College of Pharmacy faculty join others to form chapter of neuroscience group

Scientists at Idaho State University recently formed the Snake River Association for Neuroscience (SRAN) with the initial goal of establishing the first chapter of the international organization Society for Neuroscience in the state of Idaho.

The goal was realized when chapter status was officially awarded April 11.

“We are excited to have enough Society members to form a chapter,” says Dr. Leslie Devaud, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences in the ISU College of Pharmacy.

Devaud is the first SRAN president. Dr. Dan Selvage, ISU assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences, is treasurer, and Dr. James Groome, associate professor in the ISU department of biological sciences, is secretary.

Society for Neuroscience (SFN) membership includes scientists and physicians who study the brain and nervous system. Formed in 1970, SFN has grown from 500 members to more than 36,000 and is the world’s largest organization of scientists devoted to neuroscience. Its primary goal is to promote the exchange of information among researchers.

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“This chapter lets the rest of the world know that neuroscience research goes on here, and should encourage interactions with neuroscientists at our region’s universities,” Selvage says.

Thus far, chapter membership includes 10 faculty at ISU, four at BYU-Idaho, and one at Boise State University plus more than a dozen students. SRAN is now working to expand membership across the Snake River region, from southern Idaho to Montana.

The umbrella organization, SRAN, encompasses a membership extending beyond neuroscientists.

“We want to include University and community members with an interest in promoting neuroscience education and research,” Devaud says.

In March, several SRAN members gave talks about the brain and neuroscience at local schools as an initial outreach program.

As examples of significant research being conducted locally, Devaud cites her own research on how long-term alcohol use harms the brain. In particular, she uses an animal model to study how alcohol affects females differently than males.

Selvage’s neuroscience research centers on how the brain controls reproductive hormone secretions, and their disruption by stress and environmental chemicals.

Groome studies properties of a brain protein central to excitatory properties of neurons, and how errors in these proteins may underlie some types of epilepsies.

Two ISU faculty members, Dr. Curt Anderson, associate professor in biological sciences, and Dr. Gary Ten Eyck, assistant professor in biological sciences, study neuronal control of frog behaviors, from feeding to parental care.