On November 1st, the Oklahoma Center for Neuroscience graduated an outstanding student and promising young scientist, **Aaron Chaloner**. Aaron entered the program as a direct-admit in 2007 and the laboratory of the director of OCNS, professor **Beverley Greenwood-Van Meerveld**. Aaron was an active member on five different boards and committees. Aaron received multiple awards for outstanding presentations and research at both the Graduate Research Education and Technology Symposiums (2011 and 2012) as well as the OCNS Symposiums (2007 and 2011). He received grant support that exceeded $70,000 from the OU Health Sciences Center Graduate College, the Robert W. Reynolds Oklahoma Center on Aging, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Aaron is an author of three peer-reviewed manuscripts and another under review.

On December 5th, the Oklahoma Center for Neuroscience was pleased to graduate **Courtney Donica**. Courtney joined the Center in 2007 following her second semester in the Graduate Program in Biomedical Sciences (GPIBS). Courtney was mentored by professor of pharmacology and chair, **Kelly Standifer**, from the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Courtney exemplified academic excellence throughout graduate school, graduating with a perfect grade point average. She was a student representative on four different boards or committees and has received eight travel awards since 2008. Courtney is an author on two publications with three in preparation. Courtney will continue her research as a post-doctoral fellow at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston Texas. Courtney has set a high standard for all of the OCNS students, and we will miss her continuous student leadership within our program.
The fall semester is virtually over, and I have many exciting events to report to OCNS Faculty, students, staff and volunteers. To facilitate collaborative efforts between our clinical and basic scientists, associate professor and OCNS Associate Director of Clinical Affairs, Calin Prodan, led a translational research initiative. He organized a series of research focus groups that met over the summer. At these meetings he outlined our goal to fund at least three small seed grants with the hope that they will foster collaborations that eventually lead to larger translational grant applications to federal entities.

Under the leadership of professor Michelle Callegan, the OCNS Associate Director of Research, we submitted a NIH-T32 Neuroscience training grant that we hope will be reviewed favorably. Under the expert direction of associate professor and OCNS Associate Director of Special Programs, John Campbell, and OCNS program manager, Brandt Wiskur, we completed the 2012 Neuro Night series and already have a wonderful NeuroNight program planned for 2013 at the Fountains of Canterbury. Under the guidance of our Associate Director for Student Affairs, professor James McGinnis, the OCNS Graduate Education Committee and a team of experienced student mentors in 2012, we graduated Paula Warrington, Aaron Chaloner, and Courtney Donica.

As I enter my 10th year as the director of OCNS, my goals for the center in 2013 are to i) work with a team of key research leaders in OCNS to develop a 5 year research strategic plan, ii) develop new programs and courses for our neuroscience graduate students to ensure that they continue to be competitive in a rapidly changing job market, and iii) review and advance our community outreach programs such as Neuro Night and Mini Medical School so that continue to meet the educational needs of all Oklahomans. Have a wonderful holiday season!

Beverley Greenwood-Van Meeerveld, Ph.D., FACG, AGAF, Director of OCNS, Professor of Physiology

The Dr. Raniyah Ramadan Foundation sponsors a number of scholarships and scientific events. The OCNS is pleased to advance Raniyah Ramadan’s scientific accomplishments and her memory by hosting the Inaugural Raniyah Ramadan Distinguished Lectureship and join in the sponsorship of the Raniyah Ramadan Research Scholar. Sharolyn Simpson (pictured right), an undergraduate from East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, was the first sponsored research scholar and was presented her research award by Siham Ramadan (pictured left). Sharolyn conducted research in the laboratory of professor James McGinnis, OCNS associate director for student affairs.

On July 30th, 2012, the OCNS hosted The Inaugural Raniyah Ramadan Distinguished Lecture. The lecture was sponsored by the Dr. Raniyah Ramadan Foundation, and the lecture was presented by professor Michelle Callegan from the Department of Ophthalmology. Professor Callegan is also the OCNS associate director for research. Her seminar was titled “Pathogenesis of Bacterial Endophthalmitis: What Have We Learned?” The seminar reviewed the current knowledge of the disease and how these findings drive the search for novel and more elective therapeutic regimens in an effort to prevent vision loss from bacterial endophthalmitis. We hope that you can join us at the next Raniyah Ramadan Distinguished Lecture so please watch your e-mails for our announcement date.
This year the OCNS initiated its translational research initiative to establish research collaborations between medical doctors and research scientists. The OCNS invited basic and clinical scientists to compete for translational research seed grants focusing on neurodegenerative diseases, pain, stress and stroke. Associate member Rhea Towner, Advanced Magnetic Resonance Center, OMRF; associate professor Rene McNall-Knapp, Department of Pediatrics; and associate professor Kar-Ming Fung, director of the Department of Neuropathology; have received a seed grant for their research proposal “Anti-Cancer Activity of OKN-007 in Pediatric Brain Cancer Models.” Professor Jay Hanas, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and professor Linda Hershey, Department of Neurology, received a seed grant for their project titled “Developing Serum Profiling Technology to Aid in the Diagnosis and Monitoring of Patients with Mild or Moderate Alzheimer’s Disease.” Assistant professor Angelia Kirkpatrick, Department of Medicine, and professor George Dale, Department of Medicine, received a seed-grant for their proposal “The Impact of Fish Oil on Coated-Platelet Levels.” We look forward to the success of their projects that will lead to future funding from regional and national agencies.

Each semester associate professor John Campbell (pictured right), OCNS associate director for special programs, schedules opportunities for the OCNS students to interact with a rich diversity of scientists and clinicians. This semester professor William Reiner (pictured left), a pediatric urologist from the College of Medicine, met with OCNS and GPIBS students to discuss his years of service as a pediatric urologist. Professor Reiner enthusiastically described his research in quality of life outcomes for children with genitourinary birth anomalies and their parents. Next year the OCNS students will meet professor Amy Wisniewski and professor Marianne Matzo.

In November the OCNS sponsored the 2012 Mini Medical School titled “Preparing for a Career in Medicine.” Approximately 200 students from over 30 schools across the state attended the event. Attendees were welcomed by the associate dean of academic affairs, Chris Candler, and they received neuroanatomy lectures from professors Robert Blair and Daniel O’Donoghue. Professor and chair of the Department of Neurology, David Lee Gordon, lectured on stroke. Associate professor Celeste Wirsig from the Department of Cell Biology lectured on amazing applications of medical neuroscience. We would like to recognize the volunteer efforts of the OU Medicine medical school students and OCNS graduate students for their volunteer efforts. This event was also made possible by a generous grant from Oklahoma IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence.
Meet Elle
One week after Aaron Chaloner’s successful defense of his dissertation, Aaron and his wife Jae Lindsay welcomed Elliot Marie (Elle) into their home on November 9th. We are so happy for Aaron and Jae Lindsay and will watch our program applications for Elliot Marie Chaloner.

Professor Robert Anderson received the Paul A. Kayser International Award from the Retina Research Foundation. Professor Ari Berkowitz was elected as Councilor of the International Society for Neuroethology. Professor Robert Blair was nominated for the Aesculapian Award by the OU Medicine Class of 2014. Professor Michelle Callegan was awarded an NIH/NEI R21 grant for her research titled “New Models of Endogenous Bacterial Endophthalmitis.” Assistant professor Carrie Ciro received the College of Allied Health Outstanding Faculty in Teaching Award. Assistant professor Anna Csiszar received the 2012 Nathan Shock New Investigator Award. Assistant professor Lei Ding received a NSF grant from the National Robotics Initiative for his research titled “NRI-Small: Robot Assistants for Promoting Crawling and Walking in Children at Risk of Cerebral Palsy.” Professor Beverley Greenwood-Van Meerveld was elected as a member of the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives and an invited member of the Rome Foundation. She is a member of VA Study Section (Neurology A/C) and the VA Committee for Research Career Scientist/Senior Research Career Scientist Promotions. Professor Thubi Hlapang Kolobe received an Anniversary Award from the American Physical Therapy Association - Section on Pediatrics and the Philip E. Smith Outstanding Senior Faculty Service Award from the College of Allied Health. Professor William Lovallo has multiple R01 grants from the NIH/NIAAA for the Oklahoma Family Health Patterns Project and a VA Merit Review for his research titled “Neuroimaging in the Oklahoma Health Care Patterns Project.” Professor Kenneth Miller of Oklahoma State Univeristy (OSU) received a X01 grant from the NIH-Bridging Interventional Development Gaps for his research titled “DON, NSC 7365: a novel analgesic.” He received a Sponsored Research Agreement from nanoScience Engineering Corporation for his research titled “Characterization of Skin” and an OSU Center for Health Sciences Intramural Grant for his research titled “Lissauer’s tract: role in spinal facilitation.” OMRF Associate Member Kenneth G. Miller received an NIH/NIGMS R01 grant for his research titled “Signaling Pathways that Regulate Synaptic Transmission.” Professor Raju Rajala was awarded a NIH/NEI R01 grant. Professor William Reiner was invited to the International Disorders of Sex Development Working Group held in Annecy, France. Professor William Sonntag became the Chair of the Biological Sciences Section of the Gerontological Society of America. He received $2,700,000 for Oklahoma Center on Aging Phase 2 funding from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. Post-doctoral fellow Lee Tran received a Young Investigator Award from the American Neuropoastroenterology and Motility Society and another from the Joint American and European Neuropoastroenterology and Motility Society. Associate professor Carol Webb received funding from the Oklahoma Center for Adult Stem Cell Research for her research titled “Mechanisms By Which ARID3a Affects Human Pluripotency Gene Expression” and funding from the Lupus Foundation of America for her research titled “The Role of ARID3a Expression in Hematopoietic Stem Cells in SLE Patients.” She received, but relinquished as duplicate study, a Lupus Research Institute grant for her research titled “Effects of ARID3a on Hematopoietic Stem Cell Functions in SLE Patients.” Professor Allan Wiechmann received an OCAST Health Research Award for his research titled “Rescue of epithelial barrier function in corneal disease.”

Congratulations to all of our OCNS members!