

OPINION

25 Years of FUN!

Julio J. Ramirez^{1,2}

¹Psychology Department, ²Neuroscience Program, Davidson College, Davidson, NC 28035.

Dr. Julio J. Ramirez, the founding president of the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience (FUN), shared the comments below on November 13, 2016 at the 25th Anniversary of FUN's founding, when Drs. Sally Frutiger, Stephen George, Julio Ramirez, and Dennison Smith were

recognized with the Founders Award for their efforts in launching FUN in 1991.

Key words: celebration; education; founders; history; undergraduate research

Hearing all the wonderful discoveries that you undergraduates have shared with us tonight at the Annual FUN Undergraduate Poster Session held in conjunction with the 46th Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) and experiencing all the enthusiasm you bring to this banquet room tonight are truly inspiring!

I'm honored to speak on behalf of my fellow FUN co-founders, Sally Frutiger, Stephen George, and Dennison Smith. When I asked them what they'd like me to convey to this illustrious gathering, they unanimously gave me one bit of advice: Keep it short! So, I promise to keep this short!

Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon said that "If you want to make interesting scientific discoveries, you should acquire as many good friends as possible, who are as energetic, intelligent, and knowledgeable as they can be." The same can be said for pedagogical innovation and building community. We have been very fortunate to have our friends at the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience with whom we have shared the last 25 years. These friends energize us with their dedication to excellence and their passion to educate the next generation of neuroscience pioneers.

Truthfully, the list of these wonderful friends is too long to share here, but there are a few that we'd like to express special thanks to: Gary Dunbar for taking over the reins of FUN after I stepped down as president to help us weather our growing pains back in the early days. Jeffrey Wilson who crafted our name, our original FUN logo, and our first listserv FUNnet. Bruce Johnson and our cherished Carol Ann Paul, whose memory we honor with our Educator of the Year award, who always challenged us to offer innovative hands-on lab experiences in our workshops. Jack Boitano who single-handedly crafted our By-Laws. Timothy Cannon, who launched FUN's first product line – FUN Buttons – to support student travel awards and who started our first FUN Booth, now a fixture at SfN meetings. Karen Parfitt, FUN's first woman president, who inspired us to foster an environment welcoming to all who seek to educate undergraduate neuroscientists and who dramatically broadened the FUN Poster Session. Eric Wiertelak who stewarded FUN through some rocky years by selflessly serving three terms as president and



Figure 1. Julio Ramirez delivering comments celebrating the 25th anniversary of FUN's founding at the FUN Social during the 46th Annual SfN meeting in San Diego. Photo by W. Jeffrey Wilson.

dramatically expanded the FUN Booth. Barbara Lom who worked vigorously to launch the flagship journal of FUN, the *Journal of Undergraduate Neuroscience Education*, and who always comes up with great acronyms like *JUNE*. Fern Duncan, who copy-edited and assembled *JUNE* issues from its inception. Mary Harrington who pushed to internationalize FUN's presence and support neuroscience education initiatives beyond America's borders. Andrew

Mickley who founded Nu Rho Psi, the first undergraduate neuroscience honor society. Jean Hardwick and Jeffrey Smith who launched and grew our equipment-loan program to give junior faculty a jumpstart on their research projects. All of the presidents, treasurers, secretaries, councilors, committee chairs, and members of FUN who have worked tirelessly to create a community dedicated to nurturing the next generation of neuroscientists. Special thanks to our generous donors who have throughout the years supported us by lending us equipment, contributed to our workshops, and funded dozens of travel awards to bring outstanding undergraduates to our annual meeting.

Finally, among our friends, we are privileged to include our students, who have made every day in the classroom

and in the lab a joyous adventure in discovery and learning. You inspire us all!

We have all had a great 25 years together and we can hardly wait for all the FUN ahead of us! Thank you all so very much!

Received January 16, 2017; revised January 23, 2017; accepted January 23, 2017.

Address correspondence to: Dr. Julio J. Ramirez, Box 7017, Department of Psychology, Davidson College, Davidson, NC 28035. Email: juramirez@davidson.edu

Copyright © 2017 Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience
www.funjournal.org