WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

In this Winter/Spring 2022 edition of the Newsletter for the M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience, we highlight some of the remarkable research, publications, and other successes of our faculty and students. Although we continue to experience unprecedented challenges and disruptions to research and teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, our students have persevered and have often come up with creative ways to gather data and complete their theses. Some of this research is highlighted in this issue.

Since our last newsletter, we have formed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI), which is also highlighted in this issue. The committee, which has been meeting monthly, began its mission with a plan to increase diversity by contacting historically Black colleges and universities and minority serving institutions. I thank Dr. Martin Ruck, Senior Adviser to the President for Diversity and Inclusion, for his invaluable guidance and support. The MS Program in Cognitive Neuroscience is committed toward promoting inclusion at all levels. We are in the process of creating a DEI survey to help us in developing methods to better address diversity and inclusion, and we anticipate hosting events for students and faculty to engage, communicate, and more importantly, build a community where all have a space to share their voice.

Students and faculty continue to adapt their data collection protocols as we navigate these new stages of this pandemic. The Cognitive Neuroscience lounge is being retrofitted to accommodate data collection and is being equipped with state-of-the-art equipment for conducting cognitive neuroscience research, including a portable BrainProducts EEG system that is available for students to check out for at-home EEG data collection, as well as several portable Biopac modules for physiological monitoring.

This newsletter will be issued once per semester. If you would like to have your publications, grants, awards and other accomplishments included in future newsletters, please respond to the invitation for submissions that will come from our office or visit our website. We encourage you to participate, as it will give way to exciting and successful newsletters to share with current and prospective students.

Thank you and stay safe and healthy!
When faced with two threatening stimuli, how do we determine which stimulus is less threatening and does the amount of experience we have with each influence this decision? This is the question that Gordon Haskell and David Johnson have been tackling in their lab. Their project examines the impact of the number of learning trials on the strength of a conditioned fear memory. Gordon Haskell (CUNY Graduate Center) and Wingman Vivian Ho (York College) presented their research (in person!) at the 2022 annual meeting for the Eastern Psychological Association held at the Marriott Marquis In New York City on Friday, March 4, 2022.

Kunhee Lee: Be honest with yourself; you soon will be doing what you love.

Our society does a pretty good job of making you someone other than being your genuine self. Essentially, that is why I became a pharmacist. However, when I graduated from pharmacy school, I knew this was not it, although I enjoyed learning about pharmacology. Instead of working at the pharmacy upon my graduation, I decided to work for a lab. The lab I worked at studied aging and dementia. Working at the lab was intriguing because my grandmother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. However, my curiosity was not fulfilled enough. Therefore, I decided to go to graduate school. That is how I ended up moving to NYC and started at the Cognitive Neuroscience Program at The Graduate Center. I enjoyed taking interesting classes and I loved reading research papers. It was the first time in my life that I am reading something that I enjoy so much. I loved it so much that thinking about my research project has never been boring. In sum, I love what I am doing for the first time. Additionally, I figured out my dream while working on my thesis. I now realize how limited pharmacological treatment can be for certain neuro-psychiatric disorders. For example, pharmacological interventions can only do so much for structural / functional damage observed in neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease. I see the necessity to approach from different directions to enhance our current treatment options. Thinking about limitless possibilities through science is something I enjoy. The Cognitive Neuroscience program at The Graduate Center has helped me figure out what my passion is, and I couldn’t be more thankful.

ONWARD AND BEYOND

Accepted to PhD Programs:
- Trevor Caruso
- Daniela Echeverria
- Cassandra Engstrom
- Sameer Sabharwal-Siddiqi
- Kennedy Stomberg

Congratulations!
Anatomical inputs to visual cerebral cortex

The Levitt laboratory studies brain circuits for visual perception and has previously described the organization and development of anatomical inputs to primary visual cortex. This study describes the pattern of thalamic and cortical inputs to an area of visual cortex just anterior to primary visual cortex, area 18. Similar to cortical inputs to primary visual cortex, the bulk of the input to area 18 arises from the cortical area just anterior to it. An important difference in cortical connectivity however is that the portion of area 18 responsive to visual stimuli in the lower visual field seems to receive a significant input from brain regions responsive to visual stimuli in the upper visual field. This is unlike primary visual cortex, might reflect differences in visual field representations in the two areas, and suggests that one role of area 18 may be for perceptual completion or contextual modulation across the horizontal meridian.

The M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience Celebrates Women’s History Month – March 2022

Our Colleague, Jon Horvitz, in the CCNY Psychology Department is publishing an undergraduate textbook, Principles of Behavioral Neuroscience. The textbook, written with the late Barry Jacobs, examines neuroanatomy, neural communication, the neural basis of sleep, learning, memory, attention, and other topics in brain/mind relations. It will be published in July 2022 with Cambridge University Press.

Submit Content for the Cognitive Neuroscience Newsletter

Share news and events to highlight in our Cognitive Neuroscience Newsletter by using the following link or scan the QR code: https://www.gc.cuny.edu/cognitive-neuroscience/news-and-events/newsletter-submission-form

We recognize the great contributions of women who have and continue to make a tremendous mark in our world. Our program is proud to honor the women cognitive neuroscientists that make up a solid portion of our faculty. They are researchers and scientists who bring a wealth of expertise and knowledge to a field that is primarily on a quest to find out how our brains contribute to our cognitive function.
M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience Faculty Members’ 2022 Publications

Marom Bikson


Tracy Dennis


Timothy Ellmore


Yu Gao


Lucas Parra


Marom Bikson & Lucas Parra


Marom Bikson & Tracy Dennis


Tony Ro & Zhigang Zhu

Members of the M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee in Fall 2020. The M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience is proud to be a part of the City University of New York, a diverse and inclusive public institution known to be a vehicle for upward mobility. We acknowledge that racism and social injustice still exist, and we are committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for our students, faculty, and staff. We believe that diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, socio-economic background, and age are factors that ENRICH our community and our contributions to science. We aim to: EMPOWER individuals from underrepresented groups to set and reach the highest goals for themselves in their programs and their careers. NURTURE the education and career plans of individuals from underrepresented groups. RECRUIT more individuals from underrepresented groups to apply to the program. IDENTIFY sources of inequity in the program and work to combat them. COMMIT to values and policies that promote respect for individuals and their cultures. HEAR and learn from the stories of those affected by inequity.

Faculty members: Elizabeth Chua (chair), Jennifer Mangels (secretary), Tony Ro, and Peter Serrano. Student members: Michael Garcia, Margaret Grinshtein, Jeante Jackson, Tikva Nabatian, Daisy Reyes, and Kathleen Rowe. Staff member: Wanda Mercado. The committee is always looking for new members, please email echua@brooklyn.cuny.edu if you would like to join.

Current Students and Faculty Convene at the Neuroscience Virtual and In-Person Meet and Greets

In response to these difficult times, the M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience’s and the CUNY Neuroscience Collaborative’s students and faculty convened virtually on September 25 through a platform known as Gather. This platform allowed attendees to simulate in-person gatherings by allowing them to move around and have one-on-one or group discussions. After two years, on March 11, 2022, students and faculty were able to convene in-person at The Graduate Center!

During both Meet and Greets, students and faculty discussed their current research, future research, and shared resources to overcome research obstacles as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

M.S. Program in Cognitive Neuroscience Student Engagement Event

Since its inaugural meeting, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee has been committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for our students, faculty, and staff. To help with feelings of isolation and promote inclusivity, the DEI Committee proposed a Student Engagement Event. This event provided students with some well-received time to de-stress, share tips, guide, and consult with their peers.