Presidential Address:
A Retrospective

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I have been an active member of ACUBE for about 22 years. During this nearly quarter of a century, ACUBE has facilitated my teaching and learning. My goal, in this address, is to convey what ACUBE has meant and means to me and to keep my remarks relevant and short. I am planning to retire at the end of this academic year (after 30 years at the University of Illinois at Springfield [UIS], formerly Sangamon State University), much older and perhaps somewhat wiser. I became a university professor because I believed learning and teaching are paths to a better society. Accordingly, I have devoted most of my professional career to the application of scientific knowledge to issues of society and public policy. In this historical context, I have some concerns about the future, concerns for ACUBE, for education and for society.

I prefer to think about these concerns as opportunities for members of ACUBE, opportunities to make a difference in the lives of students and thus, opportunities to bring about improvements in the educational system and in society.

Some of my remarks may not be relevant to all of you, but I hope that they are relevant to most. We now attempt to educate about 55% of the high school graduates in higher education, quite a different picture from when I graduated high school in 1961; only about 12% went to college. Moreover, many of our students read nothing but what we assign, they are used to television. These students most often don’t read for fun, for general knowledge or for education. Moreover, many have an inadequate secondary education, don’t read well, don’t comprehend well, and hence, don’t write well.

That said, we have an opportunity to shape, re-shape and turn-on a significant number of our students (even a few can make the difference): for us a rewarding career; for the student, a rewarding career and life-long learning; and for society, a better world.

I have listened to my colleagues at ACUBE for the last quarter of a century (that’s about correct). Perhaps I should have been listening and learning more than I have; nevertheless, here is my “two cents worth”. To get our students to read, to learn and to write, (something they will have to do if they are to have meaningful careers) we have to turn them on to what we have already determined is a meaningful body of knowledge, the biological sciences.

At our recent 46th annual meeting and other ACUBE meetings, I have listened to presentations and participated with my colleagues in workshops on case based learning. I have also eavesdropped on discussions in the halls between presentations, another way to acquire information and learn about my colleagues. During our meetings at Columbia College Chicago, we heard about the failings of the news media - the press, radio and television. I would like to suggest that we all need to think about ways to engage our students in the learning process, to impact on them more positively and make biology more relevant. Toward that end, I offer one example that combines case based learning and our observations about the failings of the media. Consider structuring a class around a thought provoking newspaper article about a new revelation in biology. Use the local newspaper and choose an article about the same topic from a major newspaper, which can be found on the web; it is free if you retrieve it the day it hits the press. Then retrieve an article on the same topic from a scientific journal. Have your students compare the three articles, assist them in critically analyzing the articles. Guide them in preparing a written critique of their findings including an assessment of the applications and implications of the new knowledge, and the role of the press in bringing the new knowledge and its significance to the public. I have ACUBE to thank for this and many other
excellent teaching techniques. I also want to acknowledge the many discussions that I have had with Ann Larson, a friend and former biology colleague at UIS.

In this address, I also want to reiterate the importance of this organization and to convey the thoughts and best wishes of Dick Wilson, a long time active member and officer of ACUBE. Dick asked me to let people know that he is alive and well and that he expects to attend future meetings of ACUBE. A knee replacement prevented his travel this past September. I couldn’t think of a better way to express the importance of AMCBT/ACUBE than to transmit Dick Wilson’s message.

Here is what Dick had to say and I quote,

“I found in the organization not only great information to help me become a better teacher, (I can honestly say I never came back from the meeting with less than one new idea for class) but also a place at which I could contribute by giving papers.

“I was able to find a group to whom I could provide service professionally and make lifelong friendships, such as with you. I think I served on the Board 22-24 years, was secretary nine years, president one term, Acting Executive Secretary on two occasions for two years each, and gosh only knows how many years I was chair of the Resolutions Committee. Additionally, my work/study students and I transcribed about 15 years of the old journals and documents from the 50s and 60s, which are now available on the web site. All of this let me feel like I belonged to and helped AMCBT/ACUBE and made it one of the most important organizations to which I belonged.

“Translation - it is an organization in which you can have an impact from a small school!”
(Emphasis added.)

I thank you for allowing me to serve as your president for the 2001-02 academic year and I hope that I have done an acceptable job. I want to see ACUBE continue to be an important influence on biology teaching and for ACUBE to do so; we need a strong and active membership. I encourage each of you to work at ACUBE’s continued success and I look forward to our next annual meeting.

The Association of College and University Biology Educators (ACUBE), placed the organization’s rich archive of materials online for the benefit of the members and interested biology educators. Nearly 48 years of the society’s publications and resources are currently accessible.

**Featuring the Online ACUBE archives:**
- Bioscene: Journal of College Biology Teaching (1975-present)
- AMCBT Newsletter (1964-1974)
- AMCBT Proceedings (1957-1972)

**ACUBE Organizational Information:**
- ACUBE Executive Committee
- Editorial Board of Bioscene
- ACUBE Annual Meeting Information
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