

Program in Neuroscience

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Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system; this study is broad and includes investigations of the development, anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, research of cognitive and behavioral processes, and the application of mathematics and computer science to understand and model neurological function. One major goal of Neuroscience research is to understand how the nervous system forms and functions so that treatments and cures can be developed for neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, depression, drug addiction and spinal cord injury. Neuroscience research also strives to understand cognitive processes and apply this understanding to the industrial and policy arenas. The Neuroscience Graduate Program integrates across many traditional disciplines to provide training in neurobiology, cognitive neuroscience, and computational neuroscience. Graduates of the program may enter careers in academics, biomedical or technical industry, or scientific communications.

Ongoing neuroscience projects produce a stimulating environment for graduate research. These projects include areas such as: nervous system development, anatomy, and physiology, neurobiology of aging, vertebrate and invertebrate behavior, neurochemistry, visual and auditory psychophysics, linguistics, spatial cognition, computational modeling, neural computing and artificial intelligence.

Admission to graduate programs in the department is based upon an estimate of probable success in work leading to a specific degree. The Graduate Record Examination (aptitude only) is required of all applicants.

Prospective students, or students desiring more information, may write or email (neuro@uidaho.edu) the Program Director or the College of Graduate Studies.

Graduate Degree Programs

Candidates must fulfill the requirements of the College of Graduate Studies and of the Graduate Program in Neuroscience. See the College of Graduate Studies section of part 4 for the general requirements applicable to each degree.

The University of Idaho offers M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Neuroscience. The Neuroscience Program is offered on-campus in Moscow at the University of Idaho, and is administered by the College of Graduate Studies. A degree in Neuroscience requires coursework in neurobiology, cognitive neuroscience, and computational neuroscience, and original research experience in one of these areas. One goal of the program is to foster a broad, yet quantitative approach to neuroscience.

The Neuroscience Program is highly interdisciplinary. It requires students and faculty to bridge biological, computational and behavioral disciplines. Neuroscience faculty are drawn from eleven departments and programs in primarily three colleges (College of Science; College of Letters, Arts and Social Science; and College of Engineering). These faculty members are available to serve as major professors for Neuroscience graduate students, and on Neuroscience graduate student committees.

A Neuroscience degree from the University of Idaho is distinct in that the graduate can approach and describe the study of neuroscience from a variety of perspectives, and apply this broad understanding to address the important problems in neuroscience research that require an interdisciplinary approach.

Course and Credit Requirements

Incoming students admitted with background deficiencies will take background courses. For example, biology majors will little knowledge of computation will take at least one background course in computer science. The specific required background courses will be determined by each student's graduate committee with the approval of the program director. Note that credits from courses numbered 300 and below do not count toward the Neuroscience degree requirements, though they may be required to fulfill deficiencies.

The core courses form a central, shared educational experience for all Neuroscience students. These courses will enable them to share a common language, and to discuss problems from multiple disciplinary points of view. This shared experience will also give Neuroscience students a sense of identity and community, which will encourage them to help each other overcome cultural and terminological differences that may make such interdisciplinary interactions challenging. Core courses include those in neurobiology, cognitive neuroscience, computational neuroscience, methods and statistics, and scientific ethics. The neurobiology course is a core course shared by the Neuroscience graduate program at Washington State University (WSU). This practice fosters interactions between our two programs and promotes collaborative activities. M.S. students will also enroll in at least three credits, and Ph.D. students in seven credits, of Topics in Neuroscience. Topics in Neuroscience is a seminar course that includes presentation of the literature by graduate students, as well as informal seminars and discussions led by invited speakers. These seminars bring experts from around the world to campus, where they can interact with Neuroscience students and faculty.

Ph.D. students also have the option of pursuing 1-3 research rotations. Research rotations in neurobiology, computational neuroscience or cognitive and behavioral neuroscience provide practical experience in research questions and methods outside the major emphasis area of the student.

The elective courses provide more detailed knowledge of Neuroscience, and provide the depth needed to support graduate research. The list of elective courses will evolve with the research interests of the Neuroscience faculty participants. The M.S. will require at least four elective credits and the Ph.D. will require at least 25. Other courses may be required as determined by the student's committee and with approval of the program director. Please see the listing of current core and elective courses on our web page www.grad.uidaho.edu/neuro/.

The M.S. requires a minimum 32 credits and the Ph.D. requires a minimum 78 credits. The Neuroscience program assumes the usual graduate full time load of at least nine credits per semester.

Admissions Requirements and Procedures

Admission to this program is highly competitive and recruitment is international in scope. Even exceptional applicants are admitted only when there is an opening with one of the participating faculty. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required of all applicants; successful applicants must have a total score of at least 1700 (in the old system: quant+verbal+analytical) or 1200+4 (in the new system). All applicants must provide three letters of reference that speak to the applicant's aptitude for graduate research. For applicants for whom English is a second language, a TOEFL score of at least 600 or its equivalent (CBT 250 or IBT 100) is required. Successful applicants must also have at least a 3.0 undergraduate GPA. In exceptional circumstances, these requirements may be adjusted. Applicant must provide a statement of research interests that clearly identifies the research he or she would like to pursue at the University of Idaho.

To apply: Please go to the University of Idaho Graduate Admissions webpage at www.students.uidaho.edu/gradadmissions or contact the Graduate Admissions Office, University of Idaho, P.O. Box 444266, Moscow, ID 83844-4266.