Message from the Director

TO THE 2020 GRADUATES

Congratulations on your big day! I encourage you to celebrate your accomplishment and hope this graduation marks just the beginning of a lifelong journey of curiosity, discovery, leadership and service. Yes, you have earned your degree, but this is merely the stepping-stone for what is yet to come. Whatever your next endeavor may be, we know that you will succeed. What makes us so sure? Four years ago, you came to Virginia Tech fearless and determined to major in an emerging new scientific discipline. Possibly not fully grasping the field of Neuroscience and its scope, you have since learned about the inner workings of the brain; the brain-mind connection; you have learned to rely on data to make evidence-based decisions; you understand how human emotion is regulated by defined neurochemicals; you learned the volatility of memories, and became conversant in mechanisms of neurological illnesses. You learned how genes and the environment collaborate to shape human traits and personality. Most importantly, you have become a critical thinker and a person who is eager to impart on the world the power of knowledge.

I leave you with one challenge and it is not a simple one: “Make a difference in the world.” Always ask for evidence and the data that supports decisions we make individually or in society. I know you will succeed. I thank you for choosing Neuroscience as your degree and share pride in your future accomplishments.

Good luck and congratulations.

Dr. Harald Sontheimer
I.D. Wilson Chair and Professor
Executive Director
School of Neuroscience

Awards and Special Recognitions

Mia Genuario
SCHOOL OF NEUROSCIENCE OUTSTANDING SENIOR AWARD

Rishi Devulapalli
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE OUTSTANDING SENIOR RESEARCH AWARD

Lauren Haacke
VIRGINIA TECH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT OF THE YEAR

The Outstanding Senior Award recognizes a student with outstanding performance in academics, extracurricular activities, leadership, and contributions to the university and/or community.

The Outstanding Senior Research Award recognizes a student with demonstrated excellence in undergraduate research.

The Undergraduate Student of the Year recognizes a graduating senior who has achieved overall excellence during their undergraduate career at Virginia Tech. This recognition is awarded to a student who has exceptional and balanced achievement in academics, leadership, and service.
Meet the Seniors

Oludamilola Adeshina
Gainesville, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Yea In Ahn
Annandale, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Malikah Imogene Ajose
Virginia Beach, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Erik Akbar
Chesterfield, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Maxwell Amoako
Manassas, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Zoe Anderson
Earlysville, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Megan Nicole Ansley
Alexandria, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Ashwin Arora
Vienna, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Meghan Babington
Sterling, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Katie Marie Barnes
Ronceverte, WV
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Robert Gates Bass III
Midlothian, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Meet the Seniors

Ben Batman
Monroe, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kourtney A Baumfalk
Richmond, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Jennifer Leigh Beauchamp
West Chester, PA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Noralee Beecroft
Woodbridge, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Sara Belay
Washington, DC
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Matthew David Bergstresser
Charlottesville, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Riyanka Bhavsar
Aldie, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Hannah Elizabeth Bird
Chesapeake, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Amanda Lee Blattel
Virginia Beach, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Katelyn Sue Bolt
Front Royal, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Taylor Boyd
Severna Park, MD
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE
## Meet the Seniors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Neuroscience Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Audrey Briscoe</td>
<td>Manassas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caitlin Elizabeth Brnich</td>
<td>Newport News</td>
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<td>Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience</td>
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<td>Savannah Kay Brooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abby Brown</td>
<td>Annapolis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chelsea Buhler</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>Sofia Daniela Cadena Coro</td>
<td>Tyson’s Corner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sara Hope Carbaugh</td>
<td>Bluefield</td>
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<td>Katherine Carnivale</td>
<td>McMurray</td>
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<td>Meghan Elizabeth Casey</td>
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<td>Cameron Elise Cashwell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emma Rae Casto</td>
<td>Staunton</td>
<td>VA</td>
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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Gabriel M. Coleman</td>
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<td>Mikayla Ann Colt</td>
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<td>Kathryn Creighton</td>
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<td>Francesca Czesak</td>
<td>Wappingers Falls</td>
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<td>Rishi Kashyap Devulapalli</td>
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<td>Nistha Dube</td>
<td>Fairfax, VA</td>
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<td>Meet the Seniors</td>
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Meet the Seniors

Anoo Maskeri
Vienna, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Samantha Ann McChesney
Kirkland, WA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Michael Justus McGregor
King George, VA
COMPUTATIONAL AND SYSTEMS NEUROSCIENCE

Reagan Meyers
Moneta, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Shannon Noel Morrical
Chantilly, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Rebecca Mueller
Roanoke, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Jamie Lea Mustian
Richmond, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Ryan Nasser
Woodbridge, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Jacob L. Nelsen
Harrisburg, PA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kyle Nickel
Harrisonburg, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Madison Rose Noble
Mechanicsville, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Meet the Seniors

Madeline O’Brien
Vienna, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Neha Ogale
Ashburn VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Jared Akira Okada
Fairfax, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Valeria Ortiz Gareca
Lorton, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Mariam Nicole Ouattara
Ashburn, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Alexis Nicole Pagán
Chesapeake, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Shriti Pant
Chantilly, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kyra Parker
Alexandria, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Nicole Lorraine Peritz
York, PA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Madison Grace Philhower
Richmond, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Nikita Pike
Reston, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE
Meet the Seniors

Carolyn Nicole Pollock
Virginia Beach, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Carly Porter
Radford, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kayla Purcell
Millington, NJ
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Najwa Qadeer
Stafford, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kylie Ream
Haymarket, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Julianne Elizabeth Reilly
New Canaan, CT
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Sasha Marie Reynolds
Vienna, VA
COMPUTATIONAL AND SYSTEMS NEUROSCIENCE

Alexandra Nicole Rhodes
Chantilly, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Giselle Nicole Rivero Ballon
Sterling, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Daniel Ro
Oakton, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Forrest J. Robertson
Virginia Beach, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Meet the Seniors

Tanmaya Rodda
Manassas, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Lorin Tyler Roemhildt
Midlothian, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Amy Elizabeth Sabet
Chesterfield, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Eric Sanderlin
Richmond, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Taylor Nicole Schaefer
Stafford, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Nikita Nanna Schroll-McLaughlin
Leesburg, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Chase Robert Schulte
Burke, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kemper Evan Scott
Bent Mountain, VA
COMPUTATIONAL AND SYSTEMS NEUROSCIENCE

Meghan Walker Sedovy
Lexington, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

David Sellers
Hillsville, VA
COMPUTATIONAL AND SYSTEMS NEUROSCIENCE

Ana Shaffi
Waterford, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE
Meet the Seniors

Pooja Shethna
Burke, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Claire Louise Shifflett
Warrenton, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Rachel Violetta Silver
Chesterfield County, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Alathea Joy Smith
Manassas, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Erynn Sorensen
Norfolk, VA
COMPUTATIONAL AND SYSTEMS NEUROSCIENCE

Julia Sorg
Flemington, NJ
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Jessica Marye Spicer
Bahama, NC
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Nicole Louise Spiezio
Silver Spring, MD
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Amber Elise Stephens
Virginia Beach, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Michaela Grace Stevens
North Dinwiddie, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Rithika Surendra
Ashburn, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Meet the Seniors

Erica Song Townsend
Fairfax Station, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Colleen Margaret Valentine
Chester, NJ
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Katie Van Nuys
Leesburg, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Wilhelm Harry Venitz
Richmond, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Maria Villafuerte
Arlington, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Rachael Elizabeth Ward
Vienna, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Alexandra Warren
Manasquan, NJ
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Lauren Weaver
Pasadena, MD
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Addison Nicole Webster
Chesapeake, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Abigail Rae Weit
Lititz, PA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Hannah Eloise Wilding
Pittsburgh, PA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE
Meet the Seniors

Ryan Williams
Roanoke, VA
EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Meredith K Wilson
Richmond, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Mollie McKenzie Woods
Roanoke, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Kristina Woodward
Reston, VA
COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Sarah Victoria Woolverton
Winchester, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Taylor Marie Wynne
Virginia Beach, VA
CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Information about our Majors

Students in the School of Neuroscience program learn directly from experts in the field about advances in genetic, cellular, molecular, cognitive and systems Neuroscience.

CLINICAL NEUROSCIENCE

Graduates of the Clinical Neuroscience major have completed a curriculum that promotes a detailed understanding of genetic, cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying diseases and disorders of the nervous system. Several Clinical Neuroscience courses emphasize the translation of research findings into clinical practice and the role and responsibility that health care plays in society.

COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE

Graduates of the Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience major have completed a curriculum that focuses on thought processes in humans. These students have explored a wide array of topics including sensory and motor systems, learning, memory, decision-making, language, sleep, mood, awareness, and attention.

COMPUTATIONAL AND SYSTEMS NEUROSCIENCE

Graduates of the Computational and Systems Neuroscience major have undertaken an interdisciplinary branch of Neuroscience that incorporates theoretical and experimental approaches to understand the brain. Graduates from this major have explored tools and techniques that neuroscientists use to make sense of vast data in hope of finding solutions to neurological diseases as well as understanding processes such as decision-making, addiction, motivation, and more.

EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSCIENCE

Graduates of the Experimental Neuroscience major have completed a curriculum that prepares students for a hands-on career in science or science education. These graduates have gained a comprehensive understanding of genes, molecules, and cells that are the building blocks of the brain. Furthermore, many Experimental Neuroscience students have taken part in undergraduate research.
Georgia Hodes

Dr. Hodes’ work in mice and human subjects identifies the underlying biology that contributes to vulnerability and resilience to stress and mood disorders respectively. She is interested in understanding how the sex of an individual contributes to their susceptibility to stress and depression. Her goal is to develop novel personalized treatments and bioassays for mental illness so these disorders can be medically diagnosed and treated effectively.

Dr. Hodes’ initial education was in the liberal arts. She received a B.A. in Drama/Dance from Bard College and worked as an actor and a designer in New York City. In 1999, she went back to school and obtained post-baccalaureate training at Hunter College in order to pursue a graduate degree in Neuroscience. At Hunter she experienced her first foray into research studying sensory behavior in electric catfish at the American Museum of Natural History and mirror self recognition in Beluga whales at the New York Aquarium. Dr. Hodes was accepted into the laboratory of Dr. Tracey Shors at Rutgers University in 2001. She received her Ph.D. from the Behavioral and Systems Neuroscience division of the Psychology program in 2007. At Rutgers University her research explored sex differences in the effects of stress on learning and brain plasticity across the lifespan. In 2007, she began postdoctoral training in Pharmacology with Dr. Irwin Lucki at the University of Pennsylvania examining the contribution of growth factors and adult neurogenesis to genetic and sex differences in vulnerability to stress. In 2010, she joined the laboratory of Dr. Scott Russo as a post-doctoral fellow for training in molecular neuroscience. Her work at Mt. Sinai focused on neuro-immunological and epigenetic mechanisms contributing to individual differences in stress susceptibility. In 2013, she received a postdoctoral NARSAD young investigator award to examine the role of the cytokine Interleukin-6 in stress susceptibility. In 2015, she was promoted to Assistant Professor at Mt. Sinai. In 2016, she left Mt. Sinai to join the newly formed School of Neuroscience at Virginia Tech as an Assistant professor where she received a second NARSAD young investigator award to examine sex differences in the effects of stress on the peripheral immune system. She is an author of over 50 scientific papers and has contributed to 3 different textbooks. She currently runs her own research laboratory at Virginia Tech examining how sex differences in the immune system interact with the brain to drive behavioral differences in susceptibility and resiliency to stress.
Further Information
https://neuroscience.vt.edu

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