

NEW CENTER FOR NEUROSCIENCE TO FOSTER COLLABORATION

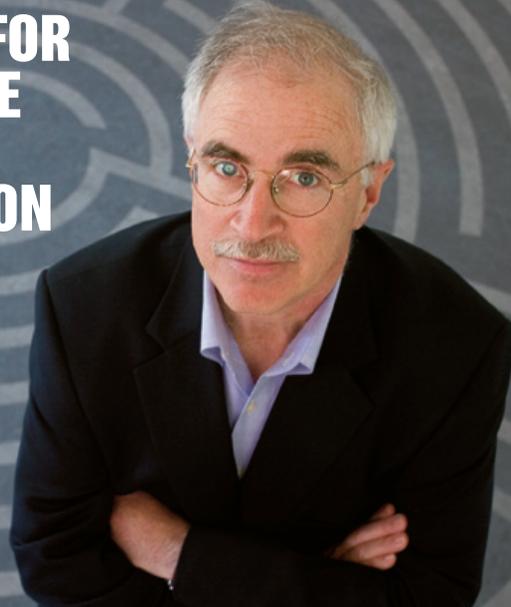


PHOTO BY ROHAN CHITRAKAR (COM 06)

NEUROSCIENCE HOLDS the promise of new insights into difficult treatment areas such as addiction and mental illness, making it one of the fastest-growing fields in research and academia. Now BU is poised to expand its presence in these areas with the creation of the Center for Neuroscience, which will bring scientists from the Charles River and Medical Campuses under one umbrella.

"Neuroscience is an up-and-coming field, in which there are about to be major advances," says Howard Eichenbaum, the center's director, a College of Arts and Sciences professor of psychology, and a University Professor. "There is a push from the government, and from the directions that research has taken, to be able to bring together research in fundamental neuroscience — how the brain works — together with translational medicine, which is to produce drugs and therapies and to address various mental illnesses. We have a lot of expertise on both campuses on both sides."

Eichenbaum says that while BU is not internationally known as a neuroscience hub, he believes the new center will raise the University's profile by highlighting the faculty currently performing research in the field. Topics of research might

include addiction and anxiety disorders, "both of which we have great strengths in," he says. "They are major national mental health problems and are ripe for both fundamental understanding and translational advances."

Working in teams will lead to quicker breakthroughs than if researchers toil alone in their labs, Eichenbaum says. "Our research mission is to foster the development of working groups that take on topically related areas, either in fundamental or translational areas of the science, or combinations of the two," he says. "Each working group would be related to one particular hot area that is ripe for major advances and would bring together those investigators."

The center will also develop new graduate and undergradu-

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ate education programs. The separate graduate programs in neuroscience on the Charles River and Medical Campuses will come under the umbrella of a new program led by Shelley Russek, a School of Medicine professor of pharmacology. Faculty from several Arts and Sciences departments will contribute, including biology, psychology, and mathematics and statistics, as well as faculty from Sargent College and the College of Engineering department of biomedical engineering. A number of departments on the Medical Campus will also be involved. The new graduate program is expected to begin in two years.

An undergraduate neuroscience major also will be created, meeting a growing demand.

"With new courses we're designing," says Eichenbaum, "we will have a unique undergraduate major that brings together three areas of strength on this campus: in cell and systems neuroscience, cognitive neuroscience, and computational neuroscience."

University leaders say that the Center for Neuroscience will help foster interdisciplinary research at BU and continue to build the University's reputation in research.

To kick-start the operation and provide seed money for interdisciplinary team research in high-risk, high-payoff areas, the University will provide \$600,000 annually during the center's first five years and \$300,000 annually for the subsequent five years. The center will seek outside funding sources as well. **TAYLOR McNEIL**

* web extra

Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus drew an overflow crowd of 1,500 when he spoke at Boston University's George Sherman Union in October. Yunus discussed Grameen Bank, which he founded in Bangladesh to help impoverished residents start small businesses and obtain college degrees. Grameen Bank now has 7.5 million borrowers. "They take the loan and start self-employment and improve their economic situation," Yunus says. "Step-by-step, people are moving out of poverty." His lecture is at www.bu.edu/today/buniverse.

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