

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

## Updated December 2020

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The ACE Policies and Procedures Manual is meant to establish a standard that guides how we conduct ourselves as an organization including how we work, interact with others, and manage the business of the organization. The policies and procedures contained in this manual are in keeping with the ACE Constitution, mission, values, and goals.

ACE is committed to providing the highest level of programs and member benefits. This document is meant as a guide to day-to-day management for leaders and members of the organization. This manual may be amended by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

## **Policy I: Statement of Organizational Values and Ethics**

The following values and ethics are meant to guide the operations and decisions of the organization and are applied equally to all members, committees, groups, and the board of directors.

### **Section A: Values**

We value:

- High standards of quality in all our work.
- Honesty, integrity, accuracy, and fairness in our professional relationships.
- The rights of free speech and free press.
- Diverse cultures and backgrounds and the richness they contribute to our profession and organization.
- Fair, open, and equitable treatment of all people.
- Practices that ensure conflicts of interest do not influence the quality and integrity of our work. When such conflicts occur, they are disclosed to our audiences.
- Ongoing cooperation and collaboration between academic professionals and communication practitioners.
- Research in communication theory and practice that adds to the body of knowledge about our profession.
- Mentoring support for our members and our discipline's student organizations.
- Career-long learning to sustain our professional growth and development.
- Our important role in advancing the public's knowledge and understanding of agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences.

### **Section B: Ethics**

- The board of directors and all members shall act in the best interests of ACE as a whole. Board members serve for the benefit of the entire ACE community, and shall at all times strive to do what is best for the membership as a whole.
- No member shall willingly misrepresent facts to advance a personal cause or influence the ACE community to advance a personal cause.
- Members shall use their best efforts at all times to make reasonable decisions that comply with the ACE Constitution and other governing documents, and to be familiar with such documents.

- Members shall hold themselves to the highest standards as representatives of the organization.
- Members shall at all times work within the organization's established management framework and refrain from unilateral action.
- The board shall conduct business in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order, relevant laws, and the organization's governing documents. Board members shall abide by decisions duly made, and shall not act contrary to such decisions.
- Members shall conduct themselves professionally at all meetings, including board meetings, annual meetings of members, and committee meetings. Differences of opinion must be expressed in a respectful and professional manner.

The ACE logo may be used on programs or products that the organization endorses or otherwise supports. Use of the logo must be approved by the ACE board. The entity that uses the logo will provide documentation of the product with the logo as a follow up to the event/activity. If program evaluations are available, the requestor should also submit those to ACE.

## **Policy II: Governance Policy**

### **Section A: Board of Directors**

ACE is governed by a board of directors which will consist of five elected officers and six elected directors. The board is led by the officer team, which includes the president, president-elect, vice president, treasurer, and past president. Responsibilities of the board members are described in the ACE Constitution. There will be a director for each of the following areas of responsibility:

- Member Services
- Professional Development
- Marketing & Membership
- Learning Communities
- Research
- Retirees

There are six non-voting, appointed leadership roles not considered members of the board: ACE Curator; Journal of Applied Communications (JAC) editors; Development Officer; ACE Representative to Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)/Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP) Communications & Marketing Committee; and ACE Representative to Journal of Extension (JOE). Duties of the development officer, curator, ECOP/ESCOP rep and JOE rep are found in Policy II, Section B. Duties of the JAC editors are found in Policy VIII, Section A.

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### **1. Board Participation**

Board members are expected to attend all board meetings and conferences in person, via phone conference, or using other communication technologies. Any board member who expects to miss a meeting will contact the ACE president in advance. The ACE president will contact a board member who misses two meetings over the course of two years for reasons unexcused by the president, or who otherwise is not fulfilling the duties of office. A board member's position may be vacated by a vote of the ACE board.

Board members should exhibit the following:

- Strong facilitation and group dynamics skills
- Ability to lead, engage, and influence others
- Ability to communicate clearly, listen to, and elicit input from others
- Experience with and knowledge of other volunteer or professional development associations
- Ability to work effectively as a team member
- Basic management knowledge, such as the ability to understand a budget, strategic planning skills, and the ability to convert strategies to actions to move the organization forward
- Ability to, and a commitment from their employer to, fulfill the time and travel commitments needed to perform the role
- Commitment to mentor new officers and directors taking leadership roles
- Be a member in good standing for at least four consecutive years

## **2. Conducting Board Business Electronically**

Although official business is normally conducted through face-to-face meetings and telephone or web conferences, business may be conducted electronically when rapid response is required. The president will determine if the board must respond quickly to a situation, and address the issue electronically. However, procedures for conducting board business by email must ensure that board members enjoy the same rights as they do in a face-to-face meeting.

When board business is conducted electronically, the president will use the ACE board email list to announce the subject to be acted upon, making it clear in the subject line that the message pertains to official board business and requires a timely response. In presenting the matter, the president will specify the timetable for board action. All further messages from the president and from board members will be sent to the entire board, not to the president or individual board members, so all members will receive them. Motions, seconds, and discussion will be conducted under the same rules as followed in face-to-face meetings, with the stipulation that the president must ensure that adequate time (usually at least 24 hours) elapses at each step of the process for board members to read and respond to email messages. All electronic votes must be included in the previous board meeting minutes.

## **3. Board Vacancies**

The steps to fill a Board vacancy are detailed in the Constitution.

#### **4. Qualifications for the Officers (Vice President and Treasurer)**

It is recommended that nominees have ACE experience such as having been or currently serving as a board member, learning community leader, or standing committee chair. Members must be informed of the desired qualifications when the call goes out for nominees. Candidates must have been members in good standing for four consecutive years. Having a working knowledge of ACE and its policies is essential to being a good officer.

#### **5. Removal of Board Member for Cause**

On the recommendation by the president, the ACE board may vote to remove a sitting member or director-elect for not performing his or her assigned duties or for no longer being eligible to serve.

#### **6. Appointment under Special Circumstances**

In some circumstances, the normal board nomination and election process fails to identify a candidate or leaves a position vacant for too long. The president needs to be able to take action to avoid the loss of critical input and perspective on the board. The president may appoint board members under unusual or compelling circumstances. The appointment may be the entire length of a term or to finish a term, depending on the position and circumstances. The president will identify and contact a qualified member and forward the name and rationale to the board. The board will review the rationale and approve such an appointment by a simple majority vote in a timely manner. The resulting appointment will then become effective immediately.

#### **7. Retiring Directors**

According to the ACE constitution, only active members may serve as directors (except in the case of the retiree director). Therefore, a director who retires while in office may serve out the calendar year(s) while they are still an active member.

### **Section B: Committees, Learning Communities, and Appointed Representatives**

The ACE board should discuss the direction and goals of committees for the upcoming year at the summer board meeting. Soon after the annual conference, the ACE board will communicate to committees any new or revised goals and specific directives.

#### **1. Committees**

Committees are assigned important tasks. Members serve terms of office as established by the leadership team of each committee. Some committees are established for a specific purpose with a limited time of service. Membership on these committees is open to anyone appropriate for the task, including board members. The ACE board appoints chairs and board advisors to each committee. Current board members will provide leadership for or serve as advisors to specific committees, reporting back at the monthly board meeting about progress.

Board advisors work with committees to ensure success. They monitor committee productivity and progress toward pursuing ACE priorities. Setting reasonable goals and

showing progress toward these goals are key factors. If this does not occur, the ACE board advisors need to make changes.

The organization has standing committees, and the president or board can appoint an ad hoc committee at any time. Standing committees and board advisors include:

- Member Services – Member Services Director  
Goal: To increase member engagement and communication
- Marketing and Membership Director  
Goal: To increase membership
- Annual Conference Committee – President and Professional Development Director  
Goal: To create a high-quality educational program that encourages and attracts attendance
- Journal of Applied Communications Editorial Board – Research Director  
Goal: To disseminate high quality research-based articles to expand the knowledge base of members and others in the discipline.
- Development Fund Committee – Development Officer  
Goal: To oversee the Development Fund's ongoing activities
- Nominating Committee – Past President  
Goal: To recruit and engage quality leaders for the future of ACE
- Awards Committee – President-elect  
Goal: To maintain the highest standards for C&A and other awards conferred by ACE
- Learning Community Chairs – Learning Community Director  
Goal: To foster communication and collaboration among learning communities

Committee chairs should understand their assignment and meet regularly with their members to fulfill their goals. Progress should be made during the year to fulfill the expectations of the president and the board in carrying out the committee's work and goals.

Committee chairs are expected to submit reports when requested by the ACE board and year-end reports at the summer board meeting.

Committee chairs who do not fulfill their duties over the course of a three-month period will be contacted by the president. Together, they will discuss whether the chair should step down from that position.

## **2. Learning Communities (LCs)**

Learning communities are board-endorsed, self-assigned networks of members with interests in a particular communications subject or medium. The following LCs are represented in ACE:



- Academic and Research
- Diversity
- Electronic Media and Photography
- Instructional Design and IT
- Leadership & Management
- Marketing
- Media Relations and Writing
- Publishing and Graphic Design
- Social Media

Leadership of an LC is open to any LC member. Membership in the LC is open to anyone in ACE with an interest in the concerns and domains of the LC. Chairs are elected by members prior to the annual conference. This allows incoming leaders to make plans to attend leadership training sessions at the conference or online, and encourages continuity in planning.

Each LC decides its own leadership structure. However, the suggested procedure is to elect a vice chair-elect via email or other means before the annual conference. The vice chair-elect typically will serve one year, then advances to vice chair and chair in successive years. LC officers may be elected to serve additional terms.

Learning community chairs lead the LC's meetings and attend all LC leader phone/web conferences. If they cannot attend, they will contact the LC director in advance, and ask the vice chair to represent the LC.

Learning community chairs who do not fulfill their duties will be contacted by the LC director. Together, they will agree on a plan to increase activity and/or improve their working relationship. If inactivity continues, or if the working relationship does not improve, the LC director will contact the other members of the LC leadership team to determine a plan of action. The LC director may recommend a change in LC leadership.

### **3. Appointed Representatives**

#### **a. Development Officer**

The ACE president, with the approval of the board, will recruit and appoint an ACE development officer whose duty it will be to provide recommendation for sponsorship, grants, and fundraising opportunities and manages the recruitment of annual and conference sponsors, as well as to chair the Development Fund Committee.

#### **b. Curator**

The ACE president, with the approval of the board will recruit and appoint an ACE curator whose duty it will be to maintain and share with the membership the archives of ACE. The curator will provide a written report of activities to the ACE board for the summer board meeting, and at other times as requested. The term is three years.

### **c. Journal of Extension (JOE) Representative**

The ACE president, with approval of the board, will appoint the ACE representative to the Journal of Extension (JOE) board. This representative serves a three-year term, and is appointed every three years. The representative will provide a written report of activities to the ACE board for the summer board meeting, and at other times as requested. ACE will not provide any financial support to this representative. The representative must have authorization and support from their institution to attend JOE board meetings.

### **d. ESCOP/ECOP Representative**

The ACE president, with approval of the board, will appoint a representative to the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP)/Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP) Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC) for a three-year term, with an option for one-term renewal. The representative will provide a written report of activities to the ACE board for the summer board meeting, and at other times as requested. ACE will not provide any financial support to this representative. The representative must have authorization and support from their institution to attend CMC meetings.

## **Policy III: Finance**

ACE uses membership dues, conference registration, awards fees, sponsorships, donations, and other funds to carry out organizational goals. The ACE management office handles the budgeting, payment, and documentation of finances, and presents monthly finance reports to the treasurer.

## **Section A: Budgeting and Revenue**

### **1. Budgeting**

ACE Annual Budget

- The fiscal year for ACE shall be July 1 – June 30.
- The ACE management office will work with the treasurer to prepare and present an annual budget for board approval prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.
- The goal of the annual budget (including revenue and expenses) is to provide quality services to the membership and generate some profit to ensure the future financial health of the organization.
- The board will approve the budget at the summer board meeting.
- The ACE management office and treasurer must seek board approval for any expenditures that may go over the approved budget or are not represented on the approved budget.
- Contracts that commit future funds of the organization, such as hotel contracts, must be submitted to the ACE board for approval and signed by the president or president-elect.
- ACE's investment accounts will be reviewed annually.

Requesting Funds for Specific Initiatives

- Members or committees should plan ahead for future expenditures and submit requests for consideration in the next annual budget. If members or committees

desire funds outside of the annual budget, they can submit a request to the appropriate director who will present it to the ACE board. The request should detail the activities or initiatives that require funding, and the amount needed. The board will vote on the request at a board meeting.

## **2. Revenue**

ACE shall work to secure revenue from the following sources:

- Membership dues
- Professional development opportunities
- Conference registrations
- Sponsorships
- Donations
- Webinars open to nonmembers

Sponsorships and donations shall supplement revenue from membership dues. A committee, led by the development officer, may work with the annual conference chairs to solicit and secure sponsors with designated levels and benefits.

## **3. Webinar pricing policy**

ACE Learning Communities provide quality professional development opportunities for members throughout the year. In most instances, professional development is delivered via webinars. Webinars, and ability to view archived recordings, are a member benefit. There is also an opportunity to promote ACE via professional development opportunities to individuals and groups outside of ACE that have an interest in communications trends, techniques, and best practices.

To maintain value for ACE members, while at the same time promoting ACE and providing another revenue stream, we offer ACE webinars to non-members for a fee. The strategy behind this initiative is three-fold:

1. Increased revenue for ACE.
2. Increased visibility for ACE with communications-focused audiences.
3. Increased opportunities for ACE membership recruitment.

This policy establishes a consistent set of guidelines for implementation, pricing structure, and revenue collection.

### **Implementation**

- Webinars are initiated and produced by one or more Learning Communities, members, or the ACE professional development director.
- The webinar organizer is responsible to inform the presenter(s) of the pricing structure in advance.
- If the presenter(s) does not agree to present in this format, the webinar will be offered only to ACE members.
- The ACE management office will coordinate webinar registration for members and non-members.

- The organizer will work with the ACE Learning Community Director, membership and marketing director, professional development director, ACE management staff, and others as needed to promote the webinar with enough advance lead time to generate interest among both members and non-members.

### **Pricing Structure**

ACE is committed to providing affordable, quality professional development for all.

- Webinars are a primary member benefit, and as such are offered to members at no additional cost beyond the regular membership fee.
- The standard ACE webinar pricing is \$25 for non-members.
- At its discretion, ACE may choose to offer a webinar at no charge to all, increase the non-member price, or offer discounts.

### **Revenue Collection**

- Non-member participants register and pay via credit cards by link provided through the ACE website.
- The funds (less credit card fees) are deposited into the ACE general checking account and treated as unrestricted funds to support ACE's annual operating budget.

## **Section B: Accounting**

### **1. Bank Account**

ACE shall have a checking account that will hold enough funds to cover regular expenses. The goal is to pay bills on a timely basis.

### **2. Expenses**

Expense reimbursements for staff, board members, retiree directors, and others will be at U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) rates for expenses such as mileage. Receipts will be submitted for pre-approved expenses. A form will be provided and submitted for approval by the ACE management office.

## **Section C: Investments**

ACE has three restricted investment accounts: the Hermance Fund, the Development Fund, and the Holly Young Fund. ACE also has a general investment account. The ACE treasurer and board shall oversee the investment accounts with the intent to:

- Protect the principal and the purchasing power of the endowed funds
- Invest the endowed funds for long-term growth and earnings
- Provide sufficient liquidity for the funds to assure that resources will be available to meet emergencies.

ACE will follow an investment policy that seeks the highest overall return on investment that can be achieved while assuming a moderate level of risk.

### **1. Hermance Fund**

The Hermance Fund is named in memory of Gary Hermance, 1992 ACE president. Florida ACE members contributed profits from the 1993 Miami ACE conference toward this account. The restricted fund supports the Hermance speaker at the annual conference. The selected speaker should represent Hermance's character and personality with creativity, innovation, determination, humor, or inspiration. Donations may be added to the Hermance Fund.

- The Hermance fund shall be considered to have \$20,000 endowed. Funds over the \$20,000 may be used to support the annual Hermance speaker.
- If the fund falls below the \$20,000 endowment, a board vote must be held to secure sponsorship of the annual Hermance speaker or temporarily forego the annual speaker to build up the fund.

## **2. Development Fund**

### **The ACE Development Fund and Its Purpose**

The ACE Development Fund was established to:

- Foster the professional development of ACE members and other communicators
- Encourage outstanding achievements in professional communications
- Extend information about communications careers
- Advance knowledge of communication processes, techniques, and ethics

As an ongoing source of support for programs that advance the professional development of ACE members, the Development Fund is a financial asset in perpetuity for ACE. It is an identifiable body of funds intended to grow from contributions and from returns on wise investment of its financial assets.

The Development Fund shall be considered to have \$50,000 endowed. Funds over the \$50,000 endowment may be used to support professional development grants each year. (See Policy VI: Awards and Professional Development Grants.)

ACE development funds may be used for:

1. Enhancing the professional development of ACE members and other communicators
2. Recognizing outstanding achievements in professional communications
3. Extending information about communication careers to young people
4. Advancing the basic communication processes, techniques, and ethics.

These uses may include, but are not limited to:

1. Speakers or facilities at the annual international meeting or regional or special meetings
2. Study grants for Rising Star (formerly Pioneer) Award winners
3. Special workshops to develop leadership or communication skills
4. Travel support grants to ACE meetings
5. Development of promotional or educational materials (videos, exhibits, publications, etc.) that reach beyond ACE members
6. Graduate fellowships for ACE members

7. Stipends for educational sabbaticals for ACE members who are not eligible for university faculty sabbatical leave
8. Travel support for ACE members to attend selected non-ACE symposiums related to communications or communications technology
9. Communications research grants

### **Sources of Funding**

The ACE Development Fund may receive undesignated gifts, bequests, donations, grants, or other funds from individuals or organizations committed to similar objectives. The principal of these undesignated funds shall to the extent possible remain in the Development Fund in order to generate interest to support ACE activities and objectives.

Sponsor funds may be provided to ACE for very specific purposes as designated by the giver. The principal of these funds may be expended for the purpose designated rather than accruing interest in the Development Fund. Any excess funds remaining after the designated activity or program shall be placed in or remain in the Development Fund.

ACE shall accept no gift, bequest, donation, grant, or fund that infers an endorsement of a product, service, or activity of the donor. A statement to this effect shall appear on appropriate ACE materials, including meeting programs and sponsor lists.

### **Fund Oversight**

ACE shall maintain an ACE Development Fund to support both short-term and long-term ACE activities. A key objective shall be to provide an endowment whose principal may remain intact, with interest used to underwrite the cost of approved ACE activities.

The ACE board of directors is ultimately responsible for the direction and policies that govern the ACE Development Fund. The board has delegated to the Development Fund Committee the responsibility for overseeing the Development Fund's ongoing activities.

Those ongoing activities fall under four main areas:

1. **Promotion.** The Development Fund Committee will promote awareness of the Development Fund and its programs to ACE members. The committee will encourage members to contribute to the fund, apply for grants from the fund, and participate in other programs supported by the fund.
2. **Programs.** The Development Fund Committee will review grant applications that draw on the fund, and then recommend recipients for grants to the board. The committee will be responsible (with input from the board) for establishing the rules and policies for disbursing funds (including materials required for the application process, deadlines, and reporting) as well as eligibility requirements for applicants.
3. **Fundraising.** The Development Fund Committee will develop and implement programs to increase the fund's endowment.

- 4. Investment.** The Development Fund Committee will be responsible for investing the fund. The committee will regularly review investment performance, provide appropriate reports to the board of directors when requested but at least once annually. This way, the board can determine the amount of money from earnings and contributions available for program purposes, and authorize ACE management staff (or designee) to disburse funds and effect other necessary financial transactions. The ACE management office (or designee) will carry out the actual investment transactions necessary to effect the decisions of the board, and will prepare reports and arrange disbursements as directed by the Development Fund Committee.

### **Composition of Committee**

The Development Fund Committee members will serve three-year terms, with staggered appointments or reappointments. Standing committee members will consist of the development officer, treasurer, and professional development director.

Ad hoc members will be recruited and appointed by the Development Fund Committee as deemed necessary on an annual basis. Any ACE member in good standing is welcome to serve on the committee. Those who are invited to serve should have interest, knowledge, and experience in financial matters and investments (or be willing to gain it), and be willing to serve extended terms.

The development officer will serve as the committee's chair and liaison to the ACE board. The development officer will help recruit committee members, coordinate meetings, help develop a plan of work for the year, and report to the board at least annually on their activities.

### **3. Holly Young Fund**

This fund was created to honor Holly Young's work as ACE Executive Director. This short-term fund supports members attending their first annual ACE conference.

- The fund shall provide grants of \$250 to members attending the annual conference for the first time. The funds will be dispersed based on a drawing of first-time attendees registered for the conference. The fund shall cease when all donations are dispersed.

### **4. General Investment Fund**

The Investment Fund is a general endowed account to provide security to the organization with a goal of keeping a balance for emergencies designated by the board.

- The Investment Fund shall be considered to have \$20,000 endowed. Funds over the \$20,000 may be used after a vote of the ACE board for professional development and other expenses beyond the annual budget and to support ACE in financial emergencies.

All other revenue, including donations and fundraisers, should be unrestricted funds and used to supplement programs for members to advance the ACE mission. The goal is to

secure the financial health of the organization and offer high-quality programs for members.

## **Policy IV: Elections**

### **Section A: Nominating Committee**

The nominating committee, as defined by the constitution, seeks nominations of professional members for the vice president and open director positions, other than retiree director. The retiree director candidates must be retiree or life members. The committee shall communicate the demands of board membership and the necessary leadership qualifications, as detailed in the constitution, to all candidates. The processes for forming the slate of candidates, presenting the slate to the board for approval and voting are detailed in the constitution.

### **Section B: Election Results**

The ballots will be sent to ACE members via email. Members should have 30 days to vote. The votes will be counted by the ACE management office using an online voting system that can be reviewed by the officers. Candidates who receive the most number of votes will be declared winners. The results will be reported to the president, who will confirm the count.

The president will contact the winners of elections as soon as the results are tallied. The chair of the Nominating Committee will notify the other candidates as soon as the winner(s) have been notified.

Once all candidates are notified, the president will inform ACE members of the election results.

## **Policy V: Membership**

ACE shall have six membership categories. Based on the annual budget of the organization, the board shall recommend the dues for each category and present any changes in dues to the membership for a majority vote. No partial-year memberships exist.

### **Section A: Membership Categories**

#### **1. Professional Member**

Any single person will be eligible for professional membership whose duties consist wholly or mostly of preparing agriculture, natural resources, life and human sciences, or related educational information in any medium or of furthering the technology of communications, and who is connected with a publicly supported university or other institution or with a unit of federal, state, or provincial government. Professional membership also includes any person with a professional interest in agriculture, natural resources, life and human sciences, or related communications.



Professional membership is individual and non-transferable. It has the following terms:

- Membership dues: \$160.00 (USD)
- Membership period: 1 year
- Automatically recurring payments are not permitted

## **2. Institutional Member**

An institutional membership allows for institutions to pay directly for a group of individual memberships that are transferable to another individual within the institution only upon a change of employment with the member. Institutional members receive full benefits, including voting privileges.

Institutional membership is owned by the paying institution/organization, bundled in groups, and transferrable. It has the following terms:

- Membership dues, up to 5 members - \$800 (USD)
- Membership dues, up to 12 members - \$1,920 (USD)
- Membership period: 1 year
- Automatically recurring payments are not permitted

## **3. Student/Recent Graduate Member**

Any person who is a full-time undergraduate or graduate student, or has graduated within the last two years, will be eligible for student/recent graduate membership.

Student/recent graduate membership is individual and non-transferable. It has the following terms:

- Membership dues: \$80.00 (USD)
- Membership period: 1 year
- Automatically recurring payments are not permitted

## **4. Retired Member (Annual)**

Any professional member who has retired from employment is eligible for retired membership for the next membership year.

Retiree membership is individual and non-transferable. It has the following terms

- Retiree annual membership dues: \$100.00 (USD)
- Membership period: 1 year
- Automatically recurring payments are not permitted

## **5. Life Member**

Any member who is eligible for retired member status may apply to become a life member. Life membership will take effect upon approval by the ACE Board.

Life membership is individual and non-transferable. It has the following terms.

- Life Membership - \$300.00 (USD)
- Membership period: Unlimited
- The one-time life membership fee may be paid in installments over three years.

## 6. International Chapter Membership

The international chapter membership is designated for developing countries where budgets and salaries preclude paying individual memberships. We accept a developing country as defined by the World Bank. The representative provides a list of communications and technology professionals qualified for membership (working in information and technology units of agricultural education, research, and development institutions). This group of persons have “chapter member” status, and receive the equivalent of one individual membership (e.g., one vote in ACE elections and one set of ACE materials that can be duplicated for wider distribution in the country). Chapter members are eligible to participate in the Critique and Awards (C&A) program and meetings and conferences at the professional member rate, but cannot be officers or directors of the ACE board. It does not imply a lesser professionalism or skill level on the part of the members from charter-status countries. Chapter status for a country does not preclude individuals in that country from applying and paying for an individual professional membership.

International chapter membership has the following terms:

- Membership dues - \$160.00 (USD)
- Bundle (up to 10 members)
- Membership period: 1 year
- Automatically recurring payments are not permitted

Each chapter country is expected to maintain a membership list, updated at least annually, and provide the list during renewal.

The purpose of chapter country memberships is to develop the professional skills and network of agricultural and rural communicators across the globe, and to link affiliate members to other chapter countries and ACE members around the world. To fulfill this purpose, chapter country organizations are encouraged to:

- Adapt, translate, and distribute materials from ACE that are useful to chapter country members
- Develop a chapter country newsletter, journal or other publications that further the ACE mission
- Regularly contribute articles to the ACE newsletter and the Journal of Applied Communications
- Provide professional development opportunities to chapter country members

## Section B. Rights of Members

Privileges are extended only to ACE members in good standing. Members will have 60 days from receipt of invoice to pay their dues. After 60 days, the membership lapses. Members will be notified when their status has lapsed, and if dues remain unpaid, the member's name will be removed from the organization's directory. Members not in good standing cannot register for the annual conference or enter the Critique & Awards Program at the regular member rate.

**Voting.** Each member of ACE will have one vote in all organization-wide and appropriate elections and meetings of ACE. The one exception is that life members are not eligible to vote on increases in dues because they no longer pay dues.

**Officers:** The privilege of serving as an officer will be restricted to professional members.

**Directors:** The privilege of serving as director is restricted to professional members, with the exception of the retiree director, who must be a retired or life member. The development officer, appointed by the president, may be a professional, retired, or life member.

### **Section C. Membership Eligibility**

The ACE board will have the authority to review and determine the eligibility of all applicants for membership in the various classes defined under Policy V (Membership). No individual may be denied membership on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, disability, marital status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. Each member will belong to only one membership category.

**Members on Military Leave.** Active members of ACE who are on leave for active duty with the Armed Forces will be considered dues-paid members. Their names will remain in the membership directory until their tour of duty ends.

## **Policy VI: Awards and Professional Development Grants**

ACE confers upon its members and outstanding communicators awards and grants as designated by the ACE board. The ACE board confirms the recipients of all ACE awards.

### **Section A: Critique and Awards (C&A) Program**

The Critique and Awards Program is an annual event geared toward providing members with professional critiques of their work, and recognizing those who have done an outstanding job.

The ACE president-elect manages the C&A program, including timeline, process, annual review and update of rules and instructions, judge selection and training, communication with entrants, and recognition.

In consultation with LC leaders, the president-elect selects and instructs the C&A judges. In consultation with the president-elect, LC leaders annually recommend changes in category and class descriptions and evaluation criteria/rubrics. In consultation with the president-elect, the ACE management office maintains the online awards submission and evaluation system, facilitates communication with entrants and judges, and prepares awards.

#### **1. Eligibility**

ACE members and non-members are eligible to compete in this program. An ACE member must be in good standing with current dues paid to receive the discounted entry fee.

A team can be all ACE members, mixed with members and nonmembers, or all nonmembers.

Board members are eligible to participate in the C&A Program with the exception of the president-elect, who manages the program.

## **2. Entry Criteria**

- Produced for an organization in the public sector. Examples include work for the U.S. or a state department of agriculture, a public university, a state Extension service or experiment station, a trade or commodity association, or a foundation.
- Produced or received by the intended audience within defined dates. The same product may not be entered two years in a row.
- The entrant must be a principal contributor to the entry.
- Any outside agency work on the entry must be acknowledged and must have been minimal.

A product may be entered only once within each category but can be entered in all categories if it qualifies.

Various parts of a product may be entered in different classes.

Each entry must be submitted separately and accompanied by the appropriate information and entry fee.

## **3. Entry Fees**

Fees:

- \$45 for each ACE member individual entry. Dues must be current.
- \$140 for each nonmember individual entry
- \$70 per entry for teams with half or more ACE members
- \$175 per entry for teams with less than half ACE members

C&A entry fees may be changed by majority vote of the ACE board.

## **4. Judging Process**

Judges evaluate entries using criteria developed for each class by ACE LCs. Judges provide a numerical score and critique comments for each entry. They are asked to highlight the entry's strengths and weaknesses and describe specific changes that could improve its effectiveness.

Judges can select a gold, silver, and bronze award in each class. Each gold-winning entry is then judged a second time against all other gold winners in a category to select

that category's Outstanding Professional Skill Award. ACE does not award ties in a class or category. Judges may choose to make no award in a class or category.

If a judge believes an entry is in the wrong class, they may move it to an appropriate class. ACE will notify entrants if this occurs.

ACE reserves the right to disqualify entries that are incomplete or otherwise do not follow the rules and instructions for the overall C&A program, the category, and the class.

All judges' decisions are final.

## **5. Recognition**

All winners will be listed in the annual conference program/awards booklet and on the ACE website.

If requested on the entry form, ACE will notify one administrator about an entrant's winning entry.

Awards will be presented at the annual ACE conference. Winners may have the opportunity to display their work at the conference.

Selection, acquisition, and engraving of appropriate plaques or certificates is a function of the ACE management office in consultation with the ACE president-elect.

Learning Communities also often include opportunities to showcase winning work within their meetings during the conference or at other times of year.

## **Section B: Honor Awards**

Awards of achievement are presented to members of ACE and outstanding communicators in the following categories:

### **1. ACE Fellow (formerly the ACE Professional Award)**

The ACE Fellow is the highest recognition given by the Association for Communication Excellence to one of its members. The award recognizes sustained excellence and professionalism in a communicator. Recipients are role models in ACE who have had an enduring impact on the organization, their institution, the national land-grant system, and/or the profession or discipline of agricultural communications. The ACE Fellow is recognized during the ACE annual conference.

#### **Guidelines for Nomination**

1. This award is based on a member's achievements over an extended period of time (at least 10 years) and on participation in and support of ACE.
2. Members must be nominated by a fellow member to be considered for the award. Current board members and directors-elect are not eligible.

3. A nomination for the award should include the following:
  - a. A general description of the member's job.
  - b. Specific accomplishments in carrying out job assignments.
  - c. Indications of impact of the member's communication efforts.
  - d. Participation in and service to ACE.
  - e. Any other achievements that document the excellence of professional competence.
4. Nominations should be accompanied by letters of recommendation.
5. Nominees who are not selected as a recipient can be re-nominated the following year.

ACE members submit ACE Fellow Award nominations via an electronic submission form. The ACE management office will forward nominations to the president for a vote by the board of directors. The president notifies the award recipient, the nominator, and the recipient's administrator. The president also notifies those not selected for this award usually through their nominators.

## **2. ACE Rising Star Award (formerly The Pioneer Award)**

The ACE Rising Star Award honors communicators, instructors and researchers who demonstrate exceptional leadership and technical skills in their communication field, to their institution, and service to ACE. Award winners are early in their career and/or ACE membership. The award was created in honor of Frank Jeter, an early ACE member from North Carolina, who made significant contributions to the communication field and to ACE.

Past recipients have revitalized communications at their institution, led innovative communication projects, served as learning community leaders for ACE, initiated and carried out new projects for ACE, and inspired communication excellence in their peers.

### **Guidelines for Nomination**

1. Award nominees must be in their first 10 years of ACE membership, and an ACE member for at least two years.
2. Recipients should be nominated by any ACE member who has direct knowledge of their skills and contributions.
3. At least two specific examples of the recipients' contributions to the communication field and ACE should be documented in the nomination.
4. Impact of the nominee's work should extend beyond their department or unit to the university, state, region, and the ACE membership.
5. Current ACE board members and directors-elect are not eligible to receive this award.
6. No more than five awards will be given in any one year.
7. The award does not have to be granted each year if, in the opinion of the ACE board, none of the candidates meet the standards required.
8. Nominees who are not selected as a recipient can be re-nominated the following year.

Any ACE members may submit one or more Rising Star Award nominations via an electronic submission form. The ACE management office will forward nominations to the president for a vote by the board of directors. The president notifies the award recipient (s), the nominator(s), and the recipient's administrator. The president also notifies those not selected for this award usually through their nominators.

### **3. Award of Excellence**

The Award of Excellence recognizes individuals who have demonstrated excellence in the discipline or area of communications represented by a Learning Community as well as leadership and involvement in ACE. A recipient may be a current or a past member of the Learning Community.

#### **Guidelines for Nomination**

1. A nominee must have their membership dues paid for the current year.
2. A nominee must have at least five years of membership in ACE (not necessarily consecutive).
3. Any ACE member – active or retired – may be nominated by any ACE member.
4. A nominee must not be currently serving in a leadership role for the Learning Community for which they are nominated.
5. A nominee must be a current or past member of the Learning Community for which the award is given.
6. Learning Communities do not have to have a nominee every year.
7. Current ACE board members and directors-elect are not eligible to receive an Award of Excellence.
8. No person should be named an award recipient for more than one Learning Community in the same year.
9. The Learning Community chairs and the Learning Community director serve as the Award of Excellence Committee. They are responsible for promoting the awards, soliciting and screening nominations, selecting recipients, and presenting the awards at the ACE annual meeting. The name of the finalist must be sent to the Learning Community director for presentation to and approval by the board.
10. The Learning Community director and the ACE board, with the concurrence of the Learning Community chair, may reject any nomination, if a candidate does not meet expected standards of documented performance.
11. Runner-up nominees are not considered automatic candidates in subsequent years. New nominations need to be made each year.
12. Selection, acquisition, and engraving of appropriate plaques or certificates is a function of the ACE management office. No cash or sponsored award is allowed.

### **4. Retiree Award of Excellence**

The Retiree Award of Excellence recognizes an individual who has demonstrated excellence in leadership, service, and involvement with ACE retirees and life members or within the larger organization.

### **Guidelines for Nomination**

1. Nominations for this award may be made by any ACE member.
2. A nominee must be a retiree member who has paid retiree membership dues for the current year or be a paid-in-full life member.
3. A nominee may not be the current Retiree Director or Director-Elect.
4. It is not necessary that the Retiree Award of Excellence be given each year. The award should be reserved for those who have made truly significant contributions to ACE and to ACE's retiree and life members. Only one award may be presented each year.
5. The current ACE Retiree Director, the immediate past Retiree Director, and (in the years when a Director-Elect has been selected) the Retiree Director-Elect serve as the Retiree Award of Excellence Committee. They are responsible for promoting the award, soliciting and screening nominations, selecting a recipient, and presenting the award at the ACE annual meeting. It is their responsibility to determine the criteria used for selecting recipients.
6. The name of the finalist must be presented to the ACE Board of Directors for approval before the award is announced or presented.
7. The Retiree Director and the ACE Board of Directors may reject any nomination if the candidate does not meet acceptable standards of documented performance.
8. Runner-up nominees are not considered automatic candidates in subsequent years. New nominations are to be made each year.
9. Selection, acquisition, and engraving of appropriate plaques or certificates is a function of the ACE management office. No cash or sponsored award is allowed.
10. The award recipient is encouraged to attend the ACE annual meeting to receive the award, although attendance is not required.

### **5. ACE Service Award**

The ACE Service Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional service to ACE.

### **Guidelines for Nomination**

1. Nominations for this award may be made by any ACE member.
2. A nominee must be a current or retiree member of ACE.
3. Current ACE board members and directors-elect are not eligible for this award.
4. It is not necessary that the Service Award be given each year. The award should be reserved for those who have made truly significant contributions to ACE. Only one award may be presented each year.
5. The ACE Board of Directors is responsible for selecting the awardee.
6. The ACE Board of Directors may reject any nomination if the candidate does not meet acceptable standards of documented performance.
7. Runner-up nominees are not considered automatic candidates in subsequent years. New nominations are to be made each year.



8. Selection, acquisition, and engraving of appropriate plaques or certificates is a function of the ACE management office. No cash or sponsored award is allowed.
9. The award recipient is encouraged to attend the ACE annual meeting to receive the award, although attendance is not required.
10. The identity of the honoree will not be revealed to the membership at large until presentation time at the annual meeting.

## **6. Reuben Brigham Award**

The award is reserved for a communicator, including a public relations or advertising person, who has made a major contribution in the field of agriculture, natural resources, or life and human sciences at the regional, national, or international level. The award can go to someone who is not a citizen of the United States.

The Reuben Brigham Award is offered in memory of Reuben Brigham (1887-1946), a native of Marlboro, Mass., and graduate of the University of Maryland. He served as an Extension editor and 4-H club agent in Maryland and was called to the Federal Extension Service office in 1917 to develop an editorial and visual aids service for Extension editors. Brigham traveled the nation, conferring with editors and directors, and helped states develop their own editorial offices as separate units.

Brigham organized the American Association of Agricultural College Editors and served as its president, secretary, and treasurer. He established the Extension Service Review in 1939 and participated in the Farm and Home Hour of the National Broadcasting Company. During the Depression, he helped develop action agencies of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. As head of a regional section of the AAA information office, he ensured that Extension staff were involved in that organization's information plans. He later was appointed assistant director of the Federal Extension Service and was associated with Extension directors, the land-grant college association, and policy-making committees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Brigham died in Chicago while attending a meeting at the National 4-H Club Congress.

The Reuben Brigham Award was established by ACE in 1947.

### **Guidelines for Nomination**

1. Active and retired members of ACE, of a land-grant college or university staff, or of USDA staffs; are not eligible for the award.
2. The award does not have to be granted each year if, in the opinion of the ACE board, none of the candidates meets the standards required.
3. Nominations of persons not receiving the award may be considered the following year. Persons making nominations are to be notified that their nominee was not selected but will be considered next year, if desired, and if an updated nomination is submitted next year.
4. The Reuben Brigham Award winner must agree to attend the annual ACE conference to receive the award. The recipient usually gives a 15-minute speech at the annual meeting.

5. After the board makes a selection, the ACE management office will arrange for a suitable plaque for the presentation at the annual meeting.
6. The identity of the honoree will not be revealed to the membership at large until presentation time at the annual meeting.
7. The ACE president will introduce the winner and present the award.

## **7. Award Criteria**

All award nominations should be submitted as directed and by the date published on the ACE website. The nominations are voted on and approved by the board.

- Members may not nominate themselves.
- Members may receive the Award of Excellence in the same year they receive other awards.
- The award winners' administrators/supervisors will be notified and encouraged to support the winners' attendance at the ACE conference where the awards will be presented.
- In rare cases, award winners may receive the same award more than once, if appropriate.
- An award can be presented posthumously to an ACE member who was in good standing at the time of their death and met the criteria for the award.
- For particularly prestigious awards, such as the Reuben Brigham or the Fellow Award, every effort will be made to generate outstanding nominations.
- With the exception of the Reuben Brigham Award, ACE awards are not named to honor specific individuals.

The voting members of the ACE board are not eligible for the Award of Excellence, Fellow Award, Rising Star Award, Service Award, Development Fund grants, or any other award on which the board votes unless they abstain from voting.

## **Section C: Other Awards**

### **1. Journal of Applied Communications Article of the Year Award**

The JAC editorial board selects the winner of the Article of the Year Award. The editorial board chair reports the selection to the ACE president for confirmation, and then notifies the winning author(s). The JAC Article of the Year Award may be given to a professional development article or a research and evaluation article. The ACE board must confirm recipients of the JAC Article of the Year Award as recommended by the JAC editorial board.

### **3. Research Paper of the Year Award**

The Academic and Research Learning Community chair is responsible for selecting the recipient of the Research Paper of the Year Award, which is presented at the annual Academic and Research LC business meeting. There may be more than one award winner in a given year.

## **Section D: Professional Development Grants**

Professional Development Grants, funded by proceeds from the endowment in the ACE Development Fund, provide support for ACE members to pursue projects and training to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Grants can be used to explore new technologies or concepts, solve everyday problems, or work on team projects. The goal is to have the recipients share their knowledge and findings with the ACE membership.

The Development Fund Committee will review grant applications that draw on the fund, and then recommend recipients for grants to the board. The committee will be responsible (with input from the board) for establishing the rules and policies for disbursing funds (including materials required for the application process, deadlines, and reporting), as well as eligibility requirements for applicants.

Recipients of Professional Development Grants are encouraged to present their findings at the ACE annual conference the summer following the grant award.

Individual applicants and the team leader on group projects must meet the following eligibility criteria to be considered for a grant.

- ACE member in good standing with current dues paid
- Project must be completed within one year
- Application must include a written report highlighting ACE-supported activities and a professional biography
- Application must be accompanied by a letter of support from the applicant's administrator
- Recipients must be willing to share about the project and its results/impacts at the annual conference or via a webinar
- Must send a letter of support from your administrator

Grants are competitive and meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee the applicant will receive a grant.

Preference will be given to proposals with broad application, so that a wide array of members can benefit from the professional development experience.

## **Policy VII. Meetings and Professional Development**

ACE provides professional development opportunities to its members. It conducts meetings, workshops, and webinars that offer high-quality educational experiences and networking prospects for members.

### **Section A: Meetings**

#### **1. Annual Conference**

ACE shall host an annual conference for members. The budget for the annual conference will be presented as part of the yearly budget approved by the ACE board. The conference committee will review and work within the approved budget to prepare the conference's educational program, venue, and events.

The annual conference must be a profitable enterprise, able to add to the operational account and, when possible, to the Development Fund.

Working with the ACE management office, the conference committee will meet to define the educational program and invite speakers of the highest quality. The conference schedule should be publicized well in advance to secure attendance and promote early registration.

Conference registration fees will be set in the ACE annual budget, with higher fees for participants who are not members of ACE or other approved organizations. A complimentary room will be available to the president.

The coming year's conference committee chair (or co-chairs) should be appointed early enough to participate in conference committee planning discussions and shadow the current conference chair. The president-elect will appoint the program committee for the annual conference in which they will be president.

The board will approve the site of the annual conference. The ACE management office will present appropriate hotel venues based on the chosen city, and the board will approve the final site for contracting. The hotel contract will be negotiated by the management office and approved by the board member who will be president at that venue.

The annual conference may host a silent auction that will support the Development Fund.

## **2. Workshops/Webinars**

An ACE workshop/webinar is defined as a professional meeting, sponsored or co-sponsored by ACE, that promotes growth in professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for a career in agricultural, natural resources, and life and human sciences communications. These may be face-to-face or technology-based, and are open to all members and non-members (who may be assessed higher fees) interested in the topics at hand.

The ACE professional development director oversees the process of initiating, planning, and carrying out ACE workshops/webinars. A member or group of members may initiate an ACE workshop. To best serve the interests of ACE members, the professional development director works with those who initiate these meetings to identify critical topics, review requests for support, and provide detailed information on workshop planning. The ACE management office provides logistical support.

## **Section B: Financing ACE Meetings**

ACE meetings and the annual conference will have lines in the ACE annual budget. If a meeting falls outside the budget, sponsorships or other funding for the event must be presented to the board of directors for approval.

## **Section C: Sponsorships**

The development officer is responsible for seeking annual and conference sponsors to increase revenue.

ACE may accept corporate sponsorship provided that such sponsorships do not conflict with the mission, values, and ethics of the organization.

## **Policy VIII: Journal of Applied Communications (JAC)**

ACE owns and sponsors the peer-reviewed Journal of Applied Communications, which publishes theoretical and applied articles of direct value to ACE members. This online journal shares knowledge about the ACE disciplines with the world, and promotes the ACE brand. The ACE president shall have a column in each issue to promote the organization's activities and professional development opportunities, attract contributors, and boost readership.

### **Section A: JAC Editors**

The board will appoint an executive editor and a managing editor for the Journal of Applied Communications who will solicit manuscripts and reviewers, oversee the review process, publish the online journal, and maintain its integrity. The executive editor and managing editor sign one-year engagement contracts with ACE.

### **Section B. JAC Policies and Procedures**

JAC policies and procedures are established by the JAC editorial board, in consultation with the ACE board. Current policies and procedures are posted on the [JAC website](#). As of October 2020, the JAC board is reviewing and revising the document: "Responsibilities of Board Members, Officers, and Executive Editors." When complete, that information will be posted on the JAC website and referenced here.

## **Policy IX. Communication**

### **Section A: Learning Community Forums**

Members in good standing are entitled to join Learning Community forums without charge. Members control their individual forum subscriptions. The forums are administered through the ACE website.

Postings to the forums should be of professional interest to members and related to the mission of ACE. Any post deemed personal or unrelated to the organization will be deleted. ACE may decide to turn off the subscription of those who abuse the privilege of participating in the forums.

### **Section B: Social Media**

Social media connects ACE to its members and the wider public. The professional development director oversees ACE social media accounts, and ensures a high-quality social media presence and content.

- All posts on ACE's main accounts are public.
- No information posted or shared should compromise the ACE brand and its mission.
- All posts should show proper respect for the organization, its audiences, and people's privacy.
- Members who post outside these boundaries can be removed from ACE's social media accounts and potentially have their membership revoked.

All ACE social media accounts should have no fewer than two responsible administrators and include at least one ACE board member and management office staff member.

### **Section C: ACE Website**

The ACE management office, in cooperation with the Membership and Marketing director, will be responsible for managing the ACE website and keeping content, event registration, and database information current and accessible to the membership. Contact information for ACE shall be available on the site, and staff shall maintain standard business hours to serve members' needs.

### **Section D: Media Inquiries**

As a leader in extending information regarding agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences, ACE may be solicited to respond to media inquiries. ACE may respond to such inquiries only after a review of the opinion or statement by the officers on the board. Responses will be drafted, reviewed, and approved prior to their release to the media.

### **Policy X: Privacy**

ACE registration forms require users to give contact information, including name, email address, postal address, and telephone numbers. Members can choose what information is visible on their member profile. ACE will never give or sell membership information to a third party.

Members who create a profile with ACE receive emails that give updates on developments at ACE, in particular, and the field of communication related to agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences, in general. Those who do not wish to receive such updates may simply use the unsubscribe feature on these emails and/or contact the ACE management office directly.

### **Section A: Security**

ACE does not require Social Security numbers. Credit card information for dues or conference registration is processed through a secure third-party processor and not retained by ACE.

### **Section B: Other Websites**

Although the information on the ACE website and main social media accounts has been gathered and processed from sources believed to be reliable, no warranty, expressed or implied, is made regarding the accuracy, adequacy, completeness, legality, reliability, or usefulness of any information. Information provided is on an "as is" basis.

ACE shall not be held liable for any error, omission, defect, delay in transmission or operation, computer virus, communication line failure, theft, destruction, or unauthorized access to, alteration of, or use of information contained on the website or social media accounts nor for the improper or incorrect use of the information contained therein.

Any member may contact the ACE management office to report concerns or questions with ACE website or social media links or content and the office will address or remove it.

### **Section C: Member Directory**

ACE maintains a member directory for the purpose of helping members of the ACE community connect with one another. Members have access to the complete directory by logging into the ACE website. Members control what information is published in the directory. This may include the member's name, organization, mailing address, phone, and email address.

### **Section D: Conference Privacy**

A list of attendees to the annual conference will be distributed only to those who register to attend. The purpose of this list is to encourage networking and individual follow up. This list is not to be used for unsolicited commercial or bulk-email purposes. The information on the list will be limited to name, organization, city, and state.

### **Section E: Prohibited Uses of Information**

Use of the ACE website, social media accounts, and/or the information stored therein for commercial or business purposes of any kind, for personal gain, or for political purposes is prohibited. Prohibited activities also include, but are not limited to, solicitations for commercial services, harvesting of information, cold-calling and mass-mailings.

### **Section F: Abuse Reporting and Privacy Inquiries**

Users wishing to report abuse or to inquire about privacy concerns are invited to contact the ACE management office by telephone or email.

### **Section G: Limitation, Suspension or Termination of Service**

ACE reserves the right to limit, suspend, or terminate service and/or membership to any user found to have used the ACE website or social media accounts in a manner inconsistent with the terms of use; in violation of local, state or federal law; or in a manner that creates liability for ACE.

## **Section H: Indemnification**

By using the ACE website and or social media accounts, users agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless ACE and its respective board members, agents, and assignees from and against any and all losses, claims, damages, costs, and expenses that may arise from the use of the site, and/or from user breach of these policies. ACE reserves the right to participate in the investigation, settlement, and defense of any such action or claim. ACE reserves the right to approve choice of counsel and any potential settlement of such a claim.