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SfN 2024 report: Sweet Home Chicago JUNE and FUN Faculty Awards

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The Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience (FUN) had a strong presence at the 2024 Society for Neuroscience meeting in Chicago. Once again, we had a booth, which gave our membership a place to meet and discuss important issues. Several of our members presented at professional development workshops, including a workshop entitled, “Demystifying the Scholarship of Teaching,” that was organized by our Education Committee Chairs, David Donley and Amy Jo Stavnezer. A FUN Final Fridays session was dedicated to the topic right after the meeting.

FUN sponsored an undergraduate poster session in conjunction with the SFN’s Trainee night with 120 undergraduate poster presentations. This is always a highlight of the meeting, seeing our work with our students on display, and watching them transition into young scientists. We awarded 20 travel awards, and you can see the complete list of awardees, their mentors and our travel award sponsors [here](#).

We held a business meeting that was also available through Zoom, where bylaws and committee reports were presented and discussed, A slate of new officers took over the reins of FUN, including

President: Jackie Rose

Past - President: Yuan Yuan (Connie) Kang

President-elect: Lorenz Neuwirth

Secretary: Jennifer Willhelm

Treasurer: Melanie Leussis

Treasurer-Elect: Lauren (Rudy) Rudolph

Councilor: Mathew Abrams, Monica M. Gaudier-Diaz, Marc Nahmani, Aparna Shah, Jennifer Wenzel, Lauren Williamson

We thank past officers for their service to FUN.

And at the FUN social which took place Sunday night, faculty and students mingled over snack and drinks and awards were presented. A summary of those awards is presented below.

JUNE AWARDS

JUNE presented several awards to recognize and thank authors, board members and reviewers that make the journal strong.

Article of the year (Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 issues) was awarded to the manuscript, “Sherlock Holmes and the Neurophysiologists: unraveling the “mystery” of active learning success,” by Lauren B. French, Madeleine Stauffer,

and Maria Salazar Requena (Allegheny College, Case Western Reserve, U of Pitt respectively) (<https://doi.org/10.59390/EHEK8915>). The article lays out an active learning exercise that is both collaborative and enhances problem solving skills. The focus is on a common topic, synaptic transmission, for undergraduate neurobiology courses. The authors do a formal assessment of student learning that supports the efficacy of the tool in the classroom. Many of us will find this active approach useful in our classrooms.

Reviewer of the year was award to **Amy Jo Stavnezer** (College of Wooster) and **Andrea Nichols** (UC, Irvine). A Big Thank You was award to **Bruce Johnson** (Cornell) and **Alo Basu** (Holy Cross) for their service on the JUNE 2023 workshop issue that was published in summer 2024.

FUN FACULTY AWARDS FOR 2024

Each year, the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience (FUN) opens a call for nominations to recognize outstanding contributions to undergraduate education in the neurosciences. These awards are presented to FUN members who have exhibited exceptional teaching or research in an undergraduate setting, who have provided fundamental service to advancing the mission and values of FUN, and those who have demonstrated achievements in these areas over sustained periods of time. Nominations are solicited and reviewed by the Awards committee, which consisted of Erin Rhinehart (Past President); Connie Kang (President) Tari Tan (Councilor); Stefan Pulver (FUN member).

CAROL ANN PAUL EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR: Kelly Lambert, University of Richmond

Kelly investigates experience-based neuroplasticity, teaches multiple neuroscience courses and has written two neuroscience textbooks (*Clinical Neuroscience: Psychopathology* and the *Brain and Biological Psychology: Brain in Context*) as well as three mainstream books including *Lifting Depression*, *The Lab Rat Chronicles*, and *Well-Grounded*. Educating the public from her research through these books provides the best form of outreach possible, written in exceptionally accessible storytelling style. In 2018, Kelly was the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award given by the International Behavioral Neuroscience Society. Her research targeting connections

between physical effort and emotional resilience was featured on CBS Sunday Morning and her rat-driving research has been featured in over 1500 news stories across the world, including the Netflix series *The Hidden Lives of Pets* and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Rat City*. In 2019, Lambert described her behaviorceuticals research perspective in a TEDx Bermuda talk. In 2023, she received the Society for Neuroscience's Science Educator Award for her scientific outreach endeavors.

With all these wide extensive outreach efforts, Dr. Lambert has also provided excellent training and education for numerous undergraduate and graduate-level student and postdoctoral fellows, making her an excellent candidate for the Educator of the Year Award.

FUN MENTOR AWARD: Corina Bondi, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Bondi has an immense amount of enthusiasm, dedication, persistence, collegiality, and success with training undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral neuroscience students, as well as medical students and residents that rotate through her laboratory. Dr. Bondi provides the opportunities for her trainees to attend national meetings such as SfN, SACNAS, and IBNS where they present their research and frequently win travel and presentation awards. Over 98% of her undergraduate neuroscience trainees (~ 60) have been accepted into or completed graduate or medical school. Dr. Bondi is also the program director for the Rehabilitation Institute Research Day at Pitt, implementing a day of research with national and international speakers as well as trainee presentations.

The following are a few examples of quotes from her mentees:

"Undeniably, Dr. Corina Bondi is the most outstanding mentor I have ever had, and I cannot envision one better."

- Eleni Moschonas, PhD candidate, Univ Pittsburgh.

"Without Dr. Bondi's dedication to my individual development, I would not be in science today." - Darik O'Neil, PhD student, Columbia.

"Dr. Bondi's commitment to mentorship extends beyond academic guidance; it encompasses personal and professional development. Her mentorship has been a guiding force throughout my educational and professional journey, providing me with the tools and mindset necessary for success in the challenging and dynamic field of neurosurgery." – Heather M. Minchew, MD, Univ Kansas Med School.

"She is unequivocally the best mentor one could ask for!" Piper Rennerfeldt, PhD student, Rutgers.

Dr. Corina Bondi is considered by all her former and current undergraduate students to be a superb mentor and one that has helped drive their current success. She is also one that many said they would like to emulate, the highest endorsement for an outstanding mentor. Dr. Bondi is preparing the next generation of neuroscientists, and we know that the future is in excellent hands.

FUN SERVICE AWARD: Kurt Illig, University of St. Thomas

Kurt has contributed significantly to the success and continued growth of FUN through his t-shirt designs, as webmaster, through his extended time in the president-elect/president/past-president positions, and many other acts of service too numerous to list. As the president, Kurt started several initiatives including the DEI committee, the mentoring network program, and the FUN online store. He was a key figure in guiding FUN through virtual interactions at the start of the pandemic and then transitioning back into in-person events as the pandemic subsided. Without his service and dedication to FUN, especially during the pandemic, the organization might not have survived. Over the past five years FUN has faced some extremely challenging situations, where the amount of sustained effort and dedication required to ensure the organization's success is almost unfathomable. However, no matter the challenge, Kurt worked tirelessly to ensure FUN's success, working closely with a plethora FUN members to creatively solve problems and accomplish the goals of the organization.

FUN AWARD FOR FOSTERING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY: Jenn Honeycutt, Bowdoin College

Though Jenn started her faculty position at Bowdoin in 2020, during the height of the pandemic, she has managed to involve students meaningfully in her lab work, mentor students at the highest level, and create a welcoming space for a diverse array of students. Jenn's passionate, enthusiastic, and skilled mentorship has made a real difference in the lives of dozens of students thus far at Bowdoin. Jenn has quite effectively included students in her lab, focused on behavioral and affective neuroscience, from the start. Though the pandemic led to delays and forced some remote work, Jenn was creative in generating opportunities for student learning, having mentored 29 Bowdoin students since her arrival in 2020, many more than normal for pre-tenure faculty at Bowdoin. Jenn's students have rapidly produced publication-quality results, demonstrating Jenn's effective mentorship. Jenn's students have presented their results every year at the Society for Neuroscience meeting, the associated FUN sessions, and Maine INBRE meetings. In 2022, her student-authored abstract was highlighted in a press conference on early life adversity sponsored by the Society for Neuroscience. Five of these student-led presentations were awarded conference awards for presentation over the last few years. Jenn is a first-generation college student and LGBTQ+ identifying woman in STEM. Her identity combined with her deep and passionate support of all her students has had a profound impact on the academic success of a growing group of students. The majority of the 29 students trained in her lab have an identity that is under-represented within the sciences: 82% identifying as women or nonbinary; 32% identifying as persons of color; 25% identifying as first

generation and/or low income. Jenn's commitment to LGBTQ scientists is deep. She mentored two LGBTQ graduate students via Out in STEM (oSTEM) before arriving at Bowdoin. In 2022, Jenn founded Bowdoin's oSTEM

chapter and continues to advise students within this capacity. Here are just a couple quotes from her students:

“During my time working with Dr. Honeycutt, she created an inclusive environment by eliminating barriers to participating in research and being transparent with her own experience working in academia. She tirelessly explained jargon, funding structures, and hidden expectations that are present in the field of neuroscience and can sometimes discourage new, young scientists like myself.”

“Before coming to college, I did not know what a career as a scientist meant. As an immigrant student there were many

aspects of higher education that were hidden even while I was on campus. Meeting Dr. Honeycutt and working in her lab has been one of the most influential parts of my undergraduate career. As a fellow first-gen, queer woman she showed me that to be a scientist you don't need to have a certain background or demographic. She has taught me how to push beyond the expected and look at the world of neuroscience with wonder and confidence.”

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