

June 12, 2019

TO: Governing Board
FROM: Rob Wiedenmann, Chair, Linnaean Games Task Force
RE: **Recommendations of the Linnaean Games Task Force**

MOTION

The ESA Governing Board approves the recommendations of the Linnaean Games Task Force.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, ESA received member feedback concerning the name of the Society's student quiz competition, the Linnaean Games.

The competition is named for Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish naturalist known as the father of modern taxonomy. His standardization of binomial nomenclature was a pivotal point in the history of biological science, and his name lives on as the credited authority in the names of many species. However, in the description of *Homo sapiens* as a species, Linnaeus named four "varieties" of human and ascribed to them anthropological and cultural stereotypes considered inappropriate and offensive today.

Presented with the concern that this aspect of Linnaeus' legacy might make the Linnaean Games less welcoming to minority participants, and given the Games' importance to the student experience in ESA, the Governing Board formed a task force to engage the membership and explore the question of whether an alternative name and/or logo for the competition is warranted.

TASK FORCE DEVELOPMENT AND DATA GATHERING

ESA President Michael Parrella appointed a five-member task force led by Dr. Rob Wiedenmann, an ESA past president. The task force convened in September 2018 and developed a plan to gather member input.

An open member comment form was made available from October through December 2018, and more than 200 members provided comments through the form. At the same time, all ESA student members from 2017 and 2018 were surveyed to ensure that student input in particular would be gathered. The survey was sent to 2,055 student members, and 224 completed the survey, a 10.9% response rate.

Task force members carefully considered every piece of member input. Given the heightened emotions surrounding the issue and the importance of providing a welcoming environment for all ESA members, the task force felt it was inappropriate to make decisions based solely by tabulating comments. To ensure that all data would be weighed and acted on fairly, the group used the decision-making process detailed in the book *Creating Great Choices* by Jennifer Riel and Roger Martin of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

A draft report of the task force's findings was released to the membership for comment on February 27. An open member comment period was held through April 25. During that time, ESA requested member feedback through the ESA eNews and Branch Meeting town halls; emails were also sent to the respondents to the original member comment form and student survey (for respondents who chose to provide their email addresses) to encourage them to read and respond to the draft. The task force then

met again in May 2019 to consider the input received on the draft recommendations and finalize its report for the Governing Board.

As noted in the February 27 draft of this report, student survey respondents were not asked to provide information about their ethnicity. Member commenters raised concerns during the February-April 2019 comment period about whether the lack of such a question might have masked concerns from minority students. To address this, staff blended the student survey data with demographic data in the ESA database, keeping individual respondents anonymous. Ultimately we were able to identify the ethnic background of more than 85% of respondents and re-analyze the student survey results with that additional information. Respondents were 65% Caucasian, 23% non-Caucasian, and 13% unknown. For comparison, the overall ESA student member population in 2017-2018 was 59% Caucasian, 28% non-Caucasian, and 13% unknown.

FINDINGS

Several key themes and values were expressed in member comments and student survey results:

- Many members expressed a strong interest in maintaining traditions within the Society and in continuing to value and learn from history.
- At the same time, other members expressed concern over the possibility that even one person might feel excluded from the Games because of its name, and they expressed strong alignment with inclusion of all entomologists as a value important to ESA.
- The majority of respondents indicated a preference for retaining the name “Linnaean Games.” In the open member comment form, 68% of respondents preferred keeping the name unchanged, compared to 26% who preferred changing the name and 6% who did not indicate a preference. In the student survey, 65.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the name “Linnaean Games” is appropriate, compared to 18% who disagreed or strongly disagreed that the name was appropriate.
- Some students expressed that they found the Games unwelcoming as a participant (4 Caucasian respondents and 3 non-Caucasian respondents) and as an attendee (1 Caucasian respondent, 1 non-Caucasian respondent, 1 respondent of unknown ethnicity). In the student survey itself, none of the students indicated in verbatim comments that the reason they felt unwelcome was related to the name of the Games; it is possible that their feelings stemmed from other factors involved in the Games or even at their universities. (Note that ESA did receive one email from a student member indicating that they felt unwelcome at the Games because of the name; this comment was mistakenly left out of the original draft of this report that was provided to the membership for feedback).
- The primary reasons cited by students for not participating in the Games were lack of time or the lack of a team at their university. Caucasian respondents gave lack of time as their top reason and lack of a team as their second most common reason, while in non-Caucasian respondents the order of those responses was reversed.
- Some members noted that the games are not taxonomic in focus, but the name “Linnaean Games” implies that they are: as one commenter wrote, “the games are bigger than just taxonomy.”
- Multiple members and respondents to the student survey suggested that the Games could use a facelift, particularly with regard to the logo, which some respondents found old-fashioned or not up-to-date with modern illustration and logo styles.
- Multiple members and respondents to the student survey suggested that this conversation should be used as a learning opportunity, to help members of the Society better understand the history of the discipline and the effects of historical racism on the development of the science.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Input from the membership pointed to two key considerations: honoring the traditions of the Games and ensuring the Games are inclusive. Although some members were concerned that students might feel unwelcome because of the name of the Games, the task force heard from only one student who said the name of the Games made them feel unwelcome and a limited number of students overall who said they found the atmosphere of the Games unwelcoming. However, the task force was concerned that the student survey results showed that non-Caucasian students were less likely to have participated in or attended the Games, most commonly because their university did not field a team (in the case of participating in the Games) or because they had not attended an ESA meeting or did not have time to attend (in the case of attending the Games). The task force felt that this showed that ESA has opportunities to make the Games more inclusive of minority participants.

The significant member passion and engagement identified through this process made it clear that ESA members care a great deal about the Linnaean Games. This indicated to the task force that ESA has an opportunity to build on the history and traditions of the Games and an obligation to use that supportive energy to promote learning, inclusion, fairness, and engagement among members.

After discussions as well as studying the members' input, the Linnaean Games Task Force recommends keeping the name "Linnaean Games." The task force does not ignore the concerns about Linnaeus's mistaken naming of human varieties. Science advances by replacing outdated interpretations with better explanations, and contemporary science reflects the rejection of Linnaeus's human classification. Many of his contributions to science are still valid today, but his interpretation of humans is discredited because he was wrong. The Games do not celebrate Linnaeus's views, but acknowledge his role in science. Rather than dropping the name and risk forgetting the issue, this is an opportunity to teach about racism in science and how it inhibits progress. The task force suggests that emphasizing the Games' traditions and history should be accompanied by highlighting the contributions of historically underrepresented scientists and bringing attention to the effects of historical racism in science. As the Games move forward, the task force also recommends using the Games to heighten community-building and inclusion among all students, particularly students from historically underrepresented groups. The recommendations include: learning from history, renewing the Games, and community building.

Learning from history. Many member comments emphasized the importance of learning from history and from the entomologists whose work contributed to our modern understanding of the discipline. The task force recommends that ESA undertake **an active effort to raise awareness of the history of entomology and encourage discussion of historical racism and its effects in the sciences.** Some ideas that could be part of this effort include:

- Hold an open call for Games questions with a focus on historical entomologists from underrepresented groups.
- Solicit proposals from potential Founders' Memorial speakers who could honor entomologists from underrepresented groups.
- Develop Linnaean Games questions with an added focus on Founders' Memorial Award honorees.
- Develop a feature article to be published in *American Entomologist* on historical racism and entomologists from underrepresented groups.
- Develop and highlight in the Annual Meeting program a Lunch and Learn session exploring historical racism relative to current ESA initiatives to increase diversity and enhance early-career membership.
- Develop posters celebrating ideas and figures from entomological history, including entomologists from underrepresented groups, for display at national ESA meetings and other venues.

Renewing the Games. The task force recommends using the opportunity created by discussions around the name of the Linnaean Games to **update and renew the Games while honoring their traditions and past winners**. Ideas that could be considered include:

- Develop a new, modern logo that can be widely used to promote the Games.
- Hold an open call for additional Games questions on all aspects of entomology to strengthen the pool of questions available to the Gamesmasters.
- Create a web-based “Hall of Fame” honoring past winning teams.
- Develop team banners to be used at Branch and national level and passed on to future teams.
- Have teams introduced at competitions by past winners, to emphasize the history.
- Promote a social gathering at the Annual Meeting to connect past and current players.

To help implement such changes, the task force recommends that the ESA Governing Board begin a conversation with the Branches regarding formalizing the ESA Linnaean Games Committee to encourage collaboration and put additional support and energy behind the Games. The task force envisions a committee with one representative from each Branch’s Linnaean Games Committee as well as an International Branch representative, but details should be worked out in cooperation with the Branches. If such a committee is formed, the task force will share all of the comments it has received about potential improvements to the Games as a resource for the new committee.

Building community through the Linnaean Games. The amount of member input and passion around the Linnaean Games clearly demonstrated that the Games have had a great impact on Society members and have the power to make an even greater impact moving forward. As inclusion is a key value of the Society, the task force recommends that ESA actively work to **make the Linnaean Games into an opportunity for inclusion for all students**. Some ideas that could be pursued include:

- Present to the Council of Entomology Department Administrators (CEDA) on the importance of diversity within Games teams and CEDA’s role in ensuring a welcoming approach to recruitment.
- Collaborate with CEDA as well as professional societies focused on underrepresented groups, such as SACNAS, to develop strategies to identify and recruit student participants.
- Collaborate with ESA Branches to identify small schools or non-Land-Grant schools that might have interest in participation in the Games.
- Create opportunities for volunteerism and participation in the Games beyond membership in a team, for students who are unable to commit to joining a team or whose university team is full.