



ALICIA & YAYA INITIATIVE IN GLOBAL AGING RESEARCH

UMB/UCR STRATEGIC PLANNING MISSION SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA JULY 2024

A four-person delegation from the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) arrived in San Jose on Sunday, July 28, 2024. The trip was organized by the UMB Graduate School's [Alicia and Yaya Initiative in Global Aging Research](#) (AYY) to visit the University of Costa Rica's (UCR) world renowned human movement laboratory (Centro de Investigación en Ciencias del Movimiento Humano) and to continue creating networks between UCR and UMB faculty members who engage in aging research with the express goal of collaborative research partnerships.

"Our goal is to ensure this collaboration provides mutual benefits," said Francisco Siles, CIMOHU Director. "Researchers from both institutions clearly articulated their goals and interests, which signals a promising partnership between our universities."

This was the second UMB/UCR mission supported by the AYY initiative. The first in July 2023 led to several productive research partnerships in the areas of nutrition, frailty, palliative care, pharmacy science, and aging within indigenous populations. This second visit focused particularly on physical manifestations of aging and involved a visit to the human movement laboratory in addition to wider ranging conversations about other areas in which UMB and UCR can work together to advance research in aging and related fields.



UMB delegation with Health Research Institute (INISA-UCR) faculty

THE UMB DELEGATION



Denise Orwig, PhD

UM School of Medicine

Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health

Co-Director, Alicia and Yaya Initiative in Global Aging Research



Katie Dondero, MS

UM School of Medicine

PhD Student



Julie Rekant, DPT, PhD

UM School of Medicine

Visiting Post-Doctoral Fellow, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science



Alice Ryan, PhD

UM School of Medicine

Professor of Medicine

Associate Director for Translational Sciences, Center for Research on Aging



Wendel Mora, RN

InterAmerican Center for Global Health (CISG)

Alicia and Yaya Initiative in Global Aging Research Project Associate in Costa Rica



JULY 29: UCR TOUR AND MEETINGS WITH AGING RESEARCHERS

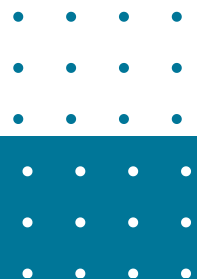
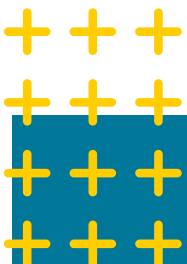
On July 29, the day began with a tour of UCR, organized by the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE). Yorleni Aguilar and Adriana Fernández led the delegation on a tour of the Rodrigo Facio campus and gave an overview of the university's facilities.

The objective of this tour was to familiarize the UMB team with UCR's academic environment and resources. The group visited the School of Health Technologies and met with the Director of the academic unit, MSc César Alfaro, as well as MSc. Catalina Smith, Director of the Physical Therapy Department, and MSc. Heilyn Fernández, Physical Therapy faculty. They provided an overview of the facilities and showcased their current projects. The group then headed to the Health Simulation Center at the School of Nursing, where Dr. Katherine Cordero provided a tour of the new building and an overview of the community outreach projects.

The delegation met privately with Dr. Fernando Morales, Dean of the UCR School of Medicine, to discuss the latest developments and progress in the Alicia and Yaya states.



*UMB delegation meeting with Dr. Fernando Morales,
Dean of the UCR Medical School*



JULY 29: UCR TOUR AND MEETINGS WITH AGING RESEARCHERS

In the afternoon, the group met with Dr. Fernando Morales and Dr. Carolina Santamaría, full professor and researcher at the UCR Health Research Institute, as well as researchers from various UCR institutes and centers, including the Instituto de Investigaciones en Salud (INISA), Programa Integral del Adulto Mayor (PIAM), Centro de Investigaciones en Neurociencias (CIN), School of Health Technologies, and the Graduate Program in Gerontology. At the meeting, Dr. Denise Orwig and Wendel Mora presented the AYY Initiative to the attendees and discussed the objectives of the delegation's visit.

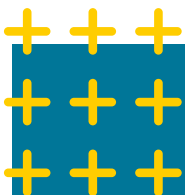
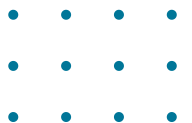
The other UMB researchers – Dr. Alice Ryan, Dr. Julie Rekant, and Katie Dondero – presented their current research projects and interests, as did the UCR investigators. The overall atmosphere was conducive to establishing new connections and the discussions were instrumental in identifying specific areas of mutual interest and establishing the foundation for future collaborative projects.



Visit to the School of Nursing and the Health Simulation Center (CESISA-UCR)



Visit and networking with Center for Human Movement Research (CIMOBU)





JULY 31: SITE VISIT TO CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN CIENCIAS DEL MOVIMIENTO HUMANO

On July 31, the delegation conducted a site visit to the Centro de Investigación en Ciencias del Movimiento Humano (CIMOHU) in the morning. The visit was led by Dr. Francisco Siles and included a guided tour of the facilities and presentations by CIMOHU and UMB researchers. The UMB team was highly impressed by the work being done at CIMOHU and discussed several potential projects, particularly in areas related to human movement and physical health.

Following the visit to CIMOHU, the group met with Dr. José Moncada, former director of CIMOHU, for lunch at a nearby restaurant, accompanied by Dr. Siles. The purpose of this meal was to facilitate the establishment of additional connections between the two universities. Following lunch, Dr. Marianella Masis, from the Centro de Investigación en Neurociencias (CIN), conducted a tour of their new facilities, gave an overview of their current projects, and established a schedule for future collaboration.

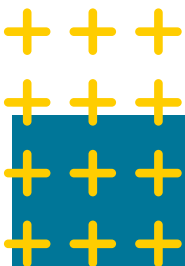
“This visit was highly productive, and I look forward to developing our projects in the coming months,” said Dr. Alice Ryan, UM School of Medicine. “The universities have the necessary infrastructure and expertise, which bodes well for our future work.”



Visit and networking event with the Center for Human Movement Research (CIMOHU)



Visit and networking with School of Health Technologies and Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE-UCR)





ACTION ITEMS & COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

Follow-Up and Communication

- Schedule meetings with:
 - OAICE and the researchers who could not attend the initial visit (Sept. 24)
 - Dr. Catalina Smith, UCR School of Physical Therapy
 - Dr. Jaime Fernández, UCR Posgrado de Gerontología
- Plan a visit for Dr. Carlos Faerron Guzmán to the Centro de Investigación en Cirugía y Cáncer (CICICA) to explore further collaboration opportunities.
- Create a shared communication channel with UCR, possibly using Teams, to share AYY Initiative news, research updates, and important deadlines, similar to a newsletter.

Collaboration Opportunities

- The UMB Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center (UM-OAIC) is now identified as a key partner for collaboration with UCR's Health Technologies and CIMOHU.
 - Shared research interests include: aging and cognitive neuroscience, aging and use of technologies (AI, ultrasound, etc.), and aging and exercise studies.
 - The UMB delegation recommended the following actions:
 - Integrate datasets from the US and Costa Rica for comprehensive research studies.
 - Use the PIAM to collect data from elderly groups in different variables.
 - Create a repository of research materials, including template grant language and proposals, to support ongoing and future research efforts.
 - Connect graduate students from the Gerontology Master's program at UCR with UMB researchers for mentorship and collaboration.
 - Develop a repository or list of UMB and UCR researchers, including photos, contact information, and publications, to help future students identify potential mentors and collaborators.
 - Organize lectures for both institutions on topics of mutual interest.
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