

Synapshot

FALL 2026

DEPARTMENT OF NEUROSCIENCE_CSH

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NEUROSCIENCE TURNS 10!!

Welcome to the second edition of the Department of Neuroscience Newsletter! This is a special one in that it marks the start of a celebratory year for DePaul Neuro, our Tenth Anniversary! It's hard to believe, but in 2016 students at DePaul were finally able to declare a major in Neuroscience (instead of just a concentration in Biology or Psychology). Our first group of students was small and mighty but we now can boast to be the fourth largest major in the College with almost 200 majors and minors.

Although a lot has changed since 2016, the passion that the faculty, students, and staff have for neuroscience continues. We hope to share that passion with you in this newsletter where you will meet our newest faculty member, learn about exciting things our students are doing, and (re)connect with one of the first graduates of the Neuroscience major.

We'd love to use the opportunity of the Tenth Anniversary to reconnect with you, and learn about how you have advanced neuroscience in your own work and lives. The newsletter will highlight some opportunities to come back to campus to visit, but you can come see us anytime! Our Tenth Anniversary is also an opportunity to think about the future of the department and how we can ensure that we support the next ten years of Neuroscience majors. *Happy 10th Anniversary DePaul Neuro!*



Dorothy Kozlowski, PhD

Chair and Vincent de Paul Professor
Department of Neuroscience
College of Science and Health



New Faculty Member:

Q & A with Dr. Matthew Bachman



Dr. Matthew Bachman has joined the Neuroscience faculty this year. A cognitive neuroscientist who studies decision making, Dr. Bachman comes to us from the University of Ontario where he was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Hutcherson lab. He completed his B.S. in Psychology at Florida State University ('13), and his PhD from Duke University ('22). In addition to his research, Dr. Bachman will be teaching Intro to Neuroscience; Physiological Psychology; Cognitive Neuroscience and will eventually develop classes more specialized to his areas of expertise in decision making and EEG.

Q: Can you share about your career path into Cognitive Neuroscience?

A: I didn't really have a plan for my "career path" when I began at Florida State University, but in hindsight there were a few things that drew me to neuroscience and psychology. First, I've always highly valued knowing the "truth", and quickly came to appreciate that science was, in essence, the act of trying to find "truth" in our chaotic world and to try to use that information to make the world a better place. I particularly loved neuroscience because it was so mysterious! I LOVED learning all about the things we didn't really understand about our brain and wondered if I could help solve those mysteries.

A research methods course really cemented my interest and encouraged me to work in a lab. This was the real turning point for me, because I found doing actual research to be far more thrilling than any of my classes. I was also incredibly lucky to have an incredible mentor, who gave me ample opportunities to cultivate my enthusiasm and skills. Once I graduated, he asked me to run his lab at the University of Maryland for a few years. From there I just continued following my natural curiosity and trying to grow as a scientist. I completed my PhD at Duke University because I wanted to develop an interdisciplinary research program. Afterwards, I completed my post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto where I learned new skills such as fMRI and computational modeling.

Q: What is your research area and what's the first study you're excited to launch at DePaul?

A: My research broadly focuses on the interactions between attention and decision making. Both of these are huge fields of cognitive neuroscience but have historically been separate fields of study. I am broadly interested in how both sides of this relationship influence one another, and my specific studies usually focus on one side of this relationship.

On one side, I might study how one reads and orders off a menu at a restaurant – does attending more to certain options make you more likely to order it? On the other side, some of my studies look at how high-value items unconsciously change your attention, even when it's not in your best interest to do so (e.g., when a distracting billboard shows your favorite food while you try to focus on driving).

Q: What classes are you excited to develop in the future?

A: I have a few ideas that I hope to develop, but my favorite is arguably a class designed to introduce students to my favorite neuroscience tool, electroencephalography (EEG). We would discuss key concepts about how it works and give students some hands-on experience with collecting data and perhaps analyze it. We might even run a small-scale study if there is sufficient time. I am also interested in developing a lecture on neuroeconomics but am still working on the details of that plan.

Q: Can you share about your personal hobbies and interests? What do you like to do (or eat) for fun?

A: I love all forms of food, which is probably obvious from how consistently they show up in my examples. I enjoy cooking, baking, and have recently taken up gardening (and have begun keenly checking on my tomato plants in the hope that they will be ready to pick soon). My favorite cuisine is Thai, but if I could only have one food on a deserted island, it would be fried chicken. Otherwise, I am a massive nerd and enjoy playing video games and Dungeons and Dragons when I can. Most importantly, I have a brilliant, charming wife, and we recently welcomed a baby girl into our lives.

Faculty and Staff Notes



Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience (FUN) Workshop

Neuro Department Faculty attended and presented at the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience (FUN) Workshop this summer. It was an opportunity to learn new ideas about how to bring neuroscience to our student and to network with other FUN faculty throughout the country. Dr. Kozlowski presented a workshop on how to develop neuroscience majors and departments and Dr. Lim presented a hands on workshop on how to integrate games into teaching. Dr. Norstrom fell in love with a virtual anatomy table and our new faculty member Dr. Bachman soaked everything in before the start of his first year.

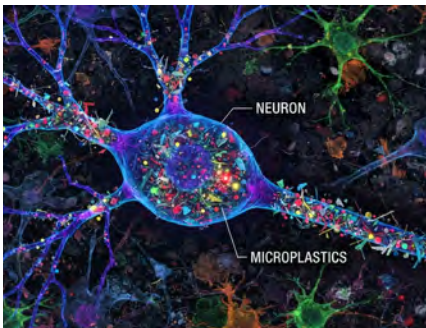
(Image :L to R; Dr. Nortrsom, Lim, Kozlowski & Bachman)



Neuroscience & Marketing Grant

Drs. Austin Lim (Neuroscience), Jenny Tatara (Marketing), and Tony Deng (Public Relations and Advertising) were awarded the Provost's Collaborative Research Grant. Their research project focuses on using liminal space imagery to improve public service advertisements in the context of mental wellbeing. They use biometric measures to study how effectively a liminal space advertisement can convey a message.

(Image = An example liminal space that may provoke a sense of unease.)



Alzheimer's and Microplastics

Eric Norstrom received a Faculty Summer Research Grant from the College of Science and Health to investigate the effect that microplastics might have on cellular and molecular events related to Alzheimer's Disease pathogenesis. Working with Neuroscience major Alyssa Hanson, they found that microplastic exposure to a neuron-like cell line altered the expression of several proteins, some of which were relevant to Alzheimer's. While we can't share specific details yet, keep an eye on this space. *(Image AI generated)*



Engle receives Service Award

Neuroscience Administrator and Student Success Coordinator, Jaimie Engle, was honored with the "Dawn Huckelberry 'Busy Bee' Service to ILACADA Award," from the Illinois Academic Advising Association. This award is given at the discretion of the ILACADA Executive Board to current or former board members who have gone above and beyond in their roles. Jaimie previously served as the associations President, Communications Chair, and on various conference committees, and currently serves as Webmaster. The Award comes with a lifetime membership to the association.

Chicago Society for Neuroscience Conference

Students Attend 2026 Chicago Society for Neuroscience Conference

In February, DePaul neuroscience students attended the Chicago Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience conference. Held at the University of Illinois, Chicago campus, the day-long event featured keynote speakers sharing their research, poster presentations, and opportunities to meet fellow students and learn about careers in neuroscience.

The conference attracts students and faculty from the Chicagoland area and has previously been held on DePaul's Lincoln Park campus.

In addition to scientific presentations, the conference also hosted a NeuroArt competition, where attendees were able to send in art that creatively depicts an important concept in neuroscience.

Colette Vanderpoel, one of the attendees, said of the conference: "This was my first time attending a science conference! I was a little intimidated before I arrived because I didn't know what to expect. But, once the speakers began presenting, I learned a lot about different types of projects being worked on in the neuroscience world and got a feel for what I wanted to do in the future."

Vanderpoel found her time at the conference meaningful, especially with respect to what comes next: "This conference gave me a better understanding of my future in science because I realized what type of studies I gravitated towards the most, which were neuropsychology related! This led me to declaring a double major of neuroscience and psychology at DePaul."

(LtoR: Dr. Lim, Dr. Kozlowski, Juliet Peterka, Jessie Sabatini, Aurelija Zalane, Zain Naqvi, Ash Duffee, Mia Lamb)



Big East Research Symposium

Ash Duffee ('26), Selected to Represent DePaul

Presenting at the Big East Symposium at Madison Square Gardens was an invaluable experience that I will never forget. I first learned of this opportunity after having presented at the annual CSH undergraduate research symposium. My poster was entitled, "Tracking Synaptic Maturation: Spine Apparatus



Development and Golgi Satellite Recruitment." I didn't think too much of applying because only five DePaul students are selected to present and I didn't consider myself to be a very great public speaker, but I figured it never hurts to try. Sure enough, I found out that I had been selected as 1 of 5 students to present my research! The symposium was set to take place during the weekend before finals week, so not only did I have to finish up all my classwork ahead of time, I had to run the last of the experiments to complete my project, quantify the data, create my poster, and then practice presenting. This was a very difficult process, but I always felt supported by Dr. J(effrey) and my lab mate, Juliet Peterka, who inspired me to keep working hard and keep my head up!

I spent a total of three days in New York, and I had an amazing time exploring the city, visiting places like the New York Public Library, Central Park, the Museum of Natural History, and had some amazing food! The symposium took place on the second day.. I had such a wonderful time presenting to the judges among whom there were both experts and non-experts, so I modified my presentation each time I presented to best tailor it to my audience. This was such a great opportunity to network with professionals and other researchers, and this experience left me feeling very fulfilled. I knew that the hard work I had put into my research was paying off, and I was very happy to have the opportunity to share my research with others!

Some advice I would give to my fellow neuroscience students hoping to go into research is to be confident in your abilities and surround yourselves with others who carry the same passion for learning that you do. You're capable of more than you think you are, but you must work hard to eventually see your dreams come true!



Alumni Spotlight:

Amira Affaneh, Ph.D, Class of 2017

A member of our first graduating NEU class, Dr. Affaneh has continued to pursue understanding the APOE gene, a genetic risk factor for Alzheimer's Disease, and one she was introduced to as an undergraduate researcher here at DePaul.

Dr. Affaneh earned her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from Northwestern University and is now a postdoctoral research associate at Washington University in St. Louis. She studies genetic factors that protect against Alzheimer's disease using stem cell culture models.

Dr. Affaneh was introduced to research, and the APOE gene in the lab of Dr. Eiron Cudaback. Here she gained confidence as a researcher and to apply to graduate school. She was given the foundational skills to not only do science, but to think critically and ask meaningful questions. "Looking back, each stage of my training has built upon the foundation I developed at DePaul, while allowing me to refine the kind of questions I want to ask and the type of scientist I continue to develop into."

My research has shifted from studying genetic risk to understanding genetic resilience.

Dr. Affaneh was first focused on understanding how the APOE gene, the strongest genetic risk factor for late-onset Alzheimer's disease influences neuronal tau pathology (a hallmark of the disease). Now she is studying a rare protective APOE variant to understand the cellular pathway that promote resilience to Alzheimer's disease, with the long-term goal of identifying mechanisms that could ultimately be harnessed for new therapeutic strategies.

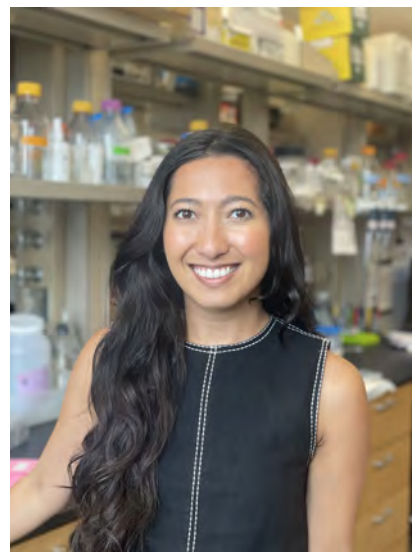
Dr. Affaneh has received several awards and opportunities throughout her scientific training including a National Institutes of Health training grant, Student Poster Award at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, and a postdoctoral poster award from the Knight Alzheimer Disease Research

Center. She was also selected for the Alzheimer's Association Ambassador Program which allowed her to become more involved in the Alzheimer's research community beyond her own laboratory.

Switching to Neuroscience was one of the first major decisions that put me on the path toward graduate school and ultimately my current career studying neurodegenerative disease.

Dr. Affaneh didn't start out as a NEU major. She entered DePaul as a Health Sciences major and enjoyed it, but felt that Neuroscience aligned much more closely with her growing interests and long-term goals. "The interdisciplinary nature of neuroscience was especially exciting to me because it brought together biology, psychology, chemistry, and research in a way that matched how I wanted to think about scientific questions. Through the major and my experiences in the laboratory, that initial curiosity developed into a genuine passion for research." She also felt that it was "an opportunity to part of something that was growing at DePaul and to help shape the community around it."

"One of the things I valued most about DePaul was the accessibility of its faculty and the sense of community within the program. There was an open-door environment where I could build relationships with faculty, learn from their experiences and career paths, and explore different ways to become involved in science. Those relationships helped make a career in research feel tangible and achievable."



First Graduating Class



Advice for current NEU Students

Tap into your community. Some of the most valuable resources you have are the people who have gone through these experiences before you. When I was applying to graduate school, I reached out to former DePaul students who had gone on to different graduate programs to hear about their experiences and get their perspectives. Those conversations helped me better understand my options and navigate a process that was completely new to me.

DePaul Neuro Hosts Chicago Brain Bee, Again!

DePaul Neuroscience proudly hosted the annual Chicago Brain Bee for the 2nd year in a row, organized by Assistant Professor, Dr. Okunola Jeyifous, with support from department Chair, Dr. Dorothy Kozlowski, and department Administrator and Student Success Coordinator, Jaimie Engle. On Saturday, February 7th, 48 students from 20 different Chicago area high schools travelled to the Lincoln Park campus to test their knowledge of Neuroscience.



The day began with an introduction from Brain Bee 2025 & 2026 organizer, Dr. Okunola Jeyifous. Students then put their knowledge to the test in a 45-minute, 40 question qualifying written exam, while parents enjoyed an informational session about DePaul University from our partners in the Office of Admissions. Once the written exam concluded, everyone came back together to learn more about DePaul Neuroscience. Dr. Dorothy Kozlowski, started off with a general overview of DePaul Neuro curriculum information and opportunities, as well as her own research and courses she teaches. We then enjoyed presentations from Neuro seniors, Juliet Peterka and Ash Duffee, about their experiences with the department, research they've been involved in, and activities such as clubs and other opportunities in which they've participated. Finally, Dr. Jeyifous gave a presentation about his own research and the courses he teaches.



Additionally, sixteen current DePaul Neuro students volunteered to help with coordination of the days' events. They assisted with everything from set-up and registration, to monitoring and grading the written exams, and mingling with attendees throughout. Parents and student attendees alike commented on how nice it was to see and interact with so many of our wonderful students. One of our student volunteers, Sofiia Fomina, was a participant in the 2025 Brain Bee at DePaul, and then came here to pursue her Neuroscience degree!

The top 10 finalists from the written exam were then invited to participate in the oral Brain Bee competition that afternoon. After several rounds of challenging questions, the finalists were eliminated until Natalie Geenen (Northside College Prep) emerged as the winner, completing her exciting 3-year run of competing and placing in the top 3. Ira Sidhani (Adlai E. Stevenson High School) took 2nd place, having also placed last year. Abhinav Sathamraju Venkata (Adlai E. Stevenson High School) rounded out the top 3 with a 3rd place finish. All 3 finalists were honored at the Chicago Society for



Neuroscience annual meeting on Friday, February 27th, and Natalie as the winner was invited to compete in the National Brain Bee at University of California Irvine on April 25th.

The annual Chicago Brain Bee, sponsored by Chicago Society for Neuroscience, rotates around to different Chicago universities every couple of years. Next years' Bee will be hosted by Rosalind Franklin University, but DePaul Neuro looks forward to hosting again in the future!



Current Student Spotlights

Neuroscience Majors making their mark.

We have an excellent student community in DePaul Neuroscience, so we wanted to share the experiences of some of our most involved students. We asked them to share why they chose Neuro, what their favorite Neuro class has been so far and what have been their most impactful experiences. Here's what they had to say.



Jessie Sabatini

I chose to study neuroscience because I've always been curious about the biological underpinnings that drive different behaviors. As I enter my senior year, it has become clear that this is the field for me. My favorite neuroscience class I've taken so far has been Neuroscience Research Methods with Dr. K because it was my first exposure to the process of immunohistochemistry and brain staining. Throughout my time at DePaul, I've had the opportunity to work as a TA for Dr. Lim's Sensory Neuroscience course, become a member of Nu Rho Psi, and work as a Research Assistant in Dr. K's lab. Getting involved with research on campus has by far been most impactful to me, allowing me to develop my skills as a future researcher.



Ashpreet Kaur

The physicality of the brain has always interested me; you can study something microscopic like a change in a neuron and connect it to something as big as an individual's memory.

My favorite class has been Neuroscience Research Methods because it was hands-on and allowed me to collaborate with others as a scientist!

Currently, I am a CSH Student Ambassador, Neuro Navigator, Crisis Counselor, Matriculate Advising Fellow, and more! My favorite experience has been working as a Medical Assistant at a neurology-focused clinic, where I've gotten to see conditions that we tend to learn in class come to life. It's helped me see what I want my future in healthcare to look like and how much I enjoy working with people.



Alyssa Hanson

The nervous system is critical to health and happiness, yet there is still so much we don't understand. I'm particularly interested in how interactions with other bodily systems impact human health.

NEU Research Methods was my favorite Neuro course because it offered me the opportunity to participate in research, to dive more deeply into the scientific writing process, and to practice giving a poster presentation. It helped me develop transferable skills for a career in research.

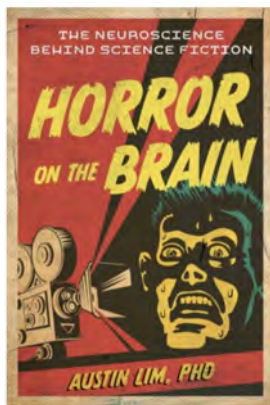
I've received URAP funding to investigate sex differences in response to traumatic brain injury in the Kozlowski lab, and worked as the NEU Research Methods TA. One of my favorite opportunities was a research-intensive study abroad course where I studied the effects of microplastics on clams in Cádiz, Spain. I am also a Nu Rho Psi member.

Opportunities to Visit DePaul Neuro



Undergraduate STEM Research Showcase November 6, 2026

For 24 years undergraduate students have been participating in this showcase by presenting their research in the form of posters and scientific talks. The showcase also features an alumni speaker and a reception. Neuro faculty, staff, students and alumni will be invited for a gathering to kick off our 10th Anniversary festivities.



Alumni Weekend Faculty Spotlight - What Horror and Science Fiction Media Teach us about Our Brains - Dr. Austin Lim

October 24, 2026 11-Noon; Schmitt Academic Center
Room 154, 2320 N. Kenmore Avenue

Of the many reasons people enjoy fiction literature, films, and TV shows, the most interesting are explained by neuroscientific principles. Teaching Associate Professor Austin Lim from the Neuroscience Department will discuss why people love being scared and speculate on how science fiction can inspire scientific discoveries of the future.



William J. Degutis Women in Science and Health Lecture Spring 2027

This annual lecture series highlights the work of a woman scientist or health care professional and promotes the engagement of our community around the topic of the lecture. We have invited a prominent neuroscientist to be our keynote and hope to share that with you in the future.



Come Visit Any Time McGowan North 125

We'd love to have you all visit us any time in the Neuro Suite.
Just arrange a visit by emailing neuroscience@depaul.edu !

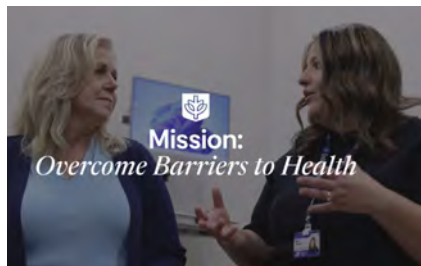
**For more information on any of these opportunities
please reach out to us by
email: neuroscience@depaul.edu**

Mission Forward: The Campaign for DePaul University

Neuroscience is helping Overcome Barriers to Health

Dr. Kozlowski's important work bringing attention to the issue of brain injury in survivors of domestic violence is an embodiment of our commitment at DePaul to build healthier communities for all. [Learn more about her work here]. This is just one of the inspiring stories empowering DePaul's mission to overcome barriers to health.

DePaul University recently launched a comprehensive fundraising campaign called



Mission:Forward- a call to action to advance our mission, amplify our impact, and create lasting change. Philanthropic support from alumni and friends of DePaul enable us to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences, to help address our most pressing

societal issues – including those explored in Dr. Kozlowski's lab and through her leadership in the Illinois Coalition to Address Intimate Partner Violence-Induced Brain Injury.

Support the Next Generation of DePaul Neuroscience

Over the last 10 years, the Neuroscience program has grown tremendously – from a major to a department – in tandem with the interest of students in our field.

We pride ourselves in providing meaningful hands-on learning and research opportunities to students, creating an inclusive and engaging environment including annual interdisciplinary events like Brain Awareness Week and providing rigorous academic experiences to all of our students.

As we celebrate this milestone, we ask for your support. As a relatively "new" program, we do not have any dedicated scholarship funds for Neuroscience students. We would love to be able to provide more support for students and faculty to engage in research and share their findings at academic conferences. Our student experience would be positively transformed by having funds to support research, mentorship, and opportunities for students to apply their learning outside of

the classroom. You can make a gift in honor of our 10-year anniversary and in support of DePaul Neuroscience students here. If you have any questions about giving or would like to discuss opportunities to give further, please contact Blair Janis at BJANIS1@depaul.edu.



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Tribute to Sophie Klippel ('24)



The DePaul community was saddened to learn of the passing of Sophie Klippel, class of 2024, earlier this year.

From Roswell, Georgia, Sophie was known for her bright energy, humor, and compassionate spirit. She was a big presence in our DePaul Neuro community, having participated in research in Dr. Sandra Virtue's lab, and serving as President of the DePaul Neuroscience Club. After graduation, Sophie earned her CNA license and worked nights at St Joseph's Hospital as a Patient Care Technician while continuing her studies at Mercer University to become a Nurse Practitioner.

To quote her obituary, "Sophie had a quiet strength, she listened deeply, cared fully, and loved those around her with sincerity and kindness. She had a way of making people feel seen, understood, and valued. She loved deeply, laughed easily and found joy in the simple moments shared with the people she cared about most."

Our thoughts and prayers are with Sophie's friends and family as we all continue to grieve the loss of this bright spirit taken far too soon.



Thank you for your interest!

Please use the links below to learn more about DePaul's Department of Neuroscience and to provide support for our students, research, and initiatives.

[about us](#)

[support us](#)

If you prefer, you may send a check addressed to DePaul University with the **"FUND FOR NEUROSCIENCE"** in the memo line and mail it to:

DePaul University
1 E. Jackson Blvd
Chicago, IL 60604

You can also engage with us on social media.

