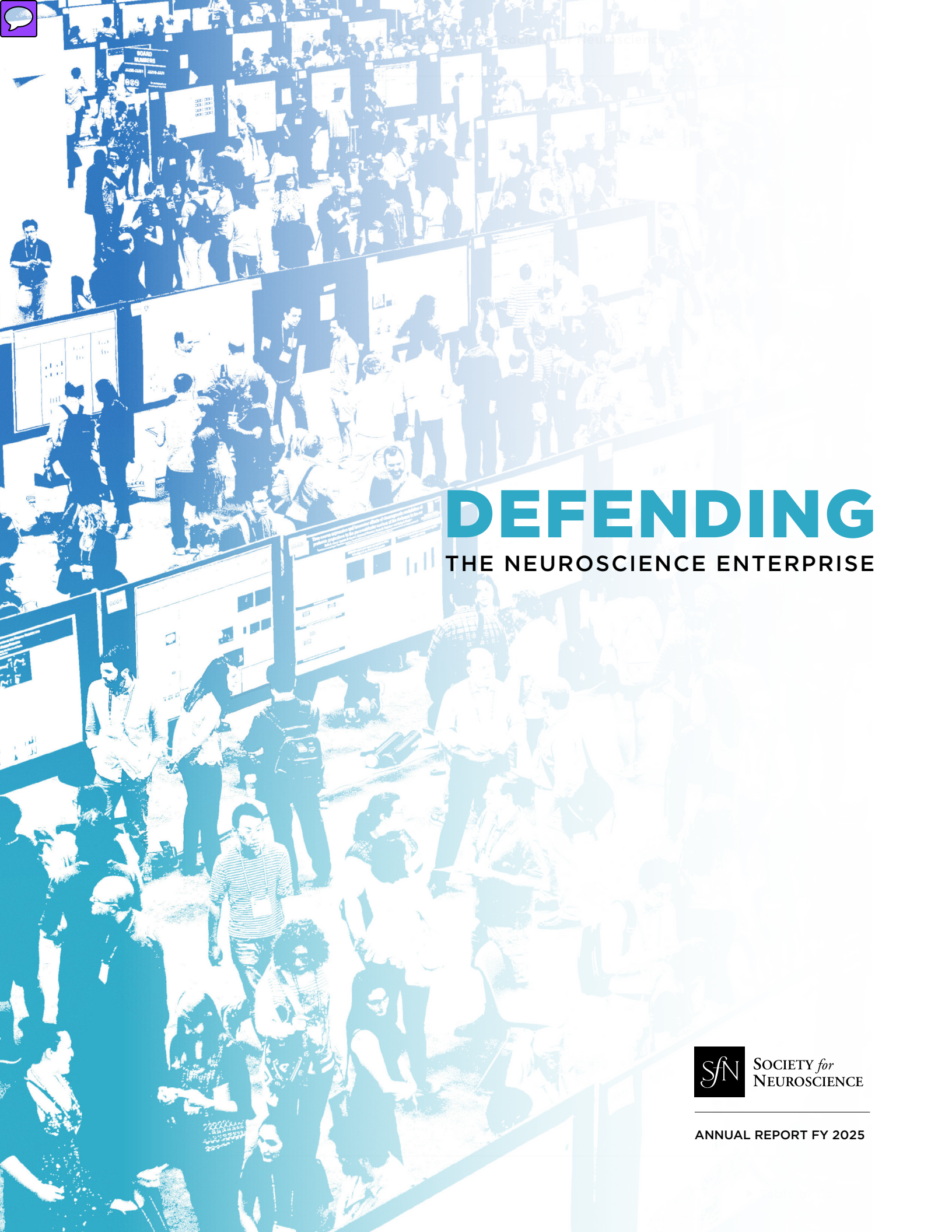

DEFENDING
THE NEUROSCIENCE ENTERPRISE

SOCIETY *for* NEUROSCIENCE

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2025

OUR MISSION

ADVANCING SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE

Advance the understanding of the brain and the nervous system by bringing together scientists of all segments of neuroscience, by facilitating the integration of research directed at all levels of biological organization, and by encouraging translational research and the application of new scientific knowledge to develop improved disease treatments and cures.

SUPPORTING THE NEUROSCIENCE COMMUNITY

Provide professional development activities, information, and educational resources for neuroscientists at all stages of their careers, including undergraduates, graduates, and postdoctoral fellows, and increase participation of scientists from all segments.

EDUCATING AND ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

Promote public information and general education about the nature of scientific discovery and the results and implications of the latest neuroscience research. Support active and continuing discussions on ethical issues relating to the conduct and outcomes of neuroscience research.

ADVOCATING FOR THE FIELD

Inform legislators and other policymakers about new scientific knowledge, recent developments, and emerging opportunities in neuroscience research and their implications for public policy, societal effects, and continued scientific progress.

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SfN Society for Neuroscience

Donor Spotlight

"I joined SfN as a graduate student and have proudly remained a member for over 45 years. Through my service on various committees and Council, I have seen firsthand SfN's deep commitment to nurturing the professional growth of early career neuroscientists. As 2025 continues to present significant challenges for science, trainees especially are facing difficult times and uncertainty in their career paths. It's important for me to support the Friends of SfN Fund,* knowing my contribution helps ensure trainees — the future of our field — can participate in the 2025 SfN Annual Meeting and stay connected to the broader neuroscience community as they build their careers."

Cheryl L. Sisk, PhD, SfN Treasurer,
Michigan State University

**SfN's Friends of SfN Fund is the member-led philanthropic effort to support member priorities such as the Trainee Professional Development Awards to attend the annual meeting. Gifts of any size are welcome and appreciated to help advance neuroscience in society.*

Message From the President

As we reflect on the past year, it's clear that SfN has achieved meaningful progress across many fronts. The successful Neuroscience 2024 meeting featured the introduction of late-breaking abstracts, the first time an SfN meeting has offered a second, later call for abstracts. SfN's journals, *JNeurosci* and *eNeuro*, continue to be in-demand publications, with *JNeurosci* remaining the most-cited journal in the field. SfN's advocacy efforts have been in overdrive, ensuring a strong presence on Capitol Hill and forging strategic partnerships with peer organizations to champion neuroscience research and funding. BrainFacts continued to produce scientific content seen by thousands worldwide and connected directly with educators at two conferences, the National Science Teaching Association and the National Association of Biology Teachers. And through Neuronline, the Society continued to offer professional development resources and opportunities tailored to support members at every career stage.

Additionally, this year has brought unprecedented challenges to the scientific community. Federal agencies have frozen or canceled numerous grants, disrupting research and threatening the stability of labs nationwide. Startlingly, the inclusion of certain words in a grant can lead to its termination, undermining scientific freedom and integrity. Some universities have faced sweeping suspensions of federal funding to coerce changes on campus. Meanwhile, thousands of staff at science-supporting agencies have been eliminated, eroding the infrastructure that sustains biomedical research.

In the face of these threats, the neuroscience enterprise and the broader biomedical community have come together. With sober resolve, we are defending the system — the foundational relationship — between researchers and the federal government, a partnership that has fueled discovery and innovation for generations. This Annual Report documents the many ways SfN has worked to promote, support, and protect our individual members and the larger community's interests.

The Society's work continues, and it cannot be done without you. Whether you participate in SfN's advocacy efforts, volunteer your time on a committee, or donate to support travel grants for deserving trainees, your contributions are vital. Shoulder to shoulder, we can protect the people, research, and future of our neuroscience community.

John H. Morrison, SfN President

Advancing Scientific Exchange

See the original image

Neuroscience 2024 Buzzes Into Chicago

Neuroscience 2024, the earliest SfN meeting in recent history, gathered the neuroscience community in Chicago for a warm, sunny week of scientific exchange. Over the buzz of kazoos, 22,359 attendees engaged over posters and socials in a smile-inducing atmosphere October 5–9.

Top: Product Theater presentations were delivered quietly to audiences via headphones. Bottom: A musical performance established a shared mood in the audience during the Dialogues lecture.

Chicago: A Windy… Convention Center

The annual meeting started off with a buzz, courtesy of Susan Magsamen's Dialogues Between Neuroscience and Society lecture, supported by the Dana Foundation. Magsamen's presentation explored the science of neuroaesthetics, the study of how the arts and aesthetic experiences measurably change the brain and body. Every audience member received a kazoo to take part in a song (and show off to their colleagues after the lecture ended).

After the Dialogues lecture, attendees fanned out across the McCormick Place Convention Center. Amidst the 458 exhibitors in the Exhibit Hall, two Product Theaters offered 22 presentations by organizations highlighting their research, products, and services. Nearby, the SfN booth featured kiosks with attendee information and a popular interactive game where players matched *JNeurosci* and *eNeuro* cover images before the clock ran out. The SfN store and Art of Neuroscience booths were as popular as ever, with the first SfN-produced Pride t-shirts selling out.

Neuroscience 2024 enjoyed the support of many organizations, including three Gold (Johnson & Johnson, Ncardia, and Nxera), three Silver, and four Bronze sponsors contributing

to the overall meeting. More than 30 sponsors enabled individual lectures, events, and awards. Select livestreamed lectures and virtual posters remained available for registered attendees to view via the virtual component for one month after Neuroscience 2024 concluded in Chicago.

Late-Breaking Abstracts

One of the most notable features of Neuroscience 2024 was the introduction of late-breaking abstracts. This second abstract submission window allowed researchers with new and significant findings to submit their work closer to the annual meeting, ensuring the program reflected the latest advancements in neuroscience. The response was overwhelming, with more than 850 submissions received. These late-breaking posters were showcased adjacent to the bustling poster floor. The success of this initiative has already set the stage for its return next year, but with a cap of 2,500 late-breaking abstract submissions and a higher abstract submission fee than the regular call for abstracts.

A Headline-Generating Meeting

The newest neuroscience research featured at the annual meeting generated numerous headlines. Attracted by 10 press-only events covering topics such as GLP-1 agonists, pain, and neuroimmunity, around 120 journalists produced stories in outlets like Nature, NPR, and Forbes.

Neuroscience 2024 was held during Nobel Week, during which the 2024 Nobel Prizes were awarded. Among others, the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to Professor John J. Hopfield at Princeton University for the foundational discoveries that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks. Hopfield was the recipient of the 2012 SfN Swartz Prize for Theoretical and Computational Neuroscience.

Neuroscience 2024 by the Numbers

22,359 ATTENDEES	**5,000+** KAZOOS
458 EXHIBITORS	**868** LATE-BREAKING ABSTRACTS

When we're doing research, we get caught up in little bubbles of our peers working in the same area. I wanted to branch out and meet different people working on different questions in different ways in the hope that it would inspire me to think more broadly.

Jayalakshmi Viswanathan, Program Analyst, National Institute on Aging

SfN Journals Empower Authors

eNeuro *and* JNeurosci *engaged the scientific community through online events and new initiatives.*

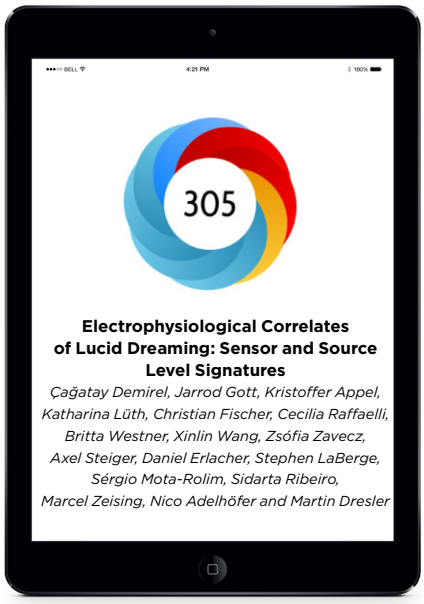
eNeuro Addresses Confirmation Bias

eNeuro has always embraced the ethos of advancing scientific progress through discussion and connection. Over the past year, the *eNeuro* community enjoyed lively online gatherings covering some of the journal's most-discussed articles, with the webinar on Lecanemab and Donanemab Alzheimer's therapies drawing hundreds of viewers. Meanwhile, the latest articles in the Improving Your Neuroscience series covered hidden symptoms of confirmation bias and illuminated some common mistakes in cognitive science to encourage reflection and professional growth.

JNeurosci Champions Author-Centered Publishing

Since beginning her term as *JNeurosci*'s Editor-in-Chief Sabine Kastner has emphasized an author-centered approach. This includes a new policy allowing supplemental material, which simplifies the process of transferring a manuscript for submission to *JNeurosci*, and continuation of the open peer review model. In its first year, 66.8% of reviewers and 81.4% of authors opted to share reviews and rebuttal letters, extending the value of scientific review to the larger community.

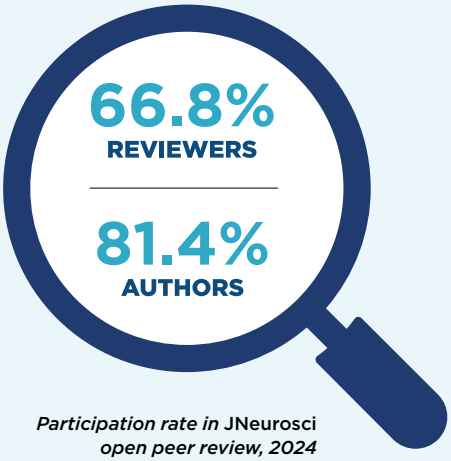
JNeurosci has also brought new authors and ideas into the fold by broadening the scope of papers it accepts and spearheading Neuro and Beyond, a space for commentary on the intersections of neuroscience and society. To continue broadening the scope of published papers, *JNeurosci* is looking forward to publishing special collections, an assortment of four to eight papers united by a common theme and edited by guest editors. The themes of the first two special collections will



A recent* JNeurosci *paper on lucid dreaming was covered by* Discover Magazine *and generated significant discussion.

[*eNeuro's* consultation review model] fosters a collaborative discussion among reviewers, leading to more balanced and thorough feedback. This approach helps authors improve their manuscripts while ensuring a fair and transparent peer review process.

Rupesh K. Chillale, Assistant Research Scientist, University of Maryland, College Park

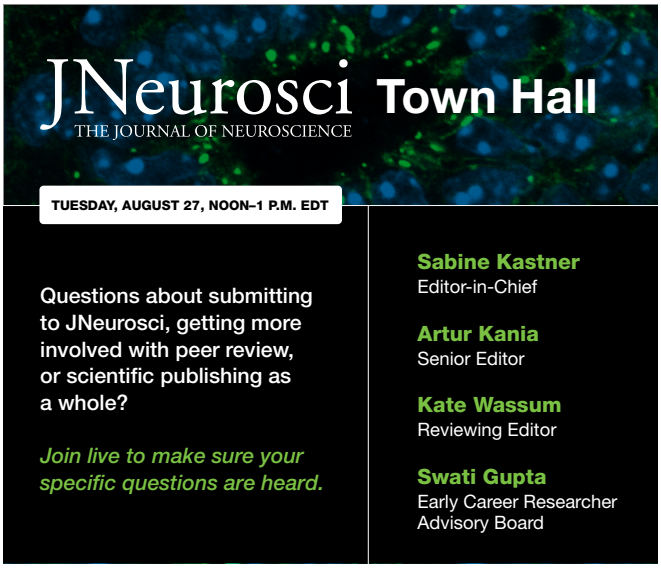


Participation rate in JNeurosci *open peer review, 2024*

be "Computational Properties of the Prefrontal Cortex" and "Central Questions for Social Neuroscience Research." In August, *JNeurosci* premiered its first virtual town hall, which resulted in an energetic exchange between authors and editors. This online gathering proved to be a valuable venue for sharing insights. To build on this momentum, *JNeurosci* will host another town hall-style event in the future.

Elevating Early Career Researchers

JNeurosci's Early Career Researcher Advisory Board also enabled new opportunities for communication between authors and editors. In addition to gaining invaluable peer review experience, the 12 board members made their voices heard, suggesting new ways for *JNeurosci* to support early career scientists. The past year included many other resources designed for early career researchers, including Journal Club, the Reviewer Mentor Program, and the popular Advancing Early Career Neuroscientists in Publishing series. The latter is supported by Elsevier, *JNeurosci*, and *eNeuro*. While specifically tailored for newer scientists, the on-demand series offered key insights for researchers at any career stage.



JNeurosci's *first town hall connected editors and authors to discuss the present and future of the journal.*

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Science in Progress

See the original image

This SfN President Studies the Molecular Basis of Behavior

Marina Picciotto studies the receptor that nicotine uses to act on the brain, paving the way for addiction and the perks people say they get from smoking.

When you light up a cigarette, the smoke you inhale travels from your lungs to flood your brain with nicotine in a matter of seconds. There, this tiny molecule exerts a formidable influence on your neural architecture. Nicotine's ability to tinker with brain cells and circuits paves the way for its addictive quality and for the self-described benefits people who smoke report as reasons for their continued use, such as sharper focus or a boosted mood.

Marina Picciotto, a neuroscientist at Yale School of Medicine and immediate past president of the Society for Neuroscience, is fascinated by the tangle of unseen biological forces shaping our daily lives. She's widely known for her research on one specific thread within this jumble: nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs), the cellular mechanism enabling nicotine to act on the body.

"If you have experience with smoking, you know about the molecular basis of behavior because you've taken in [a] foreign substance in this tube on fire, and it has changed how you perceive, how you feel, how you behave, and how you act," Picciotto said.

Picciotto has spent decades exploring how nAChRs and other receptors operate in the brain, and how their activity ultimately changes people's behavior. This nitty-gritty effort to understand how things work on the molecular level also offers a crucial knowledge base for pharmacological research, such as identifying new targets for smoking cessation aids.

Marina Picciotto welcomes the neuroscience community to Neuroscience 2024.

How Nicotine Influences the Brain

Nicotine is a famously difficult drug to quit. Today, more than a billion people around the globe use it. In the United States, an estimated 1 in 5 adults use tobacco products. Although e-cigarette use is comparatively less common, vaping is particularly popular among young adults — and that popularity is growing. Picciotto said nicotine's addictiveness is rooted in the fact that nAChRs are expressed throughout the brain and body in almost every cell type.

Found in certain neurons throughout our nervous systems, these receptors can be influenced both by nicotine and by the neurotransmitter acetylcholine. This means these two different molecules — one externally introduced and the other produced by the body — can act on the same neural pathways.

nAChRs are important molecular modulators that help maintain homeostasis, or balanced signaling, across multiple circuits in the brain. They do so by stimulating a balance of excitatory and inhibitory activity among neurons. Nicotine and acetylcholine determine how these receptors do their jobs by either activating or desensitizing them, depending on conditions in the body.

Henry Lester, a professor of biology at Caltech, explained that when nicotine is introduced to the body, it can even infiltrate neurons' inner machinery, where it takes on the role of a "pharmacological chaperone," encouraging the production of more nAChRs to become fixtures on the cellular surface. Then, in the absence of nicotine, Lester and others have found that acetylcholine's inability to fully activate those receptors leads to symptoms associated with addiction.

In the United States, an estimated 1 in 5 adults use tobacco products, and e-cigarettes are particularly popular among young adults.

But the unpleasantness of withdrawal — the cravings, moodiness, and difficulty sleeping — isn't the only reason people use nicotine. The drug also directly influences how receptors involved in various behavioral systems operate, leading to noticeable changes in conscious experiences like appetite or energy level.

"If you're tired, you might smoke in order to perk yourself up. People find it focusing, so when you're doing a hard task, it makes it easier to concentrate on the difficult task," Picciotto added. "People [also] find that it controls appetite because it works on circuits in the brainstem that are important for food seeking and satiety."

Using Biology to Change Behavior

These days, Picciotto and her colleagues study how nAChRs and other receptors influence behavior using mouse models. But before she started studying live animals in the lab, Picciotto spent years focused on the nuts-and-bolts of biochemistry and molecular biology. A pivotal moment in her career came during

her postdoctoral fellowship at the Laboratory of Molecular Neuroscience at the Institut Pasteur in Paris. The position presented Picciotto with her first opportunity to explore rodent behavior in real time.

Picciotto and her team started out by choosing a subset of nAChRs, removing them from lab mice via genetic engineering, and observing how their absence affected the rodents' behavior. The group decided to start with a subset called "beta2 nAChRs," and their bet paid off. Without this type of nAChR, nicotine no longer acted on the mice's reward systems, and they were not motivated to seek it out.

The group concluded that these receptors are crucial to fueling the rewarding effects of nicotine in the brain. Picciotto's research, in addition to that of others in the field, eventually influenced the development of a medication designed to help people stop smoking.

Today, the Picciotto lab at Yale is dedicated to studying various types of acetylcholine receptors, including those that don't respond to nicotine, and how their activity influences behavior. She and her colleagues research how this system affects mental health and addiction using mouse models. Their fundamental goal is to understand basic neurological functions which will ideally translate to the human brain, too, said Kristen Kim, a PhD student who works in the Picciotto lab.

The hope is "that we can gain a better understanding of underlying mechanisms through rodents, then use that knowledge to provide more effective treatments and therapies for people," Kim added.

Nicotine patches and gums, for example, work by providing the body with a steady but minimal stream of the drug. This consistent supply keeps nAChRs in a stable, desensitized state, which helps people who use them avoid symptoms of withdrawal.

"They keep the receptors occupied, but they don't give the initial rush and bolus [of nicotine] that a cigarette gives," Lester explained.

Demystifying Nicotine

Unlike other recreational drugs, nicotine is

Marina Picciotto (fourth from right) and her lab at Yale University.

fairly unique in both how ingrained into public life it is and how relatively mild its effects are. People can openly use it while going about their days, and its use isn't accompanied by an "overwhelming feeling of pleasure," Picciotto noted. Nicotine's ability to act on multiple brain systems is both why it's widely used and abused by people, and why it's such an intriguing molecule to study, she added.

In future research, Picciotto intends to explore nicotine's role as a reward enhancer. Rather than simply acting as a "bomb of reward," she said, using it can also make daily experiences feel even more enjoyable.

If you have experience with smoking, you know …it has changed how you perceive, how you feel, how you behave, and how you act.

Marina Picciotto, Yale School of Medicine

"That's why people smoke after a meal. It makes the meal feel better," Picciotto said. "They smoke when they're drinking, it makes the alcohol feel better. They smoke when they're with friends, and it makes that social interaction feel better."

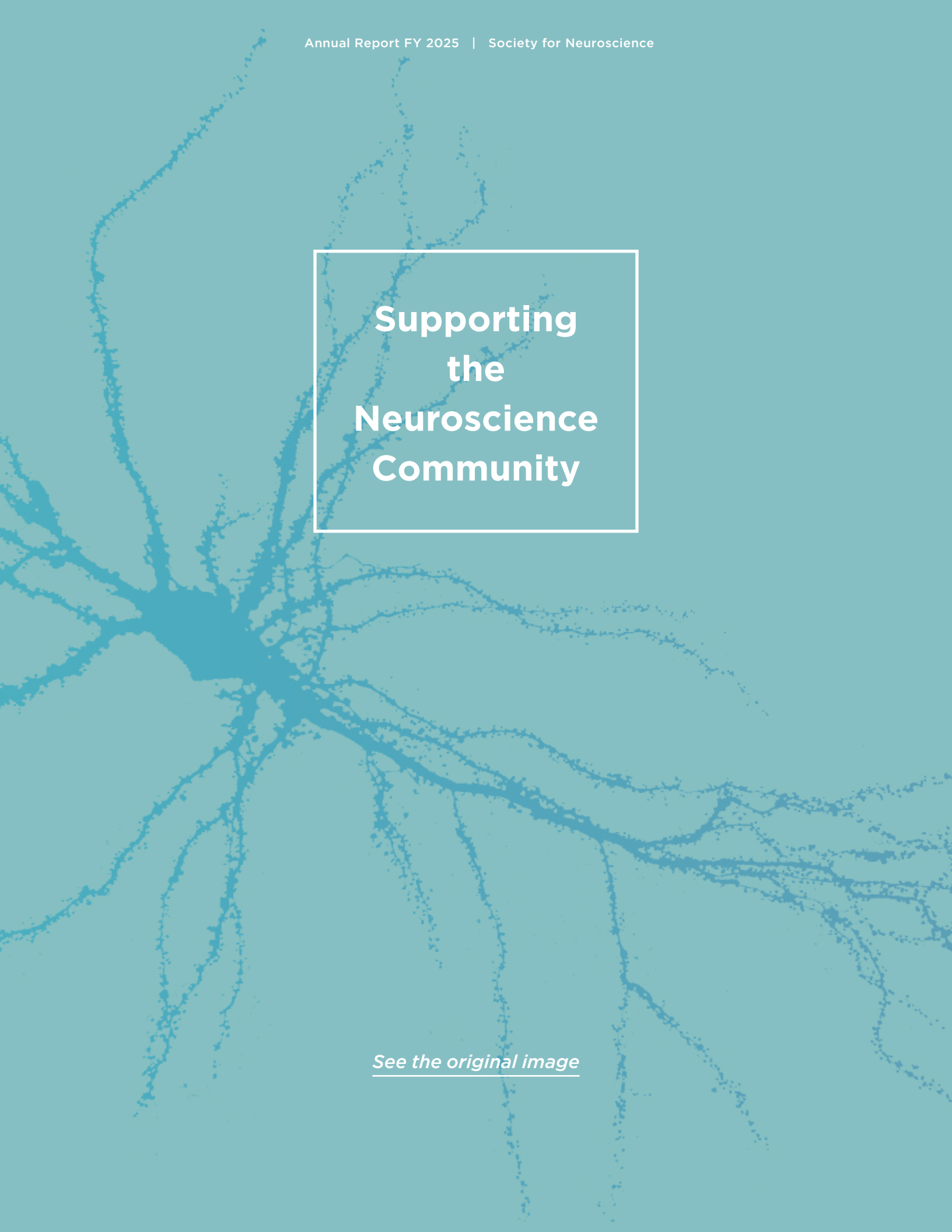
Kim shares Picciotto's intrigue with how the brain's cellular mechanisms influence big-picture outcomes like mental health and especially substance use disorders. Nicotine initially drew her attention because its use is so common and because, unlike drugs such as opioids or stimulants, dependence on it isn't necessarily associated with catastrophic outcomes.

But this doesn't mean nicotine use comes without risk. Kim noted the consequences of chronic nicotine use and its accompanying physical dependence can happen to people without their conscious realization. "It kind of creeps up on you sometimes," she said.

Kim also pointed out most research into the effects of nicotine-based drugs has so far focused on traditional tobacco products rather than newer devices like e-cigarettes. Consequently, experts don't yet know how or whether years or even decades of vaping could affect people's health. She's concerned federal cuts to research grants and threats to defund colleges and universities could hamper this type of research. Kim noted these cuts could also affect basic neuroscience research efforts, which would otherwise inform interventions like new medical treatments or public health messaging.

"Unless we have the funding to be able to understand how these different [drugs, substances, or disorders] function, [and] what is going wrong at a basic cellular [and] molecular level, we aren't going to have the understanding to be able to protect future generations from things that could be extremely harmful," Kim warned.

Supporting the Neuroscience Community



See the original image

Expanding Membership Access and Support

As the definition of "neuroscientist" evolves, SfN continues to ensure everyone is welcome in the Society and has access to resources to succeed.

A Society for All

SfN Council and the SfN membership voted overwhelmingly in favor of updates to SfN's governing documents, enabling the Society to make foundational changes to its membership structure. The expanded definition of who can be an SfN member changes it from an individual who "has done research relating to the neurosciences" to one who has "a professional or academic background related to neuroscience." Additionally, sustaining associate membership (SAM) and institutional program (IP) membership are codified in SfN's Bylaws as membership categories.

Neuronline is a huge and important part of the Society because it offers more personal ways to interact with SfN members. From articles, forums, and webinars, we learn about how others interact with neuroscience and build their careers.

Hugo Sánchez Castillo, Professor, National University of Mexico

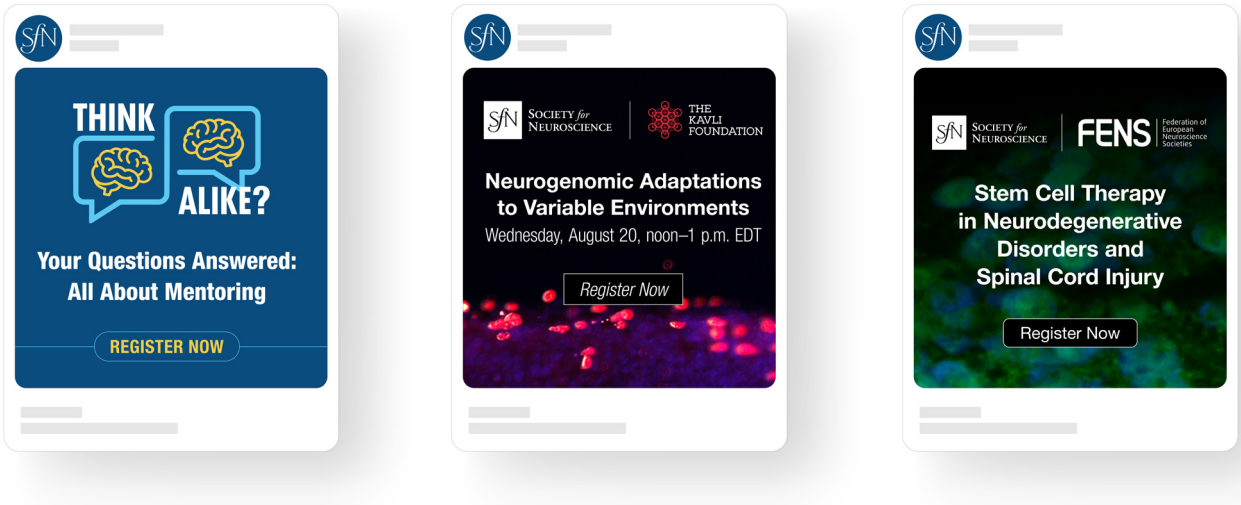
Virtual Engagement: Innovation at Scale

Neuronline, SfN's hub for learning and engagement, continued to offer rich virtual programming throughout the year.

Neuroscience 2024 marked the launch of the newly conceived Leadership Skills Development Program — a pilot initiative developed in partnership with the Grass Foundation. Designed to support early career researchers in building non-scientific skills, the program began with a workshop at the annual meeting and continued in 2025 with a series of three webinars on communication, management, and cultural awareness.

Other virtual event highlights included SfN's annual webinar with the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), which focused on stem cell therapies and became one of the most-attended sessions of the year. Additionally, in January 2025, SfN began a collaboration with The Kavli Foundation to present a four-part webinar series exploring neurobiology and changing ecosystems.

Outside of webinars, written content, including Your Roadmap to PhD, was popular on Neuronline. SfN also launched a new podcast called Think Alike? with episodes featuring candid conversations between mentors and mentees sharing personal stories, insights, and strategies for success at every career stage.



SfN's virtual programming offers content for everyone in the neuroscience community.

Investing in Trainees: Supporting the Next Generation

SfN's support for trainees remains unwavering. In 2024, the Neuroscience Scholars Program (NSP) received a full renewal of its grant for the requested five-year term, extending the program's impact beyond four decades of continuous support. Although under the current U.S. administration ongoing legal questions keep funding for initiatives like NSP in limbo, online programming and mentorship resources remain active to support existing scholars. SfN's values have not changed, even as the Society must comply with federal policies.

The Trainee Professional Development Award (TPDA) program had its largest fundraising success to date through the Friends of SfN Fund campaign and organizational donors, raising $560,100. This year's awards supported 445 recipients and welcomed the largest number of international recipients in program history. Friends of SfN Fund donors contributed a total of $73,500, nearly double the amount donated the previous year. Like individual donors, organizational donors were numerous. The BrightFocus Foundation, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, and Gatsby Charitable Foundation each donated $25,000 to the TPDA program. Other organizational donors included the Tianqiao and Chrissy Chen Institute, Developmental Studies Hybridoma Bank, Rainwater Charitable Foundation, and Science Translational Medicine/AAAS. SfN also received contributions to the TPDA program from the James L. Roberts, John I. Simpson, and Nancy Rutledge Zahniser endowments. SfN Council matched all Friends of SfN donations, all endowment contributions, and all donations of $25,000 and higher.

In-Person Connections

Neuroscience 2024 featured a vibrant program of in-person professional development opportunities. Back for its second year, six Ask Anything panels offered candid conversations between attendees and leaders in fields such as entrepreneurship and dementia research. The Responsible Conduct of Research short course on the topic of responsible use of AI in neuroscience research and education sold out. Professional development workshops rounded out the program, covering topics from science writing to founding a startup.

Science in Progress

See the original image

Tackling Alzheimer's From Bench to Bedside With Takeshi Iwatsubo

Takeshi Iwatsubo's multi-decade career has spanned the benchwork of basic neuroscience to patient-focused neurology to overseeing clinical trials evaluating new Alzheimer's disease treatments.

Alzheimer's disease researchers are in a race against time to improve outcomes for patients. Around 60 million people across the globe currently have dementia, of which Alzheimer's is the most common cause. In the coming decades, cases of the disease are projected to balloon, especially in countries with aging populations. But major breakthroughs in recent years have led to novel therapies developed to target the disease, new ways to diagnose it, and clearer understandings of how it plays out in the brain.

"Particularly in the last two decades, the acceleration has been tremendous," said Eric McDade, a neurologist and researcher at Washington University in St. Louis.

Few experts in this field have directly or indirectly touched the lives of so many patients as Takeshi Iwatsubo, a professor of neuropathology at the University of Tokyo Graduate School of Medicine and director of Japan's National Institute of Neuroscience and the National Center for Neurology and Psychiatry. A neurologist by training, Iwatsubo's career has straddled the worlds of basic neuroscience in the lab and real-world clinical trials.

[Patients] have the hope not for the perfect cure, but the slowdown of the progression. So that is impressive — remarkable.

Takeshi Iwatsubo, University of Tokyo Graduate School of Medicine

Iwatsubo played a pivotal role in clinical trials evaluating first-of-their-kind therapeutics that slow disease progression in patients with Alzheimer's.

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Iwatsubo played a pivotal role in trials evaluating first-of-their-kind therapeutics that slow Alzheimer's progression by targeting toxic protein buildup associated with the disease. These drugs mark the dawn of a new era of Alzheimer's care, but the work is far from complete. People across the world face limited access to these therapeutics, and researchers are continuing to search for treatments that could completely stop or reverse patients' symptoms.

Still, after decades of experience in multiple facets of the field, Iwatsubo emphasizes how groundbreaking this development is for patients and providers. Now, "they have the hope not for the perfect cure, but the slowdown of the progression," Iwatsubo said. "So that is impressive — remarkable."

Game-Changing Therapeutics

Alzheimer's disease is characterized by the toxic buildup of two proteins in the brain — amyloid beta and tau. Researchers suspect amyloid beta accumulation, which is toxic to neurons, marks the earliest stages of the disease. As it progresses, Iwatsubo explained, growing tau deposits between cells eventually serve as a secondary catalyst of the neuronal death that fuels cognitive decline.

"Amyloid beta may be the driver as well as the upstream trigger of the neurodegenerative process," Iwatsubo said. "And tau may be more like a driver, so it accelerates the neurodegeneration."

The two therapeutics available to patients today — donanemab and lecanemab — work by removing built-up amyloid deposits in the brain. The drugs don't cure Alzheimer's, but they can reduce the speed of symptom progression by 30%. Ongoing trials are evaluating drugs that target tau accumulation, too. One day, patients could have access to a combination of therapies targeting amyloid beta and tau to further stymie Alzheimer's progression.

10
MILLION

New dementia cases every year

one new case every three seconds

60
MILLION

Around 60 million across the globe currently have dementia

60–70% of dementia cases are Alzheimer's disease

Now, Iwatsubo is setting up a patient registry in Japan to evaluate anti-amyloid drugs' real-world efficacy and safety by collecting data from people taking them. Sister programs in the United States and Europe will also collect this information. This collaboration allows participating nations to benefit from a massive dataset, paving the way for robust analysis of their combined findings.

Identifying Biomarkers

By and large, Alzheimer's researchers envision a future where the root causes of the disease can be pharmacologically nipped in

the bud. Amyloid beta builds up in the brain for decades before patients begin to demonstrate noticeable symptoms such as memory loss. The hope is patients could one day take drugs to reduce amyloid levels, or even tau levels, before they experience mass, irreversible neuron degeneration.

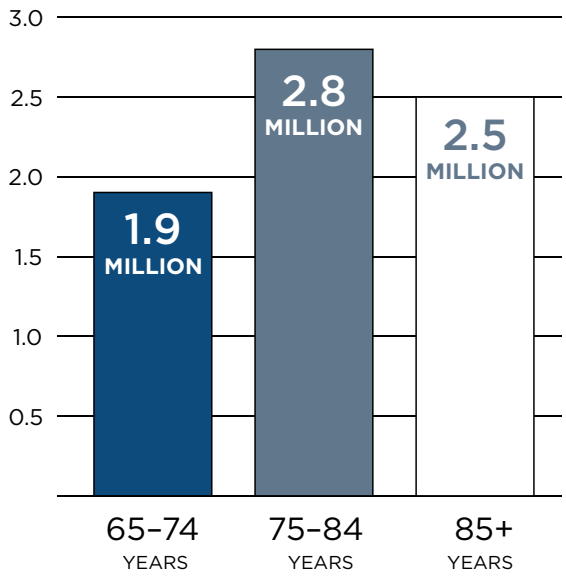
"I think all of us in the field think that eventually with Alzheimer's disease, it'll be like a lot of other chronic diseases that you have multiple therapies that you need to treat the different aspects of it," McDade said.

But before patients can gain access to therapeutics, they must first receive a diagnosis. Early Alzheimer's detection hinges on the development of biomarkers, or molecular indicators of the disease.

Chihiro Sato, an assistant professor of neurology also based at Washington University in St. Louis, studies tau pathology in Alzheimer's and other diseases. Her goal is to evaluate how the protein can be used as an indicator of where patients are in their disease progression and in clinical trials to measure the efficacy of new therapeutics.

Today, physicians typically diagnose Alzheimer's disease by using a PET scan or a spinal tap to confirm amyloid beta buildup in patients' brains. But these pricey diagnostic tests can be difficult for many patients to access. In May 2025, the FDA approved the first blood test designed to flag this protein, a comparatively cheaper and faster approach. Scientists hope future tests like this one could help ease the diagnosis process for patients while also helping providers catch the disease as early as possible.

Number and ages of people 65 or older in the U.S. with Alzheimer's dementia, 2025



Early detection is also key to getting existing therapeutics into patients' hands while they're still effective at slowing the disease. "Amyloid-beta targeted therapies are more effective for people at the earlier stage," Sato said. "And if you go way beyond, then this amyloid therapy doesn't work because amyloid has already built up and killed neurons, and you can't beat a dead horse." In an ideal world, she added, people would have access to simple Alzheimer's screenings to catch biomarkers before they've done significant damage to the brain.

Where Does Alzheimer's Research Go From Here?

Sato worked in Iwatsubo's lab at the University of Tokyo while pursuing her master's degree

More than 9 in 10 Americans would want to undergo a simple test, e.g., a blood-based biomarker test, to detect Alzheimer's disease if it were available.

Alzheimer's Association. 2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.

and PhD, where she was drawn to the "bench to bedside" nature of his work. As she pursues basic neuroscience research in her own lab, she remains attuned to how discoveries like hers will affect "people and families" who are suffering due to Alzheimer's.

"Dr. Iwatsubo is legendary. I don't think anybody [else] can be like him [in the future of Alzheimer's research]," Sato said. "He has been in this very dramatic period where many key discoveries have been made at the basic level and all the way to the clinic."

Many Alzheimer's breakthroughs were made possible by long-term, intensive research involving people with exceedingly rare, hereditary forms of the disease. A handful of families across the globe pass down genetic mutations that lead to an overproduction of particularly sticky types of amyloid beta, plus the downstream phenomenon of tau-fueled neurodegeneration, Iwatsubo explained.

These cases make up a miniscule fraction of Alzheimer's patients. For 99% of patients, he said, the root cause of their condition isn't clear. Risk factors related to people's environments, the aging process itself, and more common genetic predispositions all play a role in disease onset. But Iwatsubo noted the specific "molecular mechanisms" driving their pathology remains uncertain.

Both Iwatsubo and McDade have been involved with the Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer's Network (DIAN), an international research effort studying people with highly rare forms of the disease. Networks like these aren't possible without multi-national collaboration and funding from public and private sources. In the U.S., the Trump administration has wiped out multiple funding sources originally allocated to support a vast range of biomedical research efforts. McDade expressed alarm over what those cuts could mean for patients involved in ongoing clinical trials and for the broader message the abdication of this work could send to the rest of the world.

"I have, at this point, increasing concerns about the potential threat that this has on Alzheimer's disease research at a time when we've honestly never been more optimistic for those who are in the field and doing this research," McDade said.

Educating and Engaging the Public

See the original image

BrainFacts Inspires Curiosity and Connection

BrainFacts serves as a bridge between neuroscience and the public, highlighting scientific breakthroughs, offering resources for educators, and hosting community events.

Shining a Light on Scientific Progress

Public support for science is critical to its progress, and BrainFacts illustrates the role of neuroscience in creating healthy, vibrant communities.

Content over the past year featured brain-computer interfaces for paralysis patients, loneliness, smartphones, and more. The popular ICYMI (In Case You Missed It) series continued to round up stories that inspire awe, improve our understanding of the nervous system, and benefit people. In April, BrainFacts editorial board member Stuart Firestein wrote an insightful commentary on the uncertainty over facilities and administrative (F&A) costs in federally funded grants, giving non-scientists a glimpse into what's at stake.

Celebrating Outreach Innovation at Neuroscience 2024

At Neuroscience 2024's Brain Awareness Campaign Event (BACE), Anita Randolph of the University of Minnesota described the importance of researchers connecting with and including local communities in research priorities to both benefit the public while improving their science. BACE attendees also celebrated the winners of the annual Brain Awareness Video Contest, which had some of its most creative videos to date, including the winning entry — a rap about the blood-brain barrier (BBB).

Joshua Moses' catchy song about the BBB earned him first place in the 2024 Brain Awareness Video Contest.

Meanwhile, the BrainFacts team was busy reporting on Neuroscience 2024, producing 10 original pieces about the science being presented, keeping the site up to date and relevant to the public.

The BrainFacts book is now available in the SfN online store.

Community engagement … is now morphing into community-engaged research for the first time.

Anita Randolph, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota

Outside the convention center walls, neuroscientists gathered for the second annual BrainFacts LIVE, where this year's theme of "Alien Intelligences" covered the timely topic of artificial intelligence and the ever-fascinating world of octopus cognition. This unique event, which closed with a lively session of neuroscience trivia, gave scientists and locals the opportunity to explore the world of neuroscience in a casual setting.

Expanding Access to Neuroscience Learning

For Brain Awareness Week, BrainFacts' social media followers enjoyed daily neuroanatomy flashcards, simple digital interactives with miniature lessons about the brain. BrainFacts officially launched its Bluesky account and spearheaded new video-based educational content on Instagram to further its reach across the digital world.

BrainFacts also celebrated Brain Awareness Week in the classroom, delivering dozens of BrainFacts books to teachers throughout the Washington, D.C., area. The BrainFacts book has become a central component of many secondary school neuroscience curricula, and in response to educator demand, it's been made available in the SfN online store for the cost of shipping.

In the fall, BrainFacts built connections with hundreds of teachers from across the U.S. at the National Association of Biology Teachers in Denver. In the spring, BrainFacts teamed up with Linda Gorman, teaching professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins University, to host a workshop at the National Science Teachers Association in Philadelphia. Additionally, BrainFacts continued to add free educator resources to the website, helping teachers around the world keep their lesson plans fresh and fun. BrainFacts' work is funded in part through the Dana Foundation in its role as a Supporting Partner.

Science in Progress

See the original image

The "Blooming" Field of Neuroarts

Neuroscientists studying how aesthetic experiences change our brains are melding science and the arts.

Last October, in a darkened presentation hall, nearly 6,000 neuroscientists hummed, snapped, and sang as improvisational singer Davin Youngs and his colleagues led them to create harmony from the initial cacophony. This musical interlude highlighted the power of the arts to alter our brains and behavior.

For Youngs' group, leading the musical improvisation activated their parasympathetic nervous systems, which released a flood of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. As the judgmental regions of the prefrontal cortex quieted, they entered a flow state — fully immersed, connected, and creatively engaged.

"So, what was happening to you?" Susan Magsamen asked her audience at the 2024 Dialogues Between Neuroscience and Society lecture. "Well, sound vibrations reached you in just three milliseconds, and your brains were also flooded with neurotransmitters. But at the same time that that was happening, you were also feeling probably a little more relaxed as cortisol levels began to lower and you were entraining to the beat of the music, activating both alpha and beta waves."

Musical performances helped bring the audience together at the 2024 Dialogues Between Neuroscience and Society lecture.

"But when you think about what was happening for all of us together, our neurons started to fire together, and we started to correlate to the rhythms and beats of the music, and we synchronized with each other," she added. "And if by some chance you felt a little awe-inspired, you're now more open and empathetic and connected to each other, which I think can only be a really wonderful thing."

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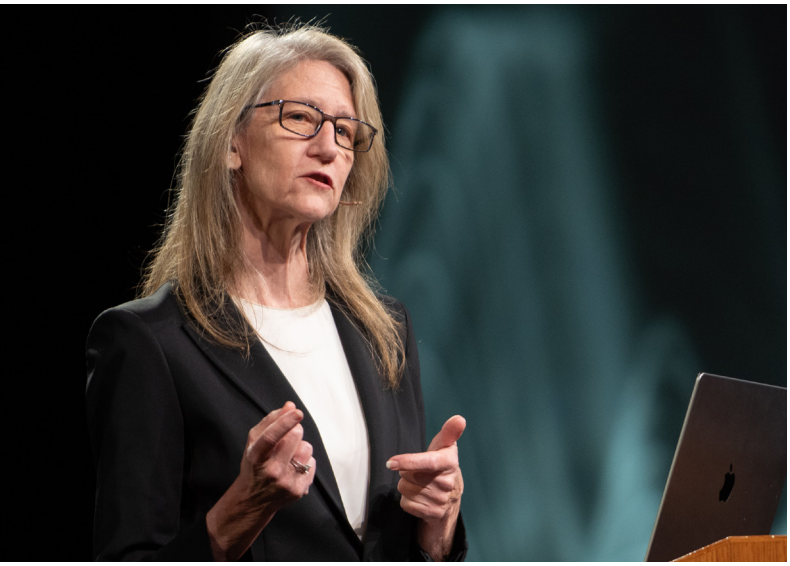
But when you think about what was happening for all of us together … we synchronized with each other.

Susan Magsamen, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, 2024 Dialogues Between Neuroscience and Society Lecturer



Susan Magsamen describes the powerful connection between the arts and the brain at Neuroscience 2024.

As the founder and executive director of the International Arts + Mind Lab (IAM Lab) at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Magsamen is leading a groundbreaking movement that explores how the arts and aesthetic experiences measurably change our brains, bodies, and behaviors.

"It's an extremely exciting time where science and the arts are coming together to prove that we are wired for the arts," Magsamen said.

For decades, research has shown how artistic endeavors such as music, painting, writing, and crafting can provide therapeutic benefits for people experiencing PTSD, depression, or anxiety. Yet, what the field has lacked is a unified, evidence-based framework to support neuroaesthetics with scientific rigor and cohesion.

The field of neuroaesthetics brings together researchers from diverse disciplines, each with distinct experimental approaches and reporting standards. To help translate neuroaesthetic findings into clinical prevention, healthcare, and wellness applications, Magsamen and her IAM Lab launched the NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative in 2019, in collaboration with the Aspen Institute's Health Medicine & Society Program. Co-directed by Magsamen and Aspen Institute Vice President Ruth Katz, the initiative is creating a community, resources, and a space for shared knowledge among researchers, clinicians, and artists.

"It is the north star to make arts in all of its forms, part of mainstream medicine, public health, and society," said Magsamen of the initiative. Modeled on a business-to-business framework, the project aims to serve the field by removing silos and integrating neuroaesthetic researchers across sectors, including the arts, technology, academia, and industry.

Magsamen credits her "maker" family with her interest in the arts. But it was an event involving her twin sister, Sandra, that truly emphasized the healing nature of creative expression. At age 12, Sandra nearly lost her leg in a farming accident and spent a year housebound, "stuck inside herself," and unable to process her trauma, Magsamen said.

Their mother encouraged Sandra to draw. The sketches gave her family insight into the

emotions she was experiencing but unable to express, inspiring Magsamen's early academic work in therapeutic recreation and the arts, and driving her ambition to bridge the arts and neuroscience today.

The NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative houses a resource center that includes a library of the latest publications in neuroaesthetic research; a directory of scientists, clinicians, and other professionals in the neuroarts field; and a continually updated list of funding opportunities. In addition, the Initiative administers the Renée Fleming Investigator Award, supporting early career investigators conducting basic and practical research in the neuroarts. Established by the Renée Fleming Foundation, the award is now in its second year and has funded nine teams.

Daniel Liu Bowling, an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral science and music at Stanford University, and his co-investigator Sarah Fogler, a board-certified music therapist and licensed creative arts therapist at the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function in Mount Vernon, New York, represent one team of the 2025 awardees. Together, they are studying self-guided, music-based interventions for depression and anxiety among people aged 12 through 29.

"Young people who are so engaged with music use it to modulate, [but] sometimes not positively," said Bowling. "There's a real opportunity to improve treatments for them, because they also tend not to respond or to not adhere to treatment or be treatment avoidant."

Bowling and Fogler are blending neuroscience and music therapy concepts to assess personalized treatments in young people with moderate to severe depression and anxiety. The work will ultimately contribute to the development of accessible and customized music therapy in mental health care.

"I'm essentially looking for foundational evidence that you can kind of combine what we know about music biologically with what we know about music therapeutically," said Bowling. "What I'd really like to see is that not only is this type of intervention feasible and desirable for this group, but it is also really effective."

Demonstrating the effectiveness of projects like those led by Bowling and Folger requires consistency in experimental methods and standardized approaches to reporting findings across the neuroarts space. The current lack of uniformity is a known issue. A 2011 review paper published in *The Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* by Anjan Chatterjee, professor of neurology, psychology, and architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, addressed the challenges of the up-and-coming discipline.

"In knowing that the pleasure of viewing a beautiful painting is correlated with activity within orbito-frontal cortex or the nucleus accumbens adds biologic texture to our understanding of the rewards of aesthetic experiences," wrote Chatterjee. "However, it is not obvious that it, by itself, advances our understanding of the psychological nature of that reward."

The NeuroArts BluePrint Initiative intends to solve this decade-old problem. "... To be able to be recognized and to be able to attract not only funders, but payers and insurance to cover some of those [art therapy] services

that science needs to be strong," said Emmeline Edwards, the former director of the Division of Extramural Research of the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) at NIH.

Before her recent retirement after 27 years of federal service, Edwards launched the Music-Based Intervention Toolkit in 2023. The kit establishes reporting guidelines for researchers to produce science through enhanced data collection.

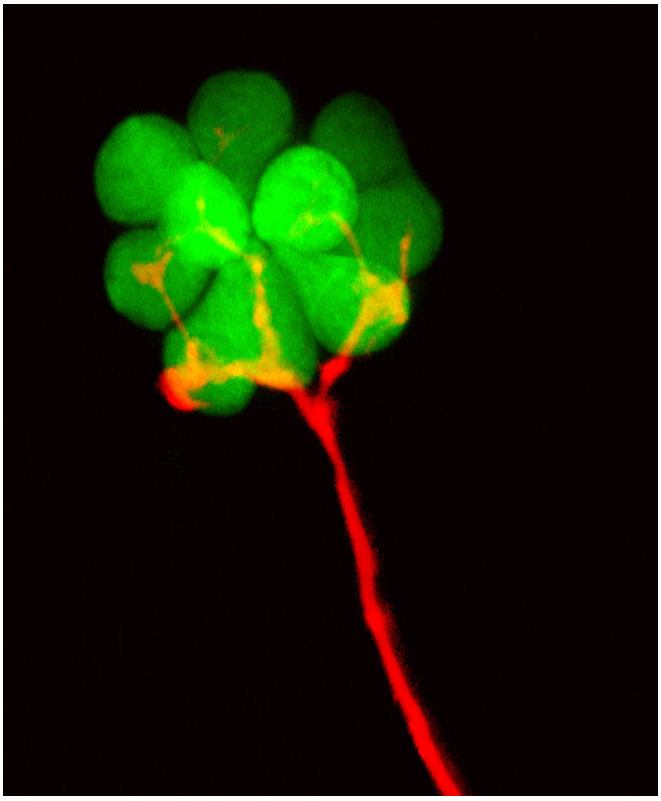
Edwards supports the NeuroArts Blueprint Initiative and will continue to work with Magsamen to set the project's agenda. "The science needs to be rigorous, and that's what we are developing with the NeuroArts Initiative," said Edwards.

As a result of NIH funding, music is the most established area of study in neuroaesthetics. For example, in 2019, NIH awarded $20 million over five years to support the first research projects in music therapy and neuroscience under a program called the Sound Health Initiative, a collaboration between NIH and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) also contributed funds.

However, executive orders issued in the first quarter of 2025 slashed NIH funds, slowing neuroarts' momentum. Today, NIH web pages for the Sound Health Initiative are no longer in service, and events like the 2025 Annual Music Research Networks Investigator Meeting, centered on sharing advances across NIH-funded music-based research networks, were postponed indefinitely in February.

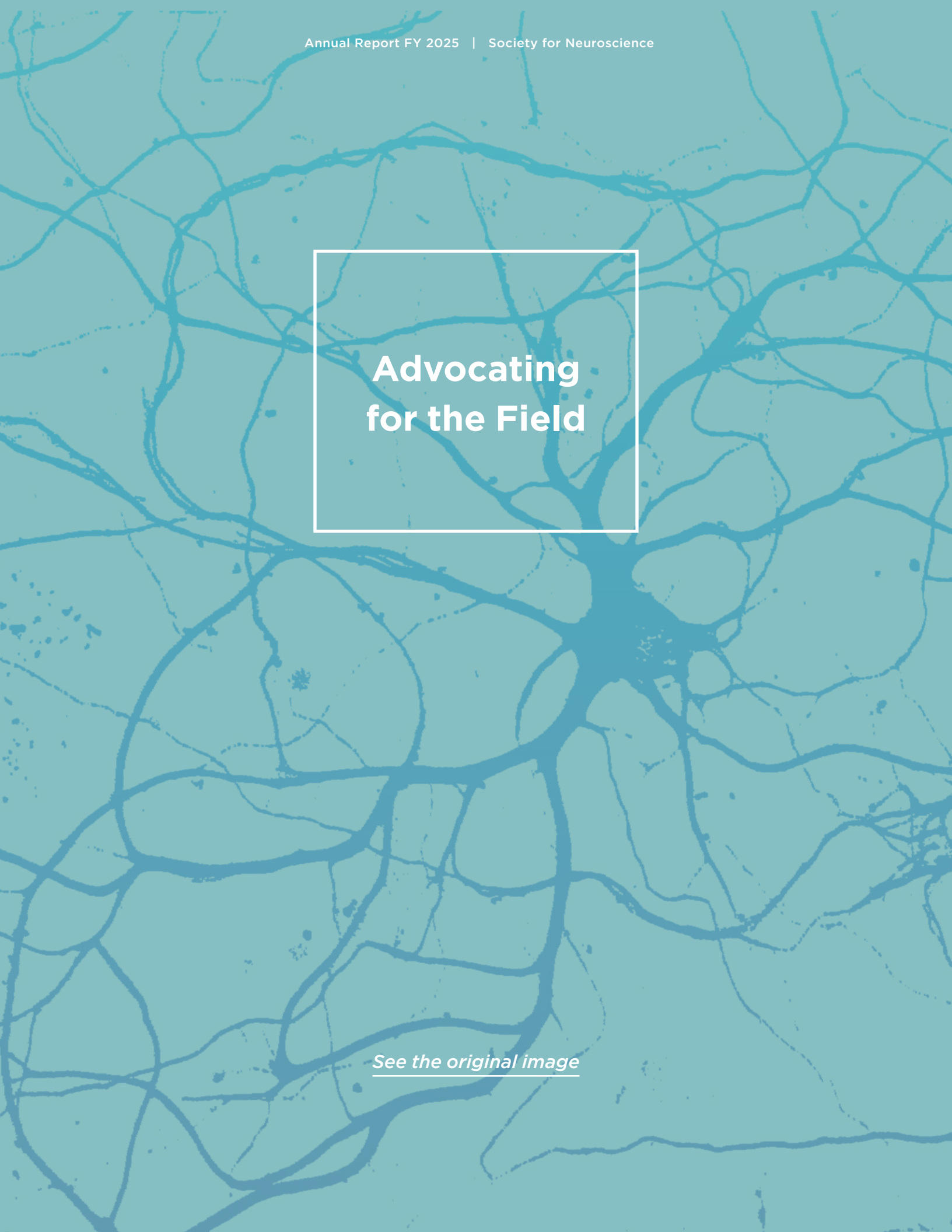
Still, the early nod from NIH legitimized neuroaesthetics as a pillar in medical research, despite the ebb and flow of federal funding. Magsamen and Edwards both expressed that neuroarts will likely turn toward philanthropy, as foundations have been supportive in the past and have signaled future support.

One thing is certain: Humans are going to create. "Flowers are blooming" in this field, Magsamen said. "Now the need is so great from the community that we are coming together, and I think we are more resolved and are more committed to the role of the arts and health and well-being today. You can cut institutions down, but you can't cut people out."



Works of art can change our brains, bodies, and behaviors.

Advocating for the Field



See the original image

NeuroAdvocates Respond to Sweeping Changes in Federal Policy

The scientific community is navigating uncertainty and confusion as a new U.S. administration ushers in unprecedented changes to federal research policy. For SfN NeuroAdvocates, the stakes have never been higher.

New U.S. Administration, New Priorities

The second Trump administration quickly signaled a stark shift in federal research priorities. Billions of dollars in government grants were frozen or canceled based on new criteria and, as a result, funding for nearly all efforts aimed at recruiting and supporting underrepresented minorities across the scientific enterprise was put in jeopardy. At the same time, the administration attempted to impose a 15% cap on facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, which would result in devastating cuts at universities and research institutes across the country. Within the federal government, thousands of employees at NIH, NSF, and other agencies pursuing and supporting science were subject to a reduction in force.

While the administration significantly interrupted federal research spending and operations for FY 2025, its proposed research budgets and associated policy changes for FY 2026 were widely viewed as catastrophic. In the President's Budget Request, NIH would have faced more than a 40% cut, which included an equally drastic downsizing of support for the BRAIN Initiative. NSF had a proposed budget of $3.9 billion, more than a 50% reduction from FY 2025.

Fortunately, Congress has indicated that it has a different plan in mind. Before going on its August recess, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a funding bill that protected NIH funding and rejected the administration's effort to cap F&A costs at 15%. In short, the Senate proposed a $400 million increase to the NIH base budget in FY 2026, with an accompanying $12 million increase to the BRAIN Initiative.

NeuroAdvocates Act in a Broad Coalition

Even before the inauguration of the second Trump administration, SfN NeuroAdvocates mobilized to strengthen relationships and defend the neuroscience community's interests. Following the 2024 presidential election, SfN hosted its first-ever fall Hill Day, gather-

When federal funding is inconsistent or politicized, we lose not just potential cures or inventions — we lose time, talent, and opportunity.

Nicole D'Souza, Research Fellow, University of California, Riverside

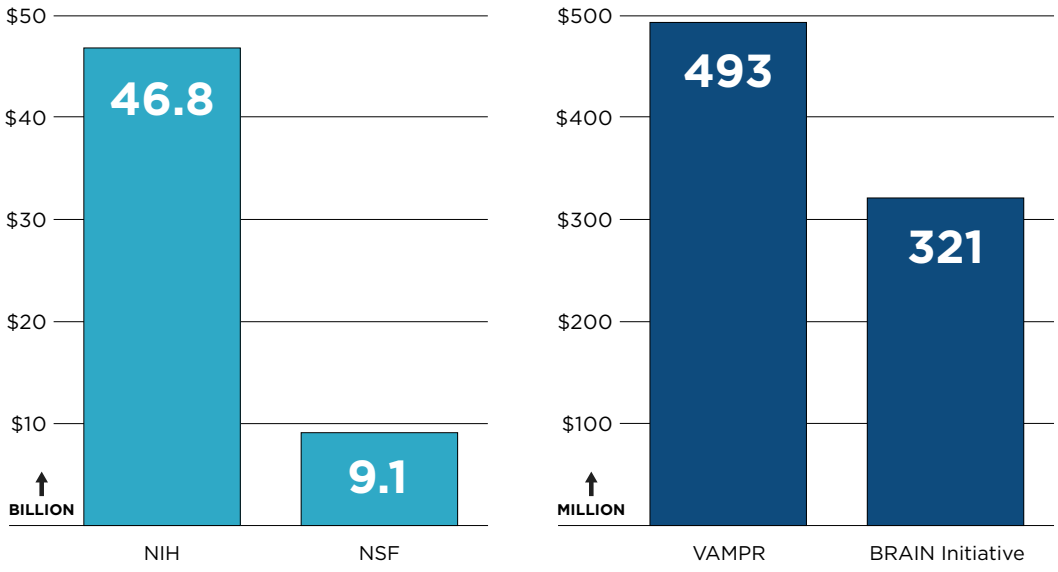
ing 14 participants representing SfN volunteer leadership. In 13 different meetings, these SfN leaders spoke with their congressional offices to encourage additional funding for the BRAIN Initiative and push back on legislative efforts to limit the use of animals in Veterans Affairs (VA) supported research programs.

In January, a record number of members applied for SfN's Early Career Policy Ambassadors (ECPA) program, which includes a 10-month training program and participation in SfN's Hill Days each spring. During the 19th annual spring Hill Days, 49 advocates met with 57 congressional offices across 29 states to urge Congress to support robust funding for neuroscience research in FY 2026, the ethical and responsible use of animals in research across federal agencies, and a plea for help to mitigate and halt the administration's destabilizing activities affecting the research enterprise.

As the destabilizing changes in federal research policy spread through the community, SfN members responded energetically. Participation in SfN action alerts — email appeals calling on NeuroAdvocates to contact their member of Congress about a specific issue — surged. Many neuroscientists wrote op eds to their local papers, and some were interviewed by national outlets about the disruption to scientific progress. SfN developed numerous toolkits and resources to help anyone speak out about the disruptive federal policy changes and the harm being done to scientists, patients, communities, and scientific discovery.

Fortunately, the neuroscience community is not alone in pushing back against the administration's efforts. SfN is an active member of multiple coalitions representing the diverse stakeholders that make up the U.S. biomedical research enterprise. International partners, including the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN), the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), and the SfN Mexico City chapter, all have Memoranda of

Neuroscience-Funding Agencies FY 2025



Understanding in place with SfN to support advocacy initiatives.

These joint efforts have led to some early results. Representative Mike Thompson (D-CA) visited constituent and SfN President John H. Morrison at his lab in the National Primate Research Center. A staff member from Senator John Fetterman's office (D-PA) visited former ECPA Elena Kozina's PhD lab at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. And Neuroscience Caucus co-chair Morgan Luttrell (R-TX) gave a speech on the House floor during Brain Awareness Week and acknowledged the work done by SfN and researchers funded by the BRAIN Initiative.

SfN's recent advocacy actions in response to the administration, alone and with coalition partners, are gathered in one location for members.

Animal Research Setbacks

Animal research policy has also seen significant developments. Restrictions on Department of Defense and VA research involving animals have raised concerns about the future of translational neuroscience. Meanwhile, the FDA has announced a shift away from animal testing for some safety studies. SfN works closely with the National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR), Americans for Medical Progress (AMP), and other animal research-focused organizations to defend the use of animals where scientifically justified.

Top: Director of the BRAIN Initiative John Ngai, Congressman Morgan Luttrell, and SfN Past-President Oswald Steward meet during an SfN Hill Day. Middle: SfN President John H. Morrison and Congressman Mike Thompson discuss primate research. Bottom: Thompson examines a tissue sample in Morrison's lab.

Financial and Organizational Highlights

See the original image

Maintaining Financial Stability

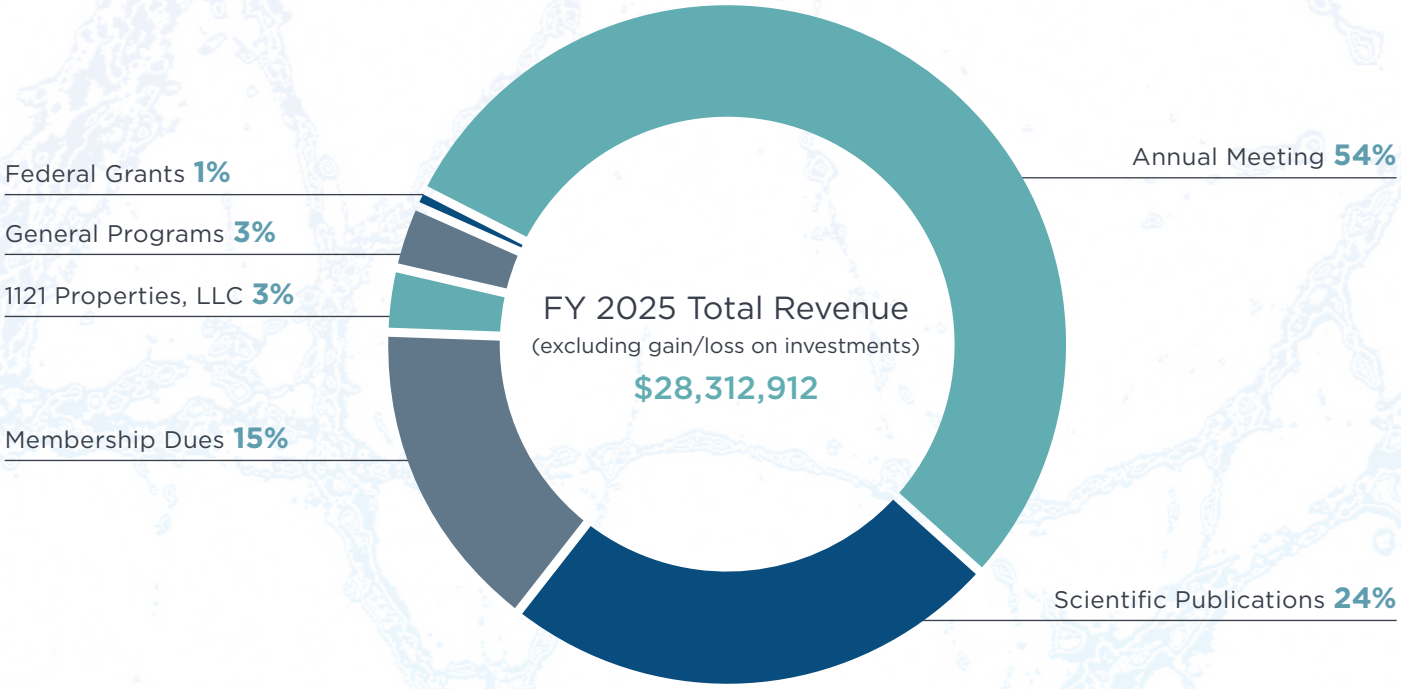
SfN finished the fiscal year with a strong financial foundation, despite a modest membership decline, thanks to robust annual meeting attendance and consistent journals revenue. The Society's strong financial foundation will enable SfN to weather potential consequences stemming from uncertain federal science funding.

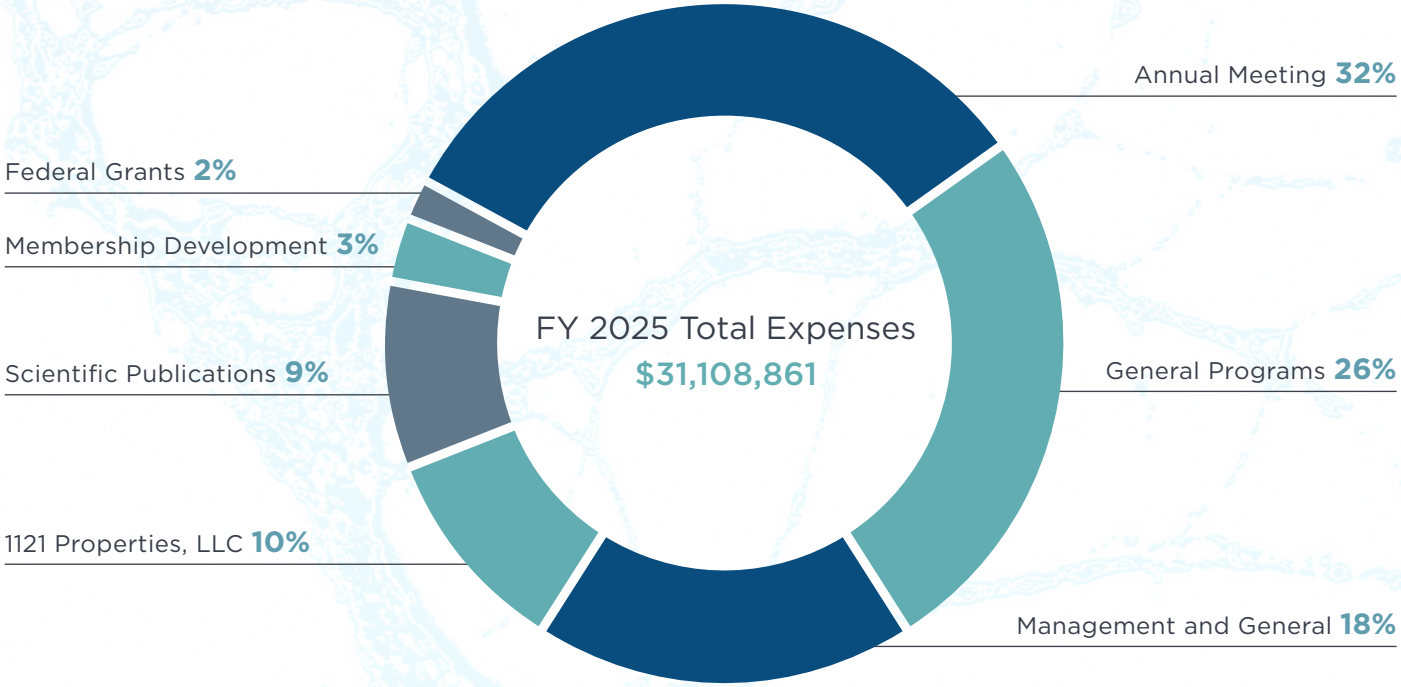
Neuroscience 2024, while still below pre-Covid attendance levels, welcomed more than 22,000 attendees. The introduction of late-breaking abstracts contributed to the breadth of science presented at the meeting, while strong attendance numbers and exhibitor and sponsor participation ensured the meeting was a financial success. Additionally, insurance negotiations related to the 2020 and 2021 annual meetings concluded. SfN's journals, *JNeurosci* and *eNeuro*, continue to serve as a dependable revenue stream. Membership trends remain in flux in the post-pandemic era. In considering who SfN serves as members, SfN's Council initiated, and the full SfN membership approved, an expansion of membership eligibility aiming to better reflect the evolving neuroscience community and attract a broader base of members. SfN owns its headquarters building in Washington, D.C., which continues to face leasing pressures post-Covid due to challenges in the city's real estate leasing market.

SfN's Strategic Reserve Fund continued to be carefully balanced to withstand the swings of the market and provide SfN with the ability to draw $2.5 million annually, which supports SfN's current programming. The long-term goal of the Strategic Reserve Fund is to ensure that SfN is able to weather unforeseen circumstances, as it did during the pandemic.

New partnerships have contributed to SfN's financial health. The Society received a $25,000 grant from the American Brain Foundation (ABF) to support the Trainee Professional Development Award (TPDA) program. Additionally, the Science Educator Award found a new sponsor in the Allen Institute, a long-time SfN collaborator. The Society also received a $50,000 grant from the Grass Foundation to support a new Leadership Skills Development training program, and a $25,000 contribution from The Kavli Foundation to support a new webinar series exploring neurobiology and changing ecosystems. SfN also attracted new sponsors to its annual meeting, including Ncardia, Nxera Pharma, Abbott, and the Pershing Square Foundation.

While no major capital investments were made this year, the Society is planning to adopt a new content management system (CMS) within the next 18 months to enhance its digital capabilities. SfN staff are embracing new technologies, including artificial intelligence tools, to streamline workflows and better serve members. Finally, SfN is undergoing a leadership transition as its longtime Executive Director Marty Saggese steps down in January 2026. A search committee has been appointed, and the Society anticipates a seamless transition with a new leader in place by the start of the new year.





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The Society for Neuroscience gratefully acknowledges the generous contributions from the following organizations and individuals in FY 2025 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025). Donations to the Friends of SfN Fund support the Society's mission of advancing the understanding of the brain and nervous system.

Visit SfN.org/Support-SfN or contact development@sfn.org to learn more about the Fund and becoming a donor.

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The SfN Council gratefully acknowledges the following organizations and individuals who contributed support to or sponsored SfN's programs, events, and awards in FY 2025, including Neuroscience 2024.

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