Society for College Science Teachers

Position Statement on the Teaching of Evolution

(Adopted March 2007)

The Society for College Science Teachers (SCST) recognizes the centrality of evolutionary theory to modern science, and encourages the teaching of evolution at an appropriate level throughout primary, secondary, and higher education science curricula. Along with many other scientific and science education societies (e.g., AAAS, NRC, NABT, and NSTA), SCST strongly endorses the position that no science curriculum, especially at the high school and college level, is complete unless it acknowledges evolutionary theory as the core scientific explanation for the diversity of life on Earth and, wherever possible, educates students about the processes and patterns of evolution. While such discussions will most often be a part of life science courses, evolution is also often an appropriate topic in disciplines such as astronomy, chemistry, geology, and physics.

In the nearly 150 years since Darwin first suggested that living things share a common ancestry, a voluminous and robust body of evidence in support of evolutionary theory has accumulated. That living things on Earth have descended with modification from a common ancestry is not a point of scientific dispute. Science teachers are therefore obligated to present the topic in an accurate and thorough fashion as part of their classes. Indeed, because of the fundamental role that evolution plays in tying together scientific disciplines, teachers do their students a great disservice by not making evolution a key component of their teaching. The obligation to include evolution in the science classroom requires that accurate and complete information be taught, and also that non-scientific “alternatives” to evolution such as creation science and intelligent design not be presented as legitimate science or a valid replacement for evolutionary theory. Suggesting to students that such non-scientific ideas qualify as legitimate alternatives to evolution undermines science, prevents students from understanding one of the most important ideas in human history, and constitutes inappropriate educational practice. If teachers encounter situations where colleagues are teaching inaccurate content about evolution or promoting non-scientific explanations in its place, or experiencing pressure to do so, SCST encourages those teachers to seek advice from local, state, and national organizations (e.g., the National Center for Science Education) about how best to address the situation and to elevate the overall quality of science education at their institution.

SCST advises science teachers at all levels, but especially those involved with developing and delivering high school and college curricula, to be well versed in evolutionary theory and to include it as a core theme within their science courses. To do otherwise is to deprive students of essential scientific knowledge that they will need to be thoughtful, productive citizens, and to successfully compete for jobs in the increasingly scientific workplace of the 21st century.

To find out more about SCST, please visit www.scst.org

For further information about evolutionary theory, the role of evolution in science education, and the problems with non-scientific “alternatives” to evolution, SCST recommends the following print and online resources:


- American Physical Society (http://aps.org/policy/statements/81_1.cfm)

• National Academies of Science (http://www.nationalacademies.org/evolution/)
• National Center for Science Education (http://www.ncseweb.org/)
• National Science Education Standards (http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/nses/)
• National Science Teachers Association (http://www.nsta.org/)
• Talk.Origins Archive (http://www.talkorigins.org/)
• Understanding Evolution (http://evolution.berkeley.edu)