

ASHG Takes Steps to Impact Undergraduate Genetics Education

Before you attend your first talk at the Annual Meeting this year in New Orleans, the Information and Education Committee will be hard at work. All day on Monday, October 9th, ASHG will host two workshops for the K–16 biology education communities. This year marks the 13th annual high school student-teacher workshop, which we have written about previously. It also marks the first annual undergraduate genetics education workshop. Both events promise to leave a lasting impact on their participants as well as to demonstrate ASHG's continued commitment to improving science education in the United States.

Undergraduate Genetics Education Workshop

ASHG's Undergraduate Education Subcommittee is currently devoting its energies to the design of a brand new annual workshop that will debut in New Orleans. Previously, this team published an article on six concepts that should comprise genetics content in introductory biology courses for non-science majors, and the team has recently been defining genetic literacy for undergraduates, determining how it can be measured and what impact biology courses can have on improving it. This year's workshop, "Teaching Genetics Using Societal Issues," will explore how professors can take advantage of the substantial number of ways genetics impacts our collective daily lives and directly addresses such contentious issues as evolution/creationism, race and genetics, and stem cell research. The content for the workshop will be designed, in part, by a team of educators from both ASHG and the Genetics Society of America (GSA). Members and nonmembers alike are welcome to attend this free workshop.

ASHG and GSA established a small group of geneticists that attended a workshop in Santa Clara, CA, this August. The Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SEN-CER) Summer Institute provided an ideal opportunity for faculty from both societies to work together to develop curricula for our undergraduate genetics education workshop that will stimulate learning "through complex, capacious, and unsolved public issues."

Participation in the all-day ASHG Undergraduate workshop is limited to 50 participants—a size that will facilitate break-out sessions, brainstorming, and case studies, making the workshop a dynamic experience. The genetics of race, forensics and identity, clinical implications of genetics, and how to increase active engagement of students in the classroom will all be discussed. A detailed agenda and other workshop information is available on our Web site (<http://www.GenEdNet.org/pages/meetings/undergraduate/index.shtml>). Extensive pre- and post-workshop assessments will examine the effectiveness of the workshop, identify techniques currently being used in the undergraduate classroom, and determine whether the workshop successfully influences how attendees design their curricula in the future. Together, we hope these assessments of this interactive workshop will provide us with data and momentum to plan additional workshops in the future. The workshop will be held at the Morial Convention Center on Monday, October 9, 2006, from 8:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. We are currently accepting registrations for this free event at our Web site.

Although the workshop is our first foray into undergraduate genetics education, we are currently investigating other ways to support our members involved in undergraduate teaching and learning. Our new education Web site (<http://www.GenEdNet.org/>) has a section devoted specifically to this area. We are currently developing resources including lesson-plan collections, PowerPoint presentations, animations, and graphics, for our members and others to utilize as they prepare for their own courses. If you have resources that you would be willing to share with the community for teaching about genetics, please send them to ASHG for review (GenEdNet@ashg.org).

If you have any questions or comments or would like to volunteer to help, please contact ASHG's Director of Education (kshaw@ashg.org).

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