From the Editor-in-Chief: A Look at 2014

Samantha L. Elliott  
St. Mary’s College of Maryland, St. Mary’s City, MD 20686

It’s been one year since I accepted the position as JMBE Editor-in-Chief. During our first year, the JMBE staff and volunteers have worked incredibly hard to implement changes and embark on exciting new endeavors. In this letter, I will give our “year in review” and describe upcoming new events.

Introducing our inaugural theme section. Our brainstorming during the March Editorial Board meeting yielded the beginnings of our theme section, which I am proud to display within our regular December issue. Over the past nine months, the authors, guest editors, section editors, reviewers, and copy editors have undertaken the herculean task of making the theme section a reality. We chose “Scientific Ethics” as a broadly-applicable topic that is highly relevant, yet often underserved in our discipline. Little did we expect the outpouring of support in the form of submissions and critiques during this process; our submissions more than doubled! We anticipated a section of 10 to 15 articles—we have 45 to share with you. We hope that the resulting theme content will promote new ideas and strategies within your classrooms.

Reaching out to the international community. Spring 2014 unveiled our updated author instructions, review rubrics, video tutorials, and manuscript self-diagnosis tool to facilitate the author experience. However, we did not stop there! The ASM international community enthusiastically responded to our request for translations of our Author Guidelines. We are now pleased to offer JMBE Author Guidelines in both Spanish and Mandarin (traditional and simplified characters) to facilitate a better understanding of JMBE expectations for the international community. Would you like to volunteer to translate the JMBE Author Guidelines into your native language? Please email us at JMBE@asmusa.org to let us know!

Understanding IRBs and publication. At JMBE, we receive many queries about the nuts and bolts of assessment, experimental design, and submission guidelines. We have taken additional steps to help our authors with this process by providing a document about Institutional Review Board (IRB) concerns. Created by Dr. Loretta Brancaccio-Taras, who coordinates the Biology Scholars Program’s Research Residency, we hope that this document will help prospective authors understand the expectations of IRB consent within biology education research.

Standing up for laboratory safety. Recent incidents within the microbiology community have underscored the need for increased laboratory safety. For years, JMBE has supported the safe use of microbes within a teaching laboratory setting; JMBE’s review rubrics specifically address safety concerns and each author must assert that safety regulations are upheld when they submit a manuscript. However, as a community of educators, JMBE must do better. Manuscripts will now be required to directly address the ASM Laboratory Safety Guidelines within the manuscript if microbes are utilized during the described activity. By directly explaining these safety concerns, we teach others the best practices in adopting our activities, and reaffirm our commitment to student and instructor safety.

Getting to know JMBE. This year also launched our JMBE Profiles interview series, which is a new venue to meet the people behind JMBE, learn about writing for a scientific education journal, and hear discussions about current issues in biology education. These videos are part of an effort to make our Editorial Board accessible and to provide resources for those doing scholarly work in the biology education community. The first two episodes can be found on the YouTube website by searching for “JMBE Profiles.” We encourage the community to send us ideas for future episodes. Stay tuned for more JMBE Profiles in 2015!

Corresponding author. Mailing address: St. Mary’s College of Maryland, 18952 E. Fisher Road, St. Mary’s City, MD 20686. Phone: 240-895-4376. E-mail: slelliott@smcm.edu.

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