Rachel R. Sharp
Neuroscientist & Science Writer

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Professional Summary

Narrative-driven science writer and Neuroscience PhD Candidate passionate about strengthening bridges between research and our communities. As both a multi-disciplined scientist and community activist, I believe that scientists and community members are equal partners in driving societal change, and I aim to facilitate conversations that further these relationships. With proven expertise in translating complex research in neuroscience and genomics into clear, memorable, and actionable insights for broad audiences, I specialize in combining deep, hands-on research experience with direct outreach through powerful storytelling and editorial leadership.

Selected writing portfolio

"*Finding Humanity in Health Data*" | *American Scientist* 🔗   2025
     Interview-driven commentary exploring the integration of social context into health data systems

"*When Practice Makes Perfect: The Neurons Behind Skilled Movement*" | *The Pipettepen* 🔗   2024
     Interview-based profile of ongoing research on NDNF neurons and their role in motor learning

"*The Need for Diversity in Large-Scale Genetic Studies*" | *The Pipettepen* 🔗   2023
     Analytical commentary on demographic representation gaps in genomics and implications for health equity

Journalism and Editorial Experience

Contributing Author | *BrainPost*   2023—Present
- Distill dense, peer-reviewed research into engaging and accessible articles for a lay audience, focusing on practical takeaways and clear explanations of complex topics

Writer & Editor | *The Pipettepen*   2022—Present
- Author original, long-form articles that explore nuanced scientific topics through a narrative lens
- Uphold rigorous editorial standards by editing peer submissions to enhance clarity, narrative flow, and scientific accuracy for a graduate-level readership

Blog Scheduler, Translation Lead, and Editor | *NC DNA Day Blog*   2022—2023
- Pioneered and managed the blog's Spanish translation program, increasing translated content from 3 articles over two years to 17 in a single semester
- Directed the editorial calendar and coordinated a team of writers, editors, and translators to ensure a consistent and high-quality publication schedule

Research and Scientific Experience

Graduate Research Assistant | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill   2021 – Present
Principal Investigator: Dr. Michael Love

Project: The Effects of Social Risk on Genetic Liability for Bipolar Disorder
- Integrate genomic data, social risk surveys, and electronic health record codes, to investigate the relationship between genetic risk, social risk, and clinical development of bipolar disorder
- Communicate with neuroscientists, epidemiologists, and geneticists, to combine information from multiple scientific fields into one cohesive, interdisciplinary, research project

Project: Pipeline for Analysis of MPRA Data Across Institutions
- Developed pipelines to systematically analyze MPRA data across five international centers
- Organized and led cross-center meetings to develop pipelines and streamline communication

Bioinformatic Analyst | OU Health Science Center Core Facilities   Jan 2020 — Aug 2021
Principal Investigator: Dr. Kenneth Jones
- Independently produced custom scripts in R, Python, Bash, and other languages to process and analyze data from single cell and bulk sequencing projects
- Collaborated with over 20 Principal Investigators on diverse research projects, including glioblastoma metastasis, zebrafish developmental models, and the genetics of Type 2 Diabetes

Science Outreach and Leadership

President | UNC Neuroscience Student Council   2022—2025
- Acted as the primary liaison between 100+ graduate students and program administration
- Promote community through the addition of new neuroscience community programs, direct check-in protocols for first-year students, and facilitation of the annual retreat
- Synthesize student needs and program goals by writing the Neuroscience program qualifying exam, rewriting the Neuroscience program Annual Progress Review Reports, and facilitating feedback interactions between trainees and administration year-round

Monthly Research Group Leader | Human Functional Regulatory Genomics   2023—2025
- Plan, organize, recruit speakers for, and facilitate monthly trainee-focused meetings with presentations and discussions on topics in the field of functional genomics

Mentor and Science Communicator | Multiple Programs   2021—Present
- Develop and lead interactive workshops on science and communication for middle and high school students through programs like Culbreth Middle School STEAM Day and WinSPIRE UNC
- Demystify STEM careers for young learners through mentorship with Letters to a Pre-Scientist

Writing Assistant | OU Honors College   2018—2019
- Taught advanced written language skills to 25 students in various Honors College writing courses which aim to develop critical thinking and a broad worldview
- Assisted students in developing tools for persuasion, clarity, and emotion in writing

Education

PhD in Neuroscience | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill   Exp. Spring 2026
Certificate in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology • NSF Graduate Research Fellow

BS in Psychology | University of Oklahoma   Dec 2019
Summa Cum Laude (4.0 GPA) • Minor: Criminology • National Merit Scholar

Professional Development & Memberships

ComSciCon Triangle Workshop Attendee	2025
Science Communicators of North Carolina Society Member	2024—2025

Selected Honors and Awards

Genomics of Brain Disorders Conference Bursary Travel Award	2023
Best Poster Award	*IGVF Consortium*	2022
UNC Department of Neuroscience T32	2022
Big Woman on Campus Award	Campus-wide leadership and service	2019
Dean's Award for Outstanding Honors College Leadership	2019

Selected Publications and Presentations

- 8 co-authored publications in high-impact journals including *Nature Genetics*
- 3 oral presentations and 7 poster presentations across local and international conferences
- ASHG abstract reviewer and session moderator