

## AIBS and NABT: A Time for Cooperation

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If we examine the objectives of the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the National Association of Biology Teachers with only the slightest bit of objectivity, we see two organizations in which the mutual commitments far outweigh the differences. In several areas where emphases differ, the strength of one organization would offset the weakness of the other.

It is not obvious to the membership and leaders of both AIBS and NABT that these two organizations need each other's support? Could joint planning and cooperative programs help both organizations to meet the needs of teachers and researchers in the biological sciences? Could both organizations in concert, and through the power of numbers, speak more effectively as one voice concerning the needs for private and public support for basic research in biology, and the national need for excellence in the teaching of the biological sciences? And would removing the duplication of effort, at a time when money is scarce, through the sharing of responsibilities make economic sense to members and potential members of both organizations?

Cooperative efforts could strengthen the national conventions of both organizations. In areas of basic research in biology, the AIBS meetings are excellent because they make it possible for those who conduct the research and those who teach the biological sciences to interact and become better informed. But over the years the AIBS meetings have not provided strong programs for teach-

ers of biology. Because of this general weakness in the total program of AIBS, the number of secondary and college teachers attending meetings has dwindled.

At the same time, the NABT conventions have been especially designed for those who devote a major portion of their time to the teaching of the biological sciences and to demonstrating new methods of teaching biology. NABT conventions have suffered from a lack of participation by research scientists who are enthusiastic about reaching teachers to ensure that their data will be properly taught by well-informed teachers.

Here we see just one example of how closer cooperation would strengthen both organizations. Nothing but good could come out of AIBS playing an active, well-defined role in planning a portion of the NABT conventions and NABT designing strong biological education programs to present at AIBS meetings.

It would also be to the advantage of both organizations to carefully schedule the national meetings so that they are in different parts of the country each year. This would help attendance, save energy and money, and allow each organization to advertise in the journal of the other. This, again, would present a solid front for the biological sciences.

AIBS and NABT should join in organizing and sponsoring activities at the state level. Due to a lack of communication, several state or regional organizations may hold meetings with similar programs one week apart in the same city, or there may

not be meetings in some states for several years. Cooperative planning and leadership at the national level can correct this situation.

Joint efforts in communicating with Congress and federal funding agencies, as well as activities relating to the protection of the rights of teachers and researchers in sensitive areas are equally important to both organizations. Separately, neither organization speaks for the biological sciences; but together they can speak with one voice.

The editors of *BioScience* and *The American Biology Teacher* have good records of cooperation and communication, and with encouragement from their respective Executive Committees the quality of the content in both journals would be improved. By working to eliminate duplication in reviewing of books and audiovisual materials, the two journals could cover a broader range of topics, and use of the available space more effectively. The joint planning of special publications could provide a wide variety of materials and information for the total audience.

The times are right for the kinds of cooperation I have described. The Executive Committees of both organizations are communicating, and seem to be receptive to some of these ideas. New Executive Directors in both organizations are enthusiastic and open to changes in attitude and organization. The financial advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. AIBS and NABT need each other, and our individual members need both organizations.