

Society for Neuroeconomics

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What do you get when you mix one part psychology, one part neuroscience, and one part economics? A cocktail called the Society for Neuroeconomics.

Five years ago, Gregory Berns, Emory University, organized an informal meeting at Martha's Vineyard for about 30 researchers whose work blends economics, neuroscience, and psychology. This meeting was such a success that a second was organized by Read Montague in 2003. At that second meeting, several researchers suggested creating a more formal society to support the newly emerging discipline. Some thought that the field wasn't ready for a formal society, but many realized that informal meetings would soon not meet the demand of the expanding field.

Eventually, those in favor of a formal group won out and, in 2005, the Society for Neuroeconomics was incorporated as a nonprofit in New York, remembers Paul Glimcher, New York University, the society's first president. The first official meeting of the new group soon followed at Kiawah Island, SC, with about 80 people in attendance. The next meeting, a year later, had about 130 attendees and was the first session with submitted presentations. Over 45 people presented, and 30 percent of submitters were turned down. The rapidly changing nature of the field has been reflected in the conferences. At the first couple of meetings, many conversations revolved around research that attendees wanted to do; now, people are discussing work that's on its way to being published.

And it appears the society and the field will only continue to grow, says current president (and APS Board Member) Elizabeth Phelps, New York University. A journal is planned to begin in the next few years, and the Society is currently working on a book, *Neuroeconomics: The Brain and Decision Making*, in association with Elsevier, scheduled to be published in 2008.

Since the beginning, one of the society's main goals has been to bridge the gap between economics and the natural sciences. Each conference begins with two talks: one given by psychologists and neuroscientists aimed at economists and one given by economists aimed at psychologists and neuroscientists. Also, the presidency of the society alternates every year between an economist and a neuroscientist or psychologist. Glimcher was first, next was Cal Tech economist Colin Camerer, and now Phelps. According to Glimcher, the Society is the "only forum at which people who speak the language of psychology, economy, and neuroscience can learn to speak the same language." He points out that a neuroscientist could easily be discouraged by two days of economics talks at an economics conference and vice versa. The Society for Neuroeconomics aims to increase fluency between these fields.

For those who'd like to become more fluent themselves, the 2007 Conference will be held September 27-30 at Nantasket Beach, MA. The Call for Submissions closes June 1. The organizers expect the rapid growth of the conferences to continue, with more high quality submissions and presentations this year than ever before. To find out how to submit and learn more about the society, please visit

www.neuroeconomics.org