



Champions of the Brain Fellows



Attendees of the inaugural Champions of the Brain Fellows dinner included faculty, alumni, fellows, and those who sponsor them.

The Challenge

MIT's Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) is a global leader within its field, and an important training ground for the next generation of brain and cognitive scientists. However, as the cost of educating graduate students climbs, federal support for basic science has declined, forcing the department to be cautious in its admissions. We have been careful not to overextend our resources: this year, we admitted about half the typical number of graduate students in order to ensure there would be enough department funds to support them throughout their training. In order to increase this number, BCS would like to strengthen its graduate program with fellowship funding.

Graduate students play a critical role within the department. According to department head Jim DiCarlo, "[they] are essential to the department's preeminence. They do a lot of the heavy lifting, conducting much of the department's research while helping to teach and mentor undergraduates." Because their work in the lab is vital to research discoveries, a strong graduate program is key to attracting superb faculty, and the advances they make while at MIT greatly enhance the Institute's reputation as a leader in education and scientific research.

Become a Champion

The **Champions of the Brain Fellows** was recently created to recognize the generosity of those friends and alumni who make it possible for BCS graduate students to explore their scientific dreams: to determine the right area of specialization and have the freedom of time to develop new insights and ideas. Those who commit \$70,000 or more will become members of the Champions of the Brain Fellows, regardless of the type of gift (endowed, expendable, or corporate). Becoming a Champion enables our supporters to meet annually with our faculty and graduate students, who are among the best and brightest in the world. Champions are kept up-to-date on the cutting edge research taking place in Building 46.

“Being young and optimistic, [our graduate students] take risks that lead to exciting new discoveries and breakthroughs.”

— Jim DiCarlo, Head of BCS



Barrie Zesiger and Jim DiCarlo, Department Head of BCS, sit together at the inaugural Champions dinner, which took place March 5, 2014.

An Early Champion

A few years ago, when Barrie and Al '51 Zesiger learned that the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences would only be able to admit eleven students due to funding concerns, they pledged one million dollars to endow a fellowship for the department. Now, in order to inaugurate the Champions of the Brain Fellows, Barrie and Al have pledged an additional one million dollars to match new fellowship donations. With this match, Barrie and Al are encouraging others to follow their example.

About the Department

MIT's Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences stands at the nexus of neuroscience, biology and psychology. We combine these disciplines to study specific aspects of the brain and mind including: vision, movement systems, learning and memory, neural and cognitive development, language and reasoning. Working collaboratively, we apply our expertise, tools, and techniques to address and answer both fundamental and universal questions about how the brain and mind work.

About the Champions

This is a critical time to be sure we keep attracting the best minds in cognitive and neuroscience. By joining the Champions of the Brain Fellows community, you will be supporting the next generation of scientists who will make future breakthroughs possible. Each Champion will receive periodic updates from the graduate student he or she is supporting, in addition to an invitation to the annual reception in celebration of the year's accomplishments.

The inaugural Champions dinner was a great success; the evening featured presentations from Rebecca Canter, Weedon Fellow; Stephen Allsop, Halis Fellow; and Pedro Tsividis, Leventhal Fellow. Faculty in attendance included Nobel laureate Susumu Tonegawa, department head Jim DiCarlo, and the director of the Picower Institute for Learning and Memory, Li-Huei Tsai. Several of our inaugural Champions were able to visit campus and meet their fellows, including Paul '81 and Anne Marcus; Bill McClelland '47; Gene Stark '68, SM '69, EE '70, SCD '72; Reid Weedon '41, and Barrie Zesiger.



2013-2014 Halis Fellow, Stephen Allsop, poses with MIT Professor and alumna Kay Tye. Allsop is a graduate student performing research in Tye's laboratory.



JOIN THE CHAMPIONS

- » Fully fund a one-year fellowship: \$70,000
- » Support one student each year for five years: \$325,000
- » Support one young scientist every year, forever: \$1 million

GIVE ONLINE

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Contact Elizabeth Chadis
Assistant Dean, Development
MIT School of Science
echadis@mit.edu
617.253.8903

