

Renowned neuroscientist will lead Tulane Brain Institute as new Presidential Chair

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Matthew Dalva, PhD, will join the Tulane Brain Institute as its new director and Tulane's newest Presidential Chair in February 2023. (Photo courtesy of Matthew Dalva)

Award-winning neuroscientist Matthew Dalva, PhD, whose research focuses on how the connections of the brain form and are changed by experience, has been appointed as director of the [Tulane Brain Institute](#) and the university's newest Presidential Chair.

Dalva, a professor in the Department of Neuroscience at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia and vice chair of research in the Department of Neuroscience at the Vicki & Jack Farber Institute of Neuroscience, will succeed Professor Jill Daniel, PhD, who has served as director of the Brain Institute since its inception in 2016.

Dalva will join Tulane in late February 2023.

“I am honored and enthusiastic to be appointed as a Presidential Chair and to be given the opportunity to guide the Tulane Brain Institute as its director,” Dalva said. “I believe that the best science is done at the intersection of new ideas, technology, people and challenges. The Tulane Brain Institute seeks to generate such an intersection, and I look forward to fostering its success in the Crescent City.”

Presidential Chairs are one of the top priorities for Tulane President Michael Fitts as he seeks to attract some of the world’s most renowned faculty members in areas such as biomedicine, coastal restoration, global health, nanotechnology and emerging fields of discovery. Presidential Chairs embark on a pursuit of teaching and research that crosses multiple disciplines and helps transform the world.

“Tulane’s goal is to be a world-leader in the ever-involving and increasingly important field of brain science,” said Fitts. “The recruitment of acclaimed scientists such as Matthew Dalva to lead the dedicated team at the Brain Institute is crucial in realizing tomorrow’s breakthroughs and advances in the study of the brain.”

Dalva's work focuses on how neurons form the connections that let them communicate. Individuals’ interactions with the outside world trigger changes in neurons that are critical for the generation of the connectivity in the brain responsible for higher cognitive function.

Research in the Dalva laboratory focuses on the mechanisms by which the growth of the brain, and experience-driven activity regulates the maturation and refinement of the essential building blocks of neural circuits.

“I am thrilled that Matthew will be joining us,” said Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Robin Forman. “He is a leader of a new generation of neuroscientists who are exploring neural dynamics at a molecular level. He is asking new questions, developing new techniques, and discovering insights that may point the way to new therapeutics. And he has an exciting vision for the Brain Institute, building on our current faculty and research strengths and positioning us to be a

leader in several areas of growing importance and excitement.”

Dalva’s work on the connections among neurons and how they form, grow and change, will likely lead to new understanding of disorders such as dementia, addiction and autism in which these connections are lost or abnormal. His research uses super-resolution imaging, cell biology, molecular biology and biochemistry to understand how mechanisms that regulate synaptic development and function are linked to pain as well as diseases as diverse as schizophrenia and Alzheimer's.

“Matthew has an exciting vision for the Brain Institute, and I look forward to our future under his leadership,” said Daniel, who chaired the search committee. Daniel will continue her research at the Brain Institute, where she is leading [a \\$14 million NIH study](#) that aims to understand estrogens, cardiometabolic health and brain aging on which she served as Principal Investigator.

The Tulane Brain Institute is an interdisciplinary research center bringing together faculty from the School of Science and Engineering, the School of Medicine, the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and the Tulane National Primate Research Center. Brain Institute faculty currently lead more than \$90 million in National Institutes of Health-funded research.

Dalva received his PhD in neurobiology in 1996 at Duke University, five years after graduating from Stanford University with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and philosophy. He did his post-doctoral training at Duke University Medical Center, and Harvard University Medical Center/Children’s Hospital.

Dalva served on the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine before joining Thomas Jefferson University as a faculty member in 2011. While at Thomas Jefferson, Dalva served as vice chair of the Department of Neuroscience and director of the Jefferson Synaptic Biology Center at the Vickie and Jack Farber Institute of Neurosciences.

His research has been published in such noted journals as *Science*, the *Journal of Neuroscience*, *Nature Neuroscience* and *Neuron*.

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