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Laurier hosts neuroscience conference May 13

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University is hosting a meeting of the minds for the mind. The Southern Ontario Neuroscience Association (SONA) will have its 33rd annual meeting at the university's Waterloo campus May 13.

"The SONA chapter has existed more than two decades, but this is the first time Laurier will be hosting the annual meeting," said Diano Marrone, associate professor in Laurier's Department of Psychology and president of SONA. "This is a sign of the coming-of-age of our program at Laurier and the diversity of our department."

Neuroscience is a diverse field that deals with everything from studying how people use their mind to solve problems to researching individual proteins in the brain. Neuroscience research at Laurier consists of two streams: cognitive and behavioral. Behavioral neuroscience deals with more basic biological processes, such as how the connections between neurons work. Cognitive neuroscience, on the other hand, deals with more "big picture" questions about how networks of smaller connections come together to make people think and act as they do.

"The SONA conference will have people at both ends of the spectrum and everything in between," said Marrone.

The conference consists of poster sessions, a keynote speaker as well as a panel on behavioral neuroscience led by Laurier's Bruce McKay, assistant professor of Psychology and a panel on cognitive neuroscience led by Laurier's Philip Servos, professor of Psychology.

SONA is the local chapter of the Society for Neuroscience, a global organization with a professional membership of 35,000.

Laurier has a strong neuroscience program with a dozen professors doing related work. Researchers hold grants from NSERC, the Ontario Gambling Agency, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation and the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation. Jeffery A. Jones, director of the Laurier Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience, sits on the review panel for the United States' National Institutes of Health agency.

Marrone, who is organizing the conference with professors Paul Mallet, Bruce McKay and Sukhvinder Obhi, says that about 300 people from across the province are expected.

For more information, visit <http://sonasfn.org/sona-2013-meeting.php>.