Thank you for your continuing support of the Behavioral Neuroscience Program! Because of your generous contribution, our Stay Up For Student Research campaign during last year’s WWU Give Day raised over $10,000 to support undergraduate research opportunities. Because of the support of donors like you, our students engaged in a range of unique and fascinating research. In this issue, some of these students share how your support impacted their undergraduate research experiences.

Anna Marie Yanny, Senior, Research Assistant
Neural Mechanisms of Language Lab
Outstanding Graduate, 2018

“Have you ever wondered how playing an instrument changes your brain? We have too! In Dr. McNeel Jantzen’s Language and Neural Systems Lab, we research how musical training can improve our language skills. This research has wide implications from education and brain development. The opportunity to work on research that could benefit my future children has been an invaluable part of my education at Western.

I am so grateful for the funding provided to me through Give Day. With this financial support, I have been able to work for over a year in the Language and Neural Systems Lab. The experience has given me technical and creative problem-solving skills. These are the kind of skills that will help me get a job in the cognitive neuroscience field.

Thank you so much for your generous donation to undergraduate scholarship, and neuroscience research. It has given me the opportunity to become trained in cutting-edge research, so I can give back to my community!”

Alex McCoy, Senior, Research Assistant
Neurobiology of Addiction Lab

Alex McCoy, is graduating this spring and pursuing a PhD at the University of Texas's Health Science center in San Antonio. Alex attended the annual Society for Neuroscience Conference in November 2017 to present her research on the effects of environmental enrichment on sucrose craving conducted in Dr. Jeff Grimm’s Neurobiology of Addiction Research Lab. Alex’s travel to this international meeting was supported by Give Day funds because of your generous donations during our Stay Up For Student Research campaign.

“I completely accredit attending SFN to my successful admission into a PhD program. When I was at the conference, I went to the grad school fair and got a chance to talk to some program representatives, some of which were Dr. Daniel Lodge and Dr. David Morilak of UT’s Health Science Center in San Antonio. That was the first school I heard from, and I got their correspondence within DAYS after submitting my application. I think getting a chance to get a personal connection with people who are both potential faculty mentors and admissions council members really made me a memorable applicant. Happy to say I decided to attend UTHSCSA and I’ll be moving there in July!”
Wesley Solem, Junior, Research Assistant and HDSA Award Recipient
Neurobiology of Huntington’s Disease Lab

“When I first became involved with Jeff Carroll’s lab two years ago, I was volunteering every spare moment I could find to help in the lab’s research. Thanks to donations made to WWU’s Behavioral Neuroscience Department during last year’s “Give Day,” I now get paid for the work that I do in the lab. That opportunity is rare, and I am incredibly grateful for it. I am a non-resident student responsible for my own tuition, and for my first few years as a student I was often so busy juggling schoolwork and several part-time jobs that I was unable to be in the lab as much as I would have liked. Getting paid for this work and having the chance to open up my schedule to experience and take part in professional research is a dream come true. This is especially important to me as I begin preparation for application processes to graduate school programs. Next year will be my last undergraduate academic year at WWU, and it will be highlighted by the experience and knowledge I’ve gained in the Carroll Lab.

Last summer in Jeff Carroll’s lab we completed an experiment which investigated the behavior of mice modeling Huntington’s disease in fixed and progressive ratio tasks, using homemade open source nosepoke operant boxes. This resulted in a paper published in Nature’s Scientific Reports, which marked my first ever achievement as a contributing author. Since September 2017, I have been conducting various experiments to investigate the metabolic and molecular effects of adipose tissue-specific knockout of the huntingtin gene in mice. We are particularly interested in seeing if this knockout will result in any transcriptional abnormalities and phenotypes that resemble those of HD-model mice. Our goal is to contribute to the understanding of whole-body signs of HD by further unraveling huntingtin’s role in the periphery.

I’m extremely excited and honored to announce that the research proposal for this project was chosen out of a nationwide pool of applicants for the Donald A. King Summer Research Fellowship by the Huntington’s Disease Society of America. This will provide a $4,000 stipend, funding for me to focus on this research full-time over the summer. I must give thanks not only to HDSA, but also again for the donations made to the Behavioral Neuroscience department for Give Day. Those donations helped allow me to spend more of my time in the Carroll Lab generating the pilot data for this research. One wonderful opportunity helped open the door to another, and I can’t believe it.”

Upcoming Events:
Stay up for Student Research: May 31st 8pm-12am
WWU Give Day: June 1st: 12am-12pm

This year, the BNS program will once again Stay Up For Student Research on the eve of June 1st (May 31st) to fundraise for undergraduate research opportunities. Our goal is to meet or exceed last year’s accomplishment, and raise at least $10,000 to support undergraduate research opportunities and continue the legacy of sending students to conferences and making undergraduate research accessible. If you are interested in giving to the BNS program this year, please visit the link below to give on June 1st, where a percentage of every gift made that day will be matched by the University. Give on June 1st to maximize your donation.
Link: http://wp.wwu.edu/bnsprogram/giving/

Pictured to the right includes students, staff, and faculty staying up for Stay up for Student Research 2017