conference for educator-preparation professionals to convene around research, policy, and practice.

Dates: February 20-22, 2026 New Orleans, LA

[National Association of School Psychologists Annual Meeting](#)

Conference focused on bringing together school psychology professionals for training, research, and networking.

Dates: February 24-27, 2026 Chicago, IL

[Council for Exceptional Children Annual Meeting](#)

Major conference for special education professionals that offers hundreds of sessions, expos, and networking opportunities.

Dates: March 11-14, 2026 Salt Lake City, Utah

[Association for Education Finance & Policy Annual Meeting](#)

Conference focused on bringing together education researchers, policymakers, and practitioners around education finance and policy issues.

Dates: March 19-21, 2026 Chicago, IL

For a full list of available fellowships, internship, and conference opportunities, check out the modules in Canvas.

Post Doctoral Opportunities

Navigating postdoc options can feel overwhelming, but having the right information helps. Please find resources below including opportunities, funding sources, and tools to support your search and help make it a bit easier.

[Harvard University Strategic Data Project \(SDP\) Fellowship](#) - A two-year postdoc that places you full-time in an education agency or institution, while providing intensive training and mentorship from Harvard University-affiliated faculty to help you use data and leadership skills to improve student outcomes.

Applications due March 16, 2026.

[University of Wisconsin-Madison, Waisman Center Postdoctoral Training Program](#) - A two-year multidisciplinary postdoctoral training program offering social, behavioral, and biobehavioral research experience on intellectual/developmental disabilities from infancy through adulthood. **Applications due January 9, 2026.**

[Postdoctoral Fellowship in Mental Health](#) - A postdoc fellowship program providing financial support, training, and mentoring to early-career psychology professionals committed to improving mental health services for underserved and minority communities. **Applications due January 15, 2026.**

[ETS Postdoc Fellowship Program](#) - A two-year postdoctoral fellowship at Educational Testing Service (ETS) where postdocs conduct independent research in areas including education, psychometrics, policy, statistics, linguistics, and educational technology, with a stipend and potential renewal.

Applications due February 1, 2026.

For a more comprehensive list of postdoctoral opportunities, be sure to check out the full postdoc spreadsheet [here](#). For additional support, take a look at the [SOE postdoc resource document](#), which provides expanded guidance and resources to help you navigate every stage of your postdoc search.

Quarterly Deadlines

Written exam sign-up: **January 5**

Apply to graduate: **January 23**

Written exam dates: **February 27 - March 2**

Format review dissertation/thesis: **March 6**

MED capstone: **March 18**

Final submission dissertation/thesis: **March 20 by noon**

Student Spotlight



Samia Alkam is a fifth-year PhD student in Education Policy Analysis and Leadership whose work focuses on addressing the growing challenges posed by synthetic media, which is any media generated by artificial intelligence. Her research centers on developing effective synthetic media literacy curricula that equip students to engage with AI-generated content thoughtfully, critically, and with the skills needed to distinguish between synthetic and authentic media. Samia is currently living in Palestine, where she is leading

a study that explores youth perspectives on democracy. Samia brings a powerful global lens to her work, connecting educational research with urgent sociopolitical realities. Below, you can find insights directly from Samia about her research and experiences:

Q: What inspired you to pursue this particular area of education research?

A: In recent years, there has been a massive uptick in the amount of disinformation and propaganda spread via generative artificial intelligence. This was most evident during the last election, where deepfakes of the candidates spread potently and rapidly, which profoundly confused voters. I was inspired to take on this research to help combat the disinformation spread via this media by designing high-quality synthetic media curricula.

Q: How does your research fit into the SOE's broader equity-focused position?

A: Disinformation campaigns have primarily targeted the most vulnerable communities in America and have influenced uneducated adults, including people of color and immigrants, to vote against their interests. Therefore, there is an urgent need for critical media literacy initiatives that empower communities to recognize and resist manipulative narratives. My aim with this work is to empower average Americans to think critically about the political information they consume so that they can be more informed, engaged citizens.

Q: What are the key findings of your work that you would like us to highlight?

A: Some of the emerging findings in my dissertation study indicate that undergraduate students struggle to distinguish between artificially generated media and authentic media. However, my curricular intervention demonstrates that synthetic media literacy can move the needle and influence students to think more critically about the media they consume.

Q: What impact on education do you hope to make throughout your career?

A: I want other educators, scholars, and practitioners around me to come to terms with the reality that education is ever-evolving. We cannot fit our students into boxes we deem to be perfect or assume that certain approaches are best for all generations

of students. The digital landscape has transformed education, and we have a responsibility to evolve alongside our students and their needs.

Samia's research highlights how media literacy can serve as a tool for empowerment, truth, and democracy in a rapidly changing digital world. Her work that bridges education, technology, and social justice will help educators instill moral clarity and empowerment into their teaching practices. Samia describes returning to Palestine to conduct a research project as both a dream come true and a profoundly meaningful experience. Still, she misses her SOE family, and she can't wait to reconnect with the community when she returns.



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