But What Does AIBS Do All Day?

Early in my career, I struggled to explain myself to my blue-collar parents, neither of whom had a college education. Although they were happy that I enjoyed my position as an assistant professor, they weren’t really sure what this entailed. Although they could understand teaching classes, conducting research eluded them, try as they might to grasp it. Their befuddlement was captured in the plaintive question “But what do you do all day?”

One might ask the same question about AIBS, which is an association of scientific societies and individual biologists that serves the life science community. But what, precisely, does this mean? What does AIBS do all day?

AIBS has three main divisions, and, if you’re reading this note, you know one of them: Publications. Publishing BioScience is a signature activity for AIBS, and, through it, AIBS brings new research results and syntheses to a broad readership.

The Community Programs Division serves the life science community in many ways. AIBS has helped advance the initiative Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education (http://visionandchange.org). AIBS has also done extensive research on what individual biologists (http://aibs-site-ym.com/BlankCustom.asp?page=Indexe+) and scientific societies (http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/content/62/4/329.full) consider the most important issues and challenges for the life science community today. This research inspired AIBS’s Leadership in Biology Program, an annual conversation focused on forging a brighter future for the community (see the upcoming April issue of BioScience for more on this program).

The Public Policy Office (PPO) informs the community about pending legislation in Washington and around the country, and works with the scientific community and policymakers to inform science policy. Every April, through the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition, AIBS helps biologists communicate the importance of biological research to members of Congress.

The Scientific Peer Review Advisory Services (SPARS) is a very influential division of AIBS. SPARS helps organizations invest their research dollars effectively by implementing an independent, objective process to assess the scientific merit of grant applications and ongoing research programs. These efforts provide funding organizations with access to the sound scientific information that they need to identify the most promising research to support.

SPARS also serves the community by studying the peer-review process itself. For example, in a recent paper in PLOS ONE (doi:10.1371/journal/pone.0071693), scientists working in SPARS compared the results of face-to-face award panel meetings with those conducted by teleconference.

These and other activities reveal what AIBS does all day. In a phrase, AIBS brings biology to life. And now you know why this is our tag line.

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