



## Education at URMIC – Student Perspectives

---



**Name:** Julianne Feola

**Hometown:** Greece, NY

**Undergraduate Degree:** B.A. in Psychology, B.S. in Chemistry

**Graduate Degree:** Pursuing a Ph.D. in Neuroscience

**Areas of Interest:** Ischemic Stroke: The role of astrocytic transglutaminase 2 in mediating ischemic tissue damage.

### Background Information

I grew up in Greece, NY and have two younger sisters. I attended Greece Athena High School and then went on to attend The State University of New York, College at Geneseo. I ran on the cross-country and track teams throughout high school and college. I also played the clarinet throughout high school in the school band and pit orchestras for several musicals.

### Why did you choose The University of Rochester Medical Center?

I chose the University of Rochester Medical Center because I instantly felt as though it was the perfect fit for me and my interests. With the combination of psychology and chemistry coursework that I took at my undergraduate institution, I had fairly broad interests within the field of neuroscience, and I instantly noted that there were a number of labs here that were conducting research that fit with these

interests. Aside from the breadth of interesting and quality research that was being conducted at Rochester, I immediately noticed that I felt comfortable and at ease with all of the faculty and the students that I met during my interview weekend. Every person that I interacted with was welcoming and I could tell that the environment was both supportive and collaborative. To me, that is a very advantageous quality for a graduate school to have. Having students and faculty that are available to discuss scientific questions and ideas is incredibly beneficial to the development of each graduate student, and this is certainly exemplified by the environment at Rochester.

### **Tell us about your program**

I joined the neuroscience graduate program in the fall of 2010. Neuroscience is highly interdepartmental, as we have the ability to work with faculty members in a wide array of fields and departments. The range of research interests of these faculty is also very extensive. Faculty and students in our program study all aspects of neuroscience, from sensory processing and higher order cognition to cellular disease mechanisms, and all in a variety of model systems. In addition, the course offerings touch on each of these areas of interest, so that we are exposed to a breadth of information. We also have the opportunity to give presentations on our own research each year, as well as participate in journal clubs that are aimed at building our abilities to think critically about scientific literature. Students in our program also have several chances to attend scientific meetings throughout their graduate training. In addition, we also TA for at least one semester, in either an undergraduate neuroscience course or a medical school course. I am currently working in the laboratory of Dr. Gail Johnson-Voll, where I am studying astrocytic mechanisms of mediating stroke damage after an ischemic injury.

### **What are your career aspirations?**

As I am only in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of graduate training, I have not yet quite decided what I will do upon graduation, though I do plan to seek a postdoctoral position upon completion of my PhD. I then hope to be able to teach while continuing to do my own research in the area of cellular and molecular mechanisms of neurological diseases.

### **What are some of the things you have learned since you came to Rochester?**

In just two years at Rochester, I have learned how to better apply my scientific knowledge in order to critically evaluate the literature, as well as my own work. The opportunities that we have had to grow as students have really helped to build these skills, and I know that I will continue to have the opportunity to develop them throughout my time here. I have also learned to ask questions and discuss my ideas often with other members of my lab, my advisor, and other faculty members. These conversations are useful for all involved, and are a good way to be exposed to new or different perspectives on your own work and other scientific topics.

### **Any Advice for perspective students?**

Take full advantage of your lab rotations! Lab rotations give you the opportunity to try out several different areas of research, some of which you may not have been exposed to previously. This is especially useful if you have pretty broad interests and aren't completely sure which direction you would like to pursue. They are also useful if you do have a stronger idea about the type of work that you'd like to do, because they can still introduce you to new and exciting perspectives. During my rotations, I tried out some different types of labs and ended up joining a lab that wasn't at all related to what I had done in the past, at my undergraduate university. The lab rotations introduced me to completely new model systems, methodologies and new ways of thinking about the topics that I was interested in.