Interest Surges in New Neuro Degree

MARGARET TATE
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

When Georgia Tech’s College of Sciences created a prospectus for a new Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience, it estimated 25 to 50 students would enroll the first year. Wrong.

Since the new degree program was approved by the Board of Regents on Feb. 14, more than 145 students have signed on. This enthusiastic response was surprising — but then again, not, says Tim Cope, chair of the Undergraduate Neuroscience Curriculum Committee and professor in the School of Biological Sciences and the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering.

“Hardly a day goes by that there’s not something in the news — a health concern or a recent breakthrough or societal challenge — that doesn’t involve neuroscience,” he says. “It’s a growing field with so many opportunities, and it’s inspired a lot of interest from our students.”

One of them is Yeseul Heo.

“I got really excited when I learned about the new major,” the rising second-year student says. “I think I was one of the first to sign up.”

As part of new student orientation, incoming students and their families are invited to bring donations for the Small Act Big Impact project led by Student Engagement. The effort benefits the Atlanta Mission and culminates with a packaging event at the end of the summer.

Faculty and staff can participate by donating items through Aug. 18.

Volunteer bins are located in the Student Center (in the Commons and near the second floor information desk) and Smithgall Student Services (Flag) Building (on both the first and second floors). Employees can also participate in the packaging event on Friday, Aug. 18, at 5 p.m. in the atrium of the Flag Building.

Donations will be used by the Atlanta Mission for critical needs kits that are given to shelter residents. Supplies for these kits are one of the most pressing needs, as hygiene items tend to be donated less frequently.

Join Incoming Students in Making ‘Small Act Big Impact’

SARAH FERRINGS
STUDENT LIFE

Fall first-year FASET orientation sessions began this month, meaning students from around the country and world are descending on campus.

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Record 184 Yellow Jackets Named to ACC Honor Roll

Three student-athletes earned the recognition for the fifth time. Track and field led the way for the Jackets, with 61 student-athletes on the honor roll. Swimming and diving added 28 honorees to the list, followed by football with 26 and baseball with 19.

c.gatech.edu/acchonorroll

A Brand New Age of Learning

The Summer 2017 issue of the Georgia Tech Alumni Magazine focuses on teaching, learning, higher education, and how Tech is leading the way. Read it online at:
gtalumimag.com

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Update on Immigration Executive Order and Travel Visas

On Monday, June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court partially granted the government’s request to stay preliminary injunctions on the 90-day travel ban in section 2(c) of Executive Order 13780. This decision will result in section 2(c) being enacted except under certain conditions. Enforcement will result in the travel ban for individuals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen “who lack a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States.” While the Court cited several examples of such “bona fide relationships” — such as students admitted to a U.S. college or university or individuals employed by U.S. entities — further guidance from the State Department is needed regarding full application of these rules. The Supreme Court will hear arguments on this case in October, and a final decision is expected during the 2017-18 academic year.

In addition, the Court formally lifted the injunction on the section outlining the government’s study which could lead, under section 2(e) of the executive order, to an indefinite ban on entry by nationals of countries that do not provide the U.S. government with sufficient information on citizens who are applying for U.S. visas or immigration benefits.

Georgia Tech’s Office of International Education (OIE) and Global Human Resources will continue to stay abreast of the changes and provide updates as they are available. International students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to contact OIE for individual guidance if they are planning to travel or study abroad. Information will continue to be shared at gatech.edu/travel-visas.
Seeing Campus through a New Lens

Biomedical Researcher Finds Beauty in Nature on Campus

STACY BRAUKMAN
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Yumiko Sakurai, a researcher in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering, has spent years walking around Georgia Tech. Like most of us, she had been thinking more about work than about the robin calling down from a dogwood or the squirrel skittering across her path.

But one day last spring, as she passed by the Roger and Helen Krone Engineered Biosystems Building (EBB), Sakurai paused and took a long look around at the wetland pond and the trees, shrubs, and vegetation near the building. For the first time, she really noticed that the campus was alive (and, yes, abuzz) with a dazzling display of nature — flora, fauna, and an array of insects and birds.

Until that point, Sakurai had been an enthusiastic recreational photographer who mostly took pictures of family vacations and travels. But now she was inspired to start bringing her Canon EOS 70D with her to the Marcus Nanotechnology Building every day. After that, her view of the Tech campus changed completely.

“For me, photography is a way to appreciate nature,” she explains. “I like it because I can capture things I can’t see in detail with my eyes. But with a camera, you can see so much — you can capture the detail of a flying bird that you wouldn’t normally see. Or a close-up of a bee. I really enjoy that.”

Before work and during lunchtime, Sakurai says, “I take my camera and explore different parts of the campus, with different varieties of trees and flowers. If there are interesting birds, or butterflies, dragonflies, and other insects, I will take a few pictures. The diverse flowers and plants attract a wide variety of butterflies in particular, from the monarch and the American lady to the eastern tiger swallowtail.”

In addition to EBB, her favorite locations to photograph campus wildlife are the rooftop garden at Clough Commons, and the area surrounding the Student Center, where she captured the robin below.

Yumiko Sakurai shoots with a Canon EOS 70D. Her favorite locations to photograph campus wildlife are the Krone Engineered Biosystems Building (where she captured the monarch butterfly image below), rooftop garden at Clough Commons, and the area surrounding the Student Center, where she captured the robin below.

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construction is booming in Atlanta, and the Georgia Tech campus has its share, including a project at the corner of 10th Street and Hemphill Avenue.

Over the past several months, the building at 490 10th Street was demolished to make space for the Campus Safety Facility, which will be the new home of the Georgia Tech Police Department. The buildings included a former church and its annex. The building was last used as a church in 1988, and part of the sanctuary was used as a call center during the 1996 Olympic Games.

During the demolition, some elements of the building were carefully salvaged and will be reused in the Living Building at Georgia Tech. Others were salvaged and sent to the Lifecycle Building Center, a local nonprofit founded by Tech alumni that works to keep construction materials out of landfills and give them new life.

Photos: (1) Demolition of the annex building was underway earlier this summer and is now complete. (2) Peeling paint and a water-damaged ceiling filled a space that once was used for choir practice. (3 and 4) Assorted curious items were found in the office and lab spaces. (5) The steeple was carefully removed in sections.

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turn in my paper to switch."

Here’s original major was psychology — and she is keeping that as a minor, along with a double major in international affairs — but she sees neuroscience as a way to put her studies on a more quantitative footing. “Along with psychology, I wanted to focus more on hard research, specifically on brain activity and working with quantitative data,” she says.

Heo has gotten a taste of neuroscience already as a student assistant in the lab of Associate Professor of Psychology Eric Schumacher, whose research uses functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and other experimental techniques to investigate the neural mechanisms for vision, attention, memory, learning, and cognitive control.

Schumacher is one of more than 50 faculty members from disciplines across Georgia Tech who are involved in neuroscience research — and have been for years. But however collaborative, widespread, and even world-renowned these neuroscience efforts have been, what they have lacked, Cope suggests, is “community.”

He and many others anticipate this new undergraduate degree will build that necessary component, for both faculty and students. “It’s a very important, symbolic event in the development of neuroscience on this campus,” he says.

NeuroX Factor

Getting from neuroscience activity to neuroscience community at Georgia Tech has been something of a journey, starting with the formation of a “NeuroX” committee back in 2014 and ending with the Board of Regents approval for the new undergraduate degree a few months ago.

To reach this place, certain boxes had to be checked. It wasn’t enough that faculty were engaged in neuroscience and students wanted it — although that was clearly the case. Every time the Institute offered a neuroscience course, it maxed out, and professors were constantly asked if there would be more courses, or if they could open up another section.

Still, Cope points out, “It’s a legitimate thing for the administration to think about these things exceedingly carefully. No university can be everything — there’s a limit to resources and we have to be strategic with our planning.”

This is an abridged version of this article. Read the full story at c.gatech.edu/bsneuro.