

Lisa Bernardin, Program Coordinator, Vermont Brain Bee, April 19, 2019



Vermont Brain Bee

Explore Neuroscience

Engage Students

www.vermontbrainbee.com - vermontbrainbee@gmail.com

Erik McLysaght Tesimony

Good afternoon legislators, my name is Erik McLysaght, I'm a senior at Mt Abe Union High School in Bristol and I am here to talk about the impact of studying neuroscience at the high school level. For three years now I have participated in my school's Neuroscience club and competed in the Vermont Brain Bee. My interest in neuroscience started my sophomore year of high school with a strong passion for the medical fields. Out of interest for human anatomy, along with the support from my teacher, Mrs. Kayart, I decided to go to my first Neuroscience club meeting. From day one, I was hooked.

By far, the most exciting part of my year is the preparation and entire day spent at UVM for the Brain Bee. For months, I studied flashcards and watched countless youtube videos to further my knowledge. Entering the Vermont Brain Bee for the first time I witnessed that same level of dedication spread throughout the entire student population. Every individual there was excited to participate, and learn throughout the day. I still light up every time I see the real human brain displayed in the wet lab, and can see on every participant's face that they hold the same reverence and excitement as well. I can truly say that without a doubt, every student comes out of the Brain Bee with both a heightened appreciation for the human brain, and a greater enthusiasm to continue their personal studies for the next year's competition.

This year, I took up the responsibility of Neuroscience club president. At the beginning of the year, I feared that we may not have the numbers to continue the club. I then began to spread the word about this club throughout the school. To my surprise, the first day of Neuroscience club had more than 10 new individuals. Just like I saw myself in sophomore year, every individual found the same passion for learning about the brain. These individuals then went on and prepared for months dissecting sheep brains, studying cranial nerves, and playing fun and educational games to expand their learning.

Throughout my three years of the Brain Bee, I have grown exponentially in my love and knowledge of the nervous system. I have even decided that neuroscience lies in my future and have committed to UVM for an undergraduate degree in it. However, I am not an anomaly. Many of my fellow club members have also committed to pursuing neuroscience. For the underclassman, they have wholeheartedly agreed that they will continue the club next year, and I have agreed to come back as much as I can to help. As for the graduates, two have decided like me, that neuroscience is something they would like to pursue further and have declared it as their undergraduate major.

By taking on the responsibility of club president this year and teaching my peers in preparation for the Vermont Brain Bee, I learned a couple of key things. Firstly, if given the opportunity, students truly engage and interact with the curriculum of neuroscience in a way unparalleled to similar classes at my school. Secondly, the interest that my peers showed proves to me that neuroscience is both interesting and important to high school students, and every school should invest in a club of their own. And finally, students care about their brain and when given the education will work to protect themselves from teenage dangers.