EDITORIAL

The 7th Annual Conference of the NorthEast Under/graduate Research Organization for Neuroscience (N.E.U.R.O.N.)

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This year marked the 7th Annual Conference of the NorthEast Under/graduate Research Organization for Neuroscience (N.E.U.R.O.N.). The N.E.U.R.O.N. conference is a regional program that was created to promote training for undergraduate students in neuroscience. The program was developed by educators from colleges and universities in New England and other areas of the Northeast in hopes of facilitating training in the Neurosciences for undergraduates and collaboration among faculty in the region.

These hopes are reflected in the primary goals of N.E.U.R.O.N.:

1) To provide an open forum for neuroscience undergraduate and graduate students to present and discuss their work with students and faculty of similar interests.
2) To provide faculty an opportunity to discuss curricular and research issues in Neuroscience.
3) To enhance communication and collaboration among neuroscience researchers and educators.

In order to achieve these goals, N.E.U.R.O.N. has held annual conferences that are focused on enhancing neuroscience training. The annual one-day conference provides a forum for undergraduate and graduate students to present and gain feedback from peers and faculty on the research in which they have engaged during their academic year. Students and faculty participate in workshops that discuss important topical and pipeline issues in neuroscience. The diversity of the agenda provides a well-rounded opportunity for all attendees to engage in rigorous science, while promoting and encouraging the development of neuroscientists in training. Notable neuroscientists provide the keynote address:

1997-Year One
Dr. Bruce McEwen, Rockefeller University, “Sex, stress, and synapses: Endocrinology and neuroscience combine forces”

1998-Year Two
Dr. Particia Goldman-Rakic, Yale University School of Medicine, “Cortical memory systems”

1999-Year Three
Dr. Robert Sapolsky, Stanford University, “Stress, neurodegeneration, and individual differences”

2000-Year Four
Dr. Sandra Witelson, McMaster University, “Einstein and other brains”

2001-Year Five
Dr. Ed Kravitz, Harvard Medical School, “Fighting lobsters – From genes to behavior”

2002-Year Six: Dr. Donald Pfaff, Rockefeller University
“Hormonal and genetic influences on arousal of the brain, sexual and otherwise”

2003-Year Seven: Dr. Eve Marder, Brandeis University
“Stability and plasticity in adult and developing neural circuits”

The location of the N.E.U.R.O.N. conference rotates every three years. The conference was held at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut from 1997-1999. Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts hosted the 2000-2002 meetings. The 2003 N.E.U.R.O.N. conference found a new home at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts where it will be held until 2005. This year’s meeting proved to be as successful as years past. There were 128 attendees and 51 poster presentations. Among the
registrants, 68 undergraduates, 12 graduate students, and 25 faculty members were in attendance and 23 institutions were represented.

The poster session was lively and well-attended (visit the N.E.U.R.O.N. website at http://www.albany.edu/neuron/ to see pictures of the poster session and others from the 2003 meeting). Dr. Joan King of Beyond Success lead the popular student workshop entitled, “Evoke your genius: Unlock your potential.” Dr. Su Tieman of SUNY Albany led the faculty workshop on ethics in teaching and research. The day was completed with the engaging keynote address “Stability and plasticity in adult and developing neural circuits” given by Dr. Eve Marder from Brandeis University.

The participation in and enthusiasm for N.E.U.R.O.N. has increased steadily over the years. The N.E.U.R.O.N. meeting provides an opportunity for students to get involved with the scientific process and share their work with others. This opportunity is particularly important to student from smaller schools or small neuroscience programs who may not get to interact with many other student or faculty interested in neuroscience. Faculty members also benefit greatly from the chance to exchange ideas on research and teaching that N.E.U.R.O.N. provides. We hope that the N.E.U.R.O.N. will continue to be a resource to more students and faculty in the future.