

Letter to the Editor

UK Centre for Bioscience, Higher Education Academy

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In a recent publication in *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, Woodin *et al.* (2010) summarized the findings and recommendations of a range of meetings and reports that addressed the changing needs of biology undergraduate education in the United States. Here in the United Kingdom, members of the community supported by the UK Centre for Bioscience are very familiar with many of the issues raised in this article. The centre is part of the national Higher Education Academy, and its remit is to support academics in providing a high-quality student learning experience in the biosciences. During the past 10 yr, the centre has therefore worked closely with colleagues across the United Kingdom in facilitating events and creating a wide range of resources in support of bioscience learning and teaching. It seems likely that many of these initiatives and materials will be of value to colleagues in the United States. The recommendation and comment, quoted by Woodin *et al.* (2010) from the American Association for the Advancement of Science Vision and Change document, that the United States should establish “a consolidated resource of research and classroom experience documenting what works and why” and “This biology education database could disseminate effective practices and provide a centralized location of resources” seem particularly apposite. I believe that an initiative of this nature could benefit greatly from our experience in establishing a similar resource in support of United Kingdom university bioscience education. Some of the key facilities and initiatives available and under way in the centre include the following:

- A series of learning guides and reports that consider, in some detail, a range of topics including, for example,

self- and peer assessment, effective use of information technology, and student research projects in the biosciences

- Our own peer-reviewed journal *Bioscience Education*
- Current and previous editions of the *Bulletin* newsletter that contains topical news items, and informal articles and case studies on bioscience learning and teaching
- *ImageBank*—a depository of ≈7000 freely available biological images with rights cleared for educational purposes

The centre has a wealth of experience in creating and maintaining an effective network of bioscience educators in the United Kingdom, and currently we are working closely with research councils, government agencies, and learned societies to promote creative, problem-solving, mathematical and practical skills in the individual bioscience disciplines.

On the international stage it's clear that, worldwide, bioscience educators face a wide range of challenges as they attempt to ensure a rewarding and engaging research-led learning experience under difficult economic circumstances. During 2011, the UK Centre for Bioscience will host an international bioscience learning and teaching conference, and I very much hope that colleagues from the United States (and many other countries) will visit the United Kingdom to share and exchange good practice in university bioscience education.

Colleagues in the United States can find out more about the UK Centre for Bioscience by visiting our website at www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk, where they will also find links to all of the centre's publications and other resources.

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REFERENCE

Woodin, T., Carter, V. C., and Fletcher, L. (2010). Vision and change in biology undergraduate education, a call for action – initial responses. *CBE Life Sci. Educ.* 9, 71–73.