

# University of California LSAMP-BD Profiles

## Esmeralda Casas, Ph.D.

**E**smeralda Casas completed a Ph.D. in

Biomedical Sciences June 2011. A member of the UC San Diego Bridge to the Doctorate cohort, Dr. Casas focused her graduate research on cancer cell metabolism, and continues to work on cancer biology in her postdoctoral position at the Scripps Research Institute. She

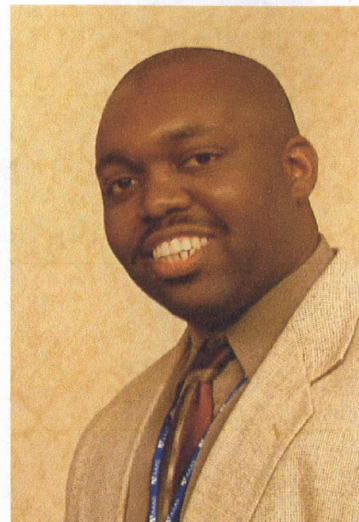


endeavors to establish new breast cancer models and paradigms to bring fresh perspectives into the study of breast cancer. Her overall career objective is to become an expert in cancer cell metabolism and to introduce new therapies in the clinic to halt or reverse cancer progression. Dr. Casas received honors and awards throughout her doctoral program, including the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Training Grant (2008-2011), the AACR Minority Scholar in Cancer Research Travel Award (2010), and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Med-Into-Grad Fellow (2010-11). Professional memberships include the American Association for Cancer Research and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, San Diego Science and Medicine Committee. As a BD Fellow she attended the National Science Foundations' Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) in 2006 and the Mouse Models of Cancer Conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006, among others. Dr. Casas is first author and co-author on publications in professional journals, including *Cancer Research*, *Science*, *Genes Development*, and *Development* (Dev.biologists.org). An active and engaged graduate student, Dr. Casas served as a mentor and a role model to many CAMP students. She completed a B.S. in Biological Sciences at UC Irvine in 1998. While an undergraduate she conducted research and earned honors as a CAMP student and a Ronald E. McNair Scholar.

## Wendell Lamar Blackwell, Ph.D.

**L**amar Blackwell completed a Ph.D. in

Biological Sciences at UC Irvine in March 2011. While at UCI, he studied signal transduction cascades in the Mitogen Activated Protein Kinase cascade. He was acknowledged for excellence in graduate research by winning the 2010 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) poster competition.



He was invited to speak at California State University Los Angeles as part of their STEM seminar series. During his academic career, Blackwell received two fellowships from the National Science Foundation. He was also awarded a Howard Hughes travel grant for serving as an exceptional teaching assistant to undergraduate students. Dr. Blackwell has maintained interest in advancing the undergraduate and graduate experience at UCI. While at UCI, he served as a member of UCI Advisory Council on Diversity Committee. He worked with several programs to help undergraduate students understand how to read scientific papers effectively and ask good scientific questions. He also served on numerous committees and graduate student panels, particularly the California LSAMP Statewide Undergraduate Research Symposium Graduate Panel. Moreover, Dr. Blackwell has partnered with teachers at high schools in Orange County to bring innovation in teaching biology. He has a passion for outreach and mentoring and enjoys giving back to the community some of the mentoring and guidance he had received during his graduate education. Additionally, he is an advanced communicator in Toastmasters International and tutors undergraduate students in chemistry and biology in his spare time. A research scientist at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, Dr. Blackwell studies mechanisms that relate elevated blood pressure with increased inflammation in mice and is first author on several publications. He did his undergraduate work at California State University Fullerton.