

UCLA BRI Newsletter



FALL INTO NEUROSCIENCE

Explore the latest from the UCLA Brain Research Institute (BRI) in this Fall edition:

Message from the Director: Reflections and future goals	2
Insights from the October Neuroscience Retreat	3
BRI Spotlights: Meet the staff, faculty, and postdocs making waves.....	4
Research Highlights: Breakthroughs reshaping brain science	6
Student Success: Celebrating undergraduate and graduate achievements	9
Schweizer Professional Development Award	12
Outreach: Connecting neuroscience with the community.....	13
UCLA-CDU-Dana Center: Community-partnered neuroscience	15
Opportunities: New initiatives and ways to get involved	17

Join us in celebrating a season of discovery and innovation!

On the Cover: Moments from the inaugural Neuroscience Retreat and Poster Day—celebrating collaboration, innovation, and community. Learn more on page 3.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

These first seven months as your BRI director have been a dream come true. Your bright ideas, enthusiasm, and collaborative spirit made the *Future of Neuroscience Day* on October 22 a huge success. Together, we envisioned how UCLA's neuroscience community can lead into the future. Your working group ideas have been processed into a [report](#) and a [survey](#) to turn those ideas into action. If you haven't already, please fill out the [survey](#). Read more about our reflections on the day on the next page!



Dr. Gina Poe, Director of the UCLA Brain Research Institute

Here's how we're already acting on your suggestions:

Expanded Membership: Any neuroscience-affiliated person at UCLA can now [join the BRI](#) independently, not just PIs!

We are excited to bring your idea to life -- a **weekly Happy Hour and common space** to convene informally. Come socialize with colleagues across campus and neuroscience disciplines starting January 7, 2025, on Tuesdays 4-5:30 PM in the Gonda 1st floor seminar room and lobby!

Improved Communication: We're hiring a new faculty-level Associate Director of Communications to revamp the BRI website. Nominate yourself or others by emailing bri@mednet.ucla.edu to help create a searchable platform for collaborators and opportunities. If you are a trainee or researcher who would like to help, please nominate yourself, as it will take a village to make it great.

Find Your People: Affinity Groups and Integrative Center leaders' contacts are now on the BRI website. The [BRI Calendar](#) is updated with neuroscience events, and you can sign up for a weekly event digest—no Mednet email required.

Workshops: You want more workshops teaching skills like data analysis, machine learning, and modern neuroscience techniques. We can do that! [Fill out the survey](#) and let us know which workshops would be most useful for you and we can help coordinate them.

Professional Development: We have created a new Schweizer Professional Development Award available to all BRI trainees for conference travel, workshops, and training. [Join the BRI](#) to apply!

There was strong support for **collaborative seed grants** to go to trainees, promoting achievements, and specific cores. We are listening and working on it. Stay tuned!

Happy holidays! Congratulations on all your achievements in 2024. To be featured in future newsletters, please [drop the news here](#). Thank you for all you do.



REFLECTING ON BRI'S INAUGURAL NEUROSCIENCE RETREAT

A Day to Remember:

On October 22, 2024, the Meyer and Luskin Conference Center buzzed with energy as students, postdoctoral fellows, staff, and faculty gathered for the inaugural Neuroscience Retreat and Poster Day. Fresh coffee, teas, pastries, and fruit welcomed attendees, setting the tone for a day filled with collaboration, innovation, and discovery. This year marked the 34th annual BRI Poster Day, now paired with our first-ever neuroscience retreat—a milestone for the UCLA BRI.



The retreat began with a warm welcome from Dr. Gina Poe, BRI director, followed by the inspiring session, "The Future of Neuroscience," featuring esteemed speakers Walter J. Koroshetz, M.D., Caroline Montojo, Ph.D., Joshua A. Gordon, M.D., Ph.D., and Frederick D. Gregory, Ph.D. Attendees then participated in breakout groups hosted by integrative centers and 13 affinity groups, brainstorming ways to shape the future of neuroscience at UCLA.

During a sunny outdoor lunch overlooking the Bruin football field, a shared vision emerged: greater collaboration across diverse groups and stronger connections with the community. The afternoon highlighted the creativity and dedication of our community through a two-hour poster session featuring over 100 posters showcasing groundbreaking research.

The BRI also gathered feedback from the BRI community on priorities for improvement and growth. Based on this input, the BRI compiled a detailed report outlining key recommendations.

Click [here](#) to read
the full report.

The day concluded with sweet and savory small plates, an open bar, and spooky-themed drinks to celebrate Halloween. The inaugural retreat was a resounding success, energizing the UCLA neuroscience community and setting the stage for even greater achievements ahead.

“ *This was the best event the BRI has put on ever in all my years at UCLA.* ”

– Barney Schlinger,
Professor of Integrative Biology & Physiology; of Ecology
& Evolutionary Biology



MEET THE TEAM BEHIND THE SCENES

Behind every successful event and milestone at the BRI is a team of dedicated individuals who keep everything running seamlessly. In this section, we're excited to introduce more of the incredible staff whose hard work and commitment make it all possible. Stay tuned as we continue to celebrate the extraordinary people who make the BRI thrive!



ETHAN SNOOK

Financial Services Analyst II, BRI

Ethan primarily serves as the travel and procurement financial analyst for BRI Integrative Centers and Affinity Groups, arranging travel, meals, and lodging for invited guest speakers at a global scale. Additionally, he coordinates the 3 BRI Summer Program Research experiences (BRI-SURE; UCLA-HBCU Neuroscience Pathways; UC-HSI Superior Opportunities in Maximizing Access [SOMA] to Neuroscience), acts as the collections officer for the BRI Electron Microscopy (EM) and Microscopic Techniques (MT) Core Facilities, and serves as the assistant to the BRI Director.



AARON MICHNER

Financial Services Analyst II, BRI

Aaron Michner is the Financial Services Analyst II at the BRI, where he supports the institute's operations through financial analysis and project management. He is actively involved in coordinating the Joint Seminar in Neuroscience (JSN) lecture series, working closely with the chair to facilitate engaging and impactful sessions. Aaron also plays a key role in BRI projects related to the Gonda building and is dedicated to enhancing the BRI's digital presence by developing the institute's website to improve accessibility and outreach for neuroscience research.

Outside of his professional role, Aaron enjoys exploring the outdoors around Los Angeles and enjoys having ice cream with his wife.



NEW BRI MEMBERS

We're thrilled to introduce the newest additions to the BRI community this quarter! These talented individuals join a dynamic network of over 300 faculty and 1,000+ trainees spanning 30 departments and 8 schools at UCLA. Learn more about our incredible members [here](#).



AUSTIN COLEY, PH.D.
Neurobiology



GIL HOFTMAN, MD, PH.D.
Psychiatry &
Biobehavioral Sciences



VAN SAVAGE, PH.D.
Ecology & Evolutionary
Biology / Computational
Medicine



ERIC REAVIS, PH.D
Psychiatry &
Biobehavioral Sciences



JIN WANG, PH.D
School of Education &
Information Studies



NICHOLAS
JENDZJOWSKY, PH.D.
Medicine

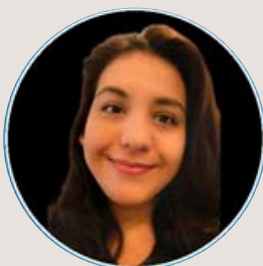
Why become a BRI member?

- Collaborate with UCLA's neuroscience community.
- Access grants, travel awards, and workshops.
- Present at BRI events and seminars.
- Stay updated with our weekly digest.

Click [here](#) to
join the BRI

POST-DOC SPOTLIGHT

Two decades ago, the BRI launched the Arnold Scheibel Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow in Neuroscience Lecture to honor exceptional postdoctoral researchers. Each year, fellow(s) deliver a lecture in the Joint Seminars in Neuroscience series & receive a travel prize. Congratulations to this year's **22nd Arnold Scheibel Postdoctoral Fellows!** Learn more about Dr. Scheibel's legacy [here](#).



**KATHIA RAMIREZ
ARMENTA, PH.D.**
Post-doctoral fellow
Lab: Kate Wassum, Ph.D
Department of Psychology,
UCLA College of Life Sciences



UROS TOPALOVIC, PH.D
Post-doctoral fellow
Lab: Nanthia Suthana, Ph.D
Department of Psychiatry &
Biobehavioral Sciences, UCLA
David Geffen School of Medicine



RESEARCH BRIEFS

Now, let's dive into the remarkable research conducted by our BRI members, advancing our understanding of the brain. Get inspired by three innovative studies featured in this issue: how flies adapt their vision to diverse environments, how COVID-19 may impact long-term retinal health, and how the hippocampus supports learning beyond spatial navigation. Each discovery sheds new light on the intricate complexities of the nervous system.

How Visual Ecology Shapes Object-Tracking in *Drosophila*

The visual environments animals navigate often shape their flight control strategies, but are these strategies better suited to their visual ecology than to their evolutionary relationships? In their [study](#), published in *Current Biology*, Dr. Mark Frye and Dr. Martha Rimniceanu reveal how related *Drosophila* species have adapted their flight control strategies to suit their visual environments. The fruit-eating *Drosophila melanogaster*, which thrives in cluttered habitats stabilizes its gaze by fixating on distant backgrounds and tracking nearby objects like food with saccades. In contrast, the desert-dwelling *Drosophila mojavensis* combines smooth pursuit and saccades to directly track sparse landscape features, largely ignoring stationary surroundings.



Martha Rimniceanu, Ph.D
MCIP



Mark Frye, Ph.D
Professor & Director of
Molecular, Cellular and
Integrative Physiology
(MCIP)

This research uncovers how evolutionary pressures shape sensory-motor strategies, tailoring them to environmental needs. By comparing these two species, Rimniceanu et al. provide valuable insights into the interplay between ecology, behavior, and adaptation—highlighting the role of visual ecology in guiding species-specific responses to their habitats.

Could COVID-19 Accelerate Vision Loss?

SARS-CoV-2 continues to affect millions globally, with symptoms that extend far beyond the acute phase, including neurological complications. A [study](#) led by Dr. Nan Hultgren and Dr. David Williams, published in *PNAS Nexus*, highlights the virus's potential effects on vision by demonstrating its ability to efficiently infect and damage the retinal pigment epithelium (RPE). They found that SARS-CoV-2 infection compromises RPE function, triggers widespread inflammation across retinal layers, and induces cellular changes resembling those in age-related macular degeneration (AMD). This RPE impairment could result in photoreceptor damage and long-term vision loss. These findings underscore the importance of further investigating SARS-CoV-2's impact on retinal health and its potential role in accelerating AMD-like conditions.



Nan W. Hultgren, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow,
Department of
Ophthalmology

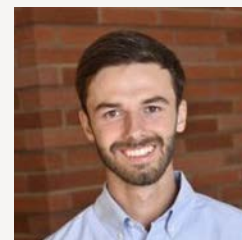


David S. Williams, Ph.D
Professor of
Ophthalmology and
Professor of Neurobiology

How the Hippocampus Adapts to Non-Spatial Learning

Behavioral timescale synaptic plasticity (BTSP) is a form of synaptic potentiation where the occurrence of a single large plateau potential in CA1 hippocampal neurons leads to the formation of reliable place fields during spatial learning tasks.

Recent PhD graduate Dr. Conor Dorian and his mentor Dr. Peyman Golshani led a [study](#) that asked whether BTSP could also be a plasticity mechanism for the generation of non-spatial responses in the hippocampus and what roles the medial and lateral entorhinal cortex (MEC and LEC) play in driving non-spatial BTSP. In this preprint, by performing calcium imaging of dorsal CA1 neurons, they discovered BTSP-like events that formed stable odor-specific fields during an olfactory working memory task. Additionally, through chemogenetic and axonal calcium imaging, they demonstrated that odor-specific information from LEC and strong odor-timed activity from MEC play a role in driving BTSP in CA1.

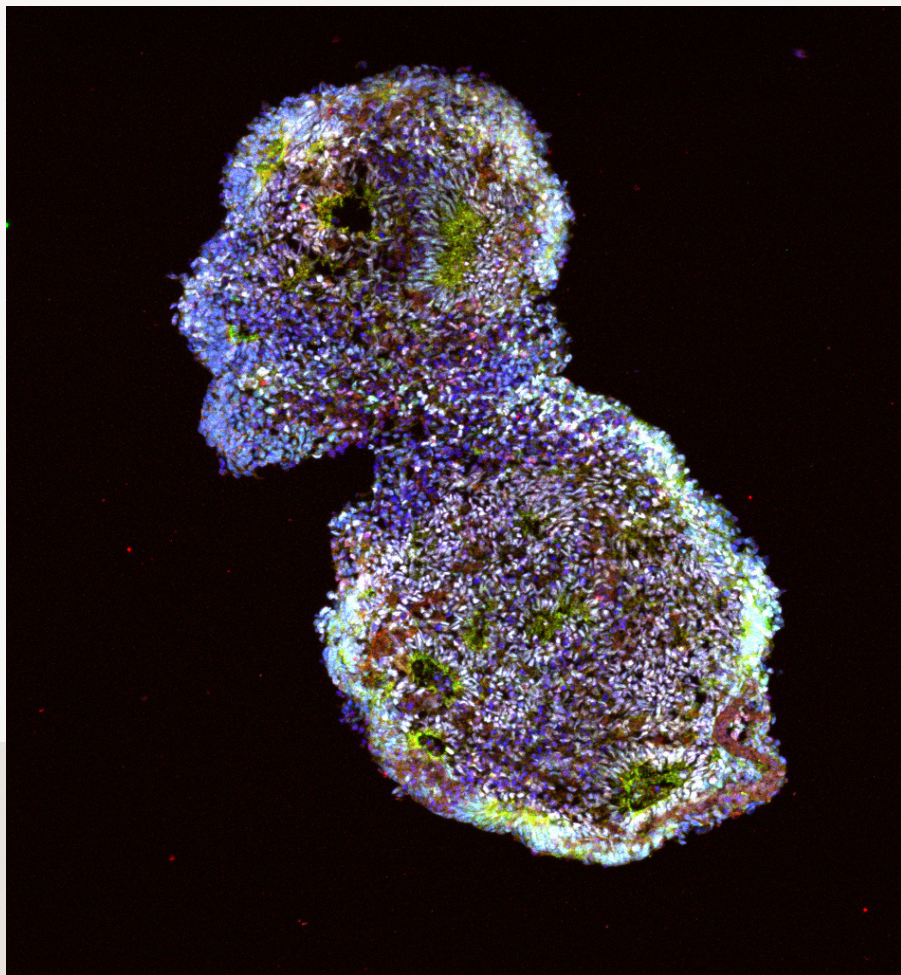


Conor Dorian, Ph.D
NSIDP



**Peyman Golshani, M.D.
Ph.D**
John Mazziotta Endowed
Chair in Neurology and
Professor-in-residence,
Neurology

The beauty of neuroscience isn't just in what we discover but also in how we see it. These stunning images, captured by BRI scientists, reveal the intricate details of brain development and disease.



Human Spinal Cord Organoid

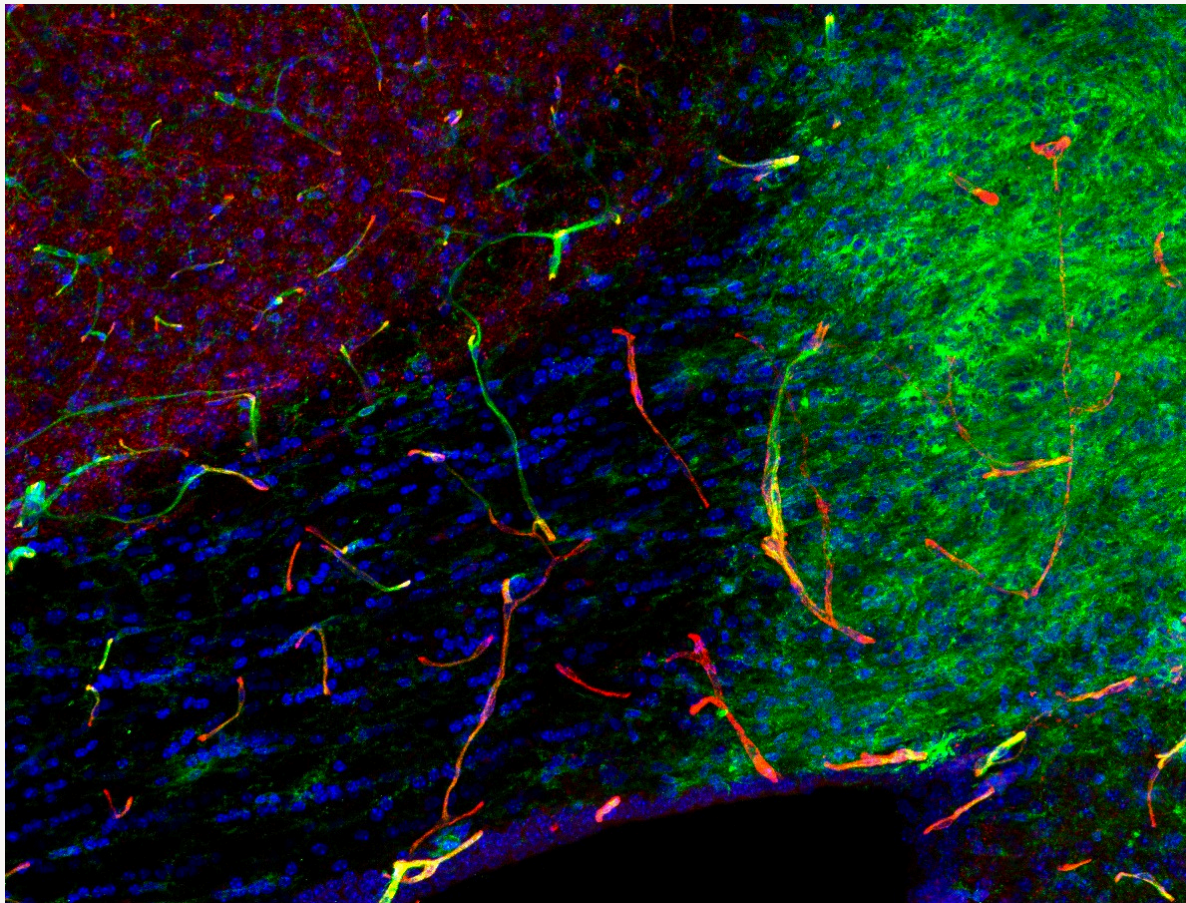
by Yahir Verdi

This cross-section of a day 20 human spinal cord organoid highlights pain- and itch-relaying neurons (PAX2: green, LHX1/5: white, LMX1B: red, DAPI: blue). Derived from an African-American iPSC donor line, these organoids are part of a project to develop regenerative therapies that restore sensation in spinal cord injury patients, with a focus on creating treatments tailored for California's diverse population.

Meet the Scientist

Yahir Verdin is a CIRM-Bridges intern serving as a research assistant in the Butler/Gupta lab at UCLA. As an undergraduate at CSUN, he has an interest in pursuing graduate school to study molecular biology. Outside the lab, he enjoys playing chess, watching football, and spending time with his family.





Blood Vessels in the Demantia Brain

by Min Tian

This confocal image captures blood vessels (red) and CD39 expression (green) in mouse brain tissue, with nuclei marked in blue. CD39, a molecule identified by UCLA scientists, plays a crucial role in vascular dementia (VaD). In a recent study, researchers used human and mouse models to show that CD39 expression is impaired in VaD. Enhancing CD39 or activating its pathway in microglia improved neural repair and promoted recovery, highlighting a promising therapeutic target for vascular dementia.



Meet the Scientist

Min Tian is an Assistant Project Scientist in the Carmichael Lab at UCLA, where she explores novel therapies for dementia, aiming to bridge science and hope for patients. When she's not delving into the complexities of brain health, she finds joy in gardening and shore hunting, embracing nature's treasures and a moment of serenity outside the lab.



STUDENT SUCCESS

CELEBRATING GRADUATE EXCELLENCE!

We proudly honor the graduate students who have been awarded prestigious fellowships and accolades for their exceptional research and dedication to advancing neuroscience.



LILLIAN WILKINS
NSF GRFP Honorable Mention



MATTHEW ANDERSON
NIH Diversity Supplement



LAUREN WAGNER
William Orr Dingwall Foundation
Dissertation Fellowship

NRSA F31 NEW AWARD RECIPIENTS FOR 2024-25



CAITLIN GOODPASTER



DOUGLAS VORMSTEIN-
SCHNEIDER



LEWIS YU

ARCS FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

ARCS (Achievement Rewards for College Scientists) Foundation advances science and technology in the United States by providing financial awards to academically outstanding students who are US citizens studying to complete degrees in science, engineering, math, technology, and medical research. ARCS Scholars are selected annually.



GABRIEL ROJAS-BOWE



ABBIE YU



TERRY PRINS



KEIONNA NEWTON



KATE MOONEY



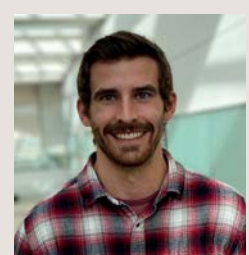
ROY MCREYNOLDS



ARIELLE HOGAN



JENNY AN



DAN JAKLIC



STUDENT SUCCESS

Beyond Fellowships: Graduate student achievements take many forms. From tackling workshops that challenge the mind to starring in films that captivate the heart, our students show that their talents go far beyond the lab bench.

GABRIEL ROJAS BOWE ATTENDED THE DYNAMIC BRAIN WORKSHOP

Allen Institute's Summer Workshop on the Dynamic Brain brings together graduate students and postdoctoral researchers specializing in either experimental or computational neuroscience to learn, collaborate, and discover. 2024 is the Workshop's ten-year anniversary.



LILLIAN WILKINS ATTENDED MBL'S COMPUTATIONAL NEUROSCIENCE COURSE

The Marine biology laboratories's computational neuroscience course at Woods Hole, Massachusetts brings together experts in a variety of fields, from zoology, ethology, and neurobiology, to physics, engineering, and mathematics to explore computational methods in neuroscience.

BLAKE MIRANDA STARRED IN PLACE OF GHOSTS

Blake Miranda, a graduate student at NSIDP and talented actor, recently starred in the film *Place of Ghosts*. Joining him on screen were acclaimed actors Forrest Goodluck (*The Revenant*) and Glen Gould (*Cardinal*). Directed by Bretten Hannam, the movie was filmed amidst the picturesque landscapes of Nova Scotia.



UNDERGRADUATE NSIDP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WELCOME, LOUIS PEREZ!



We're excited to introduce Louis Perez, the newest advisor to join the Undergraduate Neuroscience IDP (U-NSIDP) team! A native Angeleno and proud UCLA alum, Louis earned his BA in Psychology and Chicana/o Studies before obtaining a master's degree in Educational Counseling from USC. Louis is passionate about supporting students in their holistic development and well-being, helping them achieve their academic, personal, and professional goals.

When he's not working, Louis enjoys trying new coffee shops, attending concerts, watching horror movies, spending time with family and friends, and practicing self-care. Be sure to say hello if you see him around campus!

NEURO CONNECT

The U-NSIDP hosted its annual kickoff event during Week 0, helping students prepare for a successful year ahead. Attendees gained valuable tips on transitioning into upper-division courses and exploring research opportunities, while also connecting with neuroscience-focused student organizations and outreach programs.

The event featured Dr. Stephanie White, Dr. Elena Dominguez, Dr. Rafael Romero, Neuroscience Undergraduate Society, CruX, InterAxon and Nu Rho Psi.



“ This is our most attended [undergraduate student] event throughout the school year! ”

-Aftin Whitten
Student Affairs Officer, U-NSIDP



INTRODUCING:

SCHWEIZER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD

The BRI is proud to announce the Schweizer Professional Development Award, honoring the extraordinary contributions of Dr. Felix E. Schweizer, former BRI Director (2017–2024) and chair of UCLA’s Interdepartmental Neuroscience PhD Program.

Dr. Schweizer’s career embodies innovation, mentorship, and a passion for discovery—from his pioneering research on neuronal communication to his leadership in advancing the BRI’s collaborative mission. This award reflects his unwavering commitment to empowering trainees to thrive in their professional journeys.



Dr. Felix E. Schweizer

Professor, Neurobiology Director
Chair, Interdepartmental PhD Program for Neuroscience

ABOUT THE AWARD:

Open to BRI students, postdocs, and project scientists, the award provides up to \$1,500 to support travel for conferences, workshops, or specialized training that enhances professional development. Whether it’s presenting research on international stages or gaining new skills, this opportunity aims to help recipients carry forward Dr. Schweizer’s legacy of scientific excellence and collaboration.

Application Deadline: 11:55 PM Jan 10, 2025

Award Amount: up to \$1,500

How to Apply:

- Submit a brief statement outlining the opportunity and its predicted impact on your career
- CV and an estimated budget
- Email application to bri@mednet.ucla.edu

“ I am deeply honored to have this award bear my name. It is my hope that future generations of research scientists will benefit greatly from the opportunities that travel and collaboration bring. ”

–Dr. Felix E. Schweizer

This award is a testament to Dr. Schweizer’s enduring commitment to nurturing the next generation of neuroscience leaders. We look forward to supporting our trainees in their journey to grow, learn, and contribute to the field of neuroscience.

If you would like to contribute to this professional development fund, please click [here](#) and to thank you for your generosity, you will receive a receipt (e.g. for tax purposes), a letter of thanks, a BRI Calendar, and (if you opt-in) your name on the list of BRI donors. If you are involved with neuroscience research or teaching at any level, you can [join the BRI](#) for free! The BRI provides opportunities for travel to conferences, workshops, and specialized training opportunities that enhance professional development.



OUTREACH

At the heart of UCLA's neuroscience community is a shared mission: to inspire curiosity and foster a love for learning among students from diverse backgrounds. This fall, we are proud to highlight the incredible outreach efforts led by our students, postdocs, and faculty, who tirelessly work to make neuroscience accessible and exciting for the next generation of thinkers and innovators.

InterAxon: Bringing Neuroscience to Classrooms

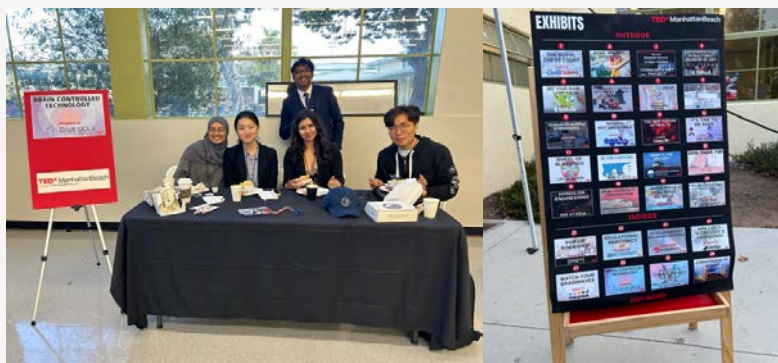
[InterAxon](#), an undergraduate student group, is dedicated to sparking interest in neuroscience among students in underserved schools with limited access to science education. Through hands-on activities and engaging presentations, InterAxon introduces young learners to the wonders of the brain. Recent efforts included classroom visits and participation in the annual Explore Your Universe (EYU) event, where students explored the intricacies of neurons, microscopes, and the connection between music and the brain.



[Exploring Your Universe](#), the volunteer-run largest science outreach event on campus, is held every year on the first Sunday in November.

CruX@UCLA: Pioneering Neurotechnology

[CruX@UCLA](#), a student-led neurotechnology organization, empowers students to contribute to the growing field of neurotech. By organizing intercollegiate BCI competitions, technical workshops, and mentorship opportunities, CruX equips participants with the skills and connections to thrive in this innovative field.



This fall, CruX attended TedXManhattan Beach, presenting ongoing projects at the event's expo. Highlights included their work from the California Neurotech Conference, research collaborations with UIUC and USC, and past Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) projects.



Bridging Neuroscience and Education: BRAINWAVE Inspires Educators and Scientists

[BRAINWAVE](#), an exciting new initiative at UCLA, connects cutting-edge neuroscience research with classroom teaching, empowering K-12 educators to inspire the next generation of scientists and thinkers.

On September 25th, BRAINWAVE hosted its inaugural workshop, welcoming educators from across Los Angeles for a dynamic day of learning. Teachers explored how the brain processes memory, the critical role of sleep in learning, and actionable strategies to bring these insights into their classrooms. Through hands-on activities, interactive presentations, and lab tours, educators left with transformative tools to connect their students with the wonders of brain science.

The program also creates unique opportunities for UCLA’s postdoctoral fellows, allowing them to share their research, refine their science communication skills, and engage directly with educators. This collaboration inspires both teachers and students, bridging the gap between the lab and the classroom.



Scenes from the inaugural BRAINWAVE workshop: (Top) Teachers gather with Dr. Takahiro Ohara (Postdoctoral fellow and Instructor, BRAINWAVE) and Dr. Vidya Saravanapandian (Postdoctoral fellow and founder, BRAINWAVE) for a group photo. (Bottom) Postdoctoral fellows and BRAINWAVE instructors Dr. Ceazar Nave and Dr. Merel Dagher leading engaging sessions on memory, sleep, & neuroscience research, and teachers are excited to discuss new teaching tools.



“Empowering teachers is one of the most powerful ways to shape the future of science. By equipping them to spark curiosity and foster discovery, we build the foundation for the next generation of scientists and innovators.”

–Dr. Vidya Saravanapandian
Postdoctoral Researcher, BRI
Founder of BRAINWAVE

Teachers described the workshop as “inspiring” and “transformative,” with many eager to return. With more workshops planned for Brain Awareness Week in March, BRAINWAVE is fostering a vibrant community of educators and researchers, working together to enhance STEM education and neuroscience literacy.

If you’re a postdoc eager to share your expertise or an educator excited to learn, BRAINWAVE offers a unique opportunity to connect, inspire, and make a lasting impact.

Learn more at bri.ucla.edu/brainwave.



Neuroscience Communication Affinity Group



Join [our mailing list](#) to hear about future meetings!

Effective science communication fosters trust between scientists and the public, inspires future generations, and drives interdisciplinary collaboration. [Neurocomm Affinity Group](#) is a space for BRI members to practice their science communications skills for within and beyond academia.

This past Fall, NeuroComm

- honed our visual design skills in an interactive Adobe Illustrator workshop
- worked on independent projects centered on visual communication
- heard from a NINDS Science Writer and a Teaching Professor & Author on their insights into public engagement and education

Through hosting workshops, peer-led discussions, and guest speakers, we focus on connecting neuroscience to broader audiences, whether for crafting talks for scientists outside your field, honing your presentation for outreach activities, or speaking with policymakers.



UCLA · CDU · DANA CENTER

Community Partnered Neuroscience.

The [UCLA-CDU Dana Center](#) is reimagining how neuroscience connects with the public. Through a practice of community-partnered neuroscience, the center aims to influence education, research, and systems change by centering the knowledge and voices of communities historically underrepresented in neuroscience.



Education Initiative



Neuroscience & Society Co-Lab



Idea Salons



Systems Change Project

How can community concerns, needs, and existing efforts be translated into new neuroscience research?

This interdisciplinary initiative brings together scholars from neuroscience, social science, education, policy, and the humanities, working alongside clinician-scholars, community partners, and organizations in South Los Angeles. The goal? To foster a new generation of experts: neuroscientists who lead community participatory research and community leaders equipped to navigate the methods of neuroscience.

In our [Human Centered Design workshops](#), participants across academic and community spaces collectively brainstorm issues for which neuroscience research can deliver social impact.

MEET THE UCLA - CDU - DANA CENTER FELLOWS

This dynamic cohort of students, researchers, faculty, and community members across diverse fields and lived experiences are united by their work at the intersection of neuroscience and society. With the goal of striving to reimagine how neuroscience can drive meaningful societal change, their projects aim to reorient neuroscience practices towards positive change and leverage neuroscience to better understand and address the impacts of adversity on health, humanity, and self-perception.



TORRENCE BRANNON-REESE

Multidisciplinary Artist, Founder of FA-MLI, and Community Advocate



JOHN HORTON JR

Community Thought Leader & Researcher at Carceral Ecologies lab, UCLA



ANNA IMMERGLUCK

Undergraduate Student, UCLA Human Biology and Society



AKILA KADAMBI, PHD

Postdoctoral Scholar, UCLA Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, USC Brain and Creativity Institute



LILYANA LEVY, PHD

Postdoctoral Scholar, Neuroethics Lab (DGSOM Neurosurgery)



KAYLA Y LIM

PhD Candidate in Physiology, UCLA



ERIN MORROW

PhD student in Cognitive Neuroscience, UCLA



PAOLA ODRIOZOLA, PHD

Postdoctoral Scholar in Psychology



SHANTÉE N. AYALA ROSARIO

PhD Candidate in Physiology, UCLA



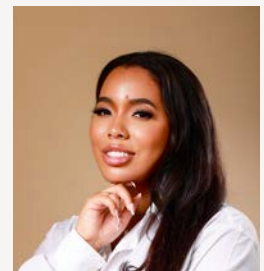
HAFIFA SADDIQ, PHD, MPH, RN

Faculty Fellow; Assistant Professor, CDU



ANA SOFIA RODRIGUEZ VEGA

PhD Student in Neuroscience, UCLA



SYDNEY WING, PHD

Postdoctoral Research Scholar in Community Brain Health Research

A NEW FOUNDATION SUPPORTING OUTREACH AT UCLA

With a remarkable legacy in neuroscience and a deep commitment to advancing research and community outreach, Dr. Christopher J. Evans, the Stefan Hatos Professor and director of the Shirley and Stefan Hatos Center for Neuropharmacology at UCLA, is leading an inspiring new endeavor. Fueled by the vision and generosity of Shirley Hatos, Dr. Evans has established a foundation dedicated to advancing research and raising awareness about substance use disorders. Although Shirley Hatos sadly passed away last year at the age of 96, her enduring legacy lives on at UCLA, where she and her husband helped create the Hatos Center for Neuropharmacology.

For Dr. Evans, the foundation fills a critical gap:

“Outreach should be one of the university’s mission pillars, yet resources for it are limited. This foundation ensures that outreach will thrive, even during times of financial hardship.”

The foundation’s first initiative centers on the Drugs of Abuse, Prevention, and Awareness (DOPA) program, co-created and co-directed by Dr. Evans and Dr. Rafael Romero as part of the Neuroscience IDP Capstone. Reflecting Shirley Hatos’s commitment to addressing substance use disorders and comorbid mental health challenges, the DOPA program delivers science and policy-based education to traditionally underserved high schools. "Shirley was passionate about this cause, and the DOPA program resonated deeply with her," Dr. Evans shared. By inspiring students interested in addiction and mental health research and raising awareness about the risks of drug use, the program creates a lasting impact.

The foundation’s goals are clear: evaluate, optimize, and expand the DOPA program to maximize its impact. "Every year, DOPA visits to local high schools are truly inspirational," Dr. Evans reflected. Looking ahead, Dr. Evans envisions a bright future for DOPA and UCLA’s outreach efforts. "We’re still in the formative stages, but the goal is clear—expand outreach at UCLA and beyond, and ensure it remains a vital part of our mission," he emphasized. This foundation is a powerful testament to the transformative potential of combining research excellence with community commitment. Stay tuned for opportunities to get involved in this exciting initiative.



Dr. Chris Evans and Shirley Hatos at the annual Hatos Center Executive Board Meeting, featuring a centerpiece flower arrangement crafted by Dr. Evans himself, adorned with gold-painted opioid poppy pods—a thoughtful nod to Shirley’s love of floral design.

With a career marked by groundbreaking opioid receptor research and leadership as a former director of the UCLA Brain Research Institute, Dr. Evans brings a wealth of experience and vision to this effort.

“The creativity and energy of our undergraduates are remarkable, and the recognition from K-12 students and their teachers highlights the value of this experience.”

- Dr. Chris Evans



A NEW BRI INTEGRATIVE CENTER

INTEGRATIVE CENTER FOR SLEEP AND PERFORMANCE (ICSP)

The new [Integrative Center for Sleep and Performance at UCLA](#), directed by Dr. Ketema Paul, unites scientists, clinicians, and educators to advance groundbreaking research in sleep, circadian rhythms, and performance. By fostering collaboration across disciplines, ICSP aims to create a vibrant community dedicated to understanding how sleep impacts health, well-being, and human performance.

MISSION

The ICSP will coordinate and integrate research activities across four key domains:

- Basic Research: Molecular, cellular, and animal models.
- Clinical Translational: Bridging experimental models and real-world applications.
- Clinical Research: Interventional studies to improve patient care.
- Wellness and Social Medicine: Addressing community-based and social dimensions of sleep health.

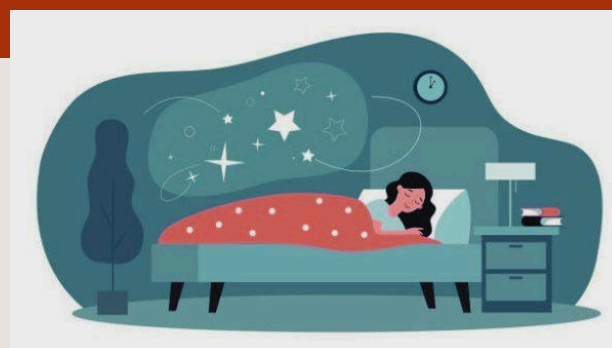
Four critical components:

Component 1: Research training and education

Component 2: Basic and translational research

Component 3: Clinical practice

Component 4: Translation of research to community health and wellness



The administrative core will support research integration, trainee management, grant coordination, and educational initiatives to ensure seamless collaboration and growth.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Michael Chase Sleep and Performance Spring Symposium: The Spring Symposium will feature keynote presentations from leading experts in the field, panel discussions, and interactive workshops. These activities will facilitate knowledge exchange and networking among participants, helping to build a strong and cohesive community of researchers and practitioners dedicated to advancing the understanding of sleep and performance.

ICSP Journal Club: This journal club offers students, post-docs, and junior scientists the chance to improve their presentation skills, understand exceptional science, and stay abreast of innovative discoveries in the field.

Frisca L. Yan-Go, M.D. Lectureship in Sleep Medicine: The Lectureship was established in 2016 to honor Frisca Yan-Go's 25 years of service and leadership in Sleep Medicine at UCLA. Frisca was the first Sleep Medicine clinician at UCLA, and she was deeply committed to fostering strong relationships among the academic, clinical, and research faculty to advance the science and practice of Sleep Medicine. The clinical and academic programs join, and enhance the established, robust community of sleep and circadian researchers at UCLA.

ADDITIONAL BRI RESOURCES & WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!

SCAN TO ACCESS ALL
LINKS ON THIS PAGE



BRI Job opportunities at the BRI
[BRI job-board](#)



Elevate your research. Discover our training grants!
[BRI Training Grants](#)
Stay tuned for the UCLA Neuroscience Grant Review Initiative in the Winter edition!



Looking for a scientific forum to exchange ideas?
[Explore BRI Affinity groups](#)



Inspired to be a Neuroscience Ambassador?
[Join the BRI outreach squad!](#)



BRI's new shared equipment library—borrow, lend, & discover tools you didn't know you needed!
[BRI equipment-library](#)



Want to feature your research or other success stories in the next newsletter?
[Submit stories for Newsletter](#)



Explore BRI's Cutting-Edge Core Facilities
[BRI core-facilities](#)



We value your feedback: Share your thoughts on this Newsletter!
[Feedback link](#)



The [BRI Undergraduate Summer Research Programs](#) is accepting applications for Summer 2025!



Want to support our mission?
[Give now!](#)

Access all BRI newsletters [here](#).

THE BRI NEWSLETTER TEAM

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Vidya Saravanapandian
(Postdoctoral Scholar, Neurology, BRI)

Content, Design and Style Editor

Kayla Y Lim (Molecular Cellular & Integrative Physiology Ph.D. student, BRI)

Content Coordinator and Editor

Linfan Gu (Bioengineering Ph.D. student, BRI)

Content Reviewer

Priyanka Sigar
(Neuroscience Ph.D. student, BRI)

Content and Announcements Support

Joseph M. Quintero
(Programs and Operations Manager, BRI)
Aaron Michner
(Financial Services Analyst, BRI)
Priyanka Samra
(Financial Services Analyst, BRI)

Faculty Review Board

Dr. Gina Poe (Director of BRI)
Dr. Felix Schweizer (Director of Graduate Education, Chair of Faculty Executive Committee, BRI)
Dr. Kate Wassum
(Associate Director of Research, BRI)

THE RIPPLE EFFECT: REFLECTIONS ON IMPACT AND THE BRAIN

.....

Drop a Pebble in the Water

By Joseph Norris

*Drop a pebble in the water,
And its ripples reach out far;
And the sunbeams dancing on them
May reflect them to a star.
Give a smile to someone passing,
Thereby making his morning glad;
It may greet you in the evening
When your own heart may be sad.
Do a deed of simple kindness;
Though its end you may not see,
It may reach, like widening ripples,
Down a long eternity.*

.....

Just as this poem captures the enduring power of small actions, we honor the collective efforts of our neuroscience community. From groundbreaking discoveries to quiet moments of mentorship and outreach, every effort matters. Let this be a call to continue creating ripples—because we may never fully see the impact of what we start. Thank you for being part of the BRI community.

