GRINNELL COLLEGE
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DIVISION OF SCIENCE
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October 23, 1978

Dr. Arthur Bosch
Chemistry Department
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Dear Art,

Before my memory of last weekend's MACTLAC meeting fades, I'd like to submit my report on the "Teaching Biochemistry" discussion session I convened on Friday afternoon, October 20.

Although I did not make an exact head count, I would estimate that approximately 20 to 25 people attended this particular session. We began by discussing the relative advantages and disadvantages of various textbooks for both biochemistry lecture and laboratory courses. Since last year's biochemistry session had been devoted exclusively to teaching biochemistry labs, I steered the discussion in the direction of biochemistry lecture courses. Nevertheless, I still sensed a need and interest to discuss biochemistry experiments, equipment, facilities, etc.

Quite a bit of time was spent discussing how much material could and should be covered in a course lasting one term, one semester, or one year. Opinions differed widely, some advocating breadth at the expense of depth, others suggesting only a limited number of topics be covered in considerable detail, still others agreeing that perhaps in some instances we were presenting "too much too fast."

Probably the largest and most challenging discussion topic centered around the individual students taking a biochemistry course. What are their interests, majors, backgrounds, career plans, etc.? Undergraduate biochemistry audiences are typically quite diverse, consisting of chemistry majors, biology majors and students interested in medically related professions. Consequently, backgrounds vary widely, different instructors require different prerequisites, and overlaps with other courses depend on the specific biology and chemistry curricula at a given institution. No consensus was reached as to the ideal biochemistry sequence, what courses should come first and which later, or the proper level of presentation of biochemical material. Little difficulty was encountered, however, in agreeing that biochemistry is coming to occupy an increasingly important part in the undergraduate curriculum. Both biology and chemistry courses lead <u>into</u> a course in biochemistry, and advanced courses in both departments can lead <u>from</u> it. Hope was expressed that some means could be found to include in our future discussions the opinions of faculty members teaching biochemistry courses in <u>biology</u>, as well as chemistry, departments at liberal arts colleges.

In summary, the discussion was lively and productive, with many different opinions and viewpoints easily shared. The group was small enough to give everyone a chance to participate and feel an integral part of the proceedings, but large enough to keep the discussion moving at an active pace throughout the hour. We could easily have continued longer, and we look forward to more such sessions in the future.

It was a pleasure serving as the convener of this session. Both this year and last I sensed a particularly close affinity among the MACTLAC members participating in the biochemistry discussion groups. Please let me know if there is any further information I can furnish regarding this year's activities or if I can be of any assistance in planning next year's meeting.

Sincerely,

Elliott L. Uhlenhopp

Elliott L. Uhlenhopp
Assistant Professor of
Chemistry

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