

## @UlowaNeuro Notes

September 2022

Last week Iowa neuroscientists had an amazing opportunity to participate in a world-class small meeting right here in our backyard. Many thanks to our colleagues **Sheila Baker, Andy Frank, Josh Weiner, and Sam Young** together with our stellar INI admin team of **Meghan Lawler and Sam Wasson**, for a truly stimulating INI Workshop focused on Synapses.

We conceived of INI Workshops as a way to build community around areas of strength in neuroscience research at the UI. We opened with “The Cerebellum in Bipolar Disorder” in 2018, followed by “Neuromodulation” in 2019. We were set to continue the success of those first two events with our Synapse Workshop in 2020. But the pandemic had other ideas.

This team never gave up though. They remained committed to an in-person meeting, and it was well worth the two-year wait. Our guest speakers were also willing to wait, with 16 top scientists traveling from around the country and the world to attend. Our impressive slate of speakers was even more notable for the gender and ethnic diversity represented. This was intentional on the part of our planning committee and reflects our INI commitment to inclusion.



We heard comments from the speakers and other attendees about what a great research community we have at Iowa and how fortunate we are to have colleagues who work so well together. Several noted that it was their first visit to Iowa but they hoped it would not be their last. This is what we want to hear!



In addition to building a world-class scientific program and showcasing the thriving neuroscience community supported by the INI, we sought to provide networking opportunities for our trainees and faculty members. Our poster session along with social events including a bowling outing at SpareMe created space for informal conversations about the work that excites our students and postdocs. Based on their poster abstracts, three UI trainees were selected to present their work in the formal sessions: [Bill Milanick](#), neuroscience graduate program (Young lab); [Bhagaban Mallik](#), postdoctoral fellow, Dept of Anatomy and Cell Biology (Frank Lab); [Genesis Omana Suarez](#), (*left*) post-bac (Tomchik Lab.)

The Synapse Workshop speakers touched upon topics of interest to many members of the Iowa neuroscience community, including fundamentals of synaptic transmission, forms of synaptic plasticity, axon maintenance, the cell biology of the neuron, and translational neuroscience. It was exciting to hear about research into central questions in synapse biology leading to novel therapeutics for diseases of the brain and nervous system. I am eager to see what new opportunities and collaborations arise from this great event. I think we can look forward to novel ideas and innovative techniques arising from discussions that started last week.

The pandemic delay pushed the Synapse Workshop into the year of the fifth anniversary of the INI. I can't think of a better way to celebrate this milestone than with a robust scientific meeting that highlights our strengths and helps us to build for the future.

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