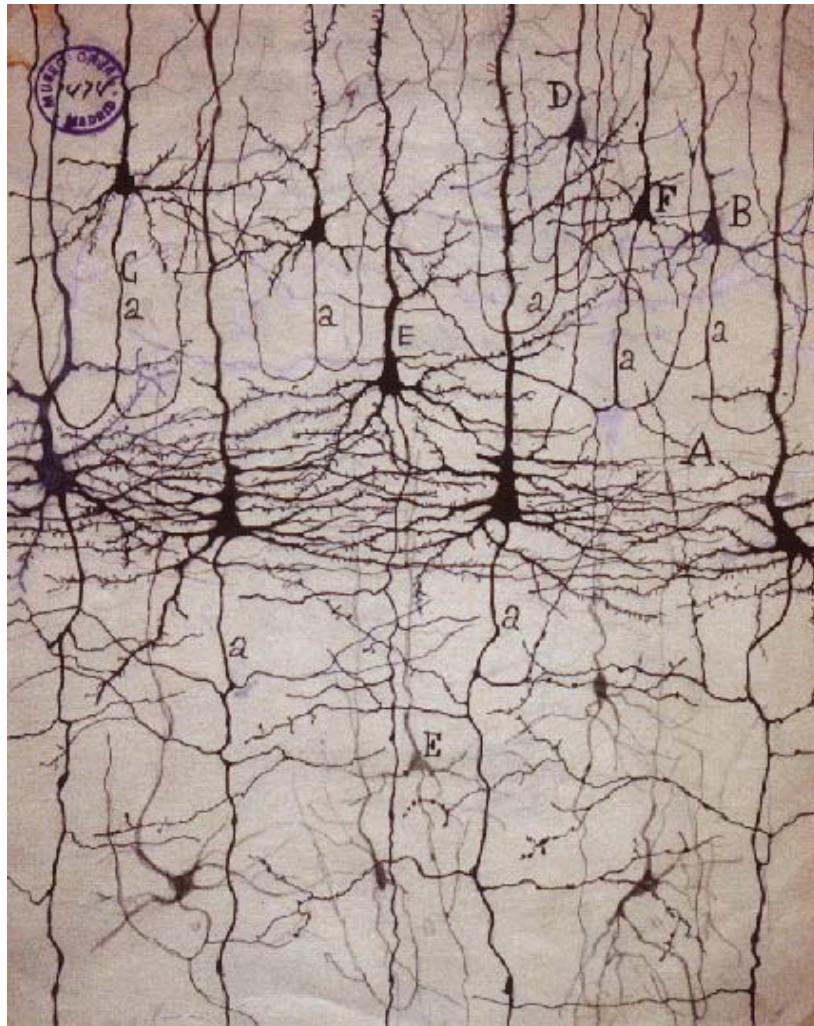


The Neuroscience Graduate Program at the University of Virginia



The Neuroscience Graduate Program
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Dr. Barry Condron, Director
Dr. Sue Moenter, Associate Director
Tracy Mourton, Program Coordinator

General

What to Expect

The Ph.D. Program in Neuroscience is designed to provide students with broad training in Neurobiology and prepare them for careers in modern biomedical research. Our Program begins with 1 year of didactic course work. During this time, students rotate through two or three research laboratories. By the end of the first year, students have chosen a mentor. In the second year, students take electives, advanced seminar courses, begin research and explore research topics as preparation for the Area Paper/Qualifying exam. On the basis of performance in course work, research rotations and the Qualifying Examination, students are evaluated for Advancement to Candidacy during the third year. After advancing to candidacy, students concentrate on conducting independent research and formulating their Research Proposal with the guidance of their mentor and research committee. The culmination of the research endeavor is a public seminar and a written dissertation that is defended orally before a faculty committee.

Throughout their course of study, students participate in a bi-weekly student coordinated journal club, weekly student seminar and attend the Neuroscience Graduate Program Seminar Series. The Training Program guarantees financial support for all Neuroscience Ph.D. students who remain in good standing throughout their course of study. This support includes payment of a stipend, remission of tuition and fees, and health insurance. Students' progress through the Program is guided at all times by a committee of faculty advisors and is reviewed annually by the entire Training Program faculty. Details of each aspect of the training experience are provided in this document, as are details of financial responsibilities of the Program and participating faculty.

Checklist and Timetable of Student Activities

Name _____ Program year _____

First Year Requirements

- 1st Semester course work
- 15 minute meeting
 - rotation report

- 2nd semester course work
- 15 minute meeting
 - rotation report
- Annual report

Mentor _____

Second Year Requirements

- 1st Semester course work
- 15 minute meeting

- 2nd semester course work
- 15 minute meeting
- Annual report

Second year summer semester

- Area paper committee and topic
 - turn in proposal form

Third Year Requirements

1st Semester

- Defend area paper by November
 - turn in signed area paper form

2nd Semester

- Begin thinking about Dissertation proposal and committee
- Annual Report

Fourth year Requirements

1st Semester

- Defense of dissertation proposal to thesis committee
 - turn in list of committee members and topic

2nd Semester

- Annual Report
- Committee Meeting Form

Fifth Year and Beyond Requirements

- Thesis defense
- Annual Report
- Committee Meeting Form

Each student that has successfully defended their thesis proposal is expected have two committee meetings a year.

Graduate Advisory Committee- 15 minute meetings

During the first two years, students meet at least twice a year with the Graduate Advisory Committee. This committee consists of the Director, Barry Condron; the Associate Director, Sue Moenter; and the Program Coordinator, Tracy Mourton. This committee will serve to advise and guide student progress through the Training Program in the first two years. These meetings are strictly confidential and provide the students an opportunity to voice concerns about coursework and rotations. Subsequent to that, guidance will largely be from the Faculty mentor and the Ph.D. Committee, although students are encouraged to continue to use the Graduate Advisory Committee as a resource. The Graduate Advisory Committee does require that all students submit various updates to the Program Coordinator to track progress. These updates are kept on file and include, but are not limited to, rotation reports, an annual report, forms for the area paper, dissertation topic defense and a hard-bound copy of the dissertation itself.

Neuroscience Graduate Program Seminar Series

During the Fall & Spring Semester, scientists are brought in from Academia and Industry to present their research. The NGP Seminar Series is held on Tuesday afternoon at 4 pm. It is expected that students will attend these seminars whenever they are offered. For each seminar speaker, an individual (usually from the host's laboratory) is selected to present research papers to the other students for the seminar preview. All students receive the papers and are expected to read those papers in preparation for the discussion. Seminar preview is normally held the Monday before the seminar. The students may also have the opportunity to meet with the speakers to discuss research and postdoctoral opportunities. Attendance at NGP Seminars is required of all students, even those who have completed classes.

NGP Student Seminar

The Neuroscience Student Seminar provides an opportunity for students to learn how to present a seminar and how to critically evaluate important papers in the original literature. Papers are chosen for their relevance, quality of science, and novelty. Fellow students and the Faculty Advisor analyze presentations to provide feedback on how to improve future presentations. Senior students are offered the opportunity to present their own research. Students that have completed their coursework are still expected to attend and present yearly.

NGP Student Journal Club

Journal club is a student-organized opportunity for informal scientific discussion between peers. The journal club meets bi-weekly to discuss papers selected by the student presenting that week. Faculty are not involved in this program. Typically, someone in their second year is selected to organize the journal club. Their responsibilities include notification of the student body about upcoming presentations and coordinating meeting times and places. There is administrative support for this program.

Laboratory Rotations

Incoming students are encouraged to begin their rotations during the summer before their coursework begins. This summer rotation allows the student a period of time in the lab without the distractions of classes and seminars. Summer rotations can begin as early as June 1st and start as late as August 1st. The NGP will assist incoming students with the selection of their summer rotation

The rotation consists of an 8-15 week period wherein the student joins the research laboratory of one of the Faculty mentors in the Neuroscience Graduate Program. Students may also wish and can gain permission, under certain circumstances, to conduct short rotations in certain labs in order to gain training in a specific technique. Students may petition the graduate committee to perform a single rotation with a faculty member who is not a member of the Training Program faculty; however such faculty must be member of the Graduate Faculty of the University. The purpose of the rotation experience is to acquaint the student with a particular area of research, a particular laboratory setting and/or a potential mentor. Students are required to submit a 1-2 page description of each laboratory rotation to the Program Coordinator for inclusion in their files. In cases where a student has extensive research experience (e.g., as a full time laboratory technician), s/he may petition the graduate committee to have this experience considered as a single laboratory rotation. Likewise, students may petition the graduate committee to perform an additional (fourth) laboratory rotation or to have other academic experiences, e.g., an internship in an industrial setting, considered as laboratory rotations.

Students should contact Faculty via telephone or email to arrange for individual appointments to discuss a possible lab rotation.

Choosing a Mentor

Dissertation research mentors are to be chosen from amongst the approximately 60 faculty participating in the Training Program.

Mentor/student partnership is by mutual agreement and is subject to approval by the Program Director in consultation with the graduate committee. The student is expected to have decided on a mentor and been accepted into his/her laboratory no later than the end of the second semester of study. The mentor acts as chair of the student's research committee (see Research Committee).
