

1997 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy New Year to all! I hope that 1998 is as good to NABT as was 1997. Our organization has flourished and moved forward on many fronts, and I'm delighted to report that NABT is both fiscally and functionally sound.

I sincerely extend my thanks to our membership for the opportunity and honor to serve as your President. The experience caps my career, and I'm especially pleased to have met so many new friends from among our dedicated and enthusiastic members.

I'd like to highlight some of NABT's successes during 1997, and provide a few glimmerings of our potential. A major overall organizational accomplishment of the year has been the completion of most of the work on a Strategic Plan for NABT. The Board of Directors met for a three-day workshop last May and hammered out a draft proposal of a mission statement and a supporting plan document. This was submitted to members in key NABT positions for analysis and feedback, and the Board dedicated a significant portion of their October meeting to refining the document. The draft will be published in the next *News & Views* along with a form for use by members in providing feedback. The final Strategic Plan that emerges in the spring will be used by the Board to restructure NABT committees and frame new, or revised, formal statements of charges to each group. Paralleling these efforts, a comprehensive survey will be sent to each NABT member seeking input regarding what may be needed in school biology programs of the future so that NABT can be proactive and on the cutting edge in production of books for biology teachers and innovative curricular materials.

Executive Director Wayne Carley and our very capable Reston staff have dedicated much effort during 1997 to bringing NABT's finances under con-

trol. Cost-cutting measures and efforts to increase revenues from new grants, publications, and membership dues have combined to allow us to forecast a fiscally sound future for the organization. We are ending 1997 with a balanced budget, an accomplishment not always matched during previous years!

One new line of effort toward improving NABT's financial situation is our "Member-Get-a-Member" campaign. Announced at the Minneapolis Convention, this program enables members who recruit new members to qualify for valuable rewards such as all-expense paid trip to our 1998 convention in Reno, Nevada, and a free airline ticket to anywhere in the U.S. that Northwest Airlines serves. Watch for more information about this program in your mailbox in January and February. Remember—membership is **everybody's** business.

1998 will mark our 60th anniversary as a formal group, and our distinguished history demonstrates that NABT has emerged as the *Leader in Life Science Education*. Our Worldwide Website is operating beautifully, and it has been characterized in the *New Scientist* journal as "a source rich with ideas and examples." The National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) requested the opportunity to unveil their new series of educational materials on drugs and the human brain at our Minneapolis convention. And, the Center for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Education of the National Research Council chose to release its new book on teaching of evolution at a major symposium organized around the subject of evolution at our convention.

Another current example of NABT's burgeoning leadership in life science education is that we will sponsor a new Spring Symposium—"The New Biology of the Brain: Learning About Learning"—March 19-21 in Cam-

bridge, MA. This meeting will blend cutting-edge research presented by eminent neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists with practical working sessions for teachers aimed at classroom implementation and assessment. This meeting will mark a significant new thrust for both NABT and science education in general, so don't miss it!

One of the strongest movements in today's NABT is toward forging partnerships with other organizations. In collaboration with the American Microbial Society, NABT has won its largest grant ever (\$782,000). This project will develop a series of microbe-focused television programs aimed at the general public, but also intended for use in school biology programs. Supporting teacher's manuals and other instructional materials will make these materials a rich resource for our membership.

Other partnerships have been built with the Association of Science and Technology Centers, The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Physiological Society, the Ecological Society of America, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, and the American Society for Cell Biology. Serious exploration for joint efforts at promoting biological education are ongoing with the Entomological Society of America, the American Society of Parasitologists, and the American Society for Limnology and Oceanography. Great potential for national impact in biological education dwells in outcome from these partnerships.

Meanwhile, *The American Biology Teacher* journal continues its distinguished work as the premiere publication in science education. Due to ever-increasing pressure of top-flight authors to publish in our journal we've added a 9th issue and 21% more pages for 1997.

Our collective purpose as biology

teachers is to inspire the more than one million biology students we teach each year. This we do, with enthusiasm and diligence. NABT does all it can do to make this task more easily and effectively accomplished by our member-teachers. Thanks for all that you do to inspire and educate our students. NABT wants to do all in its power to support you, so be sure to

send in your ideas in response to our upcoming surveys.

Thanks to our 1997 Board of Directors, many committee members, and all the volunteers who have worked long and hard for NABT. Without the effort of these dedicated folks, NABT would cease to exist. And our professional staff at Reston ranks among the best of those of professional

education associations. They work tirelessly and enthusiastically, and I thank them for all that they do.

Thanks for your continuing support of NABT and for allowing me to serve as your president. It's been an adventure I'll never forget! Have a great school year.

—Alan J. McCormack

1997 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The “dead” of winter is upon us. Whether you are reading this in the depths of a New England snow, from a brown hill in southern California, shivering against an arctic wind in the Midwest, or even basking on a sunny Gulf Coast beach, January certainly seems like the “dead” of winter. Even our students seem more dead than usual as they face the long journey to summer. But we're biology teachers, and we know better. When the world seems its bleakest, life still stirs underneath. The phloem is full of sap waiting for spring. The overwintering *Daphnia* are buried in the mud waiting for the upwelling to bring warm water and nutrients. The hibernating ground squirrels are slowly metabolizing the fat they laid away during a rich fall harvest. So it is with NABT. As President Alan McCormack shares with us in his 1997 Report, great life stirs deep within NABT.

Like those plants that will emerge this spring, NABT spent much of 1997 establishing a solid root system so we can come into full flower in the near future. Our major focus this year has been on bringing our finances into order and developing plans to guide our future. As reported at the spring meeting of the Board of Directors, NABT has been in a deficit-spending mode since at least 1989. The continual drain on our reserves has meant that, while we are still financially sound, we do not have sufficient resources to develop new and innova-

tive programs to fulfill our dreams for the future of biology education. Our staff and Board of Directors have worked very hard this year to balance the 1997 budget and to prepare a 1998 budget geared to rebuilding our reserve funds. I especially appreciate the hard work of everyone in NABT who has contributed time, talent and funds, and who has sacrificed to help us in this endeavor.

1997 also marked the growth of our new Strategic Plan. The draft plan has been circulated to all members via *News & Views*. We do want everyone's input, so please review the plan carefully. The Strategic Plan will be a living document that will shape our future and help us meet the needs of our dynamic field. For NABT and our Strategic Plan to be successful, we must meet the needs of biology and life science teachers. We soon will be circulating a survey to determine those needs, but don't wait to be asked. Go ahead and tell us now: What is the *one most important reason* you belong to NABT? And, what can we do for you that we're not doing now?

Why do you need a strong NABT? Because biology education faces great challenges today. Much time and energy this year were devoted to supporting quality science education in increasingly difficult situations. We strengthened our Position Statement on the Teaching of Evolution to reinforce our understanding of “evolution: an unpredictable, natural process . . .” and to ward off attacks

from creationists. Many of you have asked for — and received — help to defend the teaching of scientific evolution in the face of growing local and state opposition. We have written letters to state and local boards of education, published articles and editorials in *The American Biology Teacher*, and even signed an amicus brief to the Louisiana Supreme Court to block challenges to evolution in the classroom. We also continue to work to support your right to the educationally sound use of animals in the classroom. Our position statement on Animals in Biology Education receives wide distribution to teachers and school districts facing challenges from animal rights groups and poorly informed activists. In many other ways, too, whether supporting funding of the Eisenhower program, promoting the National Science Education Standards, or defending the importance of laboratory time, NABT is out there for you.

Keeping NABT healthy, like keeping a plant healthy, requires the caring nurture of our many volunteers and staff. But the real health of any plant is its roots. And you, our members, are the roots of NABT. If you and your teaching are strong, and if you help the roots to grow by spreading NABT to your colleagues, we will produce magnificent fruits: the one million students whose lives you help shape every year.

—Wayne W. Carley