

Membership Committee

Committee Members: G. Cameron, S. Carroll, E. Finck, M. Gannon (Chair), J. Hanson, M. Haynie, D. Rogers, R. Stevens.

Mission:

The Membership Committee tracks current membership trends in the Society and is involved with both membership recruitment and retention. In addition, the committee works with Allen Press to correct membership bookkeeping problems that arise.

Information Items:

(1) Recruitment

This committee has been examining both recruitment and retention for a number of years. At present, our recruitment numbers seem stable. We are bringing in about the same number of new members, year to year, as we have in the past. We are not seeing a great change in these numbers over multiple year periods. Many of these individuals are student members, recruited by current members bringing in their own graduate and undergraduate students and exposing them to what the Society can offer in terms of such things as research and professional development.

(2) Retention

We are, however, seeing a reduction in members of the Society in terms of retention. While there always has been a certain amount of turnover, we are now experiencing loss of a higher number of current members than previously experienced.

Our assessment indicates that active Society members, those who attend the annual meetings each year and are involved in committee work and the Governance of the Society, are not at significant risk for loss. They understand the intangible benefits of membership in ASM. These include a first rate meeting where contacts are made, ideas exchanged, new relationships established, the roll the Society plays in the Scientific Community and how they, as individuals, contribute as members of ASM. This includes somewhere between 20 and 25% of our current members.

Information gathered from those who are leaving reveals several reasons for the decision. These include A) members who come to the meetings occasionally or not at all and want to know what it is they are paying for with their dues, or B) members who were subscribers to the Journal who can now get it elsewhere for free, or C) a combination of A and B.

Those individuals point out that they feel they are getting little for their membership that they cannot get elsewhere for free. For example, anyone can attend our meetings and non-members pay exactly the same registration fees that members pay. At the meeting, non-members can do most everything members can do except vote at the Members Meeting or hold office. This

includes making contacts, forging relationships, attending papers, and exchanging ideas.

This Committee undertook the task of attempting to identify the tangible benefits that a member receives from ASM. At present, the list of tangible benefits of membership exclusive to members includes:

1. Eligible to hold office and/or serve on committees in the Society.
2. Eligible to vote in elections (only if you attend the annual meetings).
3. Eligible to be nominated for Society awards (although some are open to non-society members).
4. Student members can apply for various grants in aid.

(3) Recommendations

We recommend that the Society assemble a complete list of membership benefits that we can promote to both potential and current members demonstrating the benefits that accompany membership dues. In addition to this benefits list, establishing other tangible benefits may go a long way in both recruiting and retention of members.

We urge the Board to consider the following points as potential member benefits that could be offered:

Annual non-member registration fees for the ASM meetings that are greater than the rate for members, by at least the cost of regular membership dues.

Provide an **easy** mechanism for all members to participate in both the nomination and election of officers.

Consider increased page charge costs for nonmembers in the Journal of Mammalogy, and wave them for ASM members. At least one author would have to be an AMS member to request that page charges be waved.

Make better use of current technology to communicate with our members. This includes timely updates to web pages, and incorporating the use of Twitter and Facebook for communication. Other societies, such as The Wildlife Society, the Society for Conservation Biology, and the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation make use of these outlets for regular communication with members. Members of those societies that also belong to the ASM have indicated they are very pleased with receiving communications through those outlets, and in fact would rather receive them through this medium than email. Such communications would allow the ASM to reach a large number of our members quickly and on a regular basis, and may also have use in publicity and exposure for the Society. An examination of the followers of these societies on Twitter, for example, shows that they are being viewed by individuals

connected to news outlets.

Lastly, we feel that getting members to annual meetings and involved in ASM goes a long way to keeping them as members. Many individuals we approached indicated they do not go to annual meetings often because meetings are in locations that are out of the way, costly to travel to, and have little interest for other family members. We feel that holding meetings at destinations attractive to members and their families for vacation as well as attending the ASM Annual Meeting would be of significant benefit in retention.

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,
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