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Embracing Change while Keeping ACNP's Values and Culture Front & Center

“The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order.” –
Alfred North Whitehead

As ACNP continues to grow, one thing remains constant—our commitment to fostering a strong, inclusive community of the best brain and behavior scientists in the world. Change can be tricky (and let's be honest, sometimes confusing), but it's also how we evolve, refine our processes, and keep our culture vibrant and connected. As many of you see and feel at our annual meetings, ACNP has grown and is no longer the small intimate gathering of scientists on a beautiful beach in San Juan. The meeting has grown to over 2000 attendees and there is no way to make a 2000 person meeting an intimate gathering! I remember in my early days working with ACNP, Ronnie Wilkins said to me ACNP's growth is simple arithmetic. You add a base number of member slots each year in addition to those who leave membership and move to emeritus, you will have growth! While we all want to include the brightest new minds into the College, it comes with challenges. The size of our meeting has greatly limited the number of venues we can use in a warm location in December or January! Council has spent a significant amount of time over the last year looking at where we can limit the size of the meeting so that we are not meeting in a convention center with a large number of shuttles. Below are some of the changes that Council will institute with the January 2027 Annual Meeting in San Diego, California.

Associate Member Changes/Updates

- **Registration Deadline:** Associate Members will need to register by a set date after the poster proposal deadline (anticipated around September 22nd) to attend the Annual Meeting.
- **Bylaws on Annual Meeting Attendance:**
 - Pending membership approval, the attendance requirement for Associate Members will be removed.
 - *Proposed new language: “Associate Members do not have an Annual Meeting attendance requirement during their seven-year tenure as an Associate Member.”*
 - While attendance will not be mandatory, we strongly encourage Associate Members to participate whenever possible. The Annual Meeting remains one of the best ways to connect, collaborate, and grow to full membership status within the College.

Invitations to the Annual Meeting: Updated Policies and Definitions

- Associate Members will no longer be able to invite guests from the invitation banks.
- Full Members & Emeritus Members will be allowed one invitation for a guest until we meet the invited guest cap of 400. As a reminder, you must attend the annual meeting to invite a guest. Please get your invitation in early. We typically run out of invited guest invitations a few weeks prior to our poster submission deadline.
- Full Members & Emeritus Members will be allowed to:
 - **Obtain one General Invitation Bank guest invitation (cap of 50).** There are no specific requirements for this bank other than the new invited guest eligibility (please see below).
 - **Obtain up to two Special Invitation Bank guest invitations (cap of 150).** The guest must meet the requirements for the Special Invitation Bank to be eligible.
 - **There is no longer an invitation bank for early-career researchers.**

Invited Guest Qualification Changes:

After much discussion, Council has changed the qualifications for an invited guest. The goal is to open the meeting to those who are further in their careers and closer to becoming a member of the College. Beginning next year, invited guests must be at least 21 years of age and fit one of the following categories:

- At least 2nd-year post-doctoral fellow (MD or PhD) or 3rd or 4th year residents on a research track – *would qualify for the trainee rate only*
- Faculty at Instructor level (or similar) or above
- Federal scientist (e.g., NIH, NSF, FDA, ARPA-H, VA, DoD) considered to be equivalent to either criterion listed above
- Industry professional with demonstrated leadership/responsibility

*In order to qualify for the trainee registration rate, trainees are defined as individuals in their 2nd-year of post-doctoral fellowship (MD or PhD) or 3rd or 4th year residents on a research track.

The new invited guest requirements would not apply for non-member presenters on panels, mini-panels, and study groups.

Invitation Banks: Refreshed and Refined

As a reminder, full members are allowed one invited guest invitation to our meeting until the cap of 400 is reached. In addition to the one invitation, ACNP has several invitation banks to get additional qualified scientists to the meeting. Here are the upcoming changes:

- **General Invitation Bank** – This bank will be capped at 50 invitations (first come, first served). The bank is only available for use by full and emeritus members, not Associate Members. Full and emeritus members may use one invitation from this bank until the cap is reached.
- **Special Invitation Bank** – This bank will be capped at 150 invitations (first come, first served) for scientists who meet the qualifications for this bank further outlined below. This bank is only available for use by full and emeritus members, not Associate Members. Full and emeritus members may use up to two invitations from this bank until the cap is reached. ACNP continues its commitment to inclusivity by offering unlimited invitations for scientists who meet two or more of the criteria below reflecting disadvantaged backgrounds:
 - Were or currently are homeless
 - Were or currently are in the foster care system
 - Were eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program for two or more years
 - Have/had no parents or legal guardians who completed a bachelor’s degree
 - Were or currently are eligible for Federal Pell grants
 - Received support from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a parent or child
 - Grew up in a rural area or in a low- or middle-income country
 - Have/had significant social or physical challenges
 - ***International Scientists Only*** Were considered from a disadvantaged background from your country (if from or currently reside outside the U.S.)

Registration Fees:

- **Registration Fees:** Beginning with the January 2027 meeting, registrations fees will increase by \$35 per year for the next four years for the College to continue offering the same meeting experience members and invited guests have grown to expect.

As we prepare for the January 2027 Annual Meeting, please know Council is doing its best to balance growth, accessibility, and connection—ensuring that ACNP continues to be the best meeting in the field where attendees can connect and bring research to clinical practice. Change may be inevitable, but at ACNP, our commitment to sustainable growth while recognizing the important aspects of our culture remains front and center.