



***Cynthia Crawford, Ph.D.
Professor, California State University
ACNP Fellow***

An Interview with Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Cynthia Crawford, Ph.D.

Could you tell me a bit about yourself?

It's a hard question, but here goes... I am a biological psychologist and the proud mother of a smart, beautiful daughter. I like playing tennis and dancing, although I am terrible at both. I also like to read science fiction and am a hardcore fan of Kentucky basketball and LA Kings Hockey.

When did you join the ACNP?

Now, you are trying to get me to admit how old I am. I was a Travel Awardee long, long ago. I became an Associate Member in 2006 and a Full Member in 2013.

As a member of the ACNP, have you had the opportunity to interact with innovative thought leaders in the field of neuroscience or psychiatry?

Yes, I have. I work at a predominately undergraduate institution, so having the opportunity to talk with leaders in the field is the reason I wanted to be a member.

How has your membership in the ACNP put you in touch with the professionals who have shaped the field as it currently exists - and will enable you to be one of those who shape the various neuroscientific disciplines in the future?

Being a member of ACNP has allowed me to stay abreast of the changes in the field. The meetings have been important in keeping my research and teaching relevant, and they have also allowed me to be a better mentor for the students that I train.

The primary functions of the College are research and education. Do you feel the College offers investigators the opportunity for cross-disciplinary communication?

The one piece of advice I continue to tell myself is to 'keep moving forward.' There are so many setbacks and obstacles in science, but go forward, go boldly, and lift those around you up.

How about the opportunity to promote the application of various neuroscientific disciplines to the study of all forms of mental illness and their treatment? If so, how have these experiences helped your career?

I love the mix of clinical and basic science present at the annual meeting. As a basic scientist, it is important to understand current treatments and clinical conditions. I think sometimes basic science can get too enamored with techniques that have limited translational value. The information I have learned at the annual meetings has made me a better researcher and instructor.

Is there one tip or piece of advice that you have for readers on how they can help promote equity, inclusion, diversity, and justice in the scientific community?

My advice is to be nice and recognize that everyone wants to feel included and accepted.

Do you have anything else to say to the readers? I know you have been involved in the College's diversity efforts. Can you tell us about that?

I think ACNP has made tremendous strides in making the College a more welcoming place. I attended my first ACNP Annual Meeting as a Travel Awardee, and it was not a good time. I pretty much decided not to return to the annual meeting because I felt like I did not belong. I enjoyed the science, but I was uncomfortable the entire time I was there. Fortunately, I am stubborn and I decided that I needed the information and contacts I could gain from attending. I was willing to put up with the discomfort. I believe the College has made much progress in its diversity efforts. For example, increased outreach to universities that have historically not had many ACNP members but have more diverse populations will help expand the pool of diverse candidates for membership. Moreover, programs like the URM Near-Peer Mentorship Program make the annual meeting less isolating for BIPOC and other diverse groups. I know I have found the annual meetings to be much more enjoyable than I did a couple of decades ago.

This interview was conducted by Career Development Committee chair Shawn McClintock, Ph.D.



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