



A NS STUDENT-RUN PUBLICATION

THE CENTRAL SULCUS

FEBRUARY 2024

**FIRST-YEAR
LAB
ROTATIONS
TO POST-
DOC
INTERVIEWS:
A GUIDE**

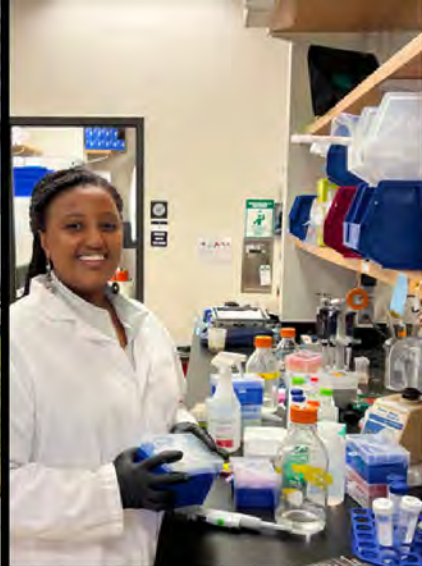
*HOT
TAKES*
ON PHD LIFE AND
MORE...

NEURO RECRUITMENT EDITION

ISSUE 06



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In this issue of... **THE CENTRAL SULCUS**

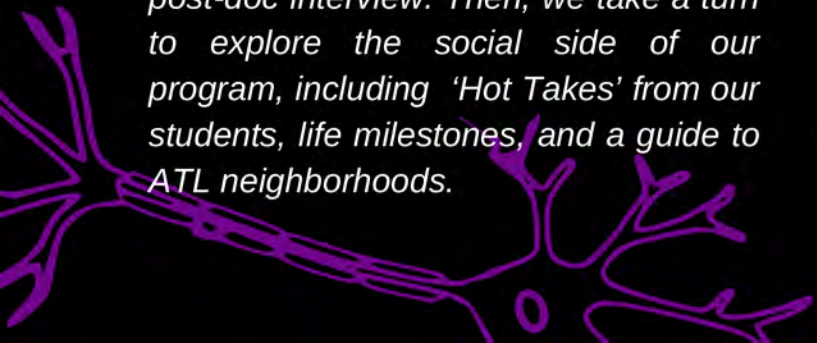
Hard to believe that recruitment is here again! Though many of us current students now feel like our own recruitment was a lifetime ago, to the 2024 recruits: we live vicariously through you for your endless enthusiasm and optimism, and wish you the best visit to ATL. As always, we want this publication to be as unique as our program is, so don't hesitate to reach out (contact info below!) with ideas or feedback on articles.

In this issue, we will first let you know all the latest on defenses, prestigious awards, new faculty, and how to nail a post-doc interview. Then, we take a turn to explore the social side of our program, including 'Hot Takes' from our students, life milestones, and a guide to ATL neighborhoods.



Recruitment
2024

**www.thecentralsulcus.com
thecentralsulcus.emory@gmail.com**



The editors of... **THE CENTRAL SULCUS**



Emmie Banks (Y3, Rowan Lab)

Hi guys! I'm honored to be back for another year as an Editor of *The Central Sulcus*! Since the last edition, I progressed to candidacy (what a blur), completed the first major experiments for my dissertation research, and attended a couple conferences. I had a great time seeing many of you at the retreat in August and at SfN in November. To the prospective students, I hope you get a good sense of life in Atlanta at your recruitment visit, and if any of you are interested in mechanisms of cellular dysfunction in preclinical Alzheimer's disease and/or patch-clamp electrophysiology, please don't hesitate to reach out!

Justin Santos (Y3, Stevens Lab)

Hey y'all! Absolutely psyched to join this current team as an Editor of *The Central Sulcus*! Our program is full of incredible people who I hope you will get a chance to celebrate with each of these editions. If you happen to catch me outside of lab shenanigans with the Grady Trauma Project (GTP) crew, it'll likely be either exploring trails outside of the city, or searching out the latest gastronomical pearl that Atlanta has yet to shine.



Betty Bekele (Y3, Bassell Lab)

Hi everyone! I am a third-year student in the program from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I am studying the mechanisms of central nervous system deficits in a rare genetic disease known as myotonic dystrophy type 1 (DM1) in the lab of Dr. Gary Bassell. I am excited to contribute to this year's *The Central Sulcus* recruitment edition. I also currently serve as an alumni coordinator as part of the Graduates in Neuroscience (GIN) and on the board of Emory Women in Neuroscience (EWIN). Outside of the program, I am an organizer on the team of Black in Neuro (BIN), and enjoy going out to museums, restaurants, and coffee shops and traveling to new places (especially the beach). Feel free to reach out if you have questions about being an international student at Emory.

William McCallum (Y2, Alvarez & Sober Lab)

Welcome to the *Central Sulcus*! I am a second year Neuroscience student studying sensorimotor circuits of the spinal cord, under the advising of Dr. Francisco J. Alvarez and Dr. Samuel J. Sober. While I'm currently most excited about the spinal cord contributes to walking, I am fascinated by all living things and Emory is a spectacular place to surround myself with others who feel the same. Please enjoy this edition of the *Central Sulcus*, as we take you through the highlights of work and life here at Emory Neuroscience!



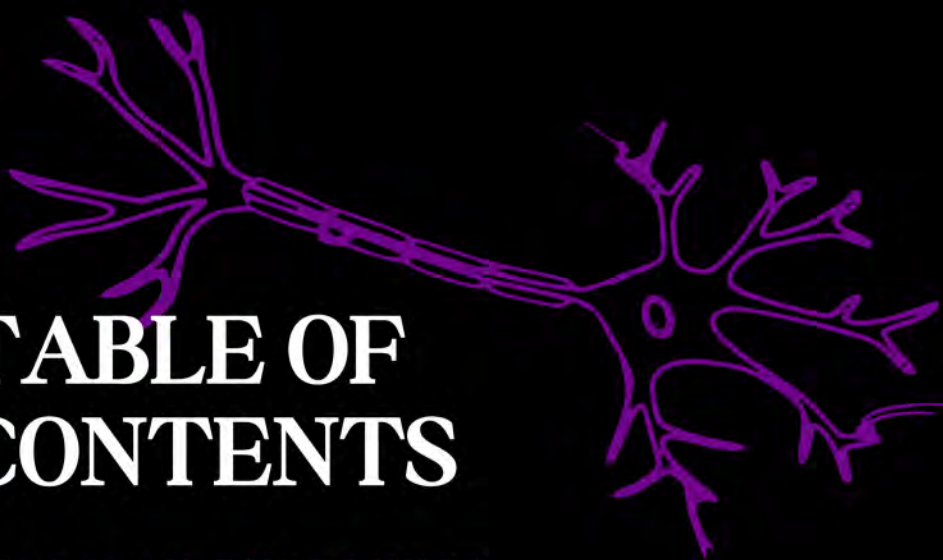


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A WORD FROM PROGRAM LEADERSHIP



ROBERT LIU, PHD
Neuroscience Program Director

The Emory Neuroscience Graduate Program welcomes the 2024 recruits! I am Robert Liu, the Director of the Program, which means I am the current custodian of the interdisciplinary training program you are considering joining. In this role, I direct the Leadership Team and Executive Committee in discussing and implementing policies for academic training, liaise with administrators to advocate for our program students and faculty, and work with our staff to foster community. Embarking on a PhD is both exciting and a little scary, as figuring out how to use your own creativity to discover new scientific knowledge has lots of ups and downs that you have yet to experience. We are here to help you thrive by guiding you on your unique paths to success in neuroscience research, ensuring you have a solid foundation to pursue your future directions.



SHANNON GOURLEY, PHD
Director of Graduate Studies, Y3+

Greetings to our 2024 recruits! I'm Shannon Gourley, the Director of Graduate Studies for our senior students. I am delighted to welcome our newest cohort. I have been at Emory for 13 years, and involvement in the neuroscience training program has been a consistent highlight of my career. The graduate students bring excitement, enthusiasm, and a sense of fearlessness in tackling new and challenging problems and developing novel, cutting-edge techniques. As the Director of Graduate Studies, I develop partnerships with students beyond those who work in my lab, and I look forward to working with the next class of students.

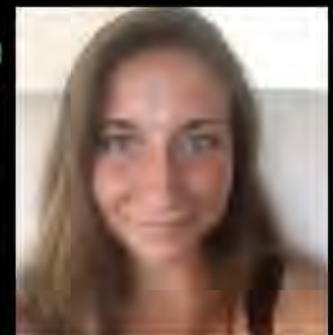
YASMINE BASSIL, Y4
GIN Co-president

Hi all! My name is Yasmine Bassil. I'm currently a 4th year student in the Neural Plasticity Research Lab, under the direction of Dr. Michael Borich, where I study the circuit mechanisms of aging-related deficits in spatial navigation ability with concurrent TMS-fMRI. Outside of the lab, I enjoy cooking, listening to live music, biking around town, visiting waterfalls, learning new languages, and taking care of my plants. I'm familiar with the Atlanta area (been living here for 12 years, so ask me for recommendations!) but I'm originally from Batroun, Lebanon. As GIN Co-President, I'm especially excited to help contribute to an organization that is entirely by students for students, through dedicating time to improving our student experience, advocating for student worker rights, and centering inclusion, justice, and accessibility in institutional and programmatic advocacy. Though academia can be institutionally challenging and isolating, I look forward to helping create a sense of community support and belonging for each other within the Neuroscience program, through GIN and other community involvements. Please feel free to reach out whenever with any questions, concerns, feedback, or just for a chat - and welcome to Atlanta!



JENNI ISAAC, Y4 (MD/PHD)
GIN Co-president

My name is Jenni Isaac and I am a 4th year in the Neuroscience program (7th year MD/PhD). One thing I've always loved about Emory is the sense of community among the graduate students. I am excited to be a part of helping this community continue to flourish. I recommend attending the events offered by GIN and other graduate student organizations - there's something for everyone!





Dr. Juliet Santiago at her successful thesis defense Fall 2023



A lab-wide celebration after Dr. Caitlin Sojka's successful thesis defense



Dr. Elizabeth Heaton successfully defending her thesis in Fall 2023

THE NEURO PROGRAM
PRESENTS...

RECENT DEFENSES!

All NGP defenses from Fall/Winter 2023
(in alphabetical order by last name):

- Halder, Mallika
- Heaton, Elizabeth
- Heffernan, Kate
- Johnson, Ashlyn
- Ratliff, April
- Santiago, Juliet
- Sojka, Caitlin
- Sunna, Sydney



CHOOSING A POST-DOC: A GUIDE FROM OUR SENIOR + GRADUATED STUDENTS

Congrats Annie for
landing a post-doc
in the Scherer lab at
Stanford!

Annie Goettemoeller - amgoett@emory.edu

My approach to searching for a postdoctoral position was initially based on looking for excellent mentors with a lab whose focus somewhat proximal to my PhD work. This search began (and ended) by getting to know PIs in my field at conferences – the easiest of which to do so at is any Gordon Research Conference. I went in with an idea of potential future mentors and had read enough of their previous work that I (1.) wouldn't make a fool of myself and (2.) could predict the directions of any potential questions they might ask me. With a balance of "selling" my science and establishing a rapport with PIs as normal people, I was fortunate to be offered postdoctoral interviews. Subsequently, I only chose to take interviews with individuals I was extremely interested in working with. As far as the interview process, it's exactly what you might expect – you fly to their lab for a few days, give a talk to their lab/department, answer extensive questions regarding your work, and then talk with most or all of the individuals in the lab. It's nice to prepare a few experiments or a 'potential postdoc project' so that you can display an understanding of what their lab is interested in and exactly where you might fit in. You're typically not tied to this – it's just nice to show that you're truly interested in conducting your postdoc with this lab in particular. All in all, my suggestions are to go to conferences, be yourself and get to know PIs, and prepare for the type of questions they might ask of your presentation. With all of that, then you'll be able to join a wonderful postdoc lab which cherishes the same values – personally and scientifically – that you do!



Thomas Shiu - fshiu@mgh.harvard.edu

I first met with my postdoc advisor at the 2022 Society for Neuroscience (SFN) meeting. Although I had emailed several PIs beforehand, ultimately, as I saw him presenting his lab's poster, I had a chat with him. He was engaging and approachable, leading me to visit his lab in person. This encounter was somewhat unexpected, but it played an important role in my decision to join his lab. I have been in his lab for four months now, and I really enjoy working in the lab so far. Conference offers a great, low-risk opportunity to meet various PIs. In general, smaller conferences are easier for networking. I recommend emailing potential PIs before a conference, not just those actively seeking trainees on their websites or social media, to check if they'll be attending and to express interest in their lab. Many PIs attend SFN meeting, or at least their lab members do. For large conferences like SFN, arranging meetings via email beforehand can be more effective, but there is always a good chance you will meet a perspective PI serendipitously ;). Choosing a PI should be based on your impression of the PI and their lab members. Besides your interest in their research topic, you also need to enjoy working with the lab members. It's important to visit the lab in person and meet the team individually. However, be aware that people often show their best side during such visits. If you notice any concerning signs, especially regarding lab dynamics, personality issues, be cautious – these signs can become more significant issues over time.



CELEBRATING SUPER SCIENTISTS!

recent awards in the NGP

Vanessa Barragan

National Science Foundation (NSF) - Graduate Research Fellowship



Olufisayo Aloba, Emmie Banks, Rachel Bear, Lisa Blackmer-Raynolds, Anu Korukonda, Catie Mason, Taylor Pio, Tana Pottorf, Christina Ramelow
F31 – Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Individual National Research Service Award



Amartya Pradhan

Trainee Professional Development Award (TPDA) – Society for Neuroscience



Viviana Valentin-Valentin

Howard Hughes Medical Institute Gilliam Graduate Fellowship



Betty Bekele

Myotonic Dystrophy Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship

Olufisayo Aloba, Alishah Lakhani, Harrison Watters
Kun Lin Memorial Scholarship Travel Award



Emmie Banks, Anu Korukonda, Saahj Gosrani

Goizueta Alzheimer's Disease Research Center REC Trainee Program Award

FACULTY TALK SPOTLIGHT

Featured Invited Talks from Our Faculty



Gary Bassell, PhD

My favorite talks are when I get to introduce my lab members talk about their research at an international conference! I was fortunate to chair a symposium “New Approaches for human stem cell models of neurological disorders reveal mechanisms and therapeutic strategies” at the Canadian Neuroscience Conference in Montreal (May 2023). My role was to introduce the session, introduce the speakers and facilitate questions. Usually when I chair a session,



we can get one lab member to speak, but we were fortunate to have two! Dr. Nisha Raj, my former Emory Neuroscience graduate student, is now an Assistant Professor, Emory Dept. Human Genetics. Dr. Ryan Purcell was a former Emory Neuroscience graduate student with Dr. Randy Hall. I served on his PhD thesis committee. Ryan did a postdoc with me (joint with Dr. Jennifer Mülle) and is now an Assistant Professor of Cell Biology at Emory.”

Shannon Gourley, PhD

I was a plenary speaker at the International Society for Psychoneuroendocrinology annual meeting in September. It was held at the Royal Society of Medicine in London. I enjoy this meeting because the Society excels in celebrating new and senior investigators alike. This year, I had the pleasure of spending time with a colleague I admire at the University of Iowa, Jason Radley, alongside fellow Emory neuroscience program faculty person Jennifer Felger. On my afternoon off, I visited the British Museum. The ancient Egypt exhibit is remarkable, particularly breath-taking when one turns a corner to encounter the massive sculpture of Ramesses II, shown here.”



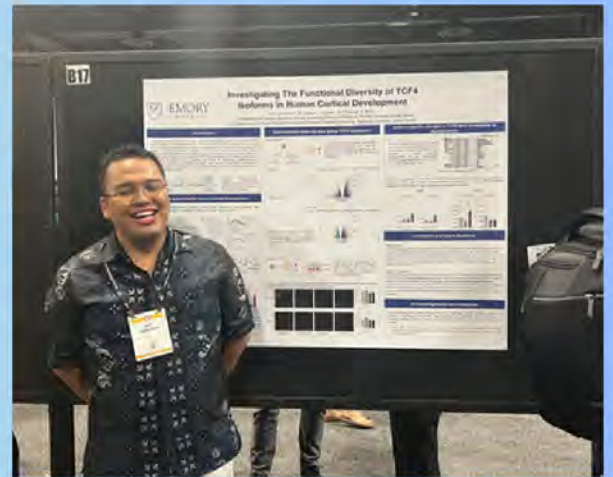
FACULTY TALK SPOTLIGHT

Featured Invited Talks from Our Faculty



Fikri Birey, PhD

This was the first SFN I attended since I started my lab and it was special; Our whole group attended with 2 posters by the NS graduate student Roy and our lab manager Carol (who presented work from her previous lab) and a nanosymposium talk by the NS graduate student Arvin. It was unique and rewarding time to experience SFN as a PI for the first time; stalking around Roy's and Carol's posters to see how they are doing, sitting at the back of a conference hall slow-nodding as I listened to Arvin deliver a talk, to end it all with overwhelming sense of pride and joy with all that these fantastic budding scientists have accomplished. We also connected more as a group amongst each other but also with Andersen and Sloan labs, with whom we work closely in the department. We left the conference tired and energized at equal measure but full of feedback and ideas, ready to push the boundaries of our research further."



Timothy Sampson, PhD

In July, I was privileged to be invited to speak at the World Parkinson's Congress in Barcelona, Spain. The WPC is highly unique in that it brings together scientists, care practitioners, and people living with Parkinson's diseases into the same conference program. In fact, half of the attendees were people living with PD. This conference therefore gives us an opportunity to discuss our work not only with our scientific colleagues, but to an invested group of impacted individuals. My talk, titled "The role of the microbiota in alpha-synuclein gut and brain pathology" described our lab's findings regarding the ability of certain gut microbes to promote PD pathology in the gut and induce motor impairments. The discussion was largely attended by people living with PD and encompassed the role of nutrition and emerging "gut-centric" clinical studies. As basic scientists, with limited clinical interactions, we risk losing sight of the community most affected by and interested in our work. Against the backdrop of this immensely beautiful city, I came away motivated and re-focused on the bigger picture."

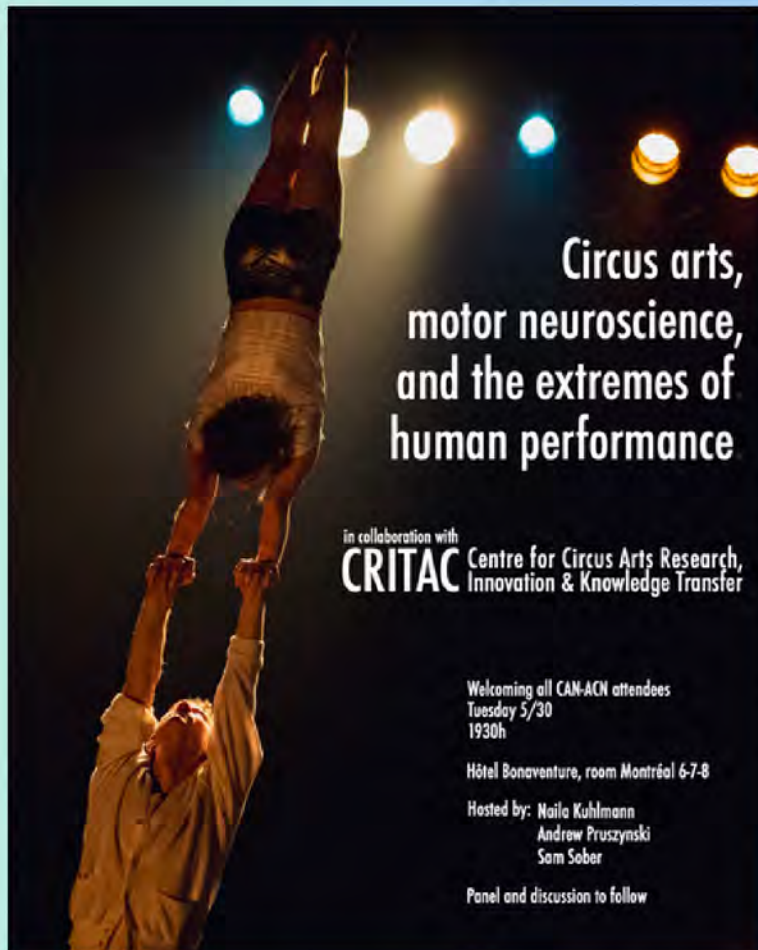
FACULTY TALK SPOTLIGHT

Featured Invited Talks from Our Faculty



Samuel Sober, PhD

“Not a standard research seminar, but my favorite recent talk was when I organized a panel discussion and performance by a bunch of neuroscientists + circus acrobats in Montreal, Canada in May of 2023 as part of the annual Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) meeting. The performance is called “Piece of Mind” and is a collaboration between neuroscientists, circus acrobats, and people living with neurodegenerative diseases. The piece, which combines neuro research with movement and insights into the lived experience of people affected by Parkinson’s and dementia, was developed by CRITAC, which is the research arm of the Canadian National Circus School (they train performers for Cirque du Soleil), headquartered in Montreal.



Also – even better news – I’m bringing this same performance to Emory and GA Tech as part of the 2024 Atlanta Science Festival! Leila Pascual is my student co-host for the event.”

FANTASTICALLY FRESH FACULTY

Here at the Emory Neuroscience Graduate Program we thrive in a collaborative community rich with diversity in training, expertise, and perspective, and we wouldn't have it any other way!

FARZANEH NAJAFI, PH.D.

Dr. Farzaneh Najafi joins the Emory Neuroscience community as adjunct faculty with primary appointment in the School of Biological Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology. More specifically, her team is interested in understanding predictive processing, and the circuits which drive processing of prediction signals. Within the context of neurological disorders such as schizophrenia and autism, this presents an exciting avenue for treatment innovation. Her work uses both computational and neurophysiological techniques to explore such systems and behavioral neuroscience questions. Additionally, her lab uses optogenetics and electrophysiological techniques to manipulate and record neural activity, respectively.



NICHOLAS AU YONG, M.D., PH.D.

Dr. Nicholas Au Yong is an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery here at the Emory University School of Medicine. His research focuses on the utilization of neuromodulation in movement disorders to promote motor recovery and homeostatic regulation for individuals experiencing CNS injury or disease. With appointments in the Departments of Cell Biology and the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology, Dr. Yong's preclinical research aims to develop novel neurosurgical treatments from diverse perspectives informed by prior research expertise in machine learning, biological signal analysis, and complex sensor systems.



SEONG SU KANG, PH.D.

Dr. Seong Su Kang is faculty in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory medicine, whose research interests lie in uncovering the cellular bases for neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. Dr. Kang's research interests lie in three different areas. First and foremost, their team investigates pathological mechanisms in the aggregation of aberrant proteins in PD and AD. Further, they are interested in elucidating the role of APOE on tau pathology and neuro-inflammation within the locus coeruleus. Finally, their work expands to understand the impact of follicle-stimulating hormone on AD progression.



BY THE NUMBERS

A statistical glance inside the Emory Neuroscience PhD Program



127

Total number of current NS training faculty

- o 94 full members, 31 affiliate members, 2 adjunct members

100

Total number of current NS students

- o 93 Ph.D., 7 M.D./Ph.D.

22

Total number of current NS international students

- o 20 non-citizen non-permanent residents
- o 2 non-citizen permanent residents

5.63

Current average time (years) to graduation

- o For the enrolling classes of 2015-2019, 5.63 years (only Ph.D.)

5

Total number of student organizations:

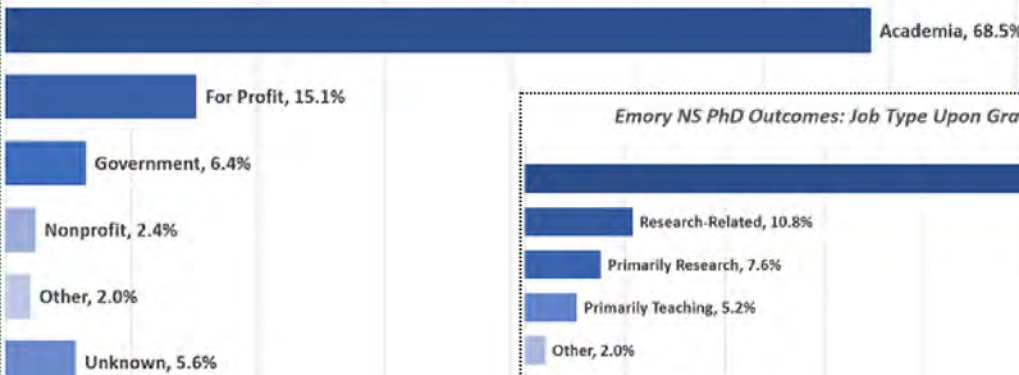
- o Graduates in Neuroscience, Emory Women in Neuroscience, Division Student Advisory Council, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee, Emory Biotech Consulting Club

4

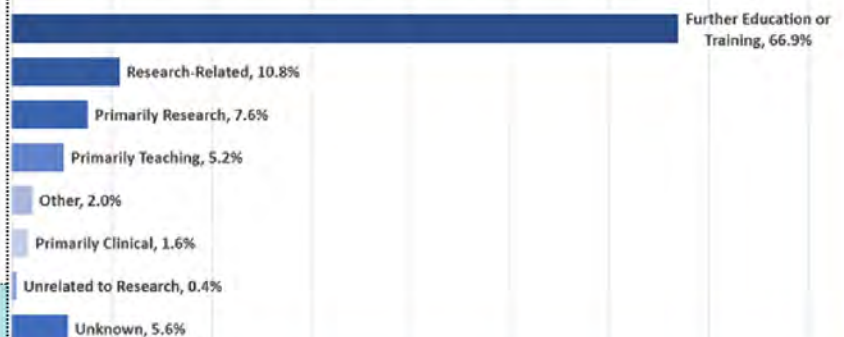
Total publications per trainee (journals and book chapters) from 2021-2023

- o 4.0 on average, 3.0 median, with a standard deviation of 2.5

Emory NS PhD Outcomes: Sector Upon Graduation (2004-2023) | N=251



Emory NS PhD Outcomes: Job Type Upon Graduation (2004-2023) | N=251



*Further Education or Training almost always corresponds to doing a postdoc." - Dr. R. Liu. A special thank you to Mikko Lindberg in the GDBBS office for gathering this data.

What's the weirdest thing in your lab?



We know that labs are supposed to be sterile of contaminants such as mold, joy, etc., but here at The Central Sulcus we love going a little off-protocol. Which got us thinking...what is the weirdest thing in our labs? We know we're mad scientists but here's some evidence to prove it.

1. Weinshenker lab

What's that I spy on the highest shelf of the highest tower of the Weinshenker lab? It's a bird! No...a plane! No...it's...it's...the pair of block heel pumps David wore one Halloween when he dressed up as a Spice Girl! Of course, silly me.

2. Rowan lab

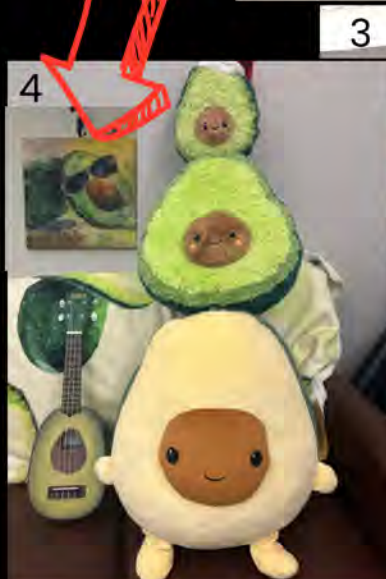
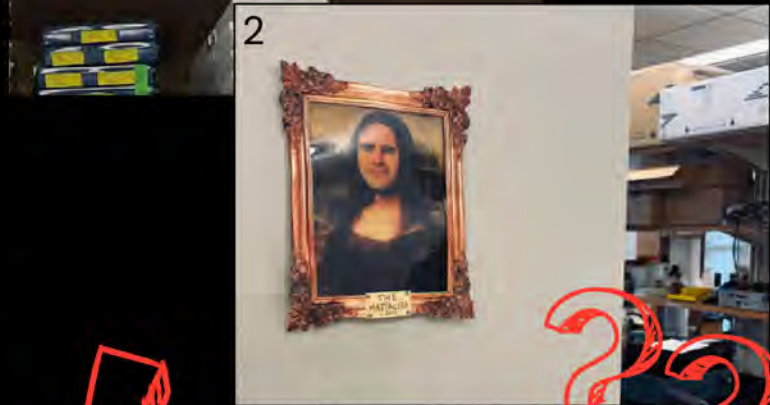
Airfare to the Louvre will cost you an arm and a leg. Also, it's unclear if we still get student discounts during our PhD. Save your time and money and feast your eyes on the *Matta Lisa* (ink on printer paper, 2022). It's a real thinker.

3. Gourley lab

As Dolly Parton once sang, "Working 9 to 5, what a way to make a living. Barely gettin' by, it's all taking and no giving. They just use your mind and they never give you credit." Dude, other than the 9 to 5 part, I swear it sounds like Dolly went to grad school.

4. Avocado lab (Pls Stevens, Michopoulos)

I mean, the name really says it all.



WINTER BREAK CHRONICLES

HOW NS STUDENTS SPENT THEIR RECENT BREAKS

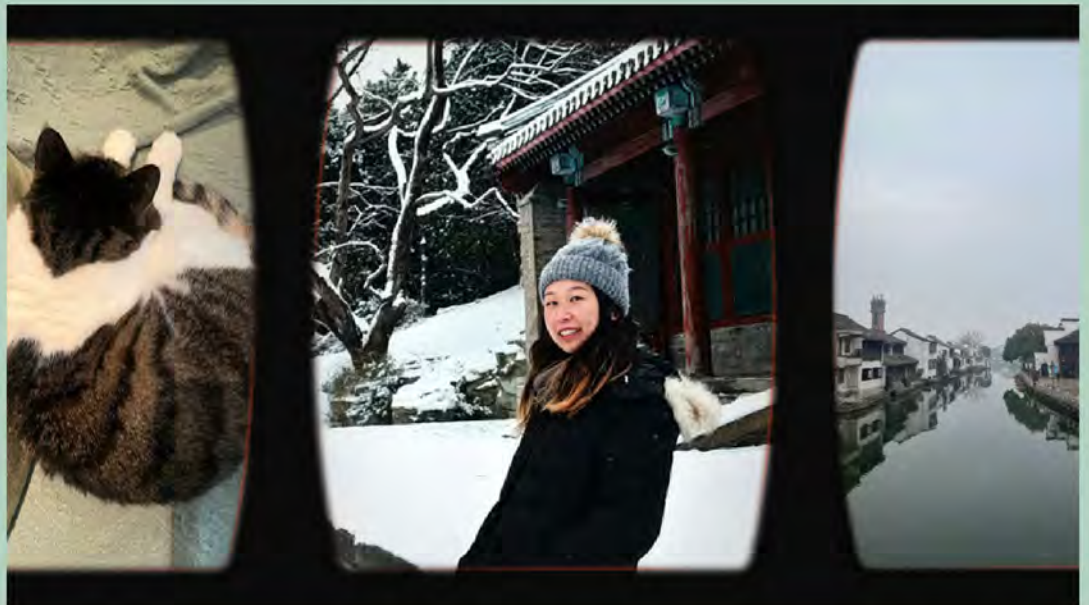
Hyma Balasubramanian (Y3) and her husband set out on a West Coast adventure



"During my winter break, my husband's family and I did a road trip on the west coast covering a total of 2232 miles. We started at Phoenix, AZ and visited the Grand canyon national park, Las Vegas, Death valley national park, Los Angeles, drove alongside the Pacific coast Highway and finally ended the trip in San Francisco - all in 10 days. Hands down one of the best trips we've been to!"



Shirley Zhang, Y2, hops around three Chinese cities, catching up with family and friends



"The last time I experienced winter in China was in 2018. So, I considered my plane landing during the first snow in Beijing a "cold" welcome and a romantic gesture from the universe. During the winter break, I traveled back to China and visited families and friends in 3 cities. In Beijing, the snow gave the city an extra flavor and made traveling more interesting. My grandma introduced me to the family cat, Meibao, who melted me and left a cat-shaped hole in my heart. I then traveled down to Shanghai, where I enjoyed the walkable historic neighborhood and the delicious local cuisine. Later I spent New Year's in Nanxun, a small and tranquil "Town of Water", with 3 of my closest friends from high school. For my last stop, I returned to my hometown Guangzhou and indulged in soul-warming Cantonese food everyday until I board my flight to New York."

WINTER BREAK CHRONICLES

HOW NS STUDENTS SPENT THEIR RECENT BREAKS

Tina Tian, Y3, learned how to crochet

"I started to learn how to crochet at the beginning of February, so I can make cute handmade gifts. Little did I know that crocheting would become the huge time sink that it currently is (I can sit in silence for 4-5 hours doing nothing but crochet when I get home haha). I started out making the tiger keychain, then the penguin keychain (improvised the coat), then the large dragon in time for the lunar new year, then the small dragon keychain, and finally, I'm currently working on improvising a neuron! Hopefully, once I get the neuron the way I like it, I can write up pattern, so others can also enjoy a stuffed neuron."



Sabra Mouhi, Y1, traveled to Los Angeles over the break

"This winter break I got to visit a college friend in LA. And we managed to get inside one of Yayoi Kusama's infinity mirrors for free and only waited for 20 minutes! I have heard the wait time can be 3 hours sometimes."

NS FALL 2023 EVENTS RECAP

DEI Frontiers in Neuroscience Seminar & Mentorship Panel



The DEI committee organized an event on October 20, 2023, which included a speaker presentation by NS faculty Dr. Shannon Gourley followed by a lunch and discussion panel on mentorship. The panel consisted of Drs Shannon Gourley, Anita Devineni, and Chris Rodgers.



GIN Monthly Coffee Break



What could be better than free coffee and donuts to bring NGP students together? Last semester, the GIN officers started monthly coffee breaks, in 2023 and this tradition continues on in the new year!

NS FALL 2023 EVENTS RECAP



HALLOWEEN WITH EWIN



Emory Women in Neuroscience held a Halloween trivia night and cookie decoration. Winners of the trivia went home with mini trophies to flaunt their spooky skills!

🌈 NS QUEER SOCIAL 🌈



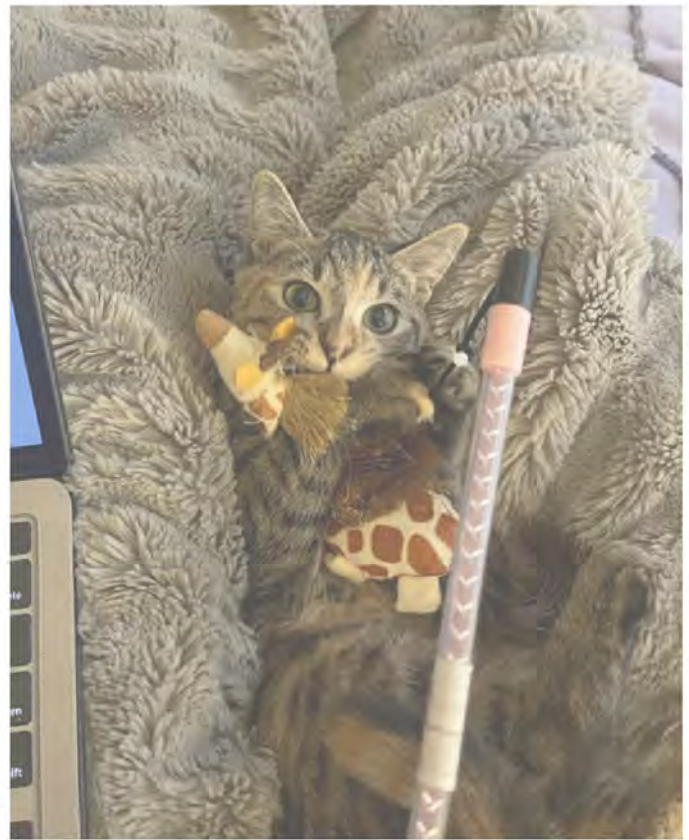
The inaugural NS queer social was held last October, hosted by Vas Michopoulos, Associate Professor and alumna of the NS program. Members of the NS community enjoyed a nice evening of conversations over a bonfire and dinner!

fyp

FIRST YEAR PERSPECTIVES

Being a first-year student in August felt like that one Robert Frost poem where two roads diverge in the woods but instead it's 1000 roads and all of them look equally exciting and horrifying. Part of this is deciding what topics in the first-year curriculum that I cared about enough to study for the next 5 years. Part of this is that being 22 often coexists with the feeling of not knowing anything about anything, ever. Yet, most of this is simply the fear of the unknown - the reality that you'll never know what is meant for you until you test your options with an open mind and ready heart, feeling the fear and doing it anyway.

“I think a well lived first year is defined by the boldness of the journey rather than one’s exact path.”



One of the best decisions I made was audaciously strolling down a few of these paths before marching along my chosen one. In one rotation, I handled my first ever experimental mice. In another, I learned how to simulate neuronal firing in Matlab. In my final rotation, I'm working in a population biology lab just for funsies, and I can't wait to see where that journey takes me. In my coursework, I indulged in a vast array of experimental methods I had never even heard of before as a theoretical biologist by training. I tried a few different hobbies to keep up my beloved work-life balance, and have taken up a new love for science education alongside continuing my coaching at CYCLEBAR.

Now, nearing the end(ish?) of my first year, I've found my lab home and, arguably just as importantly, grown bolder in my pursuit of knowledge and experiences.

And it made all the difference 😊.

megan bishop

spring 2024

fyp

FIRST YEAR PERSPECTIVES

“MY EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST YEAR IN THE EMORY NEUROSCIENCE GRADUATE PROGRAM MIRRORS PO'S JOURNEY FROM KUNG FU PANDA: STARTING AS A NEWCOMER AND GRADUALLY FINDING MY PLACE. INITIALLY, IT WASN'T AN EASY TRANSITION COMING FROM A DIFFERENT COUNTRY AND STARTING AN INTENSE GRADUATE PROGRAM.

“IT WAS THE SUPPORT, MENTORSHIP, AND RESOURCES FROM THE UNIVERSITY, NS FACULTY, OUR PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR, AND THE NS STUDENT COMMUNITY THAT HAS MADE MY SAIL THROUGH THE FIRST YEAR QUITE LESS TURBULENT...”

AMARTYA PRADHAN

I APPRECIATE HOW INVOLVED THE STUDENTS ARE IN ALMOST EVERY ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM - FROM RECRUITMENTS TO INTRODUCING SPEAKERS IN OUR WEEKLY SEMINARS. I ALSO VALUE AND CHERISH THE COLLEGIAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF THE EMORY NEUROSCIENCE COMMUNITY. ONE THING THAT FASCINATED (AND STILL FASCINATES) ME THE MOST IS THE BREADTH OF DIVERSITY THIS PROGRAM OFFERS - NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF THE TOOLS YOU CAN USE BUT ALSO THE DIFFERENT FACETS OF NEUROSCIENCE YOU CAN EXPLORE. I WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO CAPITALIZE ON THIS ASPECT OF THE PROGRAM THROUGH MY ROTATIONS. ALSO, THE FIRST-YEAR CLASSES ARE A CRASH COURSE TO BECOMING A NEUROSCIENTIST. I STILL REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I HELD AN ACTUAL HUMAN BRAIN DURING A NEUROANATOMY CLASS! LOOKING BACK, MY FIRST YEAR IN NGP HAS BEEN INCREDIBLY ENRICHING, GOING BEYOND TEXTBOOK LEARNING. I LOOK FORWARD TO FINDING MY 'MASTER SHIFU' AND DELVING DEEPER INTO NEUROSCIENCE'S COMPLEXITIES IN THE FUTURE!”



FIRST YEAR PERSPECTIVES

“WHILE I AM STILL AT THE BEGINNING OF MY JOURNEY, I AM STARTING TO REALIZE THAT, RESEARCH ASIDE,

THE TRUE VALUE OF A PHD LIES IN THE FRIENDSHIPS, COLLEAGUES, AND CONNECTIONS WE MAKE ALONG THE WAY.”

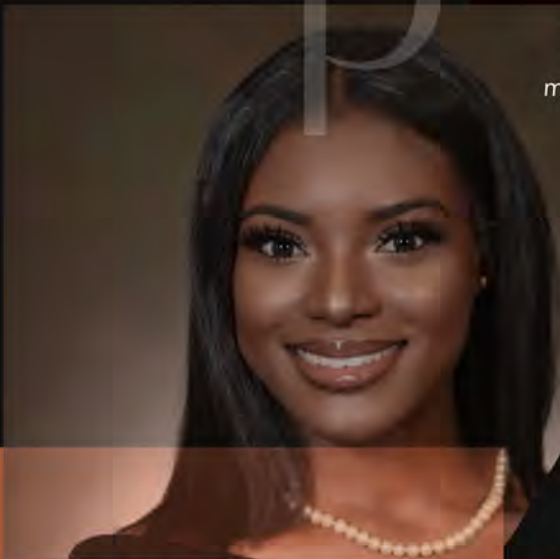
“IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT HAS BEEN ALMOST A YEAR SINCE I CHOSE TO COME TO EMORY AND EMBARK ON THIS JOURNEY TO MOVE ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND TAKE THE NEXT STEP IN BECOMING A SCIENTIST. WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED, I WAS SO ANXIOUS ABOUT NAVIGATING A NEW CITY AND FINDING A PLACE TO BELONG ON CAMPUS. EVEN SO, I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY HOW QUICKLY I ADJUSTED TO LIFE IN THE NEUROSCIENCE PROGRAM HERE, THANKS TO THE INCREDIBLE COMMUNITY OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY WHO WELCOMED ALL OF US FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS WITH OPEN ARMS. GETTING TO KNOW THE MANY AMAZING INDIVIDUALS WHO COMPRISE THE NEUROSCIENCE COMMUNITY AT EMORY HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST ENJOYABLE AND VALUABLE EXPERIENCES OF MY ACADEMIC CAREER.

HADASSAH MENDEZ-VAZQUEZ

THROUGHOUT MY FIRST YEAR AT EMORY, ENGAGING WITH THE SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS OF THIS COMMUNITY HAS HAD A PROFOUND AND UNEXPECTED IMPACT ON ME, BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY. ATTENDING LECTURES TAUGHT BY EXPERT FACULTY HAS EXPOSED ME TO NEW IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES THAT HAVE CHALLENGED WHAT I THOUGHT I KNEW, AND PROGRESSING THROUGH ROTATIONS HAS LED MY RESEARCH INTERESTS TO EVOLVE IN EXCITING AND UNFORESEEN WAYS.”



f uriel rufen-blanchette



"Outside of the lab, my favorite thing about my first year has been the friendships and connections that I have made. Developing a strong community that supports me through my PhD journey has made even the most challenging days bright. Being around such talented, phenomenal individuals motivates me to be my best and I cannot wait to see where our endeavors take us!"

"In choosing where to pursue my PhD, one of the things that drew me to Emory was the cutting-edge research that is taking place. Having the opportunity to rotate in labs that are at the forefront of the field making groundbreaking discoveries is something that I feel so fortunate to be a part of. Another highlight of my first year is rediscovering my passion for science."

→ *"Being in a position to get excited about the work that I am doing and the people that I am doing it with reminds me why I fell in love with neuroscience in the first place."*

HOT TAKES



UNPOPULAR OPINIONS ON
PHD LIFE AND MORE...

We spend all of our time at work dealing with data, facts, and logic. Here's a little space where NS students tell us how they REALLY feel.

THE GOOD

"My hot take about getting a PhD is that there will never be a more flexible time in my life."

-Anonymous

"My hot take about getting a PhD is that with good mentoring and resources available to me, I've absolutely enjoyed the entire experience."

-Anonymous

THE BAD

"My hot take on academia is that maybe the world needs more bakers!"

-Anonymous



& THE UGLY

"My hot take on the ATL airport is that it's actually the most entertaining place to people-watch around."

-Anonymous

"My hot take on being a first-year PhD student is a healthy work-life balance is not only super attainable but actually makes you a better student. I've been able to explore Atlanta with my cohort, teach spin classes at CYCLEBAR, thrive in class, and find my dream lab!"

-Megan Bishop, Y1

"My hot take about the 'grind culture' of academia is that it was made up by people who don't have good boundaries between life and work."

-Anonymous

"My hot take is that being a pedestrian around Atlanta drivers is like being in a high adrenaline extreme sport."

-Anonymous



CURRENT EVENT

STATE OF THE UNION: THE LATEST ON EMORYUNITE!



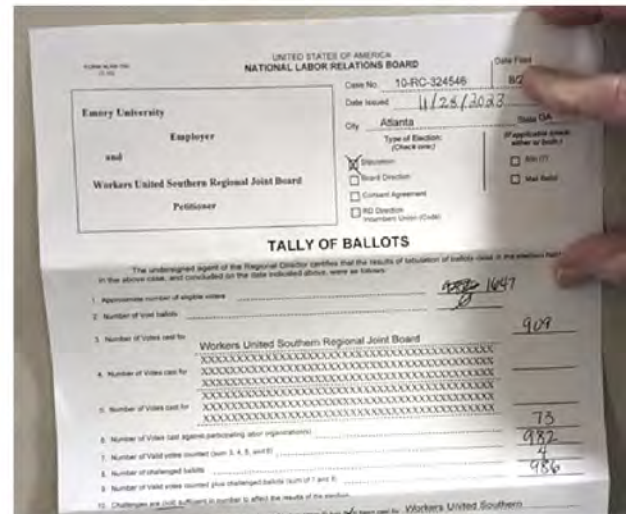
Emory University graduate students achieved a historic victory by decisively voting in favor of unionization on November 28th, 2023, forming EmoryUnite! under the Service Employees' International Union (SEIU). This landmark decision marks them as Georgia's first graduate student-worker union in history and only the second in the South, following Duke University's unionization on August 22, 2023.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) certified and released election results showing an overwhelming 92% support for unionization among Emory graduate students. Out of 982 voters, 909 favored unionization, showcasing a significant majority of the university's 1,722 graduate student-workers.

This election win is the culmination of years of dedicated efforts by EmoryUnite!, involving various activities such as meetings, rallies, and a year-long union card drive, all since the organization's conception on campus in 2016. Emory administration, in response to the unionization, expressed its commitment to negotiating in good faith.



<p>Who is our bargaining committee?</p> <p>A bargaining committee is a diverse group of your fellow PhD student-workers in Laney Graduate School, spanning many backgrounds and fields of study, who will document our job descriptions and contract priorities.</p>	<p>What does it mean that GA is a 'right-to-work' state?</p> <p>This means that employees in unionized workplaces cannot negotiate contracts which require that all benefiting members pay dues. The negotiated changes will affect all PhD student-workers regardless of membership, however, only union members can vote in elections for union leadership, join the bargaining committee, and vote on the eventual contract.</p>	<p>What are Weingarten rights?</p> <p>Weingarten rights came into effect upon the election win on November 28th, 2023. Simply put, any LGS PhD student has a right to request a union representative in an investigatory interview when they have a reasonable basis to believe that discipline may result from the meeting.</p>
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EmoryUnite! is now preparing to initiate negotiations and has formed a bargaining committee to engage with the university's administration. The union's broad goals include securing a living wage, fair compensation for on-campus responsibilities, improved working conditions, and affordable healthcare. At the very earliest estimate, a contract could be negotiated by the Fall.

As EmoryUnite! moves forward, it is their hope that competitive pay and benefits will aid our programs in the recruitment process. The EmoryUnite! website writes: "The students we teach will have better classroom experiences when their teachers are treated fairly. The essential work and research of this institution will be improved by a union that grants us the support and dignity we deserve." Altogether, EmoryUnite! aims to achieve tangible benefits for Laney Graduate School PhDs, thereby fostering a more equitable workplace.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE NEW CONTRACT? TELL EMORYUNITE HERE:



MORE THAN JUST A SCIENTIST: LIFE MILESTONES OF NS STUDENTS IN 2023

Tana Pottorf, Y4 became a new parent!



"We welcomed our beautiful daughter, Everly Sue this past October. In lieu of Sesame Street, Everly has attended multiple lab meetings, zoom calls, and guest lectures. Now at three months, it's official to say she's already a microglia expert".

Alishah Lakhani, Y5 celebrated her engagement!



"I'm happy to share that I got engaged a few months ago, and recently celebrated with friends and family. We decorated my fiancé's family's home, ordered some delicious food, and carried out a few traditions customary in the Indian Muslim community. It was so nice to be surrounded by all our loved ones!"

MORE THAN JUST A SCIENTIST: LIFE MILESTONES OF NS STUDENTS IN 2023

Maxine Robinette, Y4, and Alejandro Lopez, '22 adopted a kitten!



"This year, I adopted my first ever kitten through the ATL Lifeline Animal Project and named him Jimmy. He came home with me at just 10 weeks old (first picture)... Now, he's almost a year old and the best kitty I could have ever hoped for! What I love most about being Jimmy's mom is that we both changed each other's lives forever in such positive ways and ultimately saved each other."

**Saahj Gosrani,
Y4, got
engaged this
past summer!!**



"I got engaged to the love of my life, Karina, in June 2023 :)"

MORE THAN JUST A SCIENTIST: LIFE MILESTONES OF NS STUDENTS IN 2023

Alicia Lane, Y5, and her partner got married and bought a house!!



"2023 was a big year for me personally- my partner and I decided to inform the government that we are more than just long-term roommates (aka we got married, which is to say we got my dad to sign the paperwork from the courthouse on our 13th anniversary and laughed that you apparently get an info sheet about STDs with your marriage license application), and we bought a house! It was a part of a bigger decision-making process of whether or not we wanted to stay in Atlanta and for how long, what we wanted out of a house and the area where we live, and thinking about our finances in the context of an inevitable eventual salary bump from our stipends after I graduate (we can pretty much only go up from here, y'all!!). Despite the warnings from literally everyone, home buying and home "building" took way more time and mental energy than we anticipated, so I was really grateful that my PI was flexible during those particularly stressful months when I had very little bandwidth for science. If I had to pick a single piece of advice to give about buying a home in grad school, it would be completely unrelated to the actual process of home buying and instead is to find a lab/PI where you'll be supported not only through your science journey but also your personal journey (as exemplified by this photo of my cat in our new home on a shelf filled with gifted books from my PI)! Happy to chat about our experience with anyone who might be thinking about buying!"



Vanessa Barragan, Y2, got engaged in November

"I'm marrying my bestfriend! <3"



NGP DEI COMMITTEE

Fall 2023 Progress Report

Our Mission

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee is designed to integrate the principles of **diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and justice** into the NGP curriculum, policies, and culture. We aim to promote an environment that will **support the success and well-being** of NGP students, faculty, staff, and affiliates.

Advocacy

Promoting Inclusive Language in IBS 514

- Working with the NGP Curriculum Committee to integrate lectures on using inclusive language when discussing research about neurological conditions and disorders
- Created a template slide on inclusive language for lectures on autism with the help of Dr. Sarah Shultz, IBS 514 Module 6 leader



View full progress report

View our resource documents



Events

Black in Neuro Seminar Watch Along

- Streamed Dr. Ishmail Abdus-Saboor's keynote address relating his experiences to and through neuroscience
- Post-seminar student and faculty discussion reflecting on keynote and on supporting Black scientists at Emory

Resources & Outreach

Heritage Month Resource Lists

- Created and distributed resource lists containing neuroscience-, Emory-, and Atlanta-specific programming for Hispanic Heritage Month and Native American Heritage Month

Co-Chairs



Saahj Gosrani, Y4



Camille Trautman, Y3

Interested in joining? Scan here!



Advocating for Equitable Admissions & Recruitment Practices

- Provided feedback for the rubric used by faculty reviewing applications and the rubric used by student ambassadors to avoid biases and promote inclusion of underrepresented students

Accountability Subcommittee



Aziz Elbasheir, Y4



Eli Chlan, Y4



Mari Rocha, Y3

Events

DEI Seminar & Panel on Mentorship

- Hosted Dr. Shannon Gourley for seminar on inclusive and supportive mentorship followed by Q&A-style panel with Drs. Gourley, Anita Devineni, and Chris Rogers for students to ask mentorship-related questions
- 25 student attended the panel, & all feedback regarding panel was positive



Maxine Robinette, Y4

Internal Affairs

Directed DEI Lecture for PD Course

- Presented DEI lecture for NGP Professional Development course
- Jarildy Javier shared her journey through academia followed by small group discussion session with students
- Camille and Saahj presented support resources for 1st year students.



Ary Wiggins-Gamble, Y2

A GUIDE TO ATL NEIGHBORHOODS



3. WESTSIDE



1. VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND (VA-HI)

2. INMAN PARK



1. Aptly named after the intersection of Virginia Avenue and North Highland Avenue, Virginia-Highland is a historic suburban neighborhood situated near Emory University and bounded by Piedmont Park to the West, and Morningside-Lenox Park to the North. Expect a walkable neighborhood with a boutique retail district and quality dining options. **Must visit:** La Tavola Trattoria, Pielands Sub and Slice, Kinship Butcher & Sundry, Tuscany At Your Table, Alon's Bakery

2. One of Atlanta's first streetcar suburbs, Inman Park has developed into a vibrant community favored by transplants and natives alike. This neighborhood is situated in the center of highly frequented locales, including but not limited to the Freedom Parkway/Trail, the Carter Center, Eastside Beltline trail, and Krog Street Market. Of note, the Atlanta Beltline has been a welcome addition to the area, bridging numerous neighborhoods, attracting a wide variety of restaurants and shops, and hosting eccentric festivals all year round (yes that's a gnome festival!). **Must visit:** Brewdog Atlanta, PLANTA, Delbar Middle Eastern, VOGA gelato, and Saturday Freedom Farmers Market at the Carter Center!

3. Like many Southern metropolitan hubs, the design and infrastructure of Atlanta reflects a storied history from the Antebellum south through the 21st century. The area known as the "Westside" maintains structures that were invaluable to the city's industrialization, and evolution through the Civil War. Nowadays, the westside is most notable for its recently rapid urban development, high density of fine dining, contemporary art, and newly built Westside Park. To foster connectivity in the city, this area is now home to the Westside Beltline trail, which encapsulates metropolitan Atlanta and connects with the Eastside Beltline trail mentioned prior. **Must visit:** Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Goat Farm Arts Center, Bacchanalia, Miller Union, The Optimist, Ormsby's

A GUIDE TO ATL NEIGHBORHOODS



6. BUFORD HIGHWAY

4. SUMMERHILL & GRANT PARK



5. EAST ATLANTA (EAV)



4. Summerhill and Grant Park are some of Atlanta's oldest neighborhoods along with those that are most rapidly evolving. If you're ever Northbound on I-85, it would be difficult to miss the Olympic flame statue which would lead you to Centennial Olympic Park, site of the 1996 Olympic ceremonies, and track and field events. South of downtown, and adjacent to the Capitol, you can find just about everything here, from walkable streets to quiet local parks, and a hop, skip, and a throw from electrifying nightlife. **Must Visit:** Ria's Bluebird, Atlanta Zoo, Ziba's Bistro, The Little Tart Bakeshop

5. If you happen to venture just south of the I-20 highway and east of Moreland Avenue, you'll end up in an eclectic area known colloquially as EAV. While there, take note of the robust colors and thought-provoking murals brought to life, many of which are thanks to the *Living Walls* art collective, whose aim is to transform cities into more inclusive spaces that reflect the community and culture which is rooted there. Not to mention, on any given weekend you may serendipitously wander into a local band performance or discover some hidden gastronomic gems. **Must visit:** Atlanta Street Art Map (& walking tour), Poke Burri, Southern Feed Store, Urban Wings

6. We would be remiss not to highlight Buford Highway, a personal favorite of nearly every ATLien including yours truly. Unlike the neighborhoods listed above, Buford Highway references a more geographically linear community centered on the Buford Highway roadway. Simply put, this community is home to unrivaled ethnic and cultural diversity in Atlanta and was labeled as the "International Corridor" by the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce. If you've made it this far to our guide, I'd like you to introduce yourself to a current student and ask them for their favorite spots on Buford Highway (...in fact go ahead and ask where the best Boba tea location is).

Cheers 😊



OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER: *NORTH GEORGIA* *ATTRACTIONS*



Atlanta has so many amazing attractions to offer, but just outside the comfortable cradle of I-285, there are more adventures waiting! Here are a few favorites from NS students:

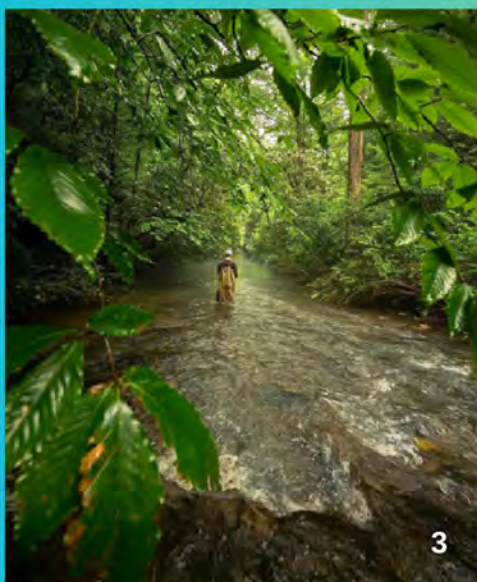
1) Amicalola Falls State Park

Just a short drive north out of Atlanta lies the southern tip of the Appalachian Trail, nestled in this gorgeous state park. Centered around a stunning waterfall, a trip to Amicalola reminds you that Atlanta lies within the foothills of the legendary Appalachian Mountains. It's worth a trip to remember how beautiful North Georgia can be!



2) The Gainesville Chicken Festival

Fun Fact: Gainesville, GA, is the poultry capital of the world. Every October the annual Chicken Festival of Gainesville is held at Lake Lanier Olympic Park, and is advertised to be "Georgia's Official Chicken Cook-Off". In short, it's all you can eat chicken for <\$10. If chicken is your thing, this is as good as it sounds. Visiting students have reported it to be worth the trip!



3) Blue Ridge, Georgia

If you make it all the way up to the Georgia/Tennessee border, you will be rewarded with some of the most gorgeous river country in the world. Amongst a winding maze of rivers lazily coursing through the rugged foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Blue Ridge, Georgia is widely known for offering the most incredible fly fishing in the United States.



THANKS FOR READING!

See you next time at NS
Retreat in August 2024!

