NABT Cyberlearning Position Statement

Cyberlearning is currently defined as learning in a networked world. The National Association of Biology Teachers supports the use of networked computing and communication technologies in education. When effectively utilized, these technologies make learning as accessible at home and in the workplace as it is in the classroom. The potential to transform education throughout a lifetime, enabling customized interactions with diverse learning resources, is now possible.

Cyberlearning involves a wide spectrum of technologies that often use the Internet. These currently range from blogs, collaborative portfolios, video conferencing, and screencasting to online courses, assessments, virtual labs, intelligent tutors, wikis, and mobile phones. All of these are a part of everyday life and should be a part of everyday education. When used appropriately, they may facilitate learning and provide educators with a whole new arsenal of learning tools.

Cyberlearning can provide learners with the means to:
- access high quality courses, learning experiences, and instructors.
- enable learners to also serve as providers of resources.
- break traditional barriers to learning resources.
- promote collaborative learning with experts and other learners.
- access real-world research tools and databases that are in active use by researchers and to participate in research projects.
- access information that is more up-to-date than that provided by traditional resources (i.e., textbooks).
- utilize multiple platforms (e.g., mobile phone technology) in learning experiences.

Cyberlearning provides educators with the means to:
- address the needs that exist for learners of different ages and learning styles.
- encourage the collaborative development and enhancement of learning materials and strategies.
- more easily incorporate knowledge about how people learn biology into new and existing curricula and assessment materials.
- encourage educational innovations that build on our knowledge about how people learn.
- transform professional development of life sciences faculty at both the pre-college and postsecondary levels.

- stimulate the professional development of educators using open-source learning environments and other supports such as "cloud computing."
- more effectively utilize professional organizations/societies as integral components of professional development.
- end the isolation that often exists in many education settings.

Many educators have been slow to adopt cyberlearning due to concerns about the potential for misuse. To counter this, NABT recommends that cyberlearners be made aware of their rights and responsibilities as digital citizens. As members of a digital society with standards and expectations for behavior and use, cyberlearners must be made aware of appropriate etiquette, copyright laws, conduct that assures personal safety, and how to project a positive digital footprint. Cyberlearners must also be provided with the tools necessary to evaluate the reliability of information sources.

In every situation, it is important that the use of technology in education follow the fundamental principles of learning, and not the other way around. NABT encourages that cyberlearning applications and accessibility be integrated into the traditional classroom setting. Virtual classrooms should also be considered as potentially viable options for teaching and learning biology.

Adopted by the NABT Board of Directors, August 2009.