January 7, 2016

To the External Review Committee:

First, let me express my sincere appreciation for your service as external reviewers for the Georgia State University Neuroscience Institute (NI). We understand the demand on your time and very much appreciate your willingness to help. Your expertise and insights into the state of the Institute and its future directions will be very critical to our effort in formulating a strategy to move forward.

I have enclosed a Self-Study report by the NI, which provides a comprehensive summary of the state of the Institute consistent with the strategic directions specified in Georgia State’s current 10-year strategic plan. The NI has made very significant progress in several areas including the impressive growth of its undergraduate majors program. Importantly, we project strong future growth. The challenge will be how to accommodate the projected rapid growth in this program. The Institute’s graduate program has also seen very significant growth. Significant challenges remain, however, as to how to fund further growth through a combination of external research funding, fellowships and scholarships, state resources, private partners, and private and charitable donations.

In research, the behavioral neuroscience area continues to be a major strength of the Institute and holds the promise of continuous excellence. The Institute’s plan to strengthen and expand the molecular and translational areas is an excellent one. The NI was established to catalyze campus-wide research in neuroscience-related areas. In the behavioral neuroscience area, significant strides have been made. There remain excellent opportunities to expand into the molecular and translational areas through collaborations with other academic units. The NI has started working in this direction with significant grant-funded activities in collaboration with other units such as the Institute for Biomedical Sciences. A major challenge will be to find research space appropriate for cultivating cross-disciplinary research activities. The current tight funding situation at the federal level will probably be the new norm in the foreseeable future. Therefore, how the NI positions itself for further growth is a critical issue.

The Self-Study report also summarizes the Institute’s extensive outreach effort as an advocate for science and educating the general public of the importance of science. Your thoughts on their broader service role would be welcome.
The report also highlights challenges in faculty diversity in many aspects (rank, ethnicity, etc.), and in other areas. As we grow the NI faculty, your guidance on effective approaches to recruiting diverse faculty based on your experience would be of great value.

I look forward to your analysis and insights on the state of the Institute and its future directions.

William J. Long, Dean
College of Arts and Sciences