



**ENTOMOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF AMERICA**
SHARING INSECT SCIENCE GLOBALLY

ESA Agenda Brief

January 2021 ESA Governing Board

Date: February 25, 2021

To: ESA Governing Board

From: Early Career Professionals Committee

Title: Request for ECP Representative position on ESA Governing Board

Presenter: Andrew Short, Governing Board Representative to the ECP Committee

Motions Requested:

To approve the ECP Committee's request to initiate a process that will result in the establishment and election of an ECP representative to the ESA Governing Board.

Background:

The Early Career Professionals (ECP) Committee (formerly known as the Student Transition and Early Professionals (STEP) Committee) was established to represent the needs and interests of student transition and early professional members as they transition to full ESA members. While it is popular to say that these significant membership categories represent the future of our professional society and the field of Entomology, they also contribute to the present. Students and ECPs provide the society with an increasingly diverse perspective, bring fresh ideas and innovation to the table, and impart a high level of energy and enthusiasm to any program in which they are involved. Our committee has been charged each year with representing the perspectives and experiences of the ECP membership, as well as providing relevant programs to help develop, recruit, and retain the next generation of ESA leaders.

After a decade of increasingly important committee work, development of programs and services, and advocacy in support of ECPs within ESA, we believe that it is time to request a formal ECP representative on the ESA Governing Board (GB). This position would allow the 'voice' of the Society's ECPs to be included in important discussions and decisions at the highest level of organizational governance, which would reflect to the ECPs that they

are an important segment of Society membership. More than just being heard, however, this position would give ECPs the opportunity to directly contribute to the overall vision and 'big picture' planning of the Society, while also offering valuable insight into Society governance and better understanding of what it means to be a leader in our organization.

In support of this request, we would like to highlight the following arguments:

1. Three years ago, former ESA President Dr. Robert Weidenmann et al. (2018) published an article (<https://academic.oup.com/ae/article/64/3/176/5098342>) in the American Entomologist that explored the changing makeup of the Society. In short, Dr. Weidenmann found that an examination of ESA's membership 'life cycle' reflects challenges in retaining student and ECP members along the path leading to full membership, with notably higher attrition rates among women and people of color. The 10-year data summarized in the article runs through 2017, which shows that this retention problem is a continuing issue that ESA must grapple with. Even then, the data highlighted that ESA needs to conduct additional research to determine how to better engage students and ECPs, and to gain their input and ideas in order to help strengthen and move the Society forward. In light of the events of 2020, we consider this need to be even more urgent, as our Society's members face unprecedented personal and professional challenges that impact everything from health and well-being to financial stability. **This new position would ensure that someone on the GB has the perspective of a current ECP member when addressing the critical challenge of ECP membership and retention challenge.**
2. While the ECP Committee acts as a voice for ECPs in the Society, the reality is that ECPs do not currently have direct input, a vote, or a 'seat at the table' regarding the discussions and decisions made by the GB. ECPs are not able to provide real-time input on matters discussed during these meetings that directly affect them as the upcoming generation of scientists. The ECP Committee is very grateful for the opportunity to be included in the annual ESA summer strategy meetings; however, when the GB meets throughout the rest of the year, ECPs are unfortunately not directly represented. This position would not only guarantee that the ECP perspective is represented, but would also give ECPs in general greater insight into how the GB operates. For most ECPs, the activities of the GB are akin to a 'black box', and very few of us have even a basic understanding of how decisions are actually made. **This new position would serve as a direct link between the GB and the ECP Committee, allowing the Committee to better interact with the priorities of the GB, to have greater insight and input into the decision-making process, and to be better prepared as future leaders of our society.**
3. A common argument that has been made against the inclusion of an ECP representative on the GB is that ECPs can be elected to almost any position throughout ESA. ECPs are encouraged to run for existing branch and section positions on the ESA GB, but history suggests that ECPs are unlikely to be elected to fill these roles. A review of all ESA elected positions from 2015 to 2019 found that ECPs have been nominated for various positions over the years, and a relatively small

number have been elected (Figure 1). When digging deeper, however, we find that no ECPs were elected to national level positions during that period (Figure 2). As a result of the very nature of a professional organization like ESA, we believe that ECP candidates will *a/ways* be at a severe disadvantage when running for these elected positions in the Society. First, this is because it is an almost impossible task to network enough within the first five years after graduation to successfully compete with someone who has been networking every year in the Society for the past 15-40 years in the same branch or section. In the end, individuals usually vote for the person they know the best. Second, there is likely an inherent bias towards older, more established candidates for such leadership positions. Even in the event that an ECP candidate were to build the networks and name recognition that might lead to being a viable candidate for a leadership role, many often assume that younger candidates lack the experience, wisdom, or time to serve in such a role. Others believe that younger candidates have not ‘paid their dues’, so to speak, and are less deserving of such positions when compared to more senior members. Regardless of the actual reason (or reasons), the evidence has shown that ECP candidates face an almost insurmountable hurdle when it comes to being elected to national level positions within the Society. **This position would increase the diversity of perspectives and representation on the GB, which would benefit from the valuable insight of ECP members who are on the forefront of social change.**

Figure 1: 2015-2020 ECP Demographics and Overall Election Success

Year	ECP Member Count	Total Member Count	% of Population	# ECPs Nominated	Total Nominations	% ECPs Nominees	# ECPs Elected
2015	558	7012	8%	0	16	0%	0
2016	525	6298	8%	6	32	19%	2
2017	680	6930	10%	3	34	9%	2
2018	695	7028	10%	2	39	5%	0
2019	721	7189	10%	6	32	19%	3
2020	917	6875	13%	10	56	18%	2

- Average ECP Member Count = 683
- Average Total Member Count = 6888
- % of Population = 10%

Figure 2: 2016-2020 ECP Election Success Breakdowns

Position Type	# ECPs Nominated	Total Nominations	% ECPs Nominees	# ECPs Successfully Elected
All (National, Branch, Section)	25	222	11%	9
National	1	45	2%	0
Branch	11	96	11%	3
Section	15	68	22%	6

4. A precedent has been set for the addition of an ECP representative to the ESA GB with the addition of a Student Representative, which was established in 2009. This position has been enormously successful in bringing new ideas forward, in addition to giving the youngest entomologists a voice in the governance of their profession. As a critical demographic to the future success of ESA, it seems only logical that ECPs should be afforded the same consideration that students have, especially given the rationale above. In fact, it may make even more sense, given the immediacy with which decisions by the GB will impact the careers of ECPs. Like students, ECPs are brimming with enthusiasm to support their profession, and want to help make it an organization that lifts up all people regardless of background. We believe that such an addition would only benefit the Society and support the growing need for volunteers to drive the priorities established by the GB. **The argument for this position is based on the precedent of the Student Representative and would support the Society's growing demand for volunteers.**

We appreciate the GB's time and consideration in helping to give ECPs that voice and input in their professional society.

Proposition

As with all the other elected GB positions, the ECP representative on the GB would serve a 3-year term. And like the Student Representative, this position would be elected only by the current ECP membership of ESA to ensure that this important demographic has the main say in determining who represents their interests. In addition, the ECP Representative to the GB will also serve on the ECP Committee and be a liaison throughout the year between the GB and the ECP Committee, communicating the latest progress that the committee is making, any actions that may affect ECPs from the GB, as well as give a voice to any needs by the ECPs.

We understand that any change to the governance structure of the ESA GB will require a change to the bylaws, which will need a member vote.

Proposed Timeline

In particular, we are suggesting that the GB approve a motion to initiate the process of appointing an ECP Representative on the GB. We envision the following timeline, while recognizing that circumstances may dictate changes to it:

<i>Mar 2021</i>	ESA GB Reviews ECP Proposal and accepts the motion to move forward
<i>Apr-Jun 2021</i>	ESA Solicits member feedback on the proposed bylaws change during a virtual 'Presidential pop-in' or 'state of the society webinar.'
<i>Jul 2021</i>	Include proposed changes in bylaws proposal for vote in ESA 2020-2021 elections

Nov-Jun 2022 If change is successful, ECP Committee seeks nominations for ECP rep on GB

Jul 2022 Election of ECP Rep on GB during 2020-2021 Society elections

Nov 2022 ECP Rep starts new position on GB

Relationship to Strategic Plan:

This proposal is directly related to ESA's strategic principle of (1) having the social responsibility to develop ALL of its members. In addition, this is indirectly related to principle on (3) realizing our profession's full potential by increasing ESA's influence, because in supporting the most diverse, inclusive generation that entomology has seen, we will be bringing untold visionary leaders into the fold who would have otherwise been excluded.

Financial Implications:

The financial implications are expected to be less than \$2,000 per year. Additional costs would be adding one additional participant to the summer Governing Board Meeting (including participation costs and travel) and the November Governing Board Meeting (participation costs) would be required each year in order to allow for the ECP representative to attend all in-person GB meetings.