

Building a Better Biology

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BioScience®

A Forum for Integrating the Life Sciences
American Institute of Biological Sciences

Building a Better Biology

A wise colleague once told me that colleges are permanent construction zones. He meant it literally—he said this as we were sidestepping a crane on a walk across campus—but also intended it figuratively. University communities are always building something, from new courses in our curricula to new knowledge in our laboratories. So it should be; there are always new students to teach, new ideas to test, and new discoveries to make.

The same dynamism characterizes the best scientific agencies, in or out of government, as well as the best professional associations and scientific societies. For these organizations, there are always new constituents to serve, new issues to confront, and new ways to communicate, inwardly and outwardly. And of course, the best agencies, associations, and societies are also permanent construction zones, because they adapt themselves to the needs of new constituents, the demands of new issues, and new opportunities for fulfilling their missions.

AIBS has been just such a construction zone for the last three years, as numerous reports and articles in *BioScience* have reported. We have rearticulated our mission and rejuvenated our commitment to that mission, particularly our commitment to listening to the community that we serve. We have modified our constitution and our bylaws and made changes in the ways in which officers and members of the Board are selected. We have embarked on new projects, experimented with new formats and themes for our annual meeting, and analyzed every facet of our operation in light of how it fulfills our mission and serves the community. Most important, we have developed a process for outcome-based decisions about our activities so that we will constantly be assessing everything we do in light of our mission and our commitments to the life-sciences community. This process ensures that AIBS will now be a permanent construction zone.

However, our goal is not to be a permanent construction zone for ourselves but to be a permanent construction zone for the life-sciences community. We want to improve the environment for the practice and teaching of the life sciences—no small goal these days. This will require as much hard work next year as it did in each of the last three years and as much hard work five years from now as next year. We also recognize that to be effective, we will need the same dynamism that characterizes the best universities, scientific agencies, and professional organizations. We must always be embracing new constituents, new issues, and new innovations in how we serve. And we will.

This year is the first in which AIBS will operate under its new governance structure. Our staff is invigorated, our board members are excited, and I am delighted to return for a two-year term as president. We have built a better AIBS, to be sure, and now we want AIBS to help the community build a better biology.

JOSEPH TRAVIS
President, AIBS

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