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It was a cool, rainy morning in the Phoenix desert on December 3rd when ACNP Council began to gather. Dressed in their cloaks and carrying lanterns, the leaders gathered around an old, oak table in a dark room. <Insert giggle!> I am always amazed at how many members think what occurs in Council is filled with secrecy. There is no secrecy involved. In fact, all ACNP Council minutes are posted on the members only section of the ACNP website so that our members can review those at any time. In the spirit of transparency, I thought I would provide a summary of several key issues that were discussed in December during our annual meeting. If this piques your curiosity and you want to read further, [please go here to read more](#).

The College has been very fortunate over the years to have had many wise leaders that made prudent financial decisions. The College has grown its reserves over the years. Since 2018, Council has taken the dividends and interest from the previous year to invest in our mission in the current year. Each year in December, Council evaluates current projects, determines if we want to continue funding those and evaluate new projects for funding. Much of our funding goes toward cultivating the next generation of researchers in neuropsychopharmacology. In fact, of the \$350,000.00 to \$400,000.00 in mission driven projects that Council funds each year, 54% of the funding goes toward travel awards/funding to our meeting. The College spends just over \$150,000.00 per year to bring past travel awardees back to the meeting. Additionally, the College spends approximately \$77,000.00 annually to bring under-represented minority awardees back to the meeting for multiple years after their travel award year. Council agreed to continue funding the ACNP URM Near-Peer Mentoring program that began in 2022. This program pairs URM research scientists that are too junior for a travel award with an ACNP member mentor who is close to their career stage. The pairs are offered monthly mentorship training during the year and

then a full workshop at the ACNP Annual Meeting. The goal of the program is to introduce under-represented minorities to the College and help them obtain a travel award and future membership by helping them become better mentees and mentors. Several of the other initiatives supported by Council are the [APA Research Colloquium](#), the [American Brain Coalition](#) with their advocacy and education efforts to public policy makers, the [Biomedical Research Awareness Day](#) (BRAD), and the [National Neuroscience Curriculum Initiative](#). These efforts have been supported since 2020 by Council. In December, Council agreed to begin supporting the [ALBA Network](#). This network was launched in 2019 by an international group of leading brain scientists involved in research, education, communication, and advocacy to promote equity and diversity in the brain sciences. ACNP will work in the coming year to conduct video interviews, diversity podcasts, diversity data collection, and ALBA/ACNP research award. It is fulfilling to see the College using funds to help support other initiatives and organizations that are working to carry out the same goals as the College.

Council also had robust discussion on a challenging issue facing many other non-profit professional medical societies today. How does an organization comment on political issues that may not directly impact the mission or the organization, but have an impact on many members values? After the Supreme Court ruling on Dobbs v Jackson, overturning Roe v Wade, and changing reproductive rights in some states, Council received a proposed statement from the Liaison Committee advocating for reproductive rights and the impact removing those rights can have on women's mental health. Council had surveyed the membership regarding their feelings about the statement drafted. We received 284 responses, which was only 21% of the membership. Of the responses received, 86% endorsed the statement, though there were passionate comments for the statement and against the statement. A number of the comments questioned whether the College should be making statements on political issues. There were also comments about where we should hold the Annual Meeting in light of state's ability to change laws. Council agreed to develop a policy statement on drafting future statements. A workgroup of Council was appointed, and the below policy was implemented.

Policy Statement on Commenting on Public Policy Issues

The principal mission of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) is to further research and education in neuropsychopharmacology and related fields by:

- *promoting the interaction of a broad range of scientific disciplines of brain and behavior in order to advance the understanding of causes, prevention and treatment of diseases of the nervous system including psychiatric, neurological, behavioral and addictive disorders;*
- *encouraging scientists to enter research careers in fields related to these disorders and their treatment; and*
- *ensuring the dissemination of relevant scientific advances in these disorders.*

Official ACNP statements related to public policy and social issues will only be generated if the statement is directly relevant to ACNP's mission and purpose. Specifically, such statements should review existing data on mental health that could guide policy, while also suggesting relevant future research.

The statement will now guide committees and Council in determining what the College should comment on. Additionally, Council plans to meet in March to further discuss the locations of the annual meeting.

One of the most exciting issues Council addressed in December was the appointment of the College's first Diversity Officer. Approved by the membership last year with our bylaws change, the Diversity and Inclusion Officer will ensure all decisions made by Council are through a lens of diversity and inclusion. The Diversity and Inclusion Officer will represent all members and prospective members from the underrepresented minority community, LGBTQ+ community, and those with disabilities. The Diversity and Inclusion Officer will be a voting member of Council and the Executive Committee. The Diversity and Inclusion Officer will be the Council liaison on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Membership Committee. The first Diversity and Inclusion Officer was selected by a vote of Council from nominations made by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee from a listing of Fellow and Fellow Emeritus Members who identifies as a URM, LGBTQ+, or someone with a disability. The second Diversity and Inclusion Officer will be elected by the full membership based on the criteria for officer elections outlined in Article XII, 3. Dr. Cynthia Crawford, ACNP Fellow, from California State University, was elected.

I hope this update provides a glimpse into the important issues being addressed by your Council. If this piqued your interest, please check out the minutes page on the website.