

# The Minority Task Force of ACNP

Richard De La Garza II, Anthony Ahmed, Victoria Arango, Carlos Bolanos-Guzman, Deborah Deas, Bankole Johnson, Gonzalo Laje, Francis Lotrich, Mauricio Tohen, Carlos Zarate, Jr.

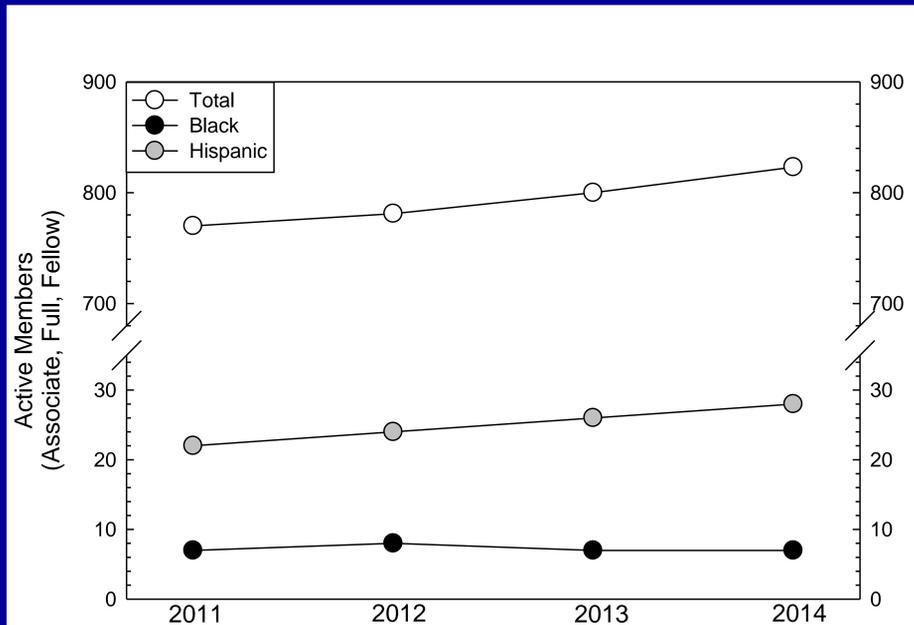
## BACKGROUND

➤ The Minority Task Force (MTF) was established during a meeting of ACNP Council at the end of 2012 by President David Lewis.

➤ **The initial charge for the MTF** included:

- 1) To develop statistics on past ACNP Minority Travel Awardees and do follow-up to determine where they are in the field to date, and
- 2) To investigate how to bring more underrepresented minorities (URMs) into the College and to the annual meeting.

➤ Our First Question: What does the current ACNP membership look like with regard to URM representation?" See **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** ACNP members (Associate, Full, and Fellow) for 2011-2014 shown as total (open symbols), and also by URM subgroups including Hispanic (gray symbols), and Black (black symbols).

*Note:* For 2014, there are 823 active members (Associate, Full, and Fellow) and of these only 7 (0.8%) self-reported being Black, 28 (3.4%) are Hispanic, 0 are Pacific Islander, and 0 are Native American. Those who did not report their race/ethnicity was only 6.3%.

*Note:* Data from Emeritus members does not brighten the picture since in 2014 there are 224 individuals in this category and among them there are only 2 Hispanics (0.9%) and 0 from all other subgroups, though there were a larger number who did not report their race/ethnicity (29%).

## The Importance of Diversification to ACNP

➤ Given that only 3% of the ACNP membership includes underrepresented minorities (URMs), the need for a MTF for ACNP is clear and the importance of diversification coincides with the initiative described by NIH to promote diversity in the biomedical research workforce:

*“The NIH has long recognized the need for greater diversity in the ranks of scientific researchers and supports programs designed to recruit, train, and retain scientists from diverse backgrounds underrepresented in the fields of biomedical and behavioral science research on a national level, including underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons from disadvantaged backgrounds.”*

## The Value of Diversification to ACNP

➤ Beyond need and importance, it is also critical to elucidate the value of diversification of ACNP, and this can be readily appreciated after consulting the NIH rationale for the same:

*“Increasing the pool of researchers from diverse backgrounds who are available to participate in NIH-funded research is an important aspect of research capacity building. The NIH expects efforts to diversify the workforce to lead to the recruitment of the most talented researchers from all groups, to improve the quality of the educational and training environment, to balance and broaden the perspective in setting research priorities, to improve the ability to recruit subjects from diverse backgrounds into clinical research protocols, and to improve the Nation's capacity to address and eliminate health disparities.”*

## Progress Being Made – ACNP URM Travel Awardees

➤ From 2011-2014, 33 of 218 total awardees (15.1%) were URMs. That's a low percentage, yet improvements are already underway since for 2014, 12 of 58 (**20.7%**) travel awardees are URMs.

➤ The success rate for this most recent year may reflect increased efforts to encourage URMs to apply for travel awards (2014 - **39 URM applications** versus 2013 - 7 URM applications).

## Room for Improvement – ACNP URM Travel Awardees

➤ Only 2 of the 65 (3.1%) URM travel awardees from 2008-2014 are current Associate or Full members.

*Note:* This outcome may simply be a function of these individuals choosing to not apply for membership, but it serves as a *call to action for the MTF* to track the progress of URMs and to encourage them to apply for membership.

➤ By comparison, during 2008-2014, four times as many non-URM travel awardees are current Associate or Full members (31 of 257; 12.1%).

## Short-Term Initiatives

1. Develop a breakfast meeting at the 2014 ACNP Annual Meeting for those interested in discussing and promoting diversity. Invitees will include ACNP URM travel awardees, ACNP URM members, and any young URM investigators interested in this topic.
2. Identify URMs now and offer them mentorship throughout this and subsequent years.
3. Encourage URM associate members to apply for full membership and URM full members to apply for promotion to Fellow.

## Long-Term Initiatives

1. Inform ACNP members on a regular basis of the importance of including URMs in the College.
2. Create and maintain a database that tracks progress of URMs throughout the different levels of the College over the years.
3. Track acceptance and rejection rates for URMs who submit Panel, Mini-Panel and Study group proposals for the Annual Meeting. Current data show **high success rates for URMs with 12 submissions and 8 accepted (75%) for 2012 and 18 submissions and 14 accepted (78%) for 2013**. These outcomes are comparable, if not better, than overall acceptance rates – specifically, in 2012 and 2013, the committee reviewed and accepted 52% and 64 % panel and 73% and 50% of mini-panel submissions, respectively.
4. Increase URMs representation on key Committees, including Program, E & T, and Membership. At present, there are 247 members on committees and task forces, of which **10.5% are URM members**.
5. Improve the visibility of URMs by recognizing their successes and nominating them for ACNP honorific awards (Axelrod, Efron, Elkes, Hoch, and Killam). For 2014 there were 18 total nominees for these awards, and **0 (zero) of those nominated were URMs**.

## The Pipeline Challenge

1. To realize success, we must act earlier to attract young scientists to the College (e.g., create a travel award for an undergraduate interested in the field or develop a summer research program for URMs).
2. We should consider NIH efforts along these lines, for example awards for “Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-Funded Workforce” program.
3. The MTF plans to reach out to other scientific organizations who already have URM neuroscientists among their ranks with accompanying successful travel award programs (e.g., Society for Neuroscience, National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse) and to collaborate with NIH staff to increase URMs that we can recruit to ACNP.