

1998 Executive Director's Report

1998 marked the beginning of a new era for NABT. The adoption of our new Strategic Plan, *Vision for a New Millennium of Life Science Education*, sets a clear path for the association to follow as we work with you, our members, to shape the new biology education for the 21st Century. As President VivianLee Ward points out in her President's Report (p. 4), NABT's 60th Anniversary was a time for anything but sitting on our laurels and reflecting on our previous successes. Instead, we worked even harder to establish ourselves as *The Leader in Life Science Education*[™]. Our leadership has carried us to the forefront of many arenas of biology education. For example, we are being recognized as leaders even among the professional biology research societies. Both the Society for the Study of Evolution and the American Association of Physical Anthropologists unanimously endorsed NABT's *Statement on the Teaching of Evolution* as their official policy on the issue. We had a great convention where the most exhibitors ever recognized NABT as the place to find qualified and interested buyers for their products and services. And *The American Biology Teacher* won two national awards for its scholarly content and editorials. This programmatic growth will carry into 1999 as we implement activities to achieve the goals of our Strategic Plan.

1998 was not without its challenges, and we will face some in 1999 as well. Membership has held steady for the past 12 months, but we would, of course, like to see growth so that more and more biology teachers can take advantage of all the benefits of belonging to NABT. 1998 was also a relatively neutral year financially. The staff and leaders worked very hard to balance the budget, and—for the first time in five years—we ended the year in the black with a budget surplus. This good news was balanced by a slight decline in our net assets, due primarily to depreciation on our aging building, equipment and inventory. The Board of Directors also initiated a thorough

study of NABT's publishing program. Although our books and monographs—many the products of federal grant-funded projects—are highly regarded, the publishing program overall has been a significant financial drain on the association since its beginning. The Publications Committee and their Occasional Publications Subcommittee will spend 1999 developing a plan to make the most effective use of member dollars to develop and disseminate valuable new biology and life science content and pedagogy for our members and the larger community.

The big—and most exciting—promise of 1999 is the opportunity to begin implementing our Strategic Plan. This month's editorial (p. 2) describes NABT's new mission to empower "the best possible biology and life science education for all students" and the four goals behind the mission. The Board of Directors has set out 15 Implementation Priorities for the Mission Statement which we will begin working on in 1999. I would like to highlight just a few of these. One of our biggest tasks for 1999 is to work in earnest on developing a modern replacement for the NABT/NSTA Standardized Biology Test. The current test is almost 10 years old and was written before the *National Science Education Standards* were published and at a time when our focus was more on factual content and less on understanding and process skills. Look for the new assessment tool to contain a variety of conceptually challenging items that include novel hands-on and factual items covering both the content and the processes of modern biology. We hope this test will be useful to individual classroom teachers and those wishing to measure the effectiveness of larger reform projects in life science education.

To truly implement our vision and to remain *The Leader in Life Science Education*[™], NABT must know what its members and their students need to meet the challenges of the new millennium. Look for one of our most important tasks in 1999 to be a major

needs assessment of biology educators. We will be going straight to the source to find out what you need and want from us to make you the best possible biology teacher. We will shape our future programs on the information we gather in this vital effort.

Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell. But growth for the sake of NABT means being able to serve more biology teachers with a variety of benefits, from our award-winning journal to low-cost professional insurance programs. In 1999 NABT will begin its most ambitious membership campaign ever. We will recruit new members from across the spectrum of biology education, and plan to reach as many as 50,000 teachers with our efforts. We want to share the great opportunities NABT provides with more and more teachers. As we grow, though, we will work very hard to insure that all of our members continue to receive the same kind of high quality personal service they always have and that NABT's conventions and other programs remain informal and easy to navigate and network.

Finally, look for NABT to hit prime time in 1999. We are very excited about the fall 1999 premiere of *Intimate Strangers: Unseen Life on Earth*. This four-part public television series focuses on the beneficial aspects of microbial life and its relationship to our lives and the biosphere. *Intimate Strangers* was produced by the Microbial Literacy Collaborative, of which NABT is a principal partner. We also produced a related set of community outreach activities that bring microbiology into informal educational settings, from kitchens to Girl Scouts to church youth groups. (Contact the NABT Education Office for more information.)

In anticipation of a great year ahead for NABT, let me thank all those volunteers, leaders and staff who give so much to make the organization a truly great resource for the science education community. Best wishes to all for an exciting and dynamic 1999.