Friends and colleagues:

It is with great sadness that I convey the news that my friend and collaborator of 26 years, Neil Campbell, passed away last night in Redlands, California. Neil died as a result of a massive coronary event that occurred at his home early Wednesday morning. Over the next 36 hours the complications proved too severe to allow any possibility of recovery. His wife of 37 years, Rochelle, and his daughter, Allison, were at his bedside when he died.

There was absolutely no warning. Neil was in good spirits and appeared to be in good health. In fact, he had passed two stress tests in the last year and had actually begun to achieve a more favorable work/life balance, his Herculean work ethic notwithstanding. He and Rochelle had recently moved into a new home in Redlands and were busy with all the work of settling in. He had just completed work on Biology, 7e and was looking forward to seeing many of you at the January sales meeting in San Diego.

Neil was just 58 years old and had so much more to live for and so much more he wanted to accomplish. Ever the visionary, he had numerous plans for new projects in the works. While the world will not benefit from his unfinished works, it's staggering to consider his past accomplishments. If one's life can be measured by its impact on other people, the positive impact of Neil's life and work is almost immeasurable. Millions of students and thousands of educators have benefited from his books. Two-thirds of all the medical doctors under the age of 35 around the world began their study of biology with Neil's textbook, including some of the doctors who attended him this week.

A couple of years ago, Neil asked me to write a letter of recommendation for him for the National Medal of Science within the University of California system. The last thing on my mind at the time was that my letter could be useful in crafting an obituary. I've attached a copy of that letter for those of you who might wish to learn more about the professional side of this extraordinary man.

But there were other sides as well. Husband. Father. Brother. Friend. Those of us who have had the honor of working closely with Neil are feeling a particularly strong sense of loss today. Neil was a source of inspiration for all of us, and we are all better for having worked, lived, and laughed with him. We were his most fortunate, if not his best, students.

Neil's family plans to hold a memorial service at UC Riverside next month and also intends to establish a scholarship fund in Neil's name. I'll share information on the memorial service and the scholarship fund as soon as the details are worked out. In the meantime, if you'd like to express your condolences to Rochelle and Allison (no flowers please), you can write to:

Ms. Rochelle Campbell  
602 Wooden Bridge Lane  
Redlands, CA    92373

The sun rose on a different world this morning, but it's a far better world for all the works and deeds of Neil Campbell.

Jim Behnke  
22 October 2004
May 31, 2002

Professor Norman Ellstrand  
Department of Botany and Plant Sciences  
University of California  
Riverside, CA

Dear Professor Ellstrand:

I understand that the Department of Botany and Plant Sciences at the University of California at Riverside is considering Dr. Neil Campbell as a candidate for the President’s National Medal of Science. I’ve worked closely and continuously with Dr. Campbell since 1978, first as an editor on his biology textbooks and more recently as a partner in a groundbreaking online initiative, *The Biology Place*. I am currently president of Addison Wesley/Benjamin Cummings, the world’s leading publisher of print and electronic education materials for the life sciences. I believe I’m in a good position to provide useful background on the impact Dr. Campbell has had as an educator and author.

To appreciate the shear magnitude of Dr. Campbell’s impact on biology education consider that over 3.6 million students have used his biology textbooks since 1987 and currently over 500,000 students use one of his books each year. Some 60% of Americans under the age of 35 in the fields of biology, biotechnology, biology education, and health careers began their college studies with *Biology*. In fact, Dr. Campbell’s *Biology*, now in its sixth edition, is the most widely used English-language scientific textbook in the world. In Canada, in Australia, in the United Kingdom, in the Scandinavian countries and virtually everywhere university-level biology and pre-health science majors use English language textbooks, *Biology* is the core introductory textbook of choice. But the influence of *Biology* is not limited to the English language. It has also been translated into many languages, including Spanish, German, French, Italian, and Korean to name a few.

In my view, *Biology* has done for college biology instruction in the ‘90s and early ‘00s what Paul Samuelson’s textbook did for introductory economics in the 60’s and 70’s. It is one of those rare textbooks that shape the way a large field of study is presented to a new generation of students.

To be sure, Dr. Campbell’s textbooks have had a tremendous impact on biology education around the world, but “why?” I believe it’s been the combination of strong scholarship and uncanny teaching sensibilities. Dr. Campbell is able to capture in words and pictures the central points and important debates of the diverse fields that comprise modern biology—from cellular and molecular biology to plant and animal physiology to ecology and behavior. Equally important, he’s learned from extensive classroom experience how to engage students in the subject matter. Where many books bury students in a sea of facts, Dr. Campbell provides a conceptual and visual story line that offers the right amount of detail at just the right times to stimulate better understanding. And, he’s able to accomplish this without watering down the science. It’s a true
gift recognized by many educators (and publishers!) who’ve made a career of trying to develop and apply more effective approaches to science education. In fact, the teaching values and pedagogical innovations introduced by Dr. Campbell have been widely emulated, not only in other biology textbooks but in many other disciplines as well.

Dr. Campbell has had a long-standing interest in the teaching of biology at the high school level. Soon after its initial publication in 1987, Biology became the book of choice for Advance Placement biology in U.S. high schools. This success helped enable Dr. Campbell to establish a dialog with leading high school biology educators around the country and has led to several initiatives relevant to his candidacy for the National Medal.

In 1996, he provided the vision for The Biology Place (http://www.biology.com), an online learning community harnessing the Web’s unique capability to facilitate collaboration and exploit the wealth of resources available on the Web to support project-based instruction. The Biology Place was extremely innovative and demonstrated Dr. Campbell’s ability to expand his influence to an entirely new medium. In 1999, his work on The Biology Place led to a $1 million NSF grant to assess the impact of online materials on high school students taking biology in the ninth and tenth grades. One outgrowth of this initiative is the forthcoming publication this fall of Exploring Life, a book on which Dr. Campbell served as lead author. Exploring Life will be the first science textbook at any level to integrate required Web-based activities within the conceptual framework of the text, working toward this hybridization of text and Web resources from the book’s very inception.

The activities described above have a common theme: Dr. Campbell’s abiding commitment to the improvement of science education at all levels. I can think of no one who has done more over the last twenty years to shape the field of biology in the minds of students at university and high school levels and around the world. I hope my comments are useful to you as you consider his candidacy for The President’s National Medal of Science.

Sincerely,

James W. Behnke
President
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