Center for RNA Biology and Medicine

2026 RNA Collaboration Symposium
November 9th | MRB Seminar Room

Program

"Welcome to our Center's 2026 RNA Collaboration Symposium. Thank you for joining us. We sincerely hope you will enjoy learning of UCR's newest vibrant and exciting RNA research. We hope this event might offer a platform to strengthen existing collaborations and perhaps stimulate new ones!"

The RNA Collaboration Symposium Planning Committee

Time	Activity
9:00 – 9:20 a.m.	**Registration | Breakfast**
9:20 – 9:30 a.m.	**Center Update** **Sika Zheng**, Director
9:30 – 10:50 a.m.	**Session 1 – RNA in Health and Disease** ***Session Chair:*** *Jernej Murn* **Jernej Murn –** Flexibility of the genetic code in neuronal homeostasis. **Sika Zheng –** RNA regulation of longevity and brain development. **Sihem Cheloufi –** Going back to the roots: the grammar of ancient viral mRNAs in cellular plasticity. **Rong Hai –** Conserved targets in a world of escape mutants.
10:50 – 11:10 a.m.	**Coffee Break**
11:10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	**Session 2 – Emerging Technologies for RNA Science** ***Session Chair:*** *Joy Xiang* **Joy Xiang –** RNASeek: A generative language model for designing functional regulatory RNAs **Benjamin Donovan –** Progressive refinement of splice site selection. **Kevin Freedman –** Method development focused on enhancing the detection of RNA and DNA using a nanopore. **Seán O'Leary –** Single-molecule dynamics of eukaryotic translation initiation.
12:30 – 12:40 p.m.	**Group Photo**
12:40 – 1:25 p.m.	**Lunch**
1:25 – 1:35 p.m.	**Faculty Fun Facts! | Alexandra Huang** and **Matthew Guevara**

1:35 p.m. – 2:55 p.m.	**Session 3 – RNA Systems Biology** ***Session Chair:*** *Maria Ninova* **Maria Ninova –** Coordinated SUMOylation in the piRNA pathway. **Hailing Jin –** Cross-kingdom RNA communication. **Linlin Zhao –** Mitochondria-targeted Chlorambucil derivative drives mitochondrial nucleic-acid output and innate immune signaling. **Adam Norris –** Exploring alternative RNA splicing with ever-increasing *in vivo* resolution.
2:55 – 3:10 p.m.	**Coffee Break**
3:10 – 4:30 p.m.	**Session 4 – The Life Cycle of RNA** ***Session Chair:*** *Megan Norris* **Vivan Li –** What's in your tissue? Tools for decoding cellular organization and composition. **Megan Norris –** Non-canonical mechanisms of RNA localization. **Xuecai Ge –** Probing local translation in the primary cilium. **Gregor Blaha –** Scanning for the start codon: a one-way street or a random walk? Probing scanning mechanisms in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* using TCP-seq.
4:30 – 4:35 p.m.	**Closing Remarks**