

AIBS News

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AIBS *news*

MARCH 2010/VOLUME 60 NUMBER 3

AIBS Policy Office Conducts Faculty Training Program

In January, AIBS director of public policy Robert Gropp traveled to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to conduct a daylong workshop called "Communicating with Decisionmakers." The program, sponsored by the New Mexico EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research), was part of an annual junior faculty leadership development program. The leadership program brings together new faculty members from higher education institutions to develop communication, leadership, and grant-writing skills. This year's program included faculty from New Mexico, Nevada, and Idaho.

AIBS offers a number of talks, seminars, and workshops to help scientists develop the skills and confidence required to become effective advocates for science through communicating with the news media, university administrators, and elected officials. To learn more about AIBS Public Policy Office training programs, please visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/policy_training.html or send an e-mail to rgropp@aibs.org.

ActionBioscience.org Featured in Webinar

On 12 January, Oksana Hlodan, editor in chief of ActionBioscience.org, presented the Webinar "Thinking Like a Scientist: Teaching and Learning with Current Science Issues." Hlodan's guest educator was Brian Shmaefsky, of Lone Star College in Kingwood, Texas, president-elect of the Society of College Science Teachers. The Webinar was sponsored by the National Science Digital Library (NSDL) on the Webinar site of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), and was coordinated by Robert Payo, of NSDL's Outreach and Profes-

sional Development office. Hlodan's Webinar was a rewarding hour of learning and discussion designed for high-school teachers and educators of undergraduate-level introductory science courses. More than 100 educators participated in the live event.

The NSTA's Web seminars are free, 90-minute professional development experiences that use online learning technologies to allow participants to interact with nationally acclaimed experts; NSTA Press authors; and scientists, engineers, and education specialists from NSTA partner organizations. Participants in the ActionBioscience.org Webinar communicated directly with Hlodan and Shmaefsky through message boards, responded to poll questions, and posed questions during the question periods.

Hlodan focused on two questions: (1) Can issue-based activities make science come alive? and (2) Can the process of science work in concert with the context of science through issues?

In the first part of the Web seminar, participants explored how to use the Web site ActionBioscience.org to incorporate issues into their teaching and extend its resources to activities that illustrate "thinking like a scientist."

In the second part, the discussion examined how to use topical and historical cases to illustrate their application to issue-based activities. In this segment, Shmaefsky talked about factors that complicate teaching with issues, accuracy of information and pedagogy, and his experiences using case studies and ActionBioscience.org with his students at Kingwood College.

In the final, hands-on component, participants learned how to teach students to evaluate Web resources using

the 5Ws strategy (who, what, where, when, and why) and discussed ways to use this and other tools for thinking critically about online resources. Worksheets for sample lesson plans and evaluation of online resources were available to download.

A list of resources from the NSDL/NSTA Web Seminar "Thinking Like a Scientist: Teaching and Learning with Current Science Issues" is available at www.diigo.com/list/nsdlworkshops/web-seminar-bioscience-issues. An archive of the presentation can be found at http://learningcenter.nsta.org/products/symposia_seminars/NSDL4/Webseminar4.aspx.

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original article in English

- "Biofuel, Economics, and Society," by Daniel De La Torre Ugarte, associate professor at the Department of Agricultural Economics of the University of Tennessee and the Associate Director of the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center. In this interview, Ugarte explains that good biofuel management not only can provide economical, environmentally friendly fuel

I N S I D E

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Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports

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worldwide but also it can decrease world poverty and food insecurity. Read the article at www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/ugarte.html.

“Technology: An Educational Issue?” blog posts

Read this blog about issues in educational technology that discusses ways to learn and teach the biological sciences using technology at <http://teachissues.blogspot.com/>. Recent posts and discussions include:

- Storybird
- Citing the Internet

Spanish translations of a previously posted article

- “El Cambio Climático Amenaza a los Pingüinos” [Climate Change Threatens Penguins], by Shaye Wolf, of the Climate Law Institute of the Center for Biological Diversity. In this article, Wolf describes how global warming is jeopardizing penguin breeding areas, their food supply, and health of their chicks. Read the article in Spanish at www.actionbioscience.org/esp/ambiente/wolf.html or in English at www.actionbioscience.org/environment/wolf.html.

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports

Public Policy Report for 19 January 2010

- **Inspector General finds fault with Interior’s management of collections.** The Inspector General (IG) for the US Department of the Interior (DOI) has “found that DOI is failing to fulfill its stewardship responsibilities over museum collections.” In a December 2009 report, the IG found that the DOI has failed to properly accession, catalogue, or inventory museum

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collections, leaving artifacts “unavailable for research, education, or display” and “subject to theft, deterioration, and damage.”

- **New biosecurity measures recommended for US lab.** The Working Group on Strengthening Biosecurity of the United States has issued a set of recommendations to improve security at labs that handle dangerous pathogens and select toxins. The interagency working group is cochaired by the secretaries of the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services. The major recommendation made by the working group is the stratification of the current list of 82 biological select agents and toxins.
- **2010 science and engineering indicators released.** On 15 January, the National Science Foundation released the most recent snapshot of the nation’s scientific research and education system. According to this year’s report, “The state of the science and engineering enterprise in America is strong, yet its lead is slipping.”
- **Another victory for science in California creationism case.** According to a recent report from the National Center for Science Education, “the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has affirmed a federal district court’s summary judgment in favor of the University of California system in *ACSI et al. v. Stearns et al.*” The ruling was released on 12 January.

Public Policy Report for 4 January 2010

- **United States predicted to remain top funder of R&D, for now.** Despite the recession, things are looking up for the research and development (R&D) side of science. According to a new report published in *R&D Magazine*, funding forecasts indicate that US

investments in science will grow by 3.3 percent to \$402 billion in 2010. Globally, R&D spending is estimated to increase by 4.0 percent to \$1.2 trillion next year.

- **Attention Graduate Students: AIBS Accepting 2010 EPPLA Applications.** AIBS is pleased to announce that applications for the 2010 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA) are now being accepted. This award recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences who have demonstrated initiative and leadership in science and science policy. To learn more about the application process and the Award, please visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html.
- **AIBS Webinar helps students, young professionals explore careers in science policy.** On 21 December 2009, AIBS held an online Webinar program to provide information to students and early-career professionals interested in learning more about careers in science policy.
- **Thank Congress for increased funding.** After months of debate, Congress passed legislation in December that will increase fiscal year 2010 funding for the National Science Foundation and NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Please let your senators and representative know how much the scientific community appreciates their efforts to provide essential new research funding. Visit the AIBS Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=14501286> to send a prepared thank you note to your members of Congress.
- **New Plant Species Discovered in Botanic Garden.** A recent article in the United Kingdom newspaper *The Guardian* highlights the importance of botanic garden

plant collections to science and conservation. The report describes how a botanist at Kew Royal Botanic Gardens in West London discovered a new plant species during a lunchtime stroll through the Princess of Wales Conservatory. The new species, now named *Isoglossa variegata*, was donated to Kew by Swedish botanists following an expedition to the Eastern Arc Mountains of Tanzania in the 1990s.

Public Policy Report for 22 December 2009

- **NSF, NOAA, NIH to receive budget increases in 2010.** Nearly three months after the 2010 fiscal year (FY) began, Congress has approved significant budget increases for several scientific agencies, including the National Science Foundation (6.7% increase over FY 2009 appropriations, excluding the economic stimulus), NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; 8.6% increase), and the National Institutes of Health (3.3% increase). The budgets for these agencies passed the House of Representatives and the Senate as part of a package of six appropriations bills (HR 3288) that were signed into law by President Obama on 16 December 2009.
- **Senators Coburn and McCain grumble about “wasteful” science spending.** On 8 December 2009, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), along with cosponsor Senator John McCain (R-AZ), released a report titled *Stimulus Checkup: A closer look at 100 projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. The 55-page report takes aim at grants for arts and academic research projects, spending to boost tourism, improvements for leisure facilities, and administrative and advertising costs associated with the \$787-billion stimulus package.
- **OSTP requests comments on public access to scientific literature.** The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy is considering the development of a new policy on public access to scientific literature resulting from federally funded research.
- **The USDA will spend additional \$90 million on climate mitigation research.** Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced on 16 December 2009 that the United States would join 20 other countries to form an international research collaboration aimed at combating climate change. The Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases will conduct research and development aimed at increasing food production and improving the resilience of agricultural systems to climate change while decreasing the carbon intensity of agriculture.
- **House Science and Technology Committee losing chairmen.** The House Science and Technology Committee will undergo a major change during the next Congress. Two of the Committee’s senior Democrats have announced that they will not seek reelection.
- **Italian science agency stirs up controversy with new book.** Italy’s science agency, the National Research Council (CNR), has stirred up controversy with the release of a new book titled *Evolutionism: The Decline of a Hypothesis*. The book was written by Roberto de Mattei, politically appointed vice president of CNR and professor of Christianity and Catholicism at the European University of Rome.