

# 2005 ASHG AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN HUMAN GENETICS EDUCATION Introductory Speech for Joseph D. McInerney\*

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I am extremely pleased to introduce this year's recipient of the Excellence in Education Award from the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG), Joe McInerney. Our previous awardees have been identified with specific texts or training programs. Joe's influence reaches far beyond the limits of our Society. He has been key for keeping evolution in high school biology texts while under constant pressure from local, state, and national organizations.

Joe was trained as a genetic counselor and soon responded to an invitation from Bentley Glass, a former ASHG president, to assume the direction of the near-moribund Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS), which is responsible for the development of the core texts for teaching high school biology. At the time Joe moved to take on this task, the group was in disarray, having only two employees and yet charged with maintaining standards for texts used across the country. He rebuilt the organization and, under constant fire from those trying to introduce creationism into high school science teaching, led the development of all the central texts that are the predecessors of our current instructional materials. This is a lonely task, and Joe and his

family were not immune to those midnight calls to his family that we all fear.

Once this task was well established, Joe was invited to become the first, and only, director of the National Coalition of Health Professional Education in Genetics (fondly known as "NCHPEG"), the organization that has assumed the broad mandate to create the educational guidelines that introduce and maintain genetics in the curricula for all health professions.

For those of you who know Joe, you sense the enormous responsibility that he feels in guarding the bastions of genetics and evolution for students in high school and introducing them to the core ideas of science—a way of thinking and solving problems, not the body of knowledge gained.

Joe has that character of unassuming, strong leadership and is the ultimate mentor for all of us, in the way that he has led by example. Joe is our spokesman in education and, in being the recipient of this final award of our meeting, brings us full cycle in the emphasis we have placed this year on education and activism. We need more people like Joe, but I worry that the mold is broken.

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