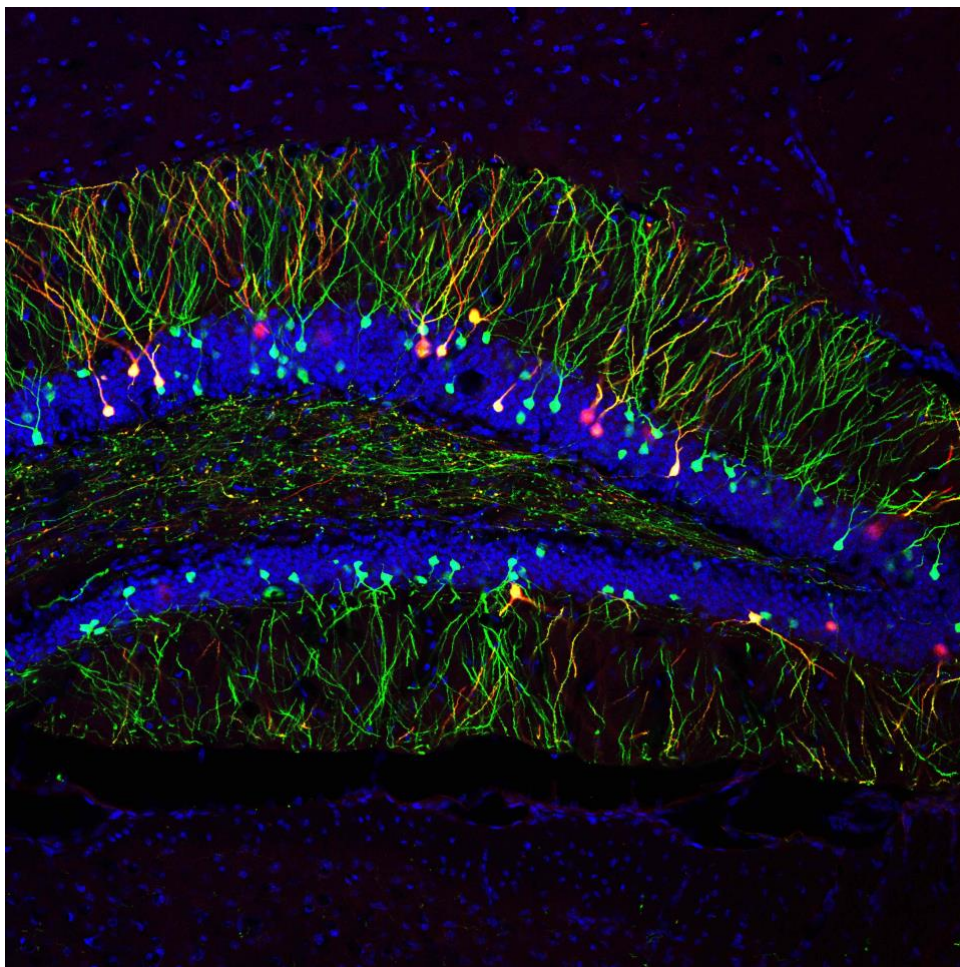


# **UT**HSC. NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE

## **THEC Neuroscience Center of Excellence**

Annual Report to the  
Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC)  
Fiscal year 2021 (7/1/2020-6/30/2021)



## **I. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Neuroscience Institute (NI) at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) is supported by the Neuroscience Center of Excellence, one of several Centers of Excellence established by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission in 1985. Our mission is to develop and support multidisciplinary research and training in neuroscience. We feature basic science and clinical members spanning 13 departments and three colleges, and foster neuroscience research through support of neuroscience track graduate students and postdocs, the Neuroscience Imaging Center and Behavioral Core, a robust seminar series, and start-up packages for new faculty. The brain is the final frontier of biology. Scientific inquiry has produced remarkably detailed knowledge of the physical world and much of the life sciences, including details of the human genome. However, our knowledge of the brain is far from complete. The nature and mechanisms of consciousness, thought, perception, learning, memory and many diseases of the nervous system are poorly understood. Neuroscience is now at an exciting threshold of discovery and unprecedented growth. The resulting explosion of information is rapidly increasing our understanding of the basic mechanisms of brain structure and function. This emerging knowledge is helping us discover effective treatments and even cures for some neurological diseases. More information concerning the NI is available at: <https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/>

## **II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In FY 2021 the NI/Center of Excellence continued the start-up fund support of (1) Dr. Tauheed Ishrat, an R01-funded associate professor and stroke/Alzheimer's neurobiologist recruited into the Anatomy and Neurobiology Department in 2017; (2) Dr. Il Hwan Kim, an R01-funded assistant professor and social behavior neurobiologist recruited from Duke University into the Anatomy and Neurobiology Department in 2019; and (3) Dr. Jianyang Du, an R01-funded associate professor and social behavior neurobiologist in the Anatomy and Neurobiology Department in January 2020. We provided stipend support to 5 graduate students and had 20 students in the Neuroscience Track of the Integrated Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program, after accepting 6 new students. We supported 10 postdocs in the Departments of Anatomy and Neurobiology, Ophthalmology and Physiology, although 2 left early. We promoted neuroscience research by providing the Neuroscience Seminar series, mixing outside with UTHSC and affiliated faculty. Due to the impact of Covid seminars were offered by Zoom, which offered the advantage of participation of international speakers. The undergraduate summer Neuroscience Merit Fellowship program, cancelled in summer of 2020 due to Covid, resumed in summer 2021 with 3 students. We supported the Neuroscience Imaging Center, a cost-recovery facility providing the only transmission electron microscope (JEOL 2000) on campus, a state of the art Zeiss 800 Arysca laser-line confocal microscope (upgraded from a Zeiss 710), and a NeuroLucida 3-dimensional reconstruction workstation, and the Neuroscience Behavioral Core. We purchased new software to expand the image analysis capabilities of the Imaging Center, and also purchased new computer workstations and histology equipment to replace non-functional items. We supplemented the service contracts of these instruments and software to keep user fees low. We supported the Imaging Center's technical director, Esther Marquez Wilkins, Ph.D. Matthew Ennis, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, was appointed as Interim Director upon the retirement of the longstanding Director of NI, William Armstrong, Ph.D. in August 2020.

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#### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

**Interim Director:** Matthew Ennis, Ph.D.  
Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology

**Co-Director:** Professor Tony Reiner, Ph.D.  
Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology

**Administrative Specialist:** Mistie Brewer

**Program Coordinator/IT Specialist:** Brandy Fleming, M.S.

#### **Neuroscience Executive Committee:**

*Matthew Ennis, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology*

*John Boughter, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology*

*Jon Jaggar, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Physiology*

*Shalini Narayana, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Pediatric Neurology, Le Bonheur Hospital/UTHSC*

*Tony Reiner, Ph.D., Professor and NI Co-Director, Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology*

*Jeff Steketee, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Pharmacology*

*Steven Tavalin Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology*

*Jim Wheless, M.D., Professor, Chief of Pediatric Neurology and LeBonheur Chair, Le Bonheur Hospital/UTHSC*

#### **Center Address:**

University of Tennessee Health Science Center  
875 Monroe Ave., Suite 426, Wittenborg Building  
Memphis TN 38163  
(901) 448-5960

<https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/>

## **V. FACULTY OF THE NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE**

The Neuroscience Institute is currently comprised of 71 faculty members in several different departments on the UTHSC campus, including those with primary appointments at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and one faculty member at UT Knoxville. Faculty are listed by department; those with primary appointments outside UTHSC or UTK are so indicated. We added 2 new members (\*), and 2 members left UTHSC as indicated, this past FY.

### **Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology**

William E. Armstrong, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus  
Alessandra d'Azzo, Ph.D., Affiliated Professor (St. Jude)  
John D. Boughter, Jr., Ph.D. Professor  
Joseph C. Callaway, Ph.D., Associate Professor  
Viktor Chizhikov, Ph.D., Associate Professor  
Jianyang Du, Ph.D., Associate Professor  
Michael A. Dyer, Ph.D., Affiliated Professor (St. Jude)  
Matthew Ennis, Ph.D., Simon R. Breusch Professor and Chair; Interim NI Director  
Max Fletcher, Ph.D., Associate Professor  
Robert C. Foehring, Ph.D., Professor  
Kristin Hamre, Ph.D., Associate Professor  
Detlef Heck, Ph.D., Professor  
Marcia G. Honig, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus  
Tauheed Ishrat, Ph.D., Associate Professor  
Il Hwan Kim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
Hitoshi Kita, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus  
Peter J. McKinnon, Ph.D., Affiliated Professor (St. Jude)  
James I. Morgan, Ph.D., Affiliated Professor (St. Jude)  
Anton J. Reiner, Ph.D., Methodist Professor and NI Co-Director  
Lindsay Schwarz, Ph.D., Affiliated Assistant Professor (St. Jude)  
J. Paul Taylor, M.D., Ph.D., Affiliated Professor (St. Jude)  
Robert S. Waters, Ph.D., Professor  
Steven L. Youngentob, Ph.D., Professor  
Stanislav Zahkarenko, Ph.D. Affiliated Professor (St. Jude)

### **Department of Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology, UT Knoxville**

Rebecca A. Prosser, Ph.D., Professor

**Department of Genetics, Genomics and Informatics**

Robert W. Williams, Ph.D., UT-Oak Ridge National Laboratory Governor's Chair in Computational Genomics,  
Professor and Chair; Director, Center for Integrative and Translational Genomics

Byron Jones, Ph.D., Professor

Lu Lu, Ph.D., Professor

Megan Mulligan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Burt Sharp, M.D., Van Fleet Professor

**Department of Medicine/Cardiology**

Syamal Bhattacharya, Ph.D., Professor

**Department of Psychiatry**

\*Ronald Cowan, M.D., Ph.D., Professor and Chair

**Department of Neurology**

Michael McDonald, Ph.D., Professor

Mohammad Khan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Thaddeus S. Nowak, Ph.D., Professor

Lawrence T. Reiter, Ph.D., Professor

Jack Tsao, M.D., Ph.D., Professor

**Department of Neurosurgery**

Frederick Boop, M.D., Professor and Chair

**Department of Ophthalmology**

Rajashekhar Gangaraju, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Monica M. Jablonski, Ph.D., Professor

Nawajes Mandal, Ph.D., Associate Professor

**Department of Pediatrics, Pediatric Neurology and LeBonheur Children's Hospital**

Abbas Babajani-Feremi, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Pediatrics, Le Bonheur (left UTHSC 12/2020)

Joan Han, M.D., Associate Professor, Pediatrics, LeBonheur (left UTHSC 12/2020)

Amy McGregor, M.D., Associate Professor, Pediatric Neurology, Le Bonheur

Shalini Narayana, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Pediatric Neurology, Le Bonheur

Massroor Pourcyrous, M.D., Professor, Pediatrics

James W. Wheless, M.D., Professor and Chief of Pediatric Neurology, Le Bonheur

**Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences**

Duane D. Miller, Ph.D., Van Fleet Professor and Chair

Bob Moore, Ph.D., Professor

Jianxiong Jiang, Ph.D., Associate Professor

**Department of Pharmacology**

Alex M. Dopico, M.D., Ph.D., Professor and Chair

Suleiman W. Bahouth, Ph.D., Professor

Anna Bukiya, Ph.D. Associate Professor

Hao Chen, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Chang Hoon Jee, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Francesca-Fang Liao, Ph.D., Professor

Kafait U. Malik, Ph.D., Professor

Kazuko Sakata, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Jeffery Steketee, Ph.D., Professor

Steven J. Tavalin, Ph.D., Associate Professor

\*Brendan Turnstall, PhD., Assistant Professor

Thirumalini Vaithianathan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Fu-Ming Zhou, M.D., Ph.D., Professor

**Department of Physiology**

Julio Cordero-Morales, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Ioannis Dragatsis, Ph.D., Professor

Jonathan Jaggar, Ph.D., Maury Bronstein Professor

Charles W. Leffler, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus

Helena Parfenova, Ph.D., Professor

Valeria Vásquez, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Paula Dietrich, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

**Department of Preventive Medicine**

Khyobeni Mozhui, Ph.D., Assistant Professor



**College of Nursing**

Ansley Stanfill, Ph.D., Associate Professor

**St. Jude Children's Hospital** (see Departments Above for Affiliated Appointments)

Michael Dyer, Ph.D., Professor

Alessandra D'Azzo, Ph.D., Professor

Peter McKinnon, Ph.D., Professor

James Morgan, Ph.D., Professor

Lindsay Schwarz, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

J. Paul Taylor, M.D., Ph.D., Professor

Stanislav Zakharenko, Ph.D., Professor

## VI. GRADUATE STUDENTS & POSTDOCTORAL STUDENTS

**Graduate Students:** The NI supports the Neuroscience Graduate Program, which is a division of the Integrated Biomedical Sciences program at UTHSC. A description of the Neuroscience program can be found at: [https://www.uthsc.edu/anatomy-neurobiology/neuroscience\\_graduate\\_program.php](https://www.uthsc.edu/anatomy-neurobiology/neuroscience_graduate_program.php). This program is directed by NI members Dr. Max Fletcher (Track Director) and Dr. Matthew Ennis (Program head and Chair of Anatomy and Neurobiology). Students in this track take Functional Neuroanatomy, and 2 of 3 additional Core courses (Cellular Neuroscience, Behavioral Neuroscience, Developmental and Molecular Neuroscience), in addition to Statistics and Ethics. In addition, all graduate students must take the Neuroscience Seminar Class each year until they pass their qualifying exam, and all students participate in the student Neuroscience Symposium class every year, where they present their research. Both the Seminar and Symposium courses are coordinated and supported by NI. All students in good standing in the program are awarded matching stipends for at least 2 years (typically, years 3 and 4) of their Ph.D. research phase with the exception of students working at St. Jude Children's Hospital, which provides their complete stipend. Currently the program has 17 students (after 3 students graduated in FY2021), 4 of whom are at St. Jude's (faculty mentors have affiliate faculty appointments in Anatomy & Neurobiology), the others of whom are placed with faculty mentors at UTHSC in Anatomy & Neurobiology, Pediatrics (Division of Neurology), Neurology, Pharmacology and the College of Nursing.

In the last 6 years, four NI supported students have been awarded nationally competitive NIH F31 predoctoral fellowships during their graduate tenure: Sarah Neuner, Jordan Ross, Jessica Baker and Angela Taylor. Drs. Neuner and Ross graduated and left for postdocs several years ago, and Jessica Baker and Angela Taylor graduated in FY2021. These are the *only* UTHSC students from the larger IBS program to have F31 fellowships.

**Postdoctoral Fellows:** The NI supports matching postdoctoral fellowships to some extent every calendar year, and successful postdocs can receive support for a maximum of 2 years. In December of 2020, we solicited applications for postdoctoral support (see **Appendix 4**). Applications were reviewed by the Neuroscience Executive Committee based on productivity and promise in neuroscience research and awards were made on a competitive basis to the following 5 candidates with Neuroscience Institute faculty mentors: Jungsoo Lee (Physiology, Dr. Valeria Vasquez), Kaushik Mondal (Ophthalmology, Dr. Nawajes Mandal), Alejandro Mata (Physiology, Dr. Jon Jagger), Pratheepa Rasiah (Ophthalmology, Raja Gangaraju), and Rong Zhang (Physiology, Dr. Helena Parfenova). We also continued (and completed) support of 3 postdoctoral fellow awards made in FY20-21. Further information on postdoctoral awards is available at <https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/education/postdoc-awards.php>

## **VII. PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **OVERVIEW**

**Organizational Structure:** The Tennessee Higher Education Commission Neuroscience Center of Excellence comprises the administrative core and financial engine of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's (UTHSC) Neuroscience Institute (NI), which is located within UTHSC's College of Medicine in Memphis, TN. Prof. Matthew Ennis is the Interim Director, and Prof. Tony Reiner is the Co-Director. The Director reports to the Executive Dean of the UTHSC College of Medicine, Scott Strome, M.D., and the UTHSC Vice Chancellor of Research, Steven Goodman, Ph.D. Physically the NI is housed within 13 different departments in 3 colleges (Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing) with an administrative suite in Rm 426 Wittenborg Building at UTHSC. Affiliated members reside at UT Knoxville, St. Jude Children's Hospital, and LeBonheur Children's Hospital.

Dr. Ennis supervises Ms. Brandy Fleming, M.S., who is our Program Coordinator and also functions as our IT specialist. Ms. Fleming and Dr. Ennis supervise our administrative assistant, Mistie Brewer. With Ms. Fleming's help, the administrative assistant organizes the seminar series including all travel arrangements, assists in ordering and billing, and handles NI official correspondence. The Neuroscience Imaging Center is managed by Dr. Esther Marquez Wilkins, Ph.D., who reports directly to NI Director Ennis.

**History:** The Neuroscience Center of Excellence at UTHSC was established in 1985 and designated an accomplished Center of Excellence by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission in 1988. In 1998, the Neuroscience Center of Excellence was designated as the University of Tennessee Neuroscience Institute, with dedicated space in the Wittenborg, Link and Johnson buildings. The Neuroscience Center of Excellence award was designed to support graduate and postdoctoral education, to recruit and provide initial support to new neuroscience faculty, to renovate laboratory facilities, to purchase research equipment, to host symposia, a weekly seminar series, and to support community outreach programs such as those associated with Brain Awareness Week. The Director from 1985-2002 was Dr. Steven T. Kitai (retired, 2002; deceased 2019). Dr. David Smith was named director from 2002-2006 (deceased, Sept. 2006). Dr. William Armstrong was director from 2006-2020. Dr. Matthew Ennis, Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, was selected as NI Interim Director by UTHSC administration in 2020 upon Dr. Armstrong's retirement.

The program brings together neuroscience faculty members from the Departments of Anatomy and Neurobiology, Genomics, Medicine, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Nursing, Ophthalmology, Pediatrics, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Pharmacology, Physiology, Preventive Medicine, Psychiatry, and the Department of Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Strong affiliations exist with Methodist University Hospital, Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, St. Jude's Children Hospital, the University of Memphis, Rhodes College, and Christian Brother's University. The interdepartmental nature of the program and the collaborations it fosters provide the cross-disciplinary environment necessary for high quality neuroscience research.

**Neuroscience Administrative Suite and Conference Rooms:** The NI maintains an administrative suite with offices for the Director, Program Coordinator, and Administrative Assistant in the Wittenborg Building, 4<sup>th</sup> floor (Room 426).

This suite also contains 2 conference rooms, one large room for classes, lab meetings, and large committee meetings, and a smaller room for small meetings. We also maintain a breakroom for the NI staff, graduate students, postdocs as well as for staff from the animal vivarium located in the basement of the Wittenborg building, which houses animals for Anatomy and Neurology, Physiology, and Neurology faculty.

**Neuroscience Imaging Core:** The NI maintains a full-service Imaging Center (<https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/facilities/imaging-center.php>) housing confocal and electron microscopes, 3-dimensional reconstruction workstations, microtomy facility and lab and office space for the Director of the Imaging Core, Dr. Esther Marquez Wilkins, located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Link Building. This is a cost recovery facility that NI supports in order to keep costs low. Scheduling is on-line.

**Neuroscience Behavioral Core:** This core is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Wittenborg building (<https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/facilities/behavioral-core.php>), and is managed by Dr. Mike McDonald of Neurology. NI helped recruit Dr. McDonald. Dr. McDonald personally trains users in the great variety of testing equipment available in this core; nearly all equipment in the core was generously donated by NI faculty. This core is free of use to any UTHSC faculty, but NI occasionally supplies equipment and software on an as-needs basis. Scheduling is on-line.

**Neuroscience Institute Web Site:** Our Program Coordinator, Ms. Brandy Fleming, maintains the NI website with assistance from IT at UTHSC (<https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/>). This site contains information about our cores, the graduate and postdoctoral support programs, undergraduate fellowships, conference room and core on-line scheduling, faculty funding, spotlights on new faculty, seminars and symposia, and a full list of participating departments and NI faculty members. Ms. Fleming maintains 2 servers for NI members. One server is for file exchange for users of the Imaging Center. All images are digitally acquired from our confocal and electron microscopes, and these can be uploaded to this site by users, stored for a month, and downloaded at their convenience during that period. We also maintain a second server for archiving all NI business.

### Areas of Neuroscience Research

#### **Neurological and Neurodegenerative Disorders**

Neurological diseases include disorders of the nervous system arising from nervous system malfunction or degeneration. Current areas of focus within NI include: cellular and network physiology of basal ganglia in the context of Parkinson's disease, traumatic brain and eye injury, stroke, seizures/epilepsy, neuronal dysfunction and death in Huntington's disease, the molecular biology of synaptogenesis in dystonia, and animal models of Alzheimer's disease.

| <b>Faculty</b>     | <b>Department</b>      | <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| A. Babajani-Feremi | Ped. Neurology         | I. Dragatsis   | Physiology             |
| D. Heck            | Anatomy & Neurobiology | B. Jones       | Genetics, Gen. Inform. |
| H. Kita            | Anatomy & Neurobiology | F.-F. Liao     | Pharmacology           |
| L. Reiter          | Neurology              | T. Nowak       | Neurology              |

|              |                         |             |                        |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| T. Ishrat    | Anatomy & Neurobiology  | A. Reiner   | Anat. & Neurobiology   |
| J. Tsao      | Neurology               | J. Wheless  | Pediatric Neurology    |
| J. Jiang     | Pharmaceutical Sciences | S. Narayana | Pediatric Neurology    |
| M. McDonald  | Neurology               | M. Mulligan | Genetics, Gen. Inform. |
| F. Zhou      | Pharmacology            | J. Taylor   | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| B. Moore     | Pharmaceutical Sciences | J. Stanfill | Nursing                |
| R. Gangaraju | Ophthalmology           | P. Dietrich | Physiology             |

### ***Excitable Properties of Neurons***

Behavior, mentation and physiological homeostasis are all a function of neuronal activity in the nervous system. This activity can be encoded by membrane polarity or in the rates and patterns of neuronal action potentials. Information is passed among neurons through synaptic transmission.

| <b>Faculty</b>     | <b>Department</b>      | <b>Faculty</b>   | <b>Department</b>      |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| R. Foehring        | Anatomy & Neurobiology | H. Kita          | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| W. Armstrong       | Anatomy & Neurobiology | J. Du            | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| J. Callaway        | Anatomy & Neurobiology | S. Tavalin       | Pharmacology           |
| J. Cordero-Morales | Physiology             | R. Waters        | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| A. Dopico          | Pharmacology           | V. Vásquez       | Physiology             |
| M. Ennis           | Anatomy & Neurobiology | D. Heck          | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| F. Zhou            | Pharmacology           | A. Bukiya        | Pharmacology           |
| S. Zahkarenko      | Anatomy & Neurobiology | T. Vaithianathan | Pharmacology           |

### ***Sensory Information Processing***

Sensory systems extract information from the environment and provide the nervous system an interface with the outside world. Understanding the way in which this information is represented in neuronal activity is the focus of this research group, which includes the study of olfaction, taste, pain, and vision.

| <b>Faculty</b>     | <b>Department</b>      | <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| M. Ennis           | Anatomy & Neurobiology | R. Waters      | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| J. Boughter        | Anatomy & Neurobiology | J. Du          | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| J. Cordero-Morales | Physiology             | V. Vásquez     | Physiology             |
| M. Fletcher        | Physiology             | I. Kim         | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| D. Heck            | Anatomy & Neurobiology | S. Youngentob  | Anatomy & Neurobiology |

### ***Vision and Retina***

Understanding the normal function of the eye and the way this process is affected by disease is the primary interest of this group. Researchers are addressing the normal development of the eye as well as the genetic basis of function and disease.

| <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      | <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| M. Dyer        | Anatomy & Neurobiology | A. Reiner      | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| M. Jablonski   | Ophthalmology          | R. Williams    | Genetics, Gen. Inform. |
| N. Mandal      | Ophthalmology          |                |                        |

***Neurogenetics and Development***

This group is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the origins of the impressive structural and functional complexity, diversity, and plasticity of the nervous system. Experimental and technical expertise of this group is broad, ranging from genetic and molecular analysis of the early stages of central and peripheral nervous system development to sophisticated functional assays of neuronal plasticity in response to environmental manipulations.

| <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      | <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| R. Williams    | Genetics, Gen. Inform. | L. Lu          | Genetics, Gen. Inform. |
| J. Boughter    | Anatomy & Neurobiology | P. McKinnon    | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| V. Chizhikov   | Anatomy & Neurobiology | J. Morgan      | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| A. d’Azzo      | Anatomy & Neurobiology | K. Mozui       | Preventive Medicine    |
| I. Dragatsis   | Physiology             | A. Reiner      | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| K. Hamre       | Anatomy & Neurobiology | L. Reiter      | Neurology              |
| J. Han         | Pediatrics             | M. Honig       | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| M. Mulligan    | Genetics, Gen. Inform. | B. Jones       | Genetics, Gen. Inform. |

***Mental and Addictive Disorders***

Mental and addictive disorders are due to changes in normal brain function. This research group collaboratively explores changes in brain function that might explain mental disorders, such as depression, schizophrenia, ADHD, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and addiction, and drug-induced changes in brain function that may be responsible for relieving mental disorders or producing addiction.

| <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      | <b>Faculty</b> | <b>Department</b>      |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| H. Chen        | Pharmacology           | B. Sharp       | Pharmacology           |
| A. Dopico      | Pharmacology           | J. Steketee    | Pharmacology           |
| K. Hamre       | Anatomy & Neurobiology | S. Tavalin     | Pharmacology           |
| K. Sakata      | Pharmacology           | F. Zhou        | Pharmacology           |
| I. Kim         | Anatomy & Neurobiology | B. Turnstall   | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| A. Reiner      | Anatomy & Neurobiology | S. Youngentob  | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| M. Mulligan    | Genetics, Gen. Inform. | L. Schwarcz    | Anatomy & Neurobiology |
| J. Du          | Anatomy & Neurobiology | R. Cowan       | Psychiatry             |

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

***Faculty support and recruitment:*** NI is currently disseminating funds to Dr. Tauheed Ishrat (\$150,000). Dr. Ishrat, started drawing on his funds in February of 2018 and will have until February 2023 to spend the \$150,000. Dr. Ishrat was recruited in 2017 into Anatomy and Neurobiology as an associate professor with an R01. He has submitted a second R01 which is pending review. He is a stroke neurobiologist and is interested in factors that mitigate or exacerbate stroke susceptibility in a focal ischemia model. NI also awarded Dr. Il Hwan Kim \$150,000 to be spent over 5 years. Dr. Kim was recruited in 2019 into Anatomy and Neurobiology as an assistant professor; his R01 funded research area is social behavior and schizophrenia. He is working towards a second R01. In 2020, we recruited Dr. Jianyang Du into Anatomy and Neurobiology as associate professor; his R01-funded research investigates social behavior and autism and he is working towards a second R01 in this area. NI awarded him \$100,000 toward his start-up fund package, to be spent over

5 years.

NI provided bridge research funding to NI member Dr. Khan (Assistant Professor of Neurology) to maintain his animal colony until his new research grant is awarded. We partnered with the Chair of Neurology to provide 50% (\$3,461) of the \$6,922 requested to maintain the colony, with the other 50% coming from Neurology.

***Acquisition of Equipment for Cores:*** In the past, NI has contributed matching funds for multi-user pieces of equipment, including those obtained from NIH for an electron microscope, for two confocal microscopes and a computerized light microscope for three-dimensional neuronal reconstructions. In addition NI partnered with UTHSC Research to obtain a high resolution digital camera attachment for the electron microscope and to upgrade the Zeiss 710 to a Zeiss 800 Airyscan confocal microscope. All are located in the Neuroscience Imaging Core and are maintained and supervised by a dedicated Technical Manager (Dr. Esther Marquez Wilkins) provided by the NI. This past year we renewed our service agreements for this imaging equipment. In FY21, in response to a survey of imaging needs of NI faculty, we purchased two new additions to our Imaris software suite: (1) the Tracking XT Package which provides interactive processing, visualization and analysis software for 3D and 4D microscopic images; and (2) the ClearView Deconvolution 9.5 module for confocal image deconvolution. Additionally, we purchased a new ultramicrotome (Leica EM UC7) as our longstanding unit was broken beyond usefulness, a new glass knifemaker (Leica EM KMR3) for similar reasons, and new computers for the Zen workstation and the Microbrightfield NeuroLucida system as the software on the existing computers could no longer be upgraded due to hardware incompatibility. The web site for the Imaging Center is: (<https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/facilities/imaging-center.php>) and features on-line scheduling for equipment use.

***Graduate Student Support and Recruiting:*** Our interdisciplinary Graduate Neuroscience Track attracts outstanding applicants from around the country, with an emphasis on those in the Mid-South. The NI pays 50% of their stipend for 2 years (years 3 and 4), the remainder is paid by their mentor. For FY21 we spent \$69,069 on matching stipends for 5 students and another \$200 on travel support. Note that the impact of Covid since March 2020 cancelled travel to many meetings that otherwise would have been supported by NI. During FY21 we had 20 Neuroscience students, including 6 new students who entered in the Fall 2020; 3 students graduated. In Fall 2021 we recruited 4 new graduate students; however, Visa approval for two international students have been delayed. Our recruiting flyer can be found at the end of **Appendix 4**, but through querying students, we find that most discover the program based on the NI Web site.

***Postdoctoral Research Awards.*** The NI provided matching funds on a competitive basis for 10 postdoctoral fellows or research associates for FY2021 (this includes 5 awarded in the previous calendar year with 2 leaving early). These awards range from \$10,000-\$15,000 each and totaled \$50,539. The 5 postdocs newly awarded in 2020 were located in the Departments of Ophthalmology and Physiology. Their names are listed above under item VI.

***NI Neuroscience Seminar Series and Symposia:*** This series is a major mechanism for interaction among neuroscience faculty and students and brings outstanding neuroscientists from around the world to the UTHSC campus. During the 2020-2021 academic year, the NI sponsored the weekly Neuroscience Seminar Series, hosted 13 speakers, 5 internal, 1 from St. Jude, and 7 from outside UTHSC. Due to the continuing impact of Covid, the number of seminars was less than the typical 17 annually and was done via Zoom. The NI seminar series serves as the basis for a graduate course, Neuroscience Seminar (ANAT 821), which is attended by all neuroscience track IBS graduate students and within which they read papers by and meet with the visiting scientists (course director Dr. Sakata, Pharmacology, co-director Dr. Du, Anatomy and Neurobiology). This seminar program is vital to the Neuroscience Track of the Graduate Program and to the entire UT neuroscience community, serving to keep our faculty and students abreast of recent developments and, perhaps even more important, to showcase our strengths to national and international leaders in neuroscience research visiting our campus. NI also assists in the Spring Student Seminar course (course director Dr. Fletcher), where students give seminars and receive critical feedback from their colleagues. A complete list of the seminar speakers and their topics are provided in **Appendix 3**.

***NI Sponsored Workshop:*** NI sponsors or co-sponsored imaging and neuroanatomy workshops, last in FY18-19. No workshops or symposia were scheduled in the current reporting period due to Covid. Several NI faculty including Drs. Cowan (Psychiatry), Williams (Genomics, Genetics and Bioinformatics), Chen (Pharmacology) and Hamre (Anatomy and Neurobiology) were featured speakers at the UTHSC Addiction Symposium (May 4, 2021; see **Appendix 4**).

***Undergraduate Neuroscience Merit Scholarships:*** These are given to outstanding undergraduates at Rhodes College, Christian Brothers University (CBU) and University of Memphis. The Rhodes and CBU scholars work on independent projects for their undergraduate thesis. New scholars are picked every Spring but UTHSC imposed a moratorium on undergraduate student research on campus in the summer of 2020 due to Covid. The previous year (summer 2019), NI supported 4 merit students working with UTHSC faculty mentors. We spent \$16,232 supporting these and 4 additional scholarships in the summer of 2019 (after July 1, 2019, so part of FY2020). Fortunately, the Covid restriction was lifted for summer 2021 and we accepted 3 undergraduate students who began their research with NI faculty in June and July.

## **VIII. GOALS AND FUTURE PLANS**

***Faculty Support and Recruitment:*** We were given permission in 2017 by Interim College of Medicine Dean Steven Schwab, and continued approval in 2018 under the new College of Medicine Dean Dr. Strome, to recruit two mid-level neuroscientists into the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology. Chair of Anatomy and Neurobiology, Dr. Ennis, and Dr. Armstrong co-chaired the search committees for these recruitments. This resulted in the recruitments of Dr. Il Hwan Kim of Duke University in 2019, and Dr. Jianyang Du from University of Toledo in 2020. NI partnered on both of their



start-up funds. NI will continue to partner on neuroscience faculty recruitments in consultation with UTHSC administration.

***Core Support:*** NI will continue to support the Imaging Center (including the microtomy facility), and Behavioral Core. This requires collecting and processing user fees, paying service contracts, and repairing/replacing equipment. Further Details are found in the budget for FY21 below. We anticipate replacing a cryostat that is beyond its lifespan and can no longer be repaired.

***Graduate Student Support and Recruiting:*** We expect to recruit 2-4 new students into the Neuroscience Track for Fall 2022. We will support matching stipends of 5 students during the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021. Dr. Fletcher will run the Neuroscience Student Symposium class with Drs. Ennis and Heck assisting, and Dr. Du will run the Neuroscience Seminar Series class for graduate students. The NI offers travel stipends (\$500 per trip) to any Neuroscience student or supported postdoc for a national meeting if they are the first or presenting author of a talk or poster.

***Postdoctoral Research Awards.*** We will continue ongoing support to 5 postdocs. Requests for applications of support in 2022 will be sent out in November 2021 for a January 2022 start date. These applications are competitive, and ranked by the NI Executive Committee. See Budget for FY21 for further details.

***NI Neuroscience Seminar Series and Symposia:*** We will continue to run the Neuroscience Seminar Series, which due to the continued impact of Covid, will be held on-line by Zoom. It is likely this will continue for the foreseeable future until health and travel issues caused by the pandemic are mitigated. Likewise, a similar situation applied to symposia and workshops normally sponsored or co-sponsored by NI.

***Undergraduate Research Fellows:*** We will support up to 4 undergraduate research fellows from Rhodes College, Christian Brothers University, or University of Memphis. The restrictions on undergraduate research on the campus imposed by Covid were lifted, allowing the resumption of this program for summer 2021. Applications were processed in the Spring 2021 and 3 students were accepted for summer research.

## **IX. BUDGET (see Schedule 7, page 21)**

**A. FY2021** The FY 2021 THEC appropriated budget for the UTNI was \$628,367. We carried forward \$369,004 from the previous year for a total budget of \$997,341. This carryover reflects amounts encumbered but unspent for Graduate Stipends that were picked up previously by NI and are now picked up by UTHSC for the student's first 18 months, monies encumbered to support our new faculty hires for whom we provided seed packages (Drs. Ishrat, Du, and Kim) and any unspent funds from research award accounts. Additionally, the carry forward reflects funds for seminar

arrangements (travel, per diem, hotel and honorarium) that were not expended due to Covid. Also, catering for the Student Symposium series did not occur due to similar Covid restrictions on group gathering on campus.

This past FY, we expended \$419,839 total personnel costs (including salaries and fringe). Personnel costs include administrative supplements for the NI Director (who also directs the NI Imaging Center), the NI Co-Director, a full-time Program Coordinator/ IT specialist, a ¾ time Administrative Specialist, and a full time Technical Manager of Imaging Center as well as the students and postdocs mentioned below.

**Students:** We awarded matching or partial funds for 5 graduate stipends to NI faculty mentors with Neuroscience track graduate students for a total \$69,069. The mentors were located in the department of Anatomy and Neurobiology and in the College of Nursing.

**Postdoctoral Support:** We provided matching funds for 10 postdoctoral fellows, (2 left early) for a total \$50,539. The NI faculty mentors are located in the departments of Anatomy and Neurobiology, Neurology, Ophthalmology, and Physiology; their names are listed above under item VI.

**Neuroscience Imaging Center:** Currently the NI Imaging Center is run by Dr. Esther Marquez Wilkins. We supplement our cost-recovery program to keep user fees low, helping to pay the service contracts on our JEOL 2000 Electron Microscope, the Zeiss 710/800 confocal microscope, the Microbrightfield Neurolucida workstation, and the Imaris software suite (including the new modules purchased this past year as noted above). This year our cost-recovery program took in \$30,615 which was used against the fees needed to pay the service contracts on the Zeiss 710/AiryScan (\$22,690) and the JEOL 2000 (\$16,800). The cost recovery this FY was much less than previous years due to the restricted research operations during Covid-19. As noted above, to replace non-functional equipment, we purchased (1) a ultramicrotome (Leica EM UC7, \$54,880), (2) a glass knifemaker (Leica EM KMR3, \$9,989), (3) two Imaris image analysis software modules (\$13,461), and (4) computer workstations (\$5,896) for the Microbrightfield Neurolucida and Zen systems as the software on the existing computer could no longer be upgraded due to hardware incompatibility. The equipment available for use can be viewed at: <https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/facilities/imaging-center.php>.

**Neuroscience Behavioral Core:** The procedures for use and available equipment can be viewed at: <https://www.uthsc.edu/neuroscience-institute/facilities/behavioral-core.php>. Due to the generally low cost of maintenance (Dr. McDonald generously trains new users at no charge and faculty provide their own research personnel to use the equipment), NI has not yet instituted fees for services in this facility.

**Seminars and Symposia:** No funds went to support travel/lodging/meals this year due to Covid. We did pay honoraria (\$1200), for the Neuroscience Seminar series (see **Appendix 3**).

**Faculty and Research Project Support:** We provided startup funds for Drs. Ishrat, Du, and Kim, who were awarded \$150,000, \$100,000 and \$150,000, respectively. Dr. Ishrat's began in February of 2018 and Drs. Du and Kim's began in April 2020. These can be spread over the next 3-5 years. We also sent out a request in February 2020 for research support grants. We awarded 5 of those grants between \$25,000-\$50,000. Those receiving the awards were: Drs. Heck (Anatomy and Neurobiology, \$50,000), Chizhikov (Anatomy and Neurobiology, \$30,000), Cordero-Morales/Vasquez (Physiology, \$35,700) and Gangaraju (Ophthalmology, \$25,695). Drs. Heck, Chizhikov, and Gangaraju carried forward funds into FY21 which is reflected in our carryover.

**Undergraduate Fellowships:** Undergraduate research on campus was cancelled in FY21 due to Covid. As noted above, the program resumed in summer 2021.

**Travel Awards:** Most national and international research meeting were cancelled in the past year due to Covid and thus our expenditures in this area were down from normal levels. \$200 in travel awards for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows were awarded.

**B. FY2022.** We will carryover \$295,371 to the coming fiscal year, and have been appropriated \$649,841 for a total of \$945,212. In addition to providing support for all the NI staff (Program Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, and Imaging Center Manager), here is a breakdown of the major anticipated projects for FY2022:

**Students:** For the coming year, we have awarded matching, or partial support, funds for 5 graduate stipends to NI faculty mentors with Neuroscience track graduate students. Mentors are located in Anatomy and Neurobiology, Pediatrics and the College of Nursing. The NI match is ~\$14,500 each for 5 of these making an expected total of ~\$72,500.

**Postdoctoral Support:** We continued to provide funds for 5 postdoctoral fellows (\$10,000-15,000 each for a total of ~\$35,000 for the coming year). Some can be given to awardees from last year assuming good progress, with a maximum of 2 year's support. In addition, we have allotted another \$40,000 for 5 new postdoctoral fellows, bringing the total expected postdoctoral expenditures to \$75,000 during FY 2021.

**Neuroscience Imaging Center:** We will pay/renew the service contracts on the: (1) JEOL 2000 (\$16,800), (2) Zeiss 710/800 Confocal (\$22,690), (3) Microbrightfield Neurolucida system (\$4,000); (5) Imaris software suite (\$4,346), (6) Leica Glass Knife Maker (\$585), and (7) Leica Ultramicrotome (\$5,876). We have budgeted \$55,000 to replace Leica cryostat in the Microtomy core as it is broken beyond repair.

***Neuroscience Behavioral Core:*** We will continue to support the Behavioral Core in FY2021, but expenditures are expected to be minimal. However, should a need arise for additional equipment, or for a part-time assistant to help run behavioral studies, NI would consider additional funding assuming a fee for service program were approved and initiated.

***NI Faculty:*** We will provide administrative supplements to Drs. Ennis and Reiner. We are currently providing startup funds as follows: (1) \$150,000 over 3-5 years to Dr. Ishrat (2/01//2018-1/31/2023); (2) \$150,000 over 3-5 years to Dr. Kim, or until ~2024 should he choose to spread it over the full 5 years; and (3) \$100,000 over 3-5 years to Dr. Du, or until 2025 should he choose to spread it over the full 5 years. We limit NI expenditures for each faculty at no more than \$50,000/year, and request that they use at least \$30,000 per year should they wish to extend the full five years. UTHSC administration intends to open a national search for the next NI director with the goal of recruiting a marquis neuroscience researcher from outside UTHSC. The specific timeframe of the search has not been specified at this time but in the case of a successful search, NI would likely be asked to partner on startup funds from the unobligated budget balance.

***Research Projects and Bridge Funding:*** We can provide small amounts of bridge assistance, but this will be limited by our commitments to start-up fund packages noted above for Drs. Ishrat, Kim, and Du.

***Seminar Series and Community Outreach:*** We will offer our weekly Neuroscience Seminar series, currently offered on-line and featuring local speakers. If conditions permit, we will continue to fund summer Undergraduate Neuroscience Merit Fellowships to Rhodes and Christian Brothers University students who are doing research projects in Neuroscience towards fulfilling their degree requirements (from 3-4 awards, depending on qualifications).

***Impact of Covid.*** As the Covid Pandemic continues, we anticipate that funds allocated to the Seminar Series and Student Symposium (catering) may not be expended or fully expended in the upcoming fiscal period. Unspent funds in these categories will allow us to fully fund 50,000/year in faculty start-up packages and also to repair or replace core equipment in the Imaging Center.

Schedule 7

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE ACTUAL, PROPOSED, AND REQUESTED BUDGET

Institution:

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

Center:

NEUROSCIENCE-In Total

|  | FY 2020-21 Actual |                  |                    | FY 2021-22 Proposed |                  |                    | FY 2022-23 Requested |                  |                    |
|--|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|  | Matching          | Appopr.          | Total              | Matching            | Appopr.          | Total              | Matching             | Appopr.          | Total              |
| <b>Expenditures</b>                    |                   |                  |                    |                     |                  |                    |                      |                  |                    |
| <b>Salaries</b>                        |                   |                  |                    |                     |                  |                    |                      |                  |                    |
| Faculty                                | \$520,265         | \$54,226         | \$574,491          | \$485,765           | \$55,304         | \$541,069          | \$500,338            | \$56,963         | \$557,301          |
| Other Professional                     | \$35,634          | \$160,025        | \$195,659          | \$36,416            | \$167,280        | \$203,696          | \$37,508             | \$172,298        | \$209,807          |
| Clerical/ Supporting                   | \$0               | \$37,280         | \$37,280           | \$0                 | \$49,788         | \$49,788           | \$0                  | \$37,449         | \$37,449           |
| Assistantships                         | \$200,444         | \$121,428        | \$321,872          | \$200,700           | \$150,455        | \$351,155          | \$206,721            | \$129,219        | \$335,940          |
| <b>Total Salaries</b>                  | <b>\$756,343</b>  | <b>\$372,959</b> | <b>\$1,129,302</b> | <b>\$722,881</b>    | <b>\$422,827</b> | <b>\$1,145,708</b> | <b>\$744,567</b>     | <b>\$395,929</b> | <b>\$1,140,496</b> |
| Longevity (Excluded from Salaries)     | \$3,193           | \$2,017          | \$5,210            | \$3,693             | \$2,934          | \$6,627            | \$3,804              | \$3,022          | \$6,826            |
| Fringe Benefits                        | \$205,897         | \$90,324         | \$296,221          | \$195,858           | \$84,232         | \$280,090          | \$201,734            | \$82,433         | \$284,167          |
| <b>Total Personnel</b>                 | <b>\$965,433</b>  | <b>\$465,301</b> | <b>\$1,430,734</b> | <b>\$922,432</b>    | <b>\$509,993</b> | <b>\$1,432,425</b> | <b>\$950,105</b>     | <b>\$481,384</b> | <b>\$1,431,489</b> |
| <b>Non-Personnel</b>                   |                   |                  |                    |                     |                  |                    |                      |                  |                    |
| Travel                                 | \$0               | \$0              | \$0                | \$0                 | \$14,000         | \$14,000           | \$0                  | \$14,420         | \$14,420           |
| Software                               | \$0               | \$13,718         | \$13,718           | \$0                 | \$5,000          | \$5,000            | \$0                  | \$5,150          | \$5,150            |
| Other Supplies                         | \$0               | \$67,313         | \$67,313           | \$0                 | \$273,250        | \$273,250          | \$0                  | \$130,240        | \$130,240          |
| Equipment                              | \$20,050          | \$150,740        | \$170,790          | \$0                 | \$85,000         | \$85,000           | \$0                  | \$0              | \$0                |
| Maintenance                            | \$0               | \$41,359         | \$41,359           | \$0                 | \$70,800         | \$70,800           | \$0                  | \$72,924         | \$72,924           |
| <b>Other (Specify):</b>                |                   |                  |                    |                     |                  |                    |                      |                  |                    |
| Media Processing                       | \$0               | \$75             | \$75               | \$0                 | \$100            | \$100              | \$0                  | \$103            | \$103              |
| Communication                          | \$0               | \$2,669          | \$2,669            | \$0                 | \$2,550          | \$2,550            | \$0                  | \$2,627          | \$2,627            |
| Rentals & Insurance                    | \$0               | \$10,296         | \$10,296           | \$0                 | \$7,525          | \$7,525            | \$0                  | \$0              | \$0                |
| Insurance & Interest                   | \$0               | \$956            | \$956              | \$0                 | \$3,000          | \$3,000            | \$0                  | \$3,090          | \$3,090            |
| Contractual & Special Services         | \$0               | \$956            | \$956              | \$0                 | \$3,000          | \$3,000            | \$0                  | \$3,090          | \$3,090            |
| Other Services & Expenditures          | \$0               | \$0              | \$0                | \$0                 | \$2,250          | \$2,250            | \$0                  | \$2,318          | \$2,318            |
| Other Expenses                         | \$0               | (\$36,508)       | (\$36,508)         | \$0                 | (\$29,206)       | (\$29,206)         | \$0                  | (\$30,900)       | (\$30,900)         |
| <b>Total Non-Personnel</b>             | <b>\$20,050</b>   | <b>\$251,573</b> | <b>\$271,623</b>   | <b>\$0</b>          | <b>\$437,269</b> | <b>\$437,269</b>   | <b>\$0</b>           | <b>\$203,061</b> | <b>\$203,061</b>   |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>                     | <b>\$985,483</b>  | <b>\$716,874</b> | <b>\$1,702,357</b> | <b>\$922,432</b>    | <b>\$947,262</b> | <b>\$1,869,694</b> | <b>\$950,105</b>     | <b>\$684,445</b> | <b>\$1,634,550</b> |
| <b>Revenue</b>                         |                   |                  |                    |                     |                  |                    |                      |                  |                    |
| New State Appropriation                | \$0               | \$628,367        | \$628,367          | \$0                 | \$649,841        | \$649,841          | \$0                  | \$682,333        | \$682,333          |
| Carryover State Appropriation          | \$0               | \$369,004        | \$369,004          | \$0                 | \$295,371        | \$295,371          | \$0                  | \$0              | \$0                |
| New Matching Funds                     | \$985,483         | \$0              | \$985,483          | \$922,432           | \$0              | \$922,432          | \$950,105            | \$0              | \$950,105          |
| Carryover from Previous Matching Funds | \$0               | \$0              | \$0                | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0                | \$0                  | \$0              | \$0                |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                   | <b>\$985,483</b>  | <b>\$997,371</b> | <b>\$1,982,854</b> | <b>\$922,432</b>    | <b>\$945,212</b> | <b>\$1,867,644</b> | <b>\$950,105</b>     | <b>\$682,333</b> | <b>\$1,632,438</b> |

## **X. FACULTY PUBLICATIONS**

The Neuroscience faculty at UTHSC is consistently productive, both in terms of peer-reviewed publications and participation in the national neuroscience community. Lists of peer-reviewed journal publications during the last academic year, as cited in PubMed are presented in **Appendix 2**. These PubMed-cited publications do not include the many chapters, reviews and other articles written by NI faculty. NI faculty members are indicated in **bold** in **Appendix 2**. **NI members published 242 papers.**

## **XI. EXTRAMURAL FUNDING OF NEUROSCIENCE FACULTY**

The UT Neuroscience Institute is a concentrated, interdepartmental Neuroscience program. For FY2020-2021, Anatomy and Neurobiology (11 funded Neuroscientists) was ranked **25<sup>th</sup> in the category of Neuroscience departments among public university medical schools in NIH funding (38<sup>th</sup> overall), and 32<sup>nd</sup> among public university Anatomy and Cell Biology Departments (48<sup>th</sup> overall)**. (Statistics from Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research ([http://www.brimr.org/NIH\\_Awards/2020/default.htm](http://www.brimr.org/NIH_Awards/2020/default.htm)). The total annual grant dollars (total costs) currently held by faculty associated with the NI at UTHSC (*i.e.*, excluding affiliate members, such as St. Jude, and excluding grants in no cost extensions) is **\$20,291,627, an increase of 1.4 million from the \$18,858,802 reported last year!** The research grants (current year total costs) currently held by individual faculty of the NI are listed by Principal Investigator in **Appendix 1**. These values are reported to us by Research Administration at UTHSC. **Appendix 4** includes some highlights of grants recently awarded to NI faculty.

**APPENDIX 1**  
**External Funding of Neuroscience Institute Faculty**  
**FY 2020-2021**

*FY2021 Neuroscience Center of Excellence Annual Report*

| Lead PI                 | Department                       | Project Title   | Sponsor  | Award Number              | Begin Date | End Date   | Total Amount |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Adebiyi, Adebowale      | Physiology                       | Control of microvascular function by ion channels   | HHS - NIH - NHLBI - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute                        | 1R01HL151735-01 S1        | 12/22/2020 | 3/31/2021  | \$23,408     |
| Boughter, John          | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Spatial taste coding in mouse gustatory cortex  | HHS - NIH - NIDCD - National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders | 5R01DC016833-04           | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$386,694    |
| Boughter, John          | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Spatial taste coding in mouse gustatory cortex  | HHS - NIH - NIDCD - National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders | 1R01DC016833-04           | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$386,694    |
| Boughter, John          | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Spatial taste coding in mouse gustatory cortex  | HHS - NIH - NIDCD - National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders | 1R01DC016833-04           | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$386,694    |
| Bukiya, Anna            | Pharmacology                     | Fatty acid and alcohol modulation of cerebral artery diameter   | HHS - NIH - NIAAA - National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism               | 5R03AA028380-02           | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$76,000     |
| Chen, Hao               | Pharmacology                     | System genetics of menthol and nicotine addiction   | HHS - NIH - NIDA - National Institute on Drug Abuse                                  | 5U01DA047638-03           | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$67,754     |
| Chen, Hao               | Pharmacology                     | Reduced complexity mapping of oxycodone self-administration and stress responsiveness in rats   | HHS - NIH - NIDA - National Institute on Drug Abuse                                  | 1R01DA048017-02           | 3/1/2021   | 2/28/2022  | \$347,315    |
| Chen, Hao               | Pharmacology                     | System genetics of menthol and nicotine addiction   | HHS - NIH - NIDA - National Institute on Drug Abuse                                  | 1U01DA047638-03           | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$609,786    |
| Cordero-Morales, Julio  | Physiology                       | Spectroscopic analyses of TRPV1 during gating   | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke          | 1R21NS117873-01           | 7/15/2020  | 6/30/2021  | \$432,218    |
| Cordero-Morales, Julio  | Physiology                       | The Role of Bioactive Lipids in Transient Receptor Potential Channels Gating  | HHS - NIH - NIGMS - National Institute of General Medical                            | 5R01GM125629-04           | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$30,400     |
| Cowan, Ronald           | Psychiatry                       | Sex differences in pain reports and brain activation in older adults with Alzheimers disease  | Ohio State University (OSU)  | SPC-1000005106 / GR121413 | 7/1/2020   | 5/31/2021  | \$60,643     |
| Cowan, Ronald           | Psychiatry                       | Pain Sensitivity and Unpleasantness in People with Alzheimer's Disease and Cancer   | HHS - NIH - NIA - National Institute on Aging  | 7R01AG061325-03           | 4/1/2021   | 5/31/2022  | \$912,460    |
| Dopico, Alejandro       | Pharmacology                     | Regulation of arterial diameter through specific sensing of endogenous steroids and novel nonsteroidal analogs by BK channel subunits.  | HHS - NIH - NHLBI - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute                        | 5R01HL147315-03           | 2/1/2021   | 1/31/2022  | \$607,625    |
| Dopico, Alejandro       | Pharmacology                     | Cholesterol regulation of smooth muscle BK channel proteins and consequent control of cerebral artery diameter  | HHS - NIH - NHLBI - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute                        | 1R01HL148941-01A1         | 7/1/2020   | 6/30/2021  | \$646,023    |
| Du, Jianyang            | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | CO2 inhalation enhances the lability of fear memory.  | HHS - NIH - NIMH - National Institute of Mental Health                               | 7R01MH113986-04           | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$372,825    |
| Foehring, Robert        | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Dynamics of Kv channel function in identified populations of pyramidal neurons in neocortex   | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke          | 2R01NS044163-17           | 2/1/2021   | 1/31/2022  | \$466,986    |
| Gangaraju, Raja Shekhar | Ophthalmology                    | Adipose-Derived Stem Cells Alleviate Visual Deficits in Blast Injury  | DOD - Department of Defense  | W81XWH-16-1-0778          | 9/30/2020  | 3/31/2021  | \$61,259     |
| Heck, Detlef            | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Engrailed genes and cerebellum morphology, spatial gene expression and circuitry  | Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center   | BD525235B                 | 12/1/2020  | 11/30/2021 | \$34,200     |
| Heck, Detlef            | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Neuronal mechanisms of cerebellar cognitive function  | HHS - NIH - NIMH - National Institute of Mental Health                               | 1R01MH112143-04           | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$356,711    |
| Jablonski, Monica       | Ophthalmology                    | Novel Extended Release Glaucoma Therapy for Once Daily Dosing   | HHS - NIH - NEI - National Eye Institute   | 1R24EY029950-02           | 3/1/2021   | 2/28/2022  | \$1,031,691  |
| Jablonski, Monica       | Ophthalmology                    | Genetic Modulation of Glaucoma  | HHS - NIH - NEI - National Eye Institute   | 2R01EY021200-07           | 2/1/2021   | 1/31/2022  | \$382,976    |
| Jablonski, Monica       | Ophthalmology                    | Genetic Modulation of Glaucoma  | HHS - NIH - NEI - National Eye Institute   | 5R01EY021200-07           | 2/1/2021   | 1/31/2022  | \$371,486    |
| Jaggar, Jonathan        | Physiology                       | PKD proteins in endothelial cells   | HHS - NIH - NHLBI - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute                        | 1R01HL155180-01           | 2/15/2021  | 1/31/2022  | \$542,105    |
| Jaggar, Jonathan        | Physiology                       | Endothelial cell potassium channels   | HHS - NIH - NHLBI - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute                        | 1R01HL137745-04           | 7/1/2020   | 6/30/2021  | \$490,268    |
| Jee, Chang Hoon         | Pharmacology                     | Center for Genetic Studies of Drug Abuse in Outbred Rats - Pilot: Cross-species functional validation of overlapping GWAS candidates between tobacco smoking in human and socially acquired nicotine IVSA in rats | University of California, San Diego (UCSD)   | 127276513 (S9002502)      | 5/1/2020   | 4/30/2021  | \$25,000     |
| Jiang, Jianxiong        | Pharmaceutical Sciences          | Inflammatory regulation of neurotrophin signaling in epileptogenesis  | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke          | 7R01NS100947-05           | 12/1/2020  | 11/30/2021 | \$33,250     |
| Jones, Byron            | Genetics, Genomics & Informatics | Genetics of epigenetic response to high circulating glucocorticoids and organophosphorus compounds  | HHS - NIH - NIEHS - National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences              | 1R01ES031656-05A1         | 2/1/2025   | 1/31/2026  | \$523,991    |
| Khan, Mohammad Moshahid | Neurology                        | Examining Progression of a Neurodegenerative Disorder   | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke          | 1R03NS114616-01A1         | 9/15/2020  | 8/31/2021  | \$76,000     |
| Kim, Il Hwan            | Anatomy and Neurobiology         | Genes, Neural Circuits and Behavior   | HHS - NIH - NIMH - National Institute of Mental Health                               | 1R01MH117429-03           | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$380,837    |
| Liao, Francesca-Fang    | Pharmacology                     | Novel mechanistic link between metabolic changes and dementia potential role of miRNA21   | HHS - NIH - NIA - National Institute on Aging  | 1RF1AG058467-04           | 6/1/2021   | 5/31/2022  | \$547,034    |
| Liao, Francesca-Fang    | Pharmacology                     | Blood-brain-barrier and white matter mechanisms underlying dementia   | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke          | 1RF1NS120327-01           | 2/1/2021   | 1/31/2023  | \$1,967,005  |
| Malik, Kafait           | Pharmacology                     | Angiotensins, Prostaglandins, Adrenergic Interactions   | HHS - NIH - NHLBI - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute                        | 2R01HL019134-46           | 6/1/2021   | 5/31/2022  | \$643,123    |
| Mandal, Nawajes         | Ophthalmology                    | Sphingolipids and their Impact in Corneal Wound Healing   | HHS - NIH - NEI - National Eye Institute   | 3R01EY031316-01S1         | 12/1/2020  | 11/30/2021 | \$61,505     |
| Mandal, Nawajes         | Ophthalmology                    | Therapeutic Potential of n-3 PUFAs TBI Mediated Visual Dysfunction  | DOD - Department of Defense  | W81XWH2010900             | 9/30/2020  | 9/29/2021  | \$192,666    |
| Nowak Jr, Thaddeus S    | Neurology                        | Genetics of stroke vulnerability in C57BL/6 mouse substrains  | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke          | 1R01NS113957-01A1         | 7/15/2020  | 6/30/2021  | \$357,200    |



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| Lead PI                    | Department                              | Project Title  | Sponsor   | Award Number      | Begin Date | End Date   | Total Amount        |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|------------|------------|---------------------|
| Parfenova, Elena           | Physiology                              | Endothelial Vasoprotection by Hypothermia  | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke                         | 1R01NS105655-03   | 7/1/2020   | 6/30/2021  | \$424,069           |
| Parfenova, Elena           | Physiology                              | Astrocyte functions in neonatal brain  | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke                         | 1R01NS101717-04   | 7/1/2020   | 6/30/2021  | \$332,500           |
| Reiner, Anton              | Anatomy and Neurobiology                | Progression of Cortical and Basal Ganglia Pathology in Human Huntington's disease and Q175 Huntington's disease Mice   | CHDI, Inc.  |                   | 10/1/2020  | 9/30/2021  | \$10,475            |
| Reiter, Larry              | Neurology                               | The role of UBE3A in gliopathic seizures.  | HHS - NIH - NINDS - National Institute of Neurological  | 1R01NS115776-01A1 | 9/30/2020  | 7/31/2021  | \$418,384           |
| Reiter, Lawrence           | Neurology                               | Rapid-onset Obesity with Hypothalamic dysfunction, Hypoventilation, & Autonomic Dysregulation (ROHHAD): Dental Pulp Stem Cell-Derived Models to Investigate Cause & Consequences | Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago  | A20-0041-S002     | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$34,548            |
| Sharp, Burt                | Genetics, Genomics & Informatics        | Genetics of oxycodone intake in a hybrid rat diversity panel   | HHS - NIH - NIDA - National Institute on Drug Abuse   | 1U01DA053672-01   | 4/15/2021  | 1/31/2022  | \$676,136           |
| Singh, Nikhlesh            | Physiology                              | Cellular Mechanisms of Pathological Retinal Neovascularization   | HHS - NIH - NEI - National Eye Institute  | 1R01EY029709-03   | 5/1/2021   | 4/30/2022  | \$380,000           |
| Stanfill, Ansley           | Nursing-Research Programs               | A multivariate predictive model for long-term disability post subarachnoid hemorrhage in Caucasian and African American populations  | HHS - NIH - NINR - National Institute of Nursing Research   | 1R01NR017407-03   | 8/1/2020   | 7/31/2021  | \$280,374           |
| Taylor, Angela             | Anatomy and Neurobiology                | Role of cerebro-cerebellar circuits in cognition   | HHS - NIH - NIMH - National Institute of Mental Health  | 1F31MH122068-02   | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$45,016            |
| Tsao, Jack                 | Neurology                               | ICAHN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT MOUNT SINAI Institutional Animal Care and Use committee Memorandum of Understanding  | Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS)   |                   | 1/1/2021   | 6/30/2021  | \$57,975            |
| Tsao, Jack                 | Neurology                               | Does Military Traumatic Brain Injury Increase the Risk for Developing Early Onset Dementia and Mild Cognitive Impairment?  | DOD - Department of Defense   | W81XWH1910868     | 9/30/2020  | 9/29/2021  | \$283,459           |
| Tsao, Jack                 | Neurology                               | Headache Treatment Outcomes Following Conversion From Botox To Dysport   | Allergan, Inc.  |                   | 5/3/2021   | 5/2/2022   | \$16,580            |
| Tsao, Jack                 | Neurology                               | Investigations into the Etiology of Phantom Limb Sensations and Phantom Limb Pain  | HHS - NIH - NICHD - Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development | 1R01HD094588-03   | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$572,938           |
| Vaithianathan, Thirumalini | Pharmacology                            | Dynamics of calcium signals control neurotransmitter release in retinal ribbon synapses  | HHS - NIH - NEI - National Eye Institute  | 1R01EY030863-01   | 1/1/2021   | 12/31/2021 | \$380,000           |
| Vasquez, Valeria           | Physiology                              | Regulation of mechanosensitive ion channels by membrane lipids.  | HHS - NIH - NIGMS - National Institute of General Medical   | 1R01GM133845-02   | 7/1/2020   | 6/30/2021  | \$326,800           |
| Vasquez, Valeria           | Physiology                              | Studying prolonged nociceptors sensitization by TRPV1 combining a spider toxin and C. elegans  | US-Israel Binational Science Foundation   | 2019254           | 10/1/2020  | 11/30/2021 | \$40,000            |
| Williams, Robert           | Genetics, Genomics & Informatics        | NIDA Core  | HHS - NIH - NIDA - National Institute on Drug Abuse   | 1P30DA044223-05   | 6/1/2021   | 5/31/2022  | \$744,955           |
| Williams, Robert           | Microbiology, Immunology & Biochemistry | R.Williams_Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research   | Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research   | Williams 21-3784  | 4/1/2021   | 8/31/2021  | \$90,000            |
| Williams, Robert           | Genetics, Genomics & Informatics        | Imaging Genetics of Brain Structure and Cognitive Aging in Murine Models of Alzheimer's Disease  | HHS - NIH - NIA - National Institute on Aging   | 1R01AG070913-01   | 2/1/2021   | 1/31/2022  | \$1,285,586         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               |   |  |   |                   |            |            | <b>\$20,291,627</b> |

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Faculty Publications (PubMed)**  
**FY 2020-2021**

**Peer-reviewed publications for 2020-2021 (cited in PubMed):**

- Abidi, A. H., Alghamdi, S. S., Dabbous, M. K., Tipton, D. A., Mustafa, S. M., & **Moore, B. M.** (2020). Cannabinoid type-2 receptor agonist, inverse agonist, and anandamide regulation of inflammatory responses in IL-1beta stimulated primary human periodontal ligament fibroblasts. *J Periodontal Res*, 55(5), 762-783. doi:10.1111/jre.12765
- Ahmad, A., Patel, V., Xiao, J., & **Khan, M. M.** (2020). The Role of Neurovascular System in Neurodegenerative Diseases. *Mol Neurobiol*, 57(11), 4373-4393. doi:10.1007/s12035-020-02023-z
- Ahmed, H. A., & **Isbrat, T.** (2020). The Brain AT2R-a Potential Target for Therapy in Alzheimer's Disease and Vascular Cognitive Impairment: a Comprehensive Review of Clinical and Experimental Therapeutics. *Mol Neurobiol*, 57(8), 3458-3484. doi:10.1007/s12035-020-01964-9
- Ahmed, H. A., Ismael, S., Mirzahosseini, G., & **Isbrat, T.** (2021). Verapamil Prevents Development of Cognitive Impairment in an Aged Mouse Model of Sporadic Alzheimer's Disease. *Mol Neurobiol*, 58(7), 3374-3387. doi:10.1007/s12035-021-02350-9
- Albadari, N., Deng, S., **Chen, H.**, Zhao, G., Yue, J., Zhang, S., **Miller, D. D.**, Wu, Z., & Li, W. (2021). Synthesis and biological evaluation of selective survivin inhibitors derived from the MX-106 hydroxyquinoline scaffold. *Eur J Med Chem*, 224, 113719. doi:10.1016/j.ejmech.2021.113719
- Allen, R. P., Earley, C. J., **Jones, B. C.**, & Unger, E. L. (2020). Iron-deficiency and dopaminergic treatment effects on RLS-Like behaviors of an animal model with the brain iron deficiency pattern of the restless legs syndrome. *Sleep Med*, 71, 141-148. doi:10.1016/j.sleep.2020.01.024
- Anderson, A. R., Iversen, W. L., Carter, M. A., Moss, K. O., **Cowan, R. L.**, & Monroe, T. B. (2021). Experimentally evoked pain in Alzheimer's disease. *J Am Assoc Nurse Pract*. doi:10.1097/JXX.0000000000000580
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- Banerjee, S., Mahmud, F., Deng, S., Ma, L., Yun, M. K., Fakayode, S. O., Arnst, K. E., Yang, L., **Chen, H.**, Wu, Z., Lukka, P. B., Parmar, K., Meibohm, B., White, S. W., Wang, Y., Li, W., & **Miller, D. D.** (2021). X-ray Crystallography-Guided Design, Antitumor Efficacy, and QSAR Analysis of Metabolically Stable Cyclopenta-Pyrimidinyl Dihydroquinoxalinone as a Potent Tubulin Polymerization Inhibitor. *J Med Chem*, 64(17), 13072-13095. doi:10.1021/acs.jmedchem.1c01202
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**APPENDIX 3**  
**Neuroscience Seminar Speakers**  
**FY 2020-2021**

# NEUROSCIENCE SEMINAR SERIES SCHEDULE

## Fall 2020

Max Fletcher, Ph.D. Zoom August 26, 2020  
Associate Professor  
Department Anatomy and Neurobiology  
University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Title: "Divergent Olfactory Bulb Responses Based on Odor Valence"

Il Hwan Kim, Ph.D. Zoom September 23, 2020  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology  
University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Title: "Neural Circuit Pathology of Abnormal Social Behavior"

Ansley Stanfill, R.N., Ph.D. Zoom October 21, 2020  
Associate Professor  
Department of Acute and Tertiary Care  
University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Title: "Crossing Boundaries in Clinical Neurogenetics"

Tauheed Ishrat, Ph.D. Zoom November 18, 2020  
Associate Professor  
Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology  
University of Tennessee Health Science Center

Title: "TXNIP: A Potential Therapeutic Target for Brain Aging and Alzheimer's Disease"

# NEUROSCIENCE SEMINAR SERIES SCHEDULE

## Spring 2021

Andrew Kodani, Ph.D. Zoom March 16, 2021  
Assistant Member, Cell & Molecular Biology  
Center for Pediatric Neurological Disease Research  
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital  
Host: Matthew Ennis

Title: "Zika Virus Hijacks Centrosomes to Suppress Innate Immunity"

Raghu Vemuganti, Ph.D. Zoom March 23, 2021  
Professor & Vice Chair for Basic Research  
Department of Neurological Surgery  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Host: Tauheed Ishrat

Title: "Stroke Therapeutic Development Based on Noncoding RNA's, Epigenetics, & Epitranscriptomics"

Egidio D'Angelo M.D. Zoom March 30, 2021  
Professor & Director of Neurophysiology  
Department of Physiology  
University of Piva, Italy  
Host: Detlef Heck

Title: "Multiscale Recordings and Models of Cerebellar Activity and Plasticity"

Sarah M. Clinton Ph.D. Zoom April 6, 2021  
Associate Professor & Associate Director  
School of Neuroscience  
Virginia Tech University  
Host: Jianyang Du

Title: "Neurodevelopment & Behavioral Consequences of Early Life SSRI Exposure"

Chun-Li Zhang, Ph.D. Zoom April 13, 2021  
Professor  
Department of Molecular Biology  
University of Texas Southwestern Dallas  
Host: Fu-Ming Zhou

Title: "Cell Fate Reprogramming for Neural Degeneration & Regeneration"

Matthew Banks, Ph.D. Zoom April 20, 2021  
Associate Professor  
Department of Anesthesiology  
University of Wisconsin  
Host: Graduate Students

Title: "Explorations of the Neural Basis of Loss and Recovery of Consciousness"

Henry Yin, Ph.D. Zoom April 27, 2021  
Professor  
Department of Psychology & Neuroscience  
Duke University  
Host: Il Hwan Kim

Title: "The Basal Ganglia in Action"

Vittorio Porciatti, D.Sc. Zoom May 25, 2021  
Professor  
Department of Ophthalmology, Neuroscience & Biomedical Engineering  
Director & Vice Chairman  
Research of Evelyn F. & William L. McKnight Vision Research Center  
Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
University of Miami  
Host: Monica Jablonski

Title: "Quality of Life of Retinal Ganglion Cells in Glaucoma"

**APPENDIX 4**  
**Neuroscience News, Events and Graduate Training Flyer**  
**FY 2020-2021**

## 2021 Neuroscience Institute (NI) Postdoctoral Research Support

**Purpose and Eligibility:** The NI solicits proposals for supplementary funds for postdoctoral fellows or research associates whose mentors are active members of NI. Mentors should be currently funded or working on a no-cost extension of a competitively renewable grant. Faculty currently on NI seed support are ineligible for this award.

Although we try to rotate funding to new applicants, currently funded postdocs or research associates **with no more than one year of NI matching support** are also welcome to apply for one more year.

**Support:** The NI will provide \$10,000-15,000 in matching funds to mentors who are NI members, to be used toward the salary/fringe of each awarded applicant. The precise amount given, and the number of postdocs funded, will be determined during the application evaluation, and depends on the number of quality applicants we receive.

### Application:

1. **New Applicants:** The applicant should provide a cover letter requesting support with a brief overview of the proposed research project, a **3 page research proposal**, a current CV, and two letters of reference (reference letters can also be emailed directly to NI), one of which must come from the mentor. These documents should be submitted electronically as PDF files. Mentors should provide an updated, brief, NIH-style biosketch attached to their support letter.

2. **Renewal Applicants:** The applicant should submit a cover letter with a 2-page progress report covering the past year's activities (publications, research progress, presentations, etc.). Those applying for renewal must also include a support letter from the mentor commenting on the progress of the applicant, and the mentor should update the brief, NIH-style biosketch.

**Review Process and Criteria:** The NI Executive Committee will review applications. Criteria include evidence of productivity in neuroscience research, with particular value attached to first author publications.

**Deadline:** Jan. 15, 2021. Awards will run from Feb. 1, 2021-Jan. 31, 2022.

**Submission:** Please send all materials electronically to:  
Brandy Fleming, Program Coordinator  
Neuroscience Institute  
[bflem3@uthsc.edu](mailto:bflem3@uthsc.edu)  
Phone: 448-1286



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 UTHSC Researchers Awarded \$2.4 Million for Study Prioritizing the Role of Cholesterol in Brain Artery Health

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# UTHSC Researchers Awarded \$2.4 Million for Study Prioritizing the Role of Cholesterol in Brain Artery Health

Written by Lee Ferguson | July 15, 2020

Alex Dopico, MD, PhD, professor and Van Vleet Chair of Excellence in the **Department of Pharmacology, Addiction Science, and Toxicology** (<https://www.uthsc.edu/pharmacology/>), and Anna Bukiya, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology, Addiction Science, and Toxicology, have been awarded \$2.4 million from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) to explore how cholesterol interacts with the mechanisms that modulate blood vessel function in the brain.

Drs. Dopico and Bukiya have hypothesized from preliminary data that cholesterol may control the diameter of brain arteries via regulation of speciXc ion channels. The channels in question are called BK (or "big potassium") channels, which play a crucial role in a vast number of physiological and pathophysiological conditions. The researchers predict that by manipulating the way cholesterol interacts with channel-forming and regulatory subunits, they can control potassium currents that cause arteries either to contract and constrict, or to relax and dilate. They will test their predictions along three speciXc areas: the molecular level, the subcellular level, and the tissue and organ level.

Dr. Alex Dopico



The project is signiXcant for challenging the paradigm that cholesterol modulation of big potassium channels is secondary to disturbances affecting other molecules in the cell membrane, speciXcally the lipid bilayer. The team's study will yield information essential to developing drugs that will counteract cholesterol-associated cerebrovascular disease.

"Although the regulation of BK channel activity in cells from vascular preparations dates back to the late Eighties, the molecular mechanisms and sites by which this lipid regulates BK activity remain unknown," said Dr. Dopico. "Covering this knowledge gap is essential to design novel therapeutic agents that could counteract BK-mediated, cholesterol-induced disruption of arterial function."

Dr. Anna Bukiya



"Cholesterol modiXcation of BK channel function is expected to be complex, as to date, there is neither a universal model of cholesterol interaction with BK channels nor an agreement among published reports on whether cholesterol activates or inhibits BK activity," said Dr. Bukiya.

The project titled, "Cholesterol regulation of smooth muscle BK channel proteins and consequent control of cerebral artery diameter," is being funded for four years.

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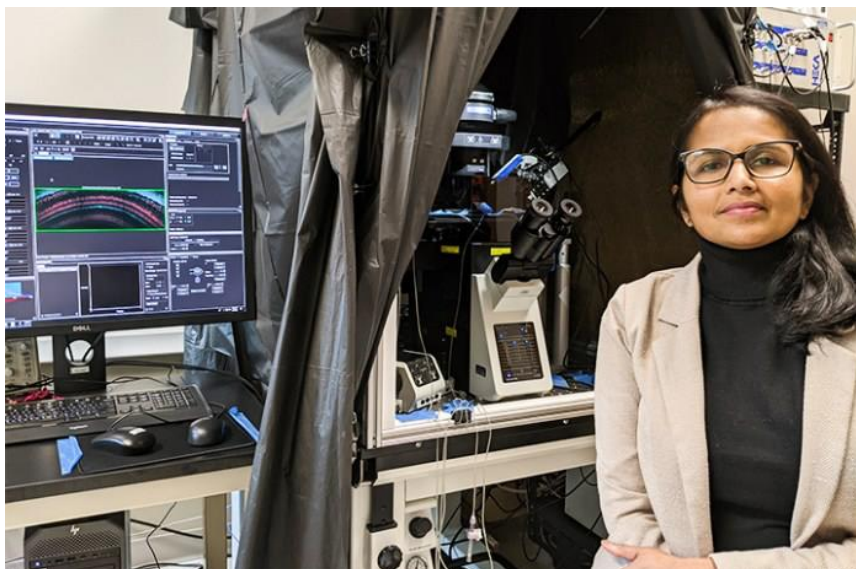
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## UTHSC's Vaithianathan Receives \$1.9 Million Grant for Retinal Research

Written by Lee Ferguson | February 4, 2021



Dr. Thirumalini Vaithianathan received \$1.9 million from the National Eye Institute for retinal research.

Thirumalini Vaithianathan, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacology, Addiction Science, and Toxicology at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, has spent a decade studying molecular signaling involved in vision. She has just received \$1.9 million from the National Eye Institute for her project titled, "Dynamics of calcium signals control neurotransmitter release in retinal ribbon Synapses".

The goal of Dr. Vaithianathan's project is to provide a deeper understanding of calcium signaling controlling the release of chemical messengers at neural communication sites in the retina. Using animal models, she will study these submicron signals in living retinal ribbon synapses during development, normal adulthood, and disease. Dr. Vaithianathan will be using novel approaches combining state-of-the-art Xuroescence imaging and voltage-clamp electrophysiology (a technique to measure ion currents across the cell membrane) to directly monitor calcium signaling in neurotransmission.

"Calcium signaling is a key player in human health and disease," Dr. Vaithianathan said. "Our project will develop strategies to directly monitor calcium signaling in neurotransmission. We address this question particularly in the visual system for a deep and comprehensive investigation of how calcium signals control neurotransmission and encode what we 'see'. Full understanding of calcium signaling in visual system health and disease will allow for the eventual development of therapeutic interventions to prevent and counteract neurodegeneration."

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# Drs. Francesca-Fang Liao, Fu-Ming Zhou Receive \$1.9 Million to Study Possible Dementia Causes

Written by Lee Ferguson | March 2, 2021

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has awarded two UTHSC researchers over \$1.9 million to study the pathogenesis of white matter damage, a main contributing factor to dementia. Francesca-Fang Liao, PhD, and Fu-Ming Zhou, PhD, both professors in the **Department of Pharmacology, Addiction Science, and Toxicology**, (<https://www.uthsc.edu/pharmacology/>) are co-investigators on the project titled "Blood-brain-barrier and white matter mechanisms underlying dementia."

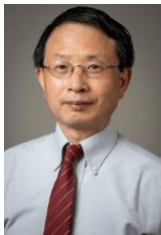
Dementia is an overall term that describes a group of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Dr. Liao has spent over five years studying specific molecular and cellular events that cause insufficient blood flow to the brain. Based on previous findings, Dr. Liao hypothesizes that degeneration of the brain's capillary mural cells is the earliest pathological event in white matter disease, preceding blood-brain-barrier breakdown and neocortical neurodegeneration. Her findings point to a specific protein, pericyte-BMP4, as a critical initiating factor.

Dr.



Francesca-Fang Liao

Dr. Liao's team will conduct microscopic tissue imaging of small vessels controlling brain blood flow to determine when and where pericyte losses happen. The team will also profile BMP4 changes in different cell types and verify BMP4 protein upregulation in white matter pericytes using human brain cortical samples from vascular dementia cases. Finally, Dr. Liao's lab will analyze RNA sequencing data on isolated micro vessels to identify new potential targets for treating white matter disease.



Dr. Fu-Ming Zhou

Dr. Zhou, who has spent two decades studying Parkinson's disease, will work from the physiological angle, examining nerve conduction and impaired neurotransmitter release in animal models. His findings may provide neurophysiological evidence for what causes vascular changes in white matter, problems in the cerebral cortex, and functional loss in neurodegenerative diseases.

"Dr. Liao is a visionary scientist on vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease," Dr. Zhou said. "I am delighted that we are combining our expertise and skills to investigate some difficult, but important, questions about the pathogenesis of vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease."

"Vascular dementia is the second most common form of dementia after Alzheimer's disease," said Dr. Liao. "With Dr. Zhou joining in force, we are embarking on a new research path to underpin early molecular and cellular mechanisms distinctive for and also shared by these two major types of dementia."

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 Dr. Jonathan Jaggar Receives \$2.3 Million For Blood Pressure Research

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# Dr. Jonathan Jaggar Receives \$2.3 Million For Blood Pressure Research

Written by Lee Ferguson | March 10, 2021

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute recently awarded Jonathan H. Jaggar, PhD, Maury Bronstein Endowed Professor in the **Department of Physiology** (<https://uthsc.edu/physiology/>) at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC), a \$2.3 million grant for his study titled "PKD proteins in endothelial cells." The proposal's goal is to provide a new understanding of how endothelial cells regulate blood pressure.

Blood vessels provide all of our organs with oxygen and nutrients and determine blood pressure in the body. Endothelial cells, which line the inside of all blood vessels, can cause blood vessels to relax or contract, thus controlling the body's blood pressure. Endothelial cells stop working properly during vascular diseases such as stroke and high blood pressure (hypertension), but how this happens is not fully understood. Dr. Jaggar's project is focused on identifying the functions of two proteins in endothelial cells called PKD1 and PKD2. His lab has new evidence that PKD1 and PKD2 physically couple in endothelial cells to relax blood vessels and reduce blood pressure. His group also found that that PKD1/PKD2 signaling is altered during hypertension, which in turn inhibits their ability to relax blood vessels. In this proposal, Dr. Jaggar's team will test the hypothesis that physiological stimuli activate PKD1/PKD2 coupling in endothelial cells. They will investigate what causes this to happen and how it produces vasodilation. They will also study the relationship between hypertension and the breakdown in PKD1/PKD2 channel signaling and the vasodilation it makes possible.

Dr. Jonathan Jaggar



This project, which is being funded for four years, will provide significant new information about vasoregulation by endothelial cell PKD1 and PKD2 proteins. "We are excited to drive this new research direction to better understand how PKD1 and PKD2 control our body's blood pressure and determine what happens that prevents these proteins from lowering blood pressure during hypertension," said Dr. Jaggar.

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# UTHSC to Host Addiction Symposium May 4

Written by Communications and Marketing | March 26, 2021



The University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Medicine will host its second Addiction Symposium, designed as a concentrated update on key issues in drug misuse and addiction, on May 4.

The University of Tennessee Health Science Center's College of Medicine will host its second **Addiction Symposium** (<https://uthsc.edu/pharmacology/addiction-symposium.php>) May 4 from 12 to 2 p.m. CDT.

The online symposium is free and open to health care practitioners and the public. The symposium will be via Zoom and is accredited for 2 hours of Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits.

Drug misuse and addiction is a pressing and often unmet health problem throughout Tennessee and nationwide. Although it has attracted widespread attention in legislatures and the media, the epidemic of opioid abuse is only one dimension of drug abuse that afflicts individuals, families, and communities – with profound, long-standing, and often tragic medical and psychosocial outcomes.

The Addiction Symposium is designed as a concentrated update on key issues in drug misuse and addiction. Experts in addictive disorders will address a wide spectrum of basic and clinical topics from the genetics of addiction to nicotine and predictive indices of human addiction, as well as the clinical presentation and diagnosis of addictions.

"As the state's public College of Medicine, it is our responsibility to provide leadership through public education for physicians, health care personnel and the lay public that highlights advances, emerging trends, and standards in medicine," said Burt Sharp, MD, event organizer and Distinguished Professor in the Departments of Genetics, Genomics, and Informatics and Medicine in the UTHSC College of Medicine.

The agenda for the event is as follows:

12:00 – 12:12 p.m.

**Introduction to the Misuse and Addiction to Opiates, Alcohol, and Nicotine and Synopsis of Opiate Addiction in Tennessee**

Burt Sharp, MD

Distinguished Professor

Departments of Genetics, Genomics, and Informatics and Medicine

UTHSC College of Medicine

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12:12 – 12:17 p.m.

**The Severity of the Addiction Epidemic in Tennessee and the Leadership Needed by UTHSC in the Discovery of Novel Treatment**

Randy Boyd

President, the University of Tennessee

12:17 – 12:35 p.m.

**Building Strong Brains During a Pandemic**

Rev. Charlie Caswell

Director, Legacy of Legends

12:35 – 12:53 p.m.

**Approach to Diagnosing Addictive Disorders**

Ronald L. Cowan, MD, PhD

Harrison Distinguished Professor and Chair

Department of Psychiatry

UTHSC College of Medicine

12:53 – 1:11 p.m.

**Transmissible Liability for Addiction; a Developmental Perspective**

Maureen Reynolds, PhD

Research Associate Professor, Pharmaceutical Science

University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy

1:11 – 1:16 p.m.

**A National Center for Highly Replicable Animal Studies of Addiction**

Robert Williams, PhD

Professor and Chair

Department of Genetics, Genomics, and Informatics

UTHSC College of Medicine

1:16 – 1:28 p.m.

**Genetic Factors Influencing Socially-Acquired Voluntary Nicotine Intake in Rats**

Hao Chen, MD, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of Pharmacology, Addiction Science, and Toxicology

UTHSC College of Medicine

1:28 – 1:40 p.m.

**Factors that Influence the Severity of Ethanol's Effects in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)**

Kristin Hamre, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology

UTHSC College of Medicine

1:40 – 2:00 p.m.

**Combating the Stigma of Substance Use Treatment Seeking in the African American Community**

Karen Derefinko, PhD

Assistant Professor

Departments of Preventive Medicine and Pharmacology, Addiction Science, and Toxicology

UTHSC College of Medicine

For registration information, to watch the symposium, and to view the full recording after the event, visit the **event website** (<https://uthsc.edu/pharmacology/addiction-symposium.php>).

**AMA Credit Designation:** *The University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Medicine designates this live activity for a maximum of 2 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)<sup>™</sup>. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.*

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# UTHSC Team Receives \$2 Million For Diabetes Pathophysiology Study

Written by Lee Ferguson | April 21, 2021

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases recently awarded a team of UTHSC researchers \$1.99 million for their work to advance understanding of the pathophysiology of prediabetes, diabetes, and related complications. Sam Dagogo-Jack, MD, professor of Medicine and director of the General Clinical Research Center, is a principal investigator, along with Nawajes Mandal, PhD, associate professor in the Departments of Ophthalmology, Anatomy and Neurobiology, and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Their project is titled "Ceramides and Sphingolipids as Predictors of Incident Dysglycemia."

Dr. Dagogo-Jack is a leading clinical researcher and an expert on diabetes and prediabetes. Dr. Mandal is a basic scientist and a leading expert on the role of bioactive lipid signaling, like sphingolipids (SPLs) and ceramides, in human ocular, metabolic, neurodegeneration, and inflammatory diseases. Using their combined expert perspectives, the two hypothesize that ceramides and other SPLs are critical modulators affecting the progression from normal glucose regulation, through prediabetes, to type 2 diabetes and associated diabetic complications.

Dr. Samuel Dagogo-Jack



To test this hypothesis, they will utilize specimens from two studies in which Dr. Dagogo-Jack is the principal investigator: the Pathobiology of Prediabetes in a Biracial Cohort (POP-ABC), which involved participants with a normal concentration of glucose who had a parental history of type 2 diabetes; and the Diabetes Prevention Program/Diabetes Prevention Program Outcome Study (DPP/DPPOS), which followed participants already diagnosed with prediabetes for the development of type 2 diabetes. Additionally, samples from 200 individuals with normal glucose concentrations and no family history of diabetes will serve as normative controls.

The project will analyze, profile, and compare samples at baseline against various follow-up intervals to investigate several aims. Drs. Dagogo-Jack and Mandal hope to determine the role ceramide and SPLs play in prediabetes risk among people with normal glucose and a family history of type 2 diabetes, in preventive treatments for type 2 diabetes, and in the development of diabetic complications, particularly vascular disease. The project includes planned lipidomics analyses to find new predictive, prognostic and specific biomarkers for prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, and vascular complications.



Dr. Nawajes Mandal

"I am delighted that my colleague, Dr. Mandal, and I were able to pool our expertise to launch this collaborative study," said Dr. Dagogo-Jack, who is also director of the UTHSC Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism. "The award from the NIH not only endorses the scientific merits of our proposal, but also gives a nod to the idea of interdisciplinary collaborative research between clinical and basic science investigators."

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# UTHSC's Byron Jones Receives \$2.87 Million For Gulf War Illness Study

Written by Lee Ferguson | April 30, 2021



Dr. Byron Jones has received a \$2.87 million grant to study genetic alterations associated with Gulf War illness among former military personnel.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences has awarded Byron C. Jones, PhD, professor in the Department of Genetics, Geonomics, and Informatics at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, \$2.87 million for his continuing study of genetic alterations associated with Gulf War illness among former military personnel.

During the 1990-91 Gulf War, 700,000 troops were sent to the Persian Gulf. Of those who returned, 25%-35% suffered from what became known as the Gulf War Illness, a multisymptomatic malady with complaints ranging from gastrointestinal problems to cognitive difficulties. Sickness behaviors were disabling, and neither cause nor treatment were known. Nearly 30 years later, most of those afflicted are still sick. Exposure to organophosphate compounds (nerve gas and insecticides), coupled with being in a high stress environment, have emerged as a possible cause of illness and a focus of study.

Dr. Jones' project will build upon past studies his lab has conducted to determine why some combatants became sick, while others did not. By duplicating exposure conditions in animal models, Dr. Jones' team has previously identified genes and biochemical pathways involved in individual differences to susceptibility.

Focusing on these systems, his team will now look for genetic-based individual differences in which genes are permanently altered in expression following the same exposure. Findings from this project will increase understanding of which biochemical processes are involved, and provide a basis for

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developing treatment.

"Initial studies show acute changes in proinflammatory cytokine genes and changes in methylation of genes following the exposure regimen," Dr. Jones said. "We have seen significant differences in proinflammatory gene expression response to the treatment among animal models, and have been able to map to a region of DNA which mediates this effect. Our research takes the next steps to understand how genetics relate to the ongoing effects of Gulf War illness."

The study, titled "Genetics of epigenetic response to high inflammatory reducing hormones and environmental compounds," is being funded for five years.

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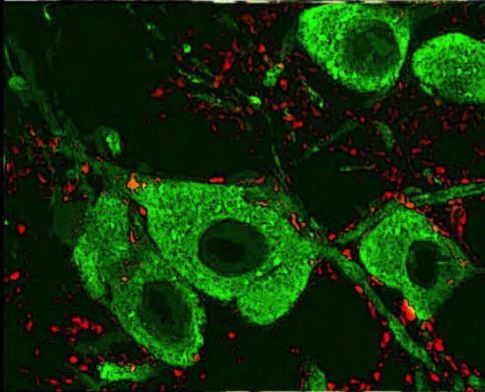
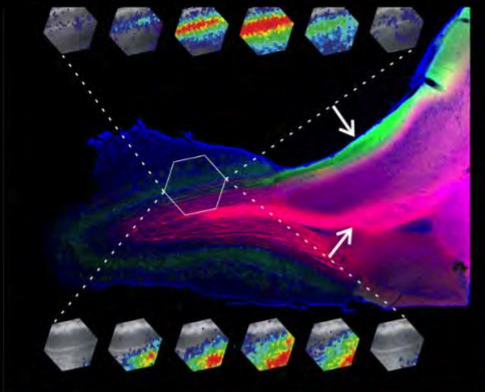
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The Neuroscience Graduate Program is a multidisciplinary, interdepartmental Ph.D. program at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) and supported by the Neuroscience Institute. Established in 1985, the Neuroscience Institute comprises over 90 faculty from multiple departments and colleges, including Anatomy and Neurobiology, Medicine, Molecular Sciences, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Ophthalmology, Pathology, Pediatrics, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Pharmacology, Physiology, and Surgery. Some faculty hold primary appointments at the world-renowned St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (SICRH) a short distance away. Our program provides broad training in neurophysiology, neuropharmacology, neuroanatomy, molecular and cellular neuroscience, developmental neurobiology, and behavioral neuroscience.

Basic and clinical Neuroscience research at UTHSC focus on intracellular signaling pathways, neuronal excitability, synaptic transmission, sensory processing and retinal biology, neurological and neurodegenerative disorders, brain tumors, neurogenetics and neural development, and mental and addictive disorders. UTHSC is one of the world's leading centers exploiting novel genetic approaches to explore brain development, function and behavior, and psychiatric and neurodegenerative diseases. Neuroscientists at SJCRH are studying diverse pediatric tumors and diseases in the CNS using cutting-edge molecular, genomic and genetic methods.

Memphis is a culturally diverse metropolitan area of over 2.5 million residents, with the rich traditions of a city on the banks of the Mississippi River. Memphis has more sunny days than Miami, and combines southern heritage and hospitality with contemporary charm. You'll enjoy great dining (world famous barbecue), art galleries and an exciting nightlife. Memphis is a must for those wanting to visit the birthplace of blues, soul, and rock and roll. Sun Studio, The Rock 'N' Soul Museum, Gibson Guitar Factory and Beale Street entertainment district are just a few blocks from campus, as is the Mississippi River, and downtown. The city is runner and bike-friendly, with a new "greenline" extending to the city center from a 3200 acre urban park (Shelby Farms) that also provides fishing and horseback riding. Memphis is home to FedEx, to the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, and to the Memphis Zoo, ranked one of the top zoos in the US and home to over 3500 animals on 76 beautifully landscaped acres.

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