

# Neural Networking

## General Body Meeting

By Kelly DeMars

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We met again among friends and peers for food, drinks, and merriment this past September for our first General Body Meeting of the academic school year. In addition to catching up with old members and meeting fresh incomers, we acknowledged the accomplishments of the previous year, many of which were supported by the gracious efforts of several faculty members.

We recognized the success of the first year of our Summer Neuroscience Internship Program (SNIP) in hosting 11 undergraduate researchers from universities across the nation. Students worked for 10 weeks on a research project which culminated in a poster session in which Joseph Dragone (Khoshbouei Lab), Candace Barnes (Dotson & McIntyre Labs), and Rachel Fritz (Notterpek Lab) were poster session winners. Applications for 2017 SNIP are currently open (for details:



neuroscience.ufl.edu/education/summer-neuroscience-internship-program/).

Our chapter recognized members that have contributed to our success this past year with \$200 Travel Award to offset SFN Conference traveling costs. The winners include Caesar Hernan-

dez (not pictured), Lauren Vetere, Miranda Schwabe, Caitlin Orsini, Leslie Gaynor, and Douglas Miller.

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## 2016 SFN Conference in San Diego



"SfN was a great platform to share ideas and present the work I've been doing. It's been a great venue for career and professional development in addition to showcasing the vast amount of diverse neuroscience research that is taking place across the globe." - Casear Hernandez

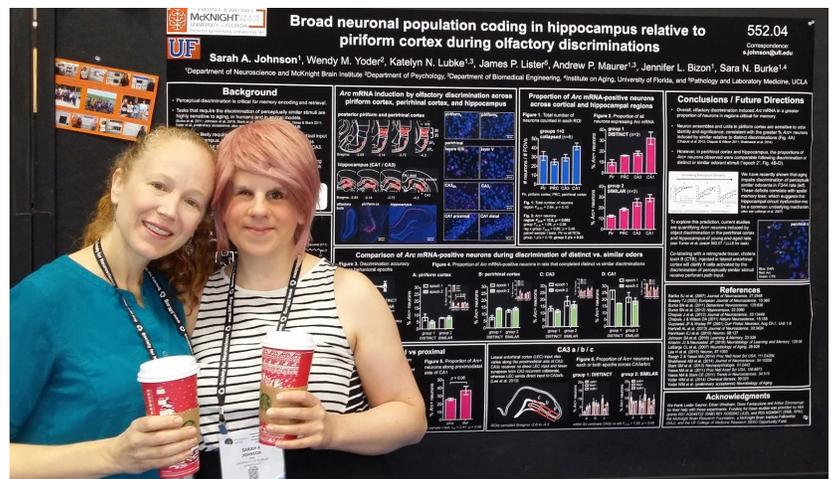
More than 30,000 people attended this year's conference and this included quite a few of our members! We asked several students what their favorite aspect of this year's SFN conference was - and here is what was said:

"The annual society for neuroscience meeting not only provides graduate students with an opportunity to present their work, but is also a great platform for both formal and informal meetings with other scientists. The topic-based poster sessions provide students with a chance to meet other graduate students, post docs and professors working on similar research and helps formulate ideas for future work. Personally, I was fortunate enough to not only meet with individuals whose work I have read and modeled some of my own projects after, but also have begun to form a future collaboration with. Without the annual meeting providing this platform, I would not have been able to make these connections." - Abbi Hernandez

"This years SfN was an amazing experience to me. I am in the first year of my dissertation project so I was able to interact with experts in the field at a time when their feedback can be implemented immediately. Hearing positive reviews, addressing

tough concerns, and considering future directions and collaborations took on a whole new meaning now that I am working on my thesis project. The other huge perk was getting to take my 3D confocal data to the Nikon booth to have their experts help me figure out how to best measure what I was looking at. Their input directly helped make a future figure more stringent and it was also their insight that helped me design our lab's current high-speed calcium imaging/optogenetics set-up." - Joseph Lebowitz

"Attending the Society for Neuroscience conference in San Diego allowed me to connect with professionals that lead the field in my areas of interest. And not just Neuroscientists--Neurologists, Neuropsychologists, and Industrial vendors attend SfN every year. Presenting research and attending talks provided many opportunities to engage in conversations with scientists I would love to work with someday." - Leslie Gaynor



Dr. Sara Burke and her post-doctorate associate Dr. Sarah Johnson at SFN 2016.

## Community Outreach in Gainesville, Florida

### Hidden Oaks Elementary Body Systems Day

By Kelly DeMars

Second graders at Hidden Oaks Elementary School learned about the brain and brain tricks while we all rehashed the white/gold or blue/black dress debate.



Students learned about taste and the basis behind super-tasters when they placed white strips of paper containing PTC, phenylthiocarbamide, in their mouths. The PTC test can identify supertasters in that only a proportion of the population perceives PTC as extremely bitter, while many are unable to discern any bitterness. The children seemed to prefer the other interactive taste experiment in which they were asked to determine the flavor of a jelly bean while holding their noses. Because flavor is a combination of taste and smell, students could only recognize the jelly bean flavor when they unplugged their noses.

We also located our blind spot, where the retina meets the optic nerve in which there are no photoreceptors. Typically, our brain just fills in the missing information in one eye with the information coming from the other eye. This obviously cannot happen when one of the eyes is closed in which case the brain fills in the gaps based on the rest of the environment. On a white strip of paper in which there was a black dot on right side about 4 inches from a black plus on the left, students were asked to close their left eyes, focus on the black plus on the left while holding piece of paper at arm's width and slowly bringing it towards them. The black dot should disappear when it reaches your blind spot as the brain fills in the missing information with the sur-



rounding white. However, children this age appear to be very bad at this experiment. Fortunately, many pencils, erasers, and stickers were passed out that day.

### Cade Museum

By Kevin Strang

Earlier this Fall, members of the North Central Florida Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience participated in "Girls Build the World," an annual event at the CADE museum in downtown Gainesville. The event focuses on introducing young girls to different STEM fields through interactive learning with various graduate and professional groups. The chapter was represented with a featured table, where students could come and learn about the brain through brain tricks, art, and interactive science. It was a wonderful event that we hope to participate in for years to come!

### Saturday Academy

By Leslie Gaynor

In December, our Brain Awareness Week coordinators visited the Saturday Academy at the Mount Carmel Baptist Church to teach their students about the brain! The Saturday Academy caters to elementary school students from East Gainesville and endeavors to increase minority representation in STEM-related careers by offering early educational experiences. The coordinators taught Saturday Academy students about the brain and its many roles in everyday functioning. At the end of the lesson, the coordinators led an interactive activity in which students created brain hats with colorful drawings to represent the location of the many brain func-

tions that had been discussed.

### Lab Tours

By Kelly DeMars

We are partnering up with UF Center for Pre-collegiate Education and Training on January 12 to give tours to groups of high school students interested in neuroscience/medical research. There will be two morning sessions from 9-10:15 am and 10:20- 11:45 am, exploring three labs per session, in which students will be given a quick synopsis of the research currently undertaken in the lab and an tidy explanation of how the data is acquired with heavy emphasis on the excitement of scientific successes and less regarding the heart-wrenching pain associated with publication rejection and dismissive attitudes toward negative data.



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*The North Central Florida Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience is located on the campus of the University of Florida in Gainesville, FL. Since its inception, the Chapter has been led by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows with support from faculty and administrators in the UF Department of Neuroscience. Each year we organize scientific and professional development venues for our members, visit local schools and community centers to educate about the brain and scientific research and sponsor travel awards to support attendance at the national meeting of the Society for Neuroscience.*

*Advancing the Understanding of the  
Brain and Nervous System*

**Visit us on the internet!**  
**<http://neuroscience.ufl.edu/sfn-north-central-fl-chapter/>**

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