

# MICROBIOLOGY & IMMUNOLOGY

## Employee Spotlight

### Q&A with Aura Ramirez Ph.D. Candidate - Smeltzer Lab



**What is the best thing about living in Arkansas?** That I get to see animals every day and in every season. I love seeing the little ducklings with their mommas in spring, dragonflies in summer, squirrels, rabbits, turtles and deer all year round.

**What advice would you give to new grad students?** When you choose to enroll in a graduate program, you are beginning a journey. Embrace it and enjoy it, don't make it hard on yourself, work smart and make the best of any result you get. Make sure you have a glass-half-full type mindset. Remember that troubleshooting can be fun and is the most powerful tool for learning.

**What is on your bucket list?** Shark diving and dance lessons (I would really like to know how to dance different rhythms).

**What is your favorite music genre?** I don't really have a favorite genre, but my favorite type of music is the one that teleports you to the beach... that kind that cheers you up and makes you want to dance to the beat or at least move your head to the rhythm.

**Where is the best place you've traveled to and why?** Buenos Aires, Argentina. The city is very pretty and well taken care of, it has a lot of historic places to visit and the food is really good.

**Do you have traditions in your family?** Yes, these are mostly New Year's traditions. We usually eat 12 grapes at midnight, they each represent one month of the year and we make one wish per grape as we eat them. We also put raw lentils on our pockets calling for prosperity. I haven't won the lottery yet but I keep finding lentils in my pants all year round.

**What was the first thing you bought with your own money?** A Christmas gift for my mom. It was a watch that she still wears to this day.

**Who inspires you?** At the risk of sounding cliché, women in science. Those women that despite all the gender inequalities have made their way to high-rank positions, run their own labs while being wives and mothers. For instance, the two ladies that just won the Nobel Prize for the CRISPR-based gene editing system are my most recent inspiration.

**What is the one thing you cannot resist?** Definitely Ice Cream, especially the key lime pie concrete from Andy's frozen custard. But if you haven't tried it yet you'll have to wait until next summer because it's a seasonal item.

**If you had a choice between two superpowers, being invisible or flying, which would you choose and why?** Flying, that way I could avoid the traffic.

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