

The Holiday Newsletter

The most wonderful time of the year has arrived!

January 2026

International Scholars

Upcoming ISS Events

Scholar Coffee Hours

What: Meet to chat with other scholars – bring your own beverage and make some friends!

When: Fridays

11AM - Noon

Where: Outside of The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

November Meet & Greet

Where: HUB 265

When:

November

19th, Noon – 1pm

Please come meet our new scholars! As always, we will provide lunch!

Season's Greetings!



Thank you so much to Dr. Mikhail Trostnikov for speaking about their journey at the Meet & Greet on November 19th! We appreciate everyone who made time out of their day to come to the November Meet & Greet!

Ahead of our Meet & Greet on December 17th, learn a little bit about our speakers and their journey on page 2!

With the holidays around the corner, find out about seasonal events happening all around Riverside. Also on page 3, get a chance to learn more about our Cultural Conversation Class held every Tuesday!

Check this out!

Please fill out the feedback form on the ISS activities:

<https://forms.gle/H2ciS3T4sqbHqrTK6>

Heads Up!

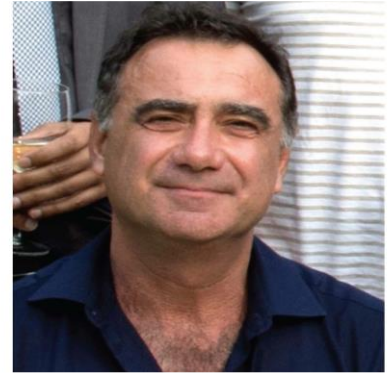
An important update from the ISS Office:

The ISS Office currently advises scholars who are already at UCR **to avoid international travel unless it is absolutely necessary.**

H-1B visa holders seeking a new visa will be subject to increased social media vetting, which may result in **significant delays in visa processing.**

Professor Thomas Eulgem
Professor, Department of Botany and Plant
Sciences

This month's speaker Professor Thomas Eulgem introduces his story below. Get to know him before the International Scholars Meet & Greet on December 17!



I am a Professor of Plant Cell Biology at the University of California at Riverside. My research program is focused on Plant Immunity with an emphasis on the regulation plant defense genes. Currently I am teaching biochemistry-related undergraduate classes and occasionally a graduate level seminar on Plant Immune Biology.

I was born and raised in Germany. After finishing high school in Bonn, I received two years of training at the *Rheinische Akademie* in Cologne to become a chemistry technician. I then started an undergraduate program on Biology at the *Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz*. After 2&1/2 years I switched to the *Albertus Magnus University of Cologne* where I received a diploma degree in Biology (equivalent of M.S. degree). From 1996 to 1999 I worked as a graduate student at the Cologne Max-Planck-Institute for Plant Breeding Research under Dr. Imre Somssich and Professor Klaus Hahlbrock on molecular roles of WRKY transcription factors in plant immunity. After I received my *Dr. rerum nat.* degree (equivalent to PhD) in summer 1999, I continued for six months as a postdoc at the same institute, before moving to Chapel Hill (NC, USA) to start at the *University of North Carolina* post-doctoral work with Professor Jeff Dangel on genetic aspects of plant immunity in *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

For my studies on WRKY transcription factors I received in 2000 the *Otto Hahn Medal* of the German *Max-Planck Society*. In summer 2003 I became a faculty member of the *Department of Botany and Plant Sciences* (BPSC) and a member of the *Center for Plant Cell Biology* (CEPCEB) at *UC-Riverside* (UCR), where I started independent research on plant defense gene regulation and synthetic plant defense elicitors. Besides leading a research program and teaching, I currently serve as chair of the *UCR Botany & Plant Sciences* department. Furthermore, I am a member of the Institute for Integrative Genome Biology and a cooperative faculty member of the departments of *Microbiology and Plant Pathology* as well as *Biochemistry* at UC-Riverside.

Cultural Conversation Class!

If you or your spouse is interested, please participate in the Cultural Conversation Class to help improve your English and to meet new friends. Thank you to the regular attendees for helping us make CCC successful!

Where: Student Services Building 2nd Floor, Conference Room

When: Every Tuesday, 9-10am

Our instructor is Candace Jorgensen, who has experience living in other cultures, which adds depth to her teaching the Cultural Conversation Class for international scholars and their families. She also holds a master's degree in education with emphasis on teaching English to speakers of other languages.

What to do this month in Riverside

Gotta Craft 'Em All: Poke Ball Ornaments

Collaborate with the Pokémon Club for their December Craft Event! You can trade with other enthusiasts and create your own Pokéball ornament.

When: Friday December 19, 2025

Where: La Sierra Library, 4600 La Sierra Avenue, Riverside CA 92505

<https://riversideca.gov/calendar/event/gotta-craft-em-all-poke-ball-ornaments?date=Friday%2C%20December%2019%2C%202025>

Reindeer Run, 5k, 10k, 15k, Half Marathon

An event that's open to all skill levels! Enjoy a Sunday running or walking through Riverside with friends or family.

When: Sunday December 21, 2025

Where: Ryan Bonaminio Park, 5000 Tequesquite Ave. Riverside, CA 92506

<https://www.abetterworldrunning.com/riverside-12-21-25-riverside>

Merry Artswalk

Enjoy the Festival of Light while listening to live performances. You can also get a chance to discover art local to Riverside.

When: Thursday December 18, 2025

Where: Along the street closed for Festival of Light

<https://riversideartscouncil.com/merry-artswalk-1>

Frequently Asked Questions

I need to leave the U.S. and ISS has not signed my DS-2019 document! Is that OK?

Please know that you do not need a travel signature on your DS-2019 document to either remain in or to depart the U.S. You do need a valid travel signature to return to the U.S. in J-1 status. A valid travel signature must be no more than twelve months old on the date that you return to the U.S.

If you are departing the U.S. soon and know that your travel signature will expire by the time you expect to return to the U.S., please contact our international scholar's office at internationalscholars@ucr.edu. If your DS-2019 is going to expire soon, please consult with your department to extend your stay and then contact our scholar advisor.

What will happen if I end my UCR appointment early and/or depart the United States and do not intend to return to the U.S. for my J program?

If you are a scholar and you depart the U.S. early (more than 15 days before your DS-2019 end date) and you do not intend to return to the U.S. for the remainder of your J program, please discuss this with your faculty sponsor. Please also email our advisors so that they can advise you on the steps and the visa implications of ending your program early.

Saying Goodbye to our friend Candace Jorgensen

We asked a few questions to our close friend Candace who will be hosting her final cultural conversation class this Tuesday. Follow below as she answers some exciting questions!

What are your favorite memories from your time teaching the cultural conversation class?

This is so difficult to answer, because I have truly loved everything about the Cultural Conversation Class-- learning about students' cultures from around the world, sharing my culture, making new friends, exploring interesting places together, tasting food from around the world...many favorite memories.

What would you like to tell anyone on the fence about attending a Cultural Conversation Class?

Don't be nervous when you see the word "class." There's no homework, tests or grades! Instead, it is like a gathering of friends you haven't met yet, people who are curious about the world around them, who are open to new things. Try it just once and see what you think.

Some people have told me they are shy so the "conversation" part makes them nervous. You don't have to stand up and give a speech. Just try a few words with the person next to you. Slowly you will feel more confident--this is what former students have told me.

What is something that you look forward to doing now that you have more time on your hands?

I plan to stay involved with helping those from other countries feel at home in the US. I will continue to teach English for an immigrant settlement organization, and I hope to still be involved with international scholars at UCR. But in the near future, I plan to travel along the east coast of the US with my husband.

What advice would you want to give to the people nervous about using their English in public?

"Accents are the spice of life." I teach this in Culture Class. Do not be embarrassed about your pronunciation. Everyone has an accent of some type. We need to remind ourselves of this. Yes, sometimes things get "too spicy." Then we speak slower and clearer. And everyone forgets words at times, even native English speakers. Be brave! Keep trying!



Sunset-watching Party at Sycamore Highlands Park



Candace Jorgensen



International Scholars House Party