

Public Education & Communication Committee

Annual Report

November 2008

Part 1 — Charter Updates

Below are the responsibilities of the Public Education & Communication Committee as defined in the approved charter. Please provide updates on activities since the last annual meeting in green.

Advise

- Advise the Council of the Society for Neuroscience on print and electronic products, and services that promote the concepts and explain the progress and promise of neuroscience research.
 - With significant content expertise contributed by PECC members and more than 150 field experts, completed the 2008 *Brain Facts* update. A significantly improved Web presentation is in the works to maximize use of the download option, which is the most cost-effective way to present. Given growing costs, staff are working to prioritize audiences that receive *Brain Facts*, focusing primarily on K-12 and neuroscience educators.
 - Continued production of *Brain Briefings*, two-page lay-friendly newsletters on a variety of neuroscience topics. Beginning in 2009, the topics are being integrated with content from Neuroscience Core Concepts. We have also put their publication on a school-calendar schedule, taking a break during summer months and during December.
 - Two issues of *Research & Discoveries* have been completed and distributed to congressional offices and relevant health agencies: Light Molecules, and Brain Plasticity and Alzheimer's disease. These new publications chronicle basic science discoveries up through their clinical applications, and are also available online. Two more are in production for winter and spring 2009.
 - Neuroscience in the News, a weekly capture of news articles pertaining to neuroscience, continues to be available online.
 - Annual meeting news releases, along with lay language summaries (renamed "Hot Topics") were for the first time provided to reporters in a keyword-searchable format on flash drives, and were also available in the password-protected area of the SfN web site. This should improve its year round utility and maximize the return on investment of staff time in this resource.
 - The FY2008 SfN annual report contained three sections geared to the public on neuroscience research: Technology & Neuroscience, Environment & Neuroscience, and Law & Neuroscience. Each section contained a Science in Society piece, outlining the relevance of the topic to the public, and a Science in Progress piece, detailing the current state

- of research in the topic area.
 - The *Neuroscience Resources for the K-12 Classroom* CD-ROM was updated with new information and redesigned with advanced search capabilities. It was released at Neuroscience 2007.
 - NERVE, the Neuroscience Education Resources Virtual Encycloportal launched on 9/24/08. The site provides a gateway to hundreds of online resources and is geared towards K-12 teachers and members who engage in public education and outreach.
 - The *Neuroscience Core Concepts* initiative is nearing completion. A pamphlet outlining the concepts, fundamental principles and other resources has been completed and will be released at Neuroscience 2008. Additionally, a Web version of the concepts will also be available, providing easy on-line access for both members and the general public. Feedback about the concepts will be collected and monitored by PECC. A second print run is scheduled for early 2009. Distribution to the teaching community will be ongoing.
- Serve as a source of information to Council on education issues pertaining to neuroscience education in the K-12 sector and our members' efforts to engage in public education and outreach.
 - Support has been continuously provided to educators and members requesting the *Neuroscience Resources for the K-12 Classroom* CD (over 7,500 distributed since Fall 07), *Brain Facts* and other SfN resources utilized in schools and other education venues such as museums and science centers.
 - Assessment of the 2007 Member Survey provided insight about the interest and participation level of SfN members in public education and outreach engagement. Further evaluation will be conducted at Neuroscience 2008 by data from all registrants regarding Brain Awareness activities.
 - A new outreach publication has been created and will be sent to all SfN-education constituents (Brain Awareness Week mailing list, Neuroscientist-Teacher Partner Program database, those with interest in public education and outreach according to the 2007 Member Survey and Neuroscience 2008 Demographic Data). The publication is an electronic communication tool ("e-newsletter") which provides direct access to all of SfN's education-related announcements and opportunities, and highlights public education efforts of SfN members. The first e-newsletter will be disseminated just prior to Neuroscience 2008 and will promote new education resources and related opportunities at the meeting.
 - PECC has assisted incoming SfN President Carew with plans for a presidential initiative that will focus on education and prominently position SfN as a catalyst in the use of neuroscience research to positively impact K-12 education.
- Advise Council on potential strategic partnerships with other professions/associations to accomplish the goals of the SfN strategic plan.

- Partnership with the National Health Museum continues as development plans progress. PECC is engaged in developing a model for a neuroscience module that will be prominently featured in the museum and as part of the on-line cybermuseum.
- An alliance has been forged with the Johns Hopkins University Neuro-Education Initiative. Collaboration between the Society and this effort will assist our efforts to maintain dialogue regarding the infusion of neuroscience research findings into teacher preparation and practice.
- See “Represent” section below for additional education partnerships.
- Advise Council on the messages the Society should communicate through the membership to a variety of public audiences.
 - On the heels of leadership input in winter 2008, staff has actively moved to improve the messaging architecture of public communications. For the first time, annual meeting public messaging was developed, reviewed and approved by executive committee and is being used in a consistent and compelling way on all annual meeting outreach. *Neuroscience Core Concepts* are also being employed to this end, recognizing the amount of input and review the document received as the “essential principles of neuroscience” that the public should know.
 - The Neuroscientist-Teacher Partner Program grew over the past year by 33%. This represents members volunteering to conduct outreach with K-12 teachers throughout the nation on a request basis.

Represent

- Represent SfN in its partnership relationships with the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT), the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives (DABI), and other educational organizations.
 - To reach high school teachers, advertising opportunities were utilized in the NSTA journal highlighting SfN’s educational resources. For 2009 ads have been secured in both NSTA’s and NABT’s journal publications (winter issues).
 - Participation in NSTA’s annual national conference (March 2008) included four exhibitor workshops and a well-positioned exhibit in the exhibit hall that received significant traffic. Thousands of SfN education materials were distributed. PECC members staffed the booth, President Marder visited the event, and 4 SfN member-teacher teams presented the workshops, which were very well attended and received high evaluation ratings.
 - SfN continued its partnership with the Science Olympiad organization by sponsoring two events at the 2008 National Tournament and assisting in the content development (in regards to neuroscience) for the 2009 tournament. PECC was represented (on stage) at the national tournament in Washington, DC in May. The Society was introduced to a crowd of 5,000 people at the closing ceremony and presented our award to the champions.

- Partnership with DABI continued on the International Brain Bee program. SfN co-sponsored the two regional competitions organized by DABI in winter 2008. (NYC and Washington, DC) Additionally, worked together in partnership to secure internship opportunities for champions of the national competition (U.S. and Canadian Champs). DABI took on complete responsibility for collecting reports from Brain Awareness Week 2008, and in doing so, cited SfN as a partner in the campaign.
- Facilitate communication between the Society and media, including the transfer of new scientific knowledge developed by SfN members to the media, K-12 teachers, education leaders, advocacy groups, elected officials and the public.
 - Public: Published and distributed *Brain Facts* and *Brain Briefings*.
 - Elected officials: The two new *Research & Discoveries* publications are advocacy oriented, bringing neuroscience discoveries to light for elected officials and demonstrating the importance of continued federal support for basic science.
 - Media: Science Journalism Student Award, now in its third year, brings two science journalism students to the annual meeting. They are mentored by science journalists on-site, receiving hands-on training in reporting on scientific findings presented at an international scientific meeting.
 - Media: the annual meeting news releases highlighted the work of some 65 scientists who presented in a series of press conferences, accompanied by the Hot Topics publication, which highlighted 500 abstracts deemed newsworthy by the Scientific Program Committee.
 - K-12 Teachers: Launch of the NERVE portal has opened a new channel for sharing the latest neuroscience research with the education community.
 - Education Leaders: The presidential initiative that is being planned for 2009 will specifically target education leaders as well as teachers and will focus on current neuroscience findings relevant to educational pedagogy and practice.
 - All groups: Significant traction has again been achieved as the 2008 Brain Awareness Campaign unfolded around the world.

Manage Activities

- Build the capacity of K-12 educators to integrate neuroscience content in science teaching activities through collaborative activities.
 - NERVE Web site provides access to neuroscience education resources.
 - NSTA convention: Conducted workshops and reached thousands of teachers through the exhibit. Numerous SfN members present, interacting directly with teachers.
 - Neuroscientist-Teacher Partner Database serves as a catalyst to bring neuroscience directly to educators.
 - Disseminated Neuroscience Education CD, supported professional development workshops and conferences in school districts using SfN resources.

- Provided a suite of materials on-line for teachers wanting to participate in Brain Awareness Week.
- Execute initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of SfN members and chapters in public education and outreach, such as Brain Awareness Week.
 - New travel award established in partnership with the Faculty of Undergraduate Neuroscience (FUN) for students active in Brain Awareness Week.
 - Conducted a letter-writing campaign to chapter representatives of NuRhoPsi (undergraduate neuroscience honor society) encouraging Brain Awareness participation and offering SfN education resources.
 - Annual Brain Awareness event at Neuroscience 2007 included SfN incoming president and Richard Morris as key speakers. The event drew a large crowd of younger SfN members.
 - The expansion of Theme H posters at the annual meeting to include education and public awareness was requested by PECC in an effort to reward members active in public education by having high visibility of their efforts in the main poster session at Neuroscience 2008.
 - Provided PECC member and staff involvement in the Chapter Workshop which was launched at Neuroscience 2007.
- Increase involvement of SfN members and chapters in public education and outreach.
 - PECC education activities were highlighted during the year in Neuroscience Quarterly with greater frequency and prominence. (Impact of this effort is difficult to measure.)
 - Communication with members through the Chapters Bulletin was ratcheted up in an attempt to prominently feature education-related activities and opportunities.
 - 33% increase in members participating in Neuroscientist-Teacher Partner Program.
- Catalyze a shift in the professional culture of SfN members and chapters to more consistently include and embrace public communication, outreach, and education about neuroscience.
 - Science Educator Award is now in its fifth year.
 - Feature article on neuroscience education secured from the 2007 Science Educator award recipient. Publication in the Journal of Neuroscience is scheduled for November 08.
 - Question about member engagement/interest in education and outreach has been prominently included on the annual meeting registration form.
- Provide an electronic gateway via the SfN Web site to educational resources that will foster the integration of neuroscience content in education activities.
 - The education resources section of the SfN Web site has been enhanced and is being updated regularly.
 - The education CD-ROM was mounted on the SfN Web site for easy download.
 - NERVE was launched in September 2008. User data is being captured.
 - Electronic e-mail blasts have been employed for targeted groups,

- providing ready, convenient access to on-line resources and information.
- Facilitate collaborative activities with the Committee on Animals in Research that will deliver a balanced message on the use of animals in biomedical research to educators and the public.
 - In light of the increased number of attacks against researchers, Committee on Animals in Research chair Jeff Kordower was an active spokesperson on animal issues, including an interview for an Associated Press article that was widely picked up, and op-eds in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Neurology Today*. SfN's Best Practices document was the resource referred to in these communications. Messages on the use of animals in research were developed to help convey the importance of responsible animal research.
 - Publicize to the media new neuroscience findings presented each year at the SfN annual meeting through a program of structured press briefings.
 - A series of press conference at the 2007 annual meeting resulted in 165 original stories and more than 350 clips. A dozen press conferences are in the planning stages for Neuroscience 2008. A substantially more proactive media outreach effort to promote annual meeting scientific findings is being conducted for 2008, including editorial meetings with SfN leadership and key reporters in NY and Washington, media pitching in advance of the meeting, and better tools for reporters to cover the meeting off-site: teleconferencing for press conferences, filmed press conferences available online, and news release and Hot Topics provided in a searchable format.
 - Publicize new neuroscience findings published throughout the year in scientific journals.
 - As of September 30, 13 press releases on studies in *The Journal of Neuroscience* were drafted and distributed.
 - Promote interesting neuroscience research on topics of interest to the public through newsletters, brochures, the SfN Web site, and other print and electronic products.
 - *Brain Briefings* were produced on these topics:
 - 2008**
 - November – Mirror Neurons
 - October – Cochlear Implants
 - September – The Bilingual Brain
 - April/May – Epilepsy
 - March – The Neural Regulation of Thirst
 - February – Diabetes, the Brain, and Cognition
 - January – Smoking and Schizophrenia
 - 2007**
 - December – Beyond Marijuana: Endocannabinoids and Therapies
 - November – Appetite and Food Intake
 - October – Gambling and Risk Taking
 - *Research & Discoveries* and *Brain Facts* were produced and distributed.
 - *Brain Facts* revision for 2008 was completed.

- Respond to media inquiries on neuroscience topics.
 - Public Information staff responded to media inquiries, recommending member experts for interviews and facilitating interviews with leadership to speak on behalf of SfN.
 - The on-line Expert Directory was substantially retooled and improved.
- Empower SfN members to engage in public dialogue and provide them with the tools to do so.
 - SfN's numerous educational and informational resources are available to members on the Web site.
 - The recent Member Survey indicated a significant portion of the membership expressed interest in public education and outreach.
 - The Brain Awareness campaign continues to be the flagship effort to engage members in public dialogue. It continues to be promoted heavily.

Monitor

- Monitor trends in K-12 science education and curricula.
 - PECC has been provided ample support from public education staff in this regard. Regular communication is circulated between staff and committee members to specifically share current 'hot' issues, trends and initiatives of interest in science education and K-12 education overall.
 - One outcome of note relates to the popularity of brain-related topics in education and our ability to secure a slot for Tom Carew as one of the invited keynote speakers at the 2009 National Science Teachers Association convention next March in New Orleans.
- Oversee the vetting of the scientific content of the Society's published materials by panels of scientists appropriately knowledgeable about the specific field discussed in the materials.
 - Published materials are carefully vetted by scientists with relevant expertise: *Brain Facts*, *Brain Briefings*, *Research & Discoveries* and press releases for journal studies and annual meeting content are all rigorously reviewed.
- Maintain a media resource directory of neuroscientists who are knowledgeable and at ease when speaking to science writers
 - The password-protected on-line Expert Directory was substantially retooled and improved to support media interest in neuroscience. It contains information on 150 scientists who are available for interviews, and includes photos, profiles, and publications.
- Coordinate with the Professional Development, Mentoring, and Development Cluster to provide media training to our membership.
 - General media training is provided to those members that participate in annual meeting press conferences. Broader media training for members is not available at this time. Staff work individually, whenever possible, with interviewed scientists to discuss and prepare for the interview.
- Review the compilation of media stories about neuroscience in order to measure how effectively the intended messages are getting across to the media and whether they are being communicated appropriately to the public.
 - PI staff periodically reviews clips to assess tone and effectiveness of

message. More extensive analysis is planned for 2009.

- Evaluate each year's program of press releases and press conferences for effectiveness.
 - With a revised press release format and expanded media outreach efforts for Neuroscience 2008, the effectiveness of press conferences and press releases will be thoroughly analyzed. New analysis was introduced for the 2007 annual meeting clips review, providing more insight into reach and impact of stories. Those findings have been integrated into planning for 2008 and there will be a continuous quality improvement effort to review and enhance our effectiveness.

Coordinate and Communicate

- Coordinate and strategize with Government and Public Affairs Committee, the Committee on Animals in Research, as well as the Membership and Chapters Committees about suggestions for how to best use the Society's educational materials to inform policymakers and educators, and about new materials and products that should be developed and produced.
 - There is enhanced coordination and strategizing between Public Information and both GPA and CAR. In particular, media activities related to the increased number of attacks by animal extremists were well coordinated in 2008, resulting in op-eds in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Neurology Today*, as well as numerous media interviews, including an Associated Press article that was widely picked up. On the heels of the Capitol Hill Day, GPA committee leadership was also interviewed for ABCnews.com.
- Communicate with other Society groups such as the Program Committee and the editorial board of *The Journal of Neuroscience* as needed to help generate suggestions about key scientific discoveries, ideas and topics that should be targeted for communication to the media and the public.
 - Public Information continues to coordinate with both *The Journal* and Program Committee. New outreach for *The Journal* this year includes distributing This Week in the Journal (drafted by the editor's staff) along with the weekly Table of Contents, and a co-hosted (SfN and *The Journal*) press reception at Neuroscience 2008. Program Committee members played an enhanced, key role in the newsworthy abstract selection process for Neuroscience 2008. During abstract sessioning, PC members highlighted 500 abstracts as potentially newsworthy.
- Coordinate activities with the other committees in the Public Outreach Cluster, which includes the Committee on Animals in Research and the Government and Public Affairs Committee. The chair will serve as the committee's representative on the cluster steering committee.
 - The cluster worked very closely this year in evaluation of a potential special lecture topic. Unfortunately, several, including Sandra Day O'Connor, had to decline due to scheduling conflicts. Cluster chairs also reviewed the annual meeting messaging document, which includes references to all public outreach activities discussed at the annual

meeting.

- The *Neuroscience Core Concepts* initiative represents a joint effort. Cluster-level planning and review enhanced the effort to produce a high-quality end result useful in a variety of venues.
- Communication among the cluster chairs at Council meetings and via conference calls as needed provides the vehicle for ongoing dialogue.

Part 2 — Other Updates

Please provide updates on any other activities of the committee that are not already covered in the charter.

- PECC has continued and extended the tradition of operation by subcommittees. All six subcommittees have been active and highly productive, acting independently but checking in with the committee as a whole for input and evaluation.
- The PI/PE(CNL) merger has been very successful. Integration of the two components is achieved through the discussions by the committee as a whole, both at face-to-face meetings and in conference calls. Individuals with primary interests in PI or PE often make contributions to PE or PI. Much of this success is a result of the people involved. The staff is terrific and does a great deal to promote this integration. The Committee on Committees has been supportive of recommendations for new members.
- Staff and PECC members were integrally involved with NIH as they launched comprehensive planning efforts to articulate educational initiatives that could compliment the Neuroscience Blueprint effort.

Part 3 — Questions for Cluster Steering Committee / Council

Use the space below to propose questions for discussion by the Cluster Steering Committee (if appropriate) and/or Council.

- How can we improve our process?
- How can we shift more of our dissemination of education and outreach activities to the web? This is an increasingly widely used basis for reaching the public.

Part 4 — Other Comments

Use the space below for any other comments.