

@UlowaNeuro Notes

April 2021

Every April we celebrate Graduate Student Appreciation Week in cooperation with the Graduate College. Too often in science and academics, we get so hyper focused on the work that we forget to stop and consider the people behind the work. Without the people, none of this is possible. It is so important to recognize and celebrate individuals.

In many ways, we can attribute the growth and development of the field of neuroscience to graduate students and their expansive view of science and scholarship. Their insatiable curiosity and interest in studying questions that spanned traditional disciplines, led to the creation of the first interdisciplinary graduate programs in neuroscience, including Iowa's in 1984. My work branched from memory to sleep in the late 1990s when a graduate student asked an intriguing question about the impact of sleep deprivation on memory, and it's fair to say that much of my work on sleep and memory since then has been driven by graduate students.

I think every line of work benefits from fresh perspectives—people who aren't afraid to ask "why?" and "how?" In academic science, we are so fortunate to have this perspective refresh built into our system. Each year we have new students whose deep thinking and curiosity open new paths of discovery in our labs. Our INI graduate students come from many different graduate programs including interdisciplinary programs in genetics and molecular medicine as well as neuroscience. In that way we might consider our labs hyper-interdisciplinary. Our faculty have worked hard to secure a number of training grants that help us provide the financial support our students need. And students are always on our minds when we speak with private donors about the best ways to support our work. In fact, the first private gift to the INI, after the founding gift from the Carver Trust, created the Kwak-Ferguson Fellowship, awarded annually to a student studying neurodegenerative disease. **Maggie Tish** received this fellowship last year for her work on normal pressure hydrocephalus in the Geerling Lab.

Even as we laud our students as the engines of discovery in our labs, we are keenly aware that we are losing highly capable scientists who face roadblocks on the path from undergraduate to graduate student to postdoc to faculty, even more so with the challenges of the pandemic over the past year. This is especially true for students who don't see faculty and leaders who look like them. We know that our graduate students represent the future of neuroscience, and we can't count ourselves successful unless and until our graduate students are achieving their full potential.

April is also traditionally a time for thesis defenses as years of study and research culminate at the end of the academic year. Congratulations to **Rachel Schroeder** (Stevens Lab) and **Yujia Liu** (Strack Lab) who defended their theses this April!

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