

## Neuroscience Survival Manual

Revised: December 2008

Originally prepared by NSP Graduate Student Council and NSP student mentor  
Dr. Cynthia Jordan

Edited for the web by Adriana Feldpausch, NSP Graduate Student Affairs Administrator, and Molly Ryan, NSP webmaster

### Things to do immediately:

- Obtain a student MSU ID at the Administration Building (next to main library)
- Memorize your student number and PAN.
- Register email account (mail.msu.edu) ASAP.

This will allow you computer access campus wide. Find out how to access your MSU email account from campus and home. If you are computer shy, register for a free class at the library. (If access to computers/printers is difficult in your lab, then find the computer labs located at various sites on campus (<http://computerlabs.msu.edu>); there are also computers/printers available in the libraries (main library and new Biomedical and Physical Sciences branch library)

- As a first year student, you must be approved by AUCAUC for your project before collecting data for vertebrate animals. If your project involves more than one grant then you need approval from AUCAUC for all grants you are using.
- See Adriana to fill in forms and get on the payroll. (feldpa15@msu.edu, 108 Giltner Hall)
- Get parking pass. Take appointment papers with you to Dept. of Public Safety (SW corner of Wilson Rd. & Red Cedar Rd.), along with your MSU ID, and check or cash.
- Establish a bank account (MSU federal credit union is popular). Arrange to have direct deposit of your paycheck.
- Obtain a MI driver's license. The Secretary of State is located under the hamster run (Habitrail), the colorful parking structure in "downtown" East Lansing, 400 Albert St.
- Register to vote while you're at it. You have to reside at the address on your license to vote.
- A campus map (a paper copy is essential, carry it with you until it disintegrates)
- Familiarize yourself with the NSP website (lots of cool and relevant information posted)
- Renter's insurance. A few bucks a month covers things like dropped laptops, bikes, CDs, books, etc

- Car insurance? You will get severely hassled without it.
- It's a big campus, get a junker bike for transportation. (you can get a bike, lock, and registration for a very reasonable cost) check MSU surplus. Even if you drive, keeping a bike on campus can make life easy. (don't forget to lube the chain with some WD-40 every now and then)
- Schedule of classes and locations. Be there!

### **Good advice from the faculty:**

- Know what is in your Graduate Student Handbook This means reading the table of contents (pp 1-2). Information that is immediately relevant to you as “first years” are Course Requirements (p 3) and First Year Evaluations (p 7). This manual is loaded with lots of useful information and is a good resource for answering many questions you may have.
- Sometime during the fall, become a member of the Society for Neuroscience if you are not already. (You must be a member to submit an abstract; abstract deadlines are usually in April.) Application forms and lots of other relevant information can be found on their web site.
- For those of you interested in gonadal hormones and SEX (who isn't??), you may also want to check out the web site for the Society of Behavioral Neuroendocrinology and consider becoming a member. This is a very graduate student-friendly society and its web site offers many useful links.
- Ask your rotation supervisor or other grad students about other relevant organizations.
- Get to know your fellow NSP graduate students (they are often the experts!!)

### **Advice about rotations:**

*A few things to find out from your rotation supervisor:*

- What he/she expects (e.g., expected time spent in the lab? completion of a project? write up expected? etc.)
- What her/his policies are regarding use of lab resources such as phone, computers, printers, etc., and anything else that you might want to use in the lab that is not strictly related to your rotation project.

### **Good advice from the Students:**

- 

**Read!!** Lab publications. Student references. Anything that will get you "in the loop"

**Listen!!** People will be trying to assist you, let them.

**Ask!!** Everyone wants you to do well, we've all been there.

Go to the Society for Neuroscience meeting in November.

- Stay current: Read your email, especially emails from Dr. Sisk (a.k.a. Cheryl) and Adriana.
- Get a planner, or some means of keeping up with your schedule.
- Borrow notes, old exams, books from other students.
- Get organized. Bind/recopy notes, make lists, whatever it takes for you.

- Start writing now and get in the habit; people always want to know what you're up to.
- The Essential, Must Have, Better Read it-Web site for MSU graduate students: GRAD STUDENT RESOURCE
- Spartan Life: a 141 pg resource document for MSU students (2MB file) If you want to know what clubs, sports, organizations, events, and other student services/activities
  - The “Quick Reference Guide” (pp 2-5) from Spartan Life lists many campus resources with phone numbers and URLs. Post it over your desk, you'll be using it.
- ORCBS training. You'll need to enroll for these courses to work in the lab. Chemical and Radiation safety training.
- Student Life provides a variety of services for MSU students, including job opportunities, resources for student leaders, and more.

### **Info about health insurance:**

- Grad students on Graduate Assistantships are automatically enrolled. That is not the case for Grad students on MSU/Department Fellowships.
- Dental plan: the plan offers dental coverage through Midwestern Dental Plan with 50% of the premium paid by MSU. Please call 1-800-544-6374 and ask for additional information and the MSU GA/GEU Enrollment Application.
- No coverage for pre-existing conditions for the first 6 months
- Information about insurance coverage for students and health services at Olin Health Center  
**ALSO, READ THE NSP GRAD STUDENT HANDBOOK!**

### **How to survive classes:**

- Good class notes are essential for passing your comprehensives.
- Worthy reference material:
  - Ask other students for the best references; borrow notes, old exams, books from them
  - Principles of Neural Science (by Eric R. Kandel (Editor), James H. Schwartz (Editor), Thomas M. Jessell)
  - Neurobiology by Gordon M. Shepherd
  - Neuroscience by Purves et al. (the entire book is on PubMed!)

### **Where to buy class materials:**

- half.com is part of Ebay, both have used text books worth checking out
- Student bookstore on Grand River
- Family owned bookstore in Okemos

### **How to find possible sources of funding:**

- MSU Office for the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies maintains a web site that links you to sources of intramural and extramural funds, including a link to the Community of Science (COS), a worldwide network of scientists that you can join at no

cost to you because MSU pays the fee. You can probably learn about virtually every possible source of funding for neuroscientists at the COS website. Register now!

- MSU Funding guide which will link you to things like:
  - The National Science Foundation (NSF) is for first and second year students only!!! Get on it. Deadlines are in the fall.

### **Links:**

- ***Nerdy Neuro web links:*** here you'll find links to sites for neuroanatomy quizzes, study guides, techniques, methods, etc.
- ***Local Links:***
  - City of East Lansing Website
  - City of Lansing Website
  - Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA)
  - Lansing Chamber of Commerce
  - Lansing.com - Lansing area information including a restaurant and movie guide
  - Lansing State Journal –main city newspaper
  - State News -MSU newspaper
  - City Pulse - local newspaper
  - Michigan Government-- Bet you didn't know that was legal!
- ***Professional Societies***
  - Society For Neuroscience
  - International Neuroendocrine Federation
  - Society for Research on Biological Rhythms
  - Association of Neuroscience Departments and Programs
  - Michigan Life Sciences Corridor
  - Core Technology Alliance
  - Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology
  - Michigan Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience

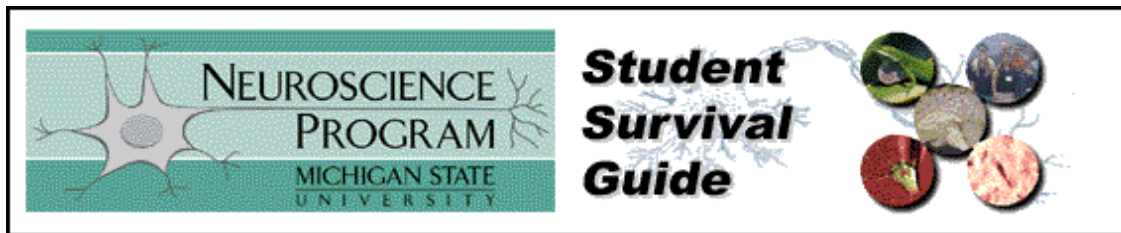
### **Things to do around Lansing**

- Kresge Art Museum
- Potter Park Zoo
- Impression 5 Science Center
- Abrams Planetarium
- MSU Dairy Store
- Fenner Nature Center
- Uncle John's Cider Mill
- Lansing Lugnuts Baseball

### **Contact Info:**

Feel free to contact any of the following graduate students if you have questions about anything, seriously!

- Katie Northcutt: [northcu2@msu.edu](mailto:northcu2@msu.edu) (850) 556-5892cl



## List for New Students

Hello. My name is Adriana Feldpausch. I am the Graduate Student Affairs Administrator. If you have any questions about these or other items, please feel free to email me at [feldpa15@msu.edu](mailto:feldpa15@msu.edu). Please keep the following items in mind:

1. In mid-summer semester of every year, new graduate students in the Neuroscience Program appointed to Graduate Assistantships will need to stop by my office to complete an I-9 form. Students need to provide the Neuroscience Program with their social security card and driver's license (**original documents**).
2. New students should go to the payroll office in 350 Administration Building or go to the payroll office website (<http://www.ctrl.msu.edu/COPayroll/>) to fill out any necessary documents for the appropriate handling of your payroll. For example; Direct deposit forms, etc.
3. Only new graduate assistants need to provide the payroll office with copies of their social security cards. The number must be verified before the student is paid.
4. All students in the Neuroscience Program (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. year students) must be registered with fees paid by the University's deadline (contact the office to find out this date) in order to receive their first paycheck on time. This means that even if the Neuroscience Program will cover your tuition, fees and health insurance, you will need to pay for any applicable taxes and return your bill (green form) online. By returning the bill to MSU, you will be considered "registered", not "enrolled". You do your own enrollment online.
5. Student must be appointed for 53 calendar days for Fall and Spring and 46 calendar days for Summer to be eligible for benefits.
6. Please obtain a copy of your appointment papers from the Neuroscience Program for every semester, especially Fall and Spring. This is necessary for you to obtain a parking permit, football tickets, etc.
7. According to MSU standards, you are eligible for a graduate assistantship when enrolled for only three (3) credits, but are not considered "full time" unless you are enrolled for six (6) credits.

## **PAYROLL PROCESSING**

All new graduate assistants (i.e., those who have never been paid on the Grad payroll) need to complete three payroll processing steps:

1. Complete federal and state W-4 forms for tax withholding.
2. Have social security card information verified.
3. Take visa & I-20 form to Payroll Office, 350 Administration Building. (if international graduate student).

W-4 forms are available on the Payroll web page (<http://ctrl.msu.edu/payroll>) or may be picked up at the Payroll Office any time between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

The payroll office is required by Federal Law to verify each person's name and social security number as they appear on the social security card. Social security card information can be verified in two ways:

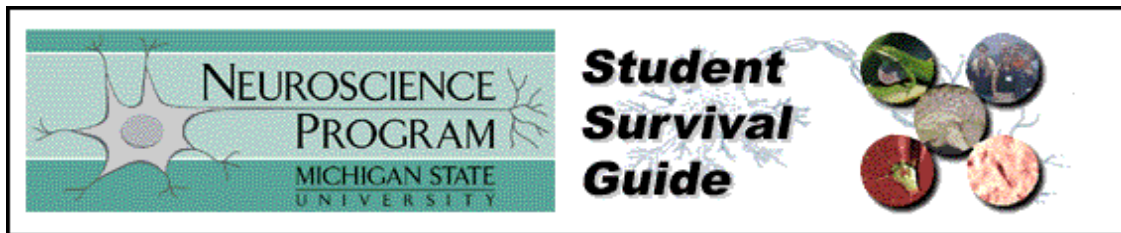
- Student may attach a photocopy of his/her social security card to the W-4 card.
- Student may take his/her social security card to the payroll office.

Anyone who does not have a social security card or whose card is lost, stolen or destroyed must apply for a card from the Social Security Administration. By telephone, you can call 1-800-772-1213 (between the hours of 7a.m. and 7 p.m.) or you may visit the Social Security Administration office at 5210 Perry Robinson, Lansing, MI 48911 (517-393-3876). Allow approximately 4 weeks for processing.

New grads that have not completed the required processing by the deadline will have their checks for the September grad pay held in the payroll office on payday. To avoid having checks held, please see that the required processing is completed before the deadline.

Checks will be held for all graduate assistants not registered (i.e., fees paid) by the payday. Grads not registered by the deadline may not be eligible for payroll direct deposit for the September payroll.

If you have any questions, please call the Payroll Office at 355-5010.



## List for Current Students

Please remember that the following things apply from year to year for NSP current students:

1. All students in the Neuroscience Program (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. year students) must be registered with fees paid by the University's deadline (**contact the office to find out this date**) in order to receive their paycheck on time. This means that even if the Neuroscience Program will cover your tuition, fees and health insurance, you will need to pay for any applicable taxes and return your bill (green form) online via Stuinfo. By returning the bill to MSU, you will be considered "registered", not "enrolled". You do your own enrollment online.
2. Student must be appointed for 53 calendar days for Fall and Spring and 46 calendar days for Summer to be eligible for benefits.
3. Please obtain a copy of your appointment papers from the Neuroscience Program for every semester, especially Fall and Spring. This is necessary for you to obtain a parking permit, football tickets, etc.
4. According to MSU standards, you are eligible for a graduate assistantship when enrolled for only three (3) credits, but are not considered "full time" student unless you are enrolled for six (6) credits.
5. Checks will be held for all graduate assistants not registered (i.e., fees paid) by the payday.
6. First year NSP predoctoral students **DO NOT enroll** in NEU 800 (Research Forum) during their first year in the Program, but attend Research Forum sessions in the Fall and Spring semesters that are appropriate for early stage trainees. At the beginning of each semester, students will be informed about which weeks they are expected to attend Forum.
7. Second year NSP predoctoral students and beyond **MUST ENROLL** in NEU 800 (Research Forum) every Fall and Spring semester until graduation, unless there are schedule conflicts. If this is the case, the student should notify Cheryl Sisk in *writing* before the semester in which there is a conflict, explaining the nature of the conflict (e.g., another course, experimental schedule). Research Forum activities are often targeted to students in specific stages of training, and attendance at every Forum meeting may not be expected of every student. At the beginning of each semester, students will be informed about which weeks they are expected to attend Forum. For an enrolled student to receive a passing grade, the student can miss no more than three of the meetings that he/she is expected to attend. All students must earn 4 credits of Research Forum in order to receive the Ph.D in Neuroscience.

8. NSP predoctoral students are financially supported via two mechanisms: **Research Graduate Assistantships and MSU or NSP Fellowships**. When an NSP grad student is appointed to a *research graduate assistantship*, the student is considered an *employee* of MSU, taxes are taken out of paycheck and he/she is automatically enrolled in the health insurance. Students must be registered for 3 credits minimum in each Fall, Spring and Summer semester to receive a graduate assistantship and thus, get a paycheck.

NSP predoctoral students can be appointed to either an **MSU or NSP fellowship**. NSP grad students appointed to the NSP training grant or who have an individual NIH predoctoral National Research Service Award receive an NSP fellowship. Also, NSP grad students are appointed to an NSP fellowship when an arrangement has been made between the Program and student's major advisor. Furthermore, NSP grad students can be supported by an MSU fellowship when the student receives an award from The Graduate School or College of Natural Science or NSF. NSP predoctoral students on fellowships ARE NOT considered MSU employees and their taxes are handled differently. Please contact the Office of Fees and Scholarships for tax information. Also, NSP predoctoral students on fellowships are not automatically enrolled in health insurance; the health insurance coverage may come from NSP, the major advisor or The Graduate School depending on the terms/agreement between the student and the source providing the fellowship.

**Externally Funded Fellowships:** students who have written their own grant applications and received their own externally funded applications worth at least \$20,000 (direct costs) are eligible for in-state tuition rate. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semesters during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a US institution/agency/foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowships) or from international sources do not qualify the students for in-state tuition rates. You must be a US citizen or US alien/permanent resident.

9. NSP Seminars: attendance is mandatory for the duration of your Ph.D. program.
10. Neuroscience Program - Responsible Conduct of Research Series: NSP predoctoral students are required to attend 7 workshops offered by the Graduate School. **Six** workshops should be from the "Responsible Conduct of Research" series and **one** should be from the "Conflict Resolution" series. In order for students to be credited for these workshops by the Program, they must submit to the NSP Graduate Secretary the following:

**A. Obtain a certificate of attendance for the Responsible Conduct of Research series from the Graduate School**

**B. Have speaker for Conflict Resolution workshop complete and sign the NSP form (Appendix M in Graduate Student Handbook) stating the graduate student's**

**attendance. Take the form with you to the workshop!**