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Letter from the President

Hello, Neuroscience Graduate Students!



First, I would like to welcome the new NGSA members and thank the returning members for coming back! Although we have only

been working together for three months, we have already accomplished a lot. We have conducted a fundraising drive and collected a grand total of \$1,100. This money will go towards NGSA events throughout the year and towards Neuroscience Research Day, which will be held in November 2006. Thank you to those who supported us. A list of sponsors can be found elsewhere in this issue of PoNS. We have also created and approved an NGSA constitution, which provides guidelines for the NGSA for this year and in the future. As well, there have been two successful NGSA social events. Thank you to those of you who attended and we look forward to seeing in the future those of you who have not yet come out. In sports, the NGSA has a volleyball team, and is planning on having a

team for the Red-Eye competition at the end of March. If you are interested please contact Robin, the sports coordinator, as he is always looking for new people! There have also been a lot of things going on within the GSA. An update on important issues can be found elsewhere in this issue of PoNS.

On top of things like prof lunches, Neuroscience Research Day and running a TGIF, which were done in previous years, this year we are also planning on using the Alberta Neuroscience Network Academic Exchange (ANNAE) program to foster the exchange of ideas throughout Alberta, providing specific CAPS programs for NGSA students and increasing the number of social activities and sports for NGSA members. If you have any suggestions for events you would like the NGSA to organize please let me, or the appropriate coordinator, know.

We are all looking forward to a very exciting year, and welcome any input on how to improve your experience as a neuroscience graduate student here at the University of Alberta.

Rhiannon Noble
NGSA President 2006

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This year, the NGSA is proud to be hosting seminars. The first seminar in this series, featuring Dr. Gerald Zamponi, will take place on April 13, 2006.

Meet Your New NGSА Executives

President: Rhiannon Noble

Hi! I am excited to be the president of the NGSА this year. This year is going to be great! The members of the executive are planning a lot of events so keep yourself posted by reading emails forwarded from Nancy or checking out the website (<http://www.ualberta.ca/~ngsa/>).

Vice President - Treasurer/Vice President - Secretary: Sabrina Gustafson & Melissa Chee

Sabrina: I'm in my second year of a Master's at U of A. My research interests are the mechanisms of neuropathic pain, and the inflammatory reaction after spinal cord injury. I did my undergrad in B.C. in Kinesiology and studied exercise psychology and motor control. I plan on finishing my Master's this summer, then traveling for a bit before returning to school. I love to play soccer, tennis, and all intramural sports. I like to be active and outdoors. My favourite place so far in Alberta is Elk Island, hiking with the bison herds.

Melissa: Hello! This is Melissa Chee, your NGSА Co-Secretary/Treasurer for 2006. I'm looking forward to an exciting year with you all. I love to play volleyball, and hope to see some of you out there this year! Besides volleyball, I am a budding scientist studying constitutively active receptors with Dr. Bill Colmers.

Webmaster: Mark Ballermann

Besides running the NGSА website, I am currently studying plasticity of the reticulospinal tract after spinal cord



injury. When I'm not at home with my wife Charlotte and son Seth, I coach a men's division 3 soccer team.

Social Coordinator: Joanna Clair

My name is Joanna Clair and I am the new Social Coordinator for the NGSА this year. I started my M.Sc. in September with Dr. David Collins and am looking at the effects of electrical stimulation of paralyzed muscle in people with spinal cord injury. Some of the activities that I am hoping to organize this year include monthly pub/activity nights (third Thursday of each month), skating at Hawrelak Park, bowling, a curling night, and possibly a camping trip in the summer. Additionally, I will be arranging student lunches with visit-

ing professors. All students are welcome to join in on the lunches. I look forward to meeting you at future events and if you have any suggestions for social activities please contact me.

Sports Representative: Robin Clugston

I am a graduate student with Dr John Greer, studying the embryological development of the diaphragm. As sports co-ordinator, it is my job to encourage neuroscience grad students to get out of the lab and get their game faces on. The official team of the NGSА is the Astrocytes; slo-pitch, ultimate frisbee, soccer, volleyball - you name it, we will enter a team. Playing with the Astrocytes is a great way to meet other NGSА members, have a good time and keep fit!

GSA Representative: Sonja Fremit

PoNS Editor: Valerie Yeung

I am editing the newsletter this year, and I hope to get at least two issues out to you. I am currently in the second year of my Master's, studying the effects of fatty acids on pancreatic beta cells with Dr. Amy Tse.

GSA Update

Your GSA Rep, Sonja, has been working hard to represent your interests at GSA meetings. Some of the issues that have come up in recent weeks are increases in health plan and GSA fees, the negotiation of a tuition

freeze, and the GSA elections (being held this week). For more information, please check out the GSA's website, at <http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/>.

If you have any questions, please contact Sonja (sfremit@ualberta.ca).

Sports Report: Go Astrocytes!



By Robin Clugston

NGSA Astrocytes clean up at the Tuffest-3.

The Tuffest-3 is held every fall at Hawrelak Park, typically on a chilly Sunday morning. The race is a 3-person relay involving 3 legs: a 7-km run, followed by a 25-km bike, then a 4.5-km run to finish things up. Though one of the smaller campus recreation sports, the Tuffest-3 is still competitive and, more importantly, lots of fun!

This year, your NGSA Sports Coordina-

tor, Robin Clugston, toed the line to try and secure a good lead in the cycling leg, for what we knew would be some strong opposition. In typical fashion, Robin sped off at a pace more suitable for a race half the length he was actually running, but soon settled down to a comfortable lead and was first to finish the first run.

At the start of the cycling leg the Astrocytes had over a lap head start on the main competition, a strong team entered by the U of A triathlon club. Our cyclist Jason McLennan, an honorary Astrocyte from the Faculty of Engineering, was fast, but unfortunately the competition was faster and was taking almost a minute out of our lead every lap. This led to some serious mental arithmetic to calculate whether we would still be in front after ten laps. As it turned out both cyclists finished almost at the same time, leading to a very dramatic finale.

All the pressure was on our last-leg runner Lisa Guevremont (officially in

Biomedical Engineering, but it's all neuroscience). It was going to be a close race and when she disappeared round the first corner the opposition was in hot pursuit. At the end of the first lap Lisa was looking strong and was beginning to pull ahead from her rather rosy-cheeked pursuer. A lap later she was bringing the Astrocytes home to victory and the highly coveted campus recreation t-shirts – Yeeee haaa!

As is always the case, behind every winning team there was excellent support. In addition to our 3 racers, neuroscience student Tera Mosher was our expertly qualified lap-counter – she has spent half her Ph.D. in a darkened room counting rat movements, so noting down our lap times was a walk in the park (!). In addition to the fun of the chase, the day also provided other entertainment. Whether it was the out-of-shape frat boys stopping for doughnuts or bemused cyclists being sent out for extra laps because of miscounting – a good time was had by all!

- Look out for a report on how neuroscience students help to kick ass in the fall Ultimate Frisbee league – we played some tough games but still managed to bring home the t-shirts!
- The NGSA usually enters one team into some sport every term; keep an eye on your inbox for details or e-mail Robin (clugston@ualberta.ca).

Prof Lunches

Prof Lunches are a great opportunity to meet a visiting speaker and chat about anything you want, science-related or not. This semester, we are holding 3 Prof Lunches (listed below), so you have plenty of chances to get out to one. Meet in the semi-

nar room (HMRC 207, on the bridge) at 1 PM, right after the seminar. Hope you see you there!

April 13 – Gerald Zamponi

April 27 – Eric Klann

May 18 – Brian Kolb

Thank you to those who donated to NGSA!

The NGSA would like to extend a big thank you to the following individuals, who donated generously during our 2006 fundraising drive. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Glen Baker

Klaus Ballanyi

Ming Chan

Bill Colmers

Bruce Dick

Monica Gorassini

John Greer

Steve Harvey

Teresa Krukoff

Jack Jhamandas

Kelvin Jones

Peter Nguyen

Arthur Prochazka

Yves Sauve

Peter Silverstone

Peter Smith

Philip Tibbo

Social Report



Pictures from the first event of 2006, Pub Night at the Black Dog in January. Turn-out was great and everyone had fun!

Each month, the NGSa will be holding a social event. The two events so far this year, a Pub Night at the Black Dog and an evening at Avenue Pizza, were a great success and a lot of fun. Events that are planned for the coming year include an Edmonton Rush game, tobogganing, skating, and even a trip to the waterpark! Check your email and the website for updates on events.



If you have any suggestions for social events or would like to help out in organizing one, please contact Joanna Clair (jclair@ualberta.ca).

Neuroscience Research Day 2005 Review

Neuroscience Research Day, which took place on November 22, 2005, was a rousing success. The keynote seminar, by Dr. Phil Gardiner of the University of Manitoba, generated a great deal of interest from the audience. Dr. Gardiner, who earned his Ph.D. in Physical Education at U of A, gave a talk about the effects of exercise on the nervous system.

Dr. Gardiner's seminar was preceded by five student talks, a feature new to Research Day. Three U of A students, as well as two guests from the University of Calgary, presented their findings from such diverse fields as neu-

ron-glia interactions and experimental sleep models.

After the seminars, the group moved to the Timms Centre for the poster session. With nearly 30 participants, the poster session was a wonderful opportunity to share research with others, and to see what kind of exciting developments were taking place in other labs. Though there was no prize awarded this year, poster presenters received a gift for participating.

The NGSa would like to thank all those who came out, the students who presented talks and posters,

and especially Dr. Gardiner. Thank you also to Dave Hayes for his key role in organizing the event, and to Nancy and the Centre for Neuroscience for their help.

Everyone is welcome to attend Neuroscience Research Day 2006, which is planned for November. If you have any recommendations for speakers or want to help out, please contact Rhiannon (noble@ualberta.ca). Stay tuned for more information!

If you have any questions or concerns about the running of the NGSa, please come to a meeting. The NGSa meets the first Tuesday of every month at 9:30 AM, in 550B HMRC. The next one will be on April 4, 2006. Everyone is welcome!

This issue of PoNS was edited by Valerie Yeung. Please send feedback to vey@ualberta.ca.

Did you know...

...the NGSa has its very own website?

Visit <http://www.ualberta.ca/~ngsa/> for the latest news about the NGSa, event announcements, Prof Lunch schedules, and even back issues of PoNS. It's everything you need in one handy place.