Hello everyone! I am honoured to be a recipient of the Jonathan and Joshua graduate scholarship and to be able to join you tonight. I would like to start by thanking Bob, his family, and all of you for your invaluable support. As graduate students it is incredibly motivating to meet individuals interested in our work.

Our senses are how we learn about and connect with the world around us. Without us having to think about it, our brains can automatically ignore unnecessary information and focus on the important ones, this ability is called sensory filtering. Without this ability our brains would be very overwhelmed. For example, in this room, even with the clanking of utensils on plates and the chatter around you, you're still able to focus on what I'm saying. Often this ability to process incoming information is compromised in individuals with neurodevelopmental and neuropsychiatric disorders.

For example, if someone's phone alarm was to ring right now, some of us might be a little startled – we might flinch a little – but, for someone whose sensory filtering is compromised they might startle more strongly. And that's exactly what we study and do in our lab with our rats! We play the rats a loud noise and measure how much they startle, then we try to figure out what brain areas are affected in our genetic model that has compromised sensory filtering.

Once again, I would like to thank you all. Your generous efforts have made a great impact on the graduate student community at Western.