

# American College of Neuropsychopharmacology



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#### **President's Letter 2013**

## Securing our Future, Honoring our Past

David A. Lewis, MD

It is a remarkable honor for me to serve as President of an organization that for me has always offered the best of both science and friendships. For each of us, the members and activities of the College represent critical sources of information and motivation in our scientific pursuits. Our annual meeting brings together the best in clinical, translational and basic research, providing a rich source of new ideas, opportunities for building collaborations, and a venue for forming and sustaining friendships. In the coming year, we will face two ongoing challenges: 1) the pursuit of new approaches that will ensure the College's successful leadership in shaping the future of our field, and 2) the preservation of the core values that have defined us as a unique community of scientists and clinicians for more than half a century.

#### Securing our Future

Under the leadership of recent ACNP Presidents David Braff, David Rubinow, Eric Nestler and John Krystal, we have undertaken a number of initiatives to prepare the College for a vibrant and sustainable future that will enable us to pursue our fundamental mission with excellence. Council reformed and streamlined key areas of the College's activities including membership categories, criteria for membership, committee structure and the increased involvement of women and younger scientists. Each of these initiatives has met with success, but it would be premature either to rest on our laurels or to immediately undertake a completely new slate of initiatives.

The recent revisions in the ACNP's governing documents, policies and procedures have been directed at six goals, each of which deserves continued attention. *Each* of these goals is important; the following order of presentation does not reflect their relative priorities.

1) Enhance the value of the Annual Meeting for members and guests by ensuring a well-defined and transparent process for designing the Program. At least four aspects of the Annual meeting require continued attention and potential adjustments for future meetings based on membership feedback: a) designing the optimal mix of types of sessions, participants in sessions, and scheduling of sessions; b) creating more time for informal interactions; c) increasing the diversity of participating scientists; and d) stabilizing the meeting size at a level that facilitates interactions and permits all events to take place in one hotel.

- 2) Make the path to membership in the ACNP transparent and straightforward, and engage new members in the activities of the College. The Membership Task Force has generated a number of creative ideas to facilitate the integration of new members into the life of the College, and will continue these initiatives and will take on new responsibilities such as finding ways in which former Travel Awardees can be guided on the path to membership. The latest changes in the By-Laws, which provide flexibility in the number of individuals admitted as Associate Members or Members annually, is another step in empowering the Membership Committee and Council to work together for the best outcome of individual applicants for membership and for the College.
- 3) Facilitate career development for women and their participation in the ACNP. This goal will be pursued by continuing to work with the Women's Task Force to ensure that the charges to the Task Force are clear and that the resources to accomplish those charges are sufficient. In particular, we will seek ways to enhance the effectiveness of events and initiatives focused on women, and we will continue to encourage and support the involvement of women in all aspects of the College including admission to membership, advancement to fellow, representation in panels and plenary sessions, receipt of honorific awards, and participation in ACNP leadership.
- 4) Increase the diversity of our membership and meeting attendees. At the past two business meetings, the out-going Presidents have cited the criticism that the ACNP membership and meeting participants are "too frail, too male and too pale." As noted above, the Membership Advisory and Women's Task Forces have done a superb job in initiating new activities that are effectively addressing the first two criticisms. In the coming year, we will form a new Task Force on Diversity that will be charged with developing means to increase the participation of under-represented minorities in all activities and membership categories of the College. In addition, the Program and Membership Committees will continue to be instructed to consider diversity, including career stage, gender, race, and scientific focus, in their decision processes and in their proposals for activities within the College.
- 5) Further the dissemination of knowledge through Neuropsychopharmacology, the ACNP website and other venues. We have great confidence that Bill Carlezon and the new editorial group leading Neuropsychopharmacology will continue to grow the quality and impact of our journal. Initiatives that will make Neuropsychopharmacology an even more attractive and valued publication vehicle for the best work of College members will be considered over the next year. In addition, we are certain that Dave Sibley and team will continue to strategize for our website's high quality content, cutting-edge design and ease of navigation.
- 6) Promote long-term fiscal stability of the ACNP through the continued diversification of income streams, ensuring that all income sources are consistent with the stated standards of the ACNP, and through the prudent reduction of expenses. In the coming year, Council will work with Ronnie Wilkins, Sarah Timm, and the talented ACNP staff to conduct a systematic review of all ACNP procedures and policies. This review will identify ways to reduce staff effort and costs, streamline processes, and simplify the experience for our members and meeting guests.

### Honoring our Past

As our name indicates, we are a College...and there is value in periodically reflecting on what that means. While there are many facets to a college, the following four aspects, that have served the ACNP well for the past half century, are worthy of particular emphasis:

First, by definition, a college is characterized by a spirit of *Collegiality*; that is, the ACNP is a social group whose members seek to promote from each other the best in science, training and service.

Second, to effectively operate as a college requires *Civility*. In the words of Stephen Carter, civility is "valuing the 'we' over the 'me'" in all our interactions.

Third, as a college we participate in a *Community*. Together we pursue a goal...understanding the neurobiology of brain diseases and reducing their burden on individuals and our society...that is much larger than any one of us.

Finally, colleges engage in *Celebration*. We take the time to recognize and enjoy (if all too briefly) the contributions and accomplishments of our members.

In conclusion, I look forward to serving you over the next year, and working with you to secure a vibrant future for our College and to preserve our core values.