

Ph.D. Positions – Ant Genomics and Ant-Plant Symbioses Starting Fall 2026

Ant-plant symbioses are among the most ecologically and evolutionarily dynamic interactions in tropical and subtropical ecosystems. These relationships shape patterns of biodiversity, community structure, and species coexistence. The lab of Dr. Rodolfo Probst at the University of California, Davis (Department of Entomology and Nematology) is recruiting **two** graduate students for Fall 2026. Starting in March 2026, Dr. Probst's lab at UC Davis will integrate comparative genomics, phylogenetics/phylogenomics, systematics, and field-based ecology to understand how mutualistic interactions involving ants evolve, diversify, and respond to environmental change. This will also include investigating ant-hemipteran dynamics in California's agroecological systems, addressing how ecological and genomic mechanisms mediate symbiosis, invasion, and population structure across native and introduced landscapes. These Ph.D. positions offer opportunities to develop projects centered on – but not limited to:

- Comparative genomics of mutualistic ant lineages (with emphasis on Formicinae).
- Evolutionary and ecological mechanisms of ant-plant-hemipteran interactions.
- Functional genomics of adaptation and convergence in mutualistic species.

Students will have access to state-of-the-art sequencing technologies (including Nanopore and Illumina platforms), field opportunities in the Neotropics and California, and the collaborative research environment of UC Davis, one of the world's leading institutions for entomology and evolutionary biology. The Department of Entomology and Nematology is internationally recognized for its excellence in research, teaching, and outreach, encompassing more than 20 faculty members whose expertise spans molecular biology, systematics, ecology, evolution, behavior, and pest management. The department fosters a highly collaborative and interdisciplinary environment, integrating field, laboratory, and computational approaches to address fundamental and applied questions in insect science. Davis is a vibrant college town situated in the heart of Northern California's Central Valley, offering a high quality of life, with easy access to both the Sierra Nevada mountains and the Pacific Coast, as well as to nearby cultural hubs such as Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area.

I seek motivated applicants from a variety of backgrounds, including those with experience in biology, entomology, bioinformatics, or a related field, and am particularly interested in those with a strong interest in evolutionary biology and genomics. I strongly encourage applications from first-generation college students, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, non-traditional, and international scholars. My lab will value equity, diversity, and inclusive mentorship as integral components of scientific excellence.

Funding and Support

Both positions will be **fully funded** through a combination of research and teaching assistantships, with opportunities for competitive fellowships and travel support for fieldwork and conferences. UC Davis provides extensive resources for professional development, graduate training, and engagement with CAES (College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences) research networks.

How to Apply

Email **Dr. Rodolfo Probst** (rsprobst@ucdavis.edu) with the subject line:
“Interest in Ph.D. position – Fall 2026 (Probst Lab)”

Please include:

- A CV – unofficial transcripts are also encouraged.
- Brief statement of research interests/experience, motivation, and career goals.
- Names and contact information for two professional references.

Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until positions are filled; candidates are encouraged to apply by **December 15, 2025**. Please note that selected candidates will also be required to submit a formal application to the UC Davis Graduate Program in Entomology (deadline: **January 5, 2026**) after discussions of potential fit and projects and prior to the agreed-upon start date. Please email Rodolfo Probst (rsprobst@ucdavis.edu) with any questions.

For More Information

[UC Davis Department of Entomology and Nematology](#)
[College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences \(CAES\)](#)
[My Personal Website – Lab Page Coming Soon](#)