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PRESS RELEASE

## **Public Meeting to Focus on Evolution and Kansas Bioscience**

Thursday, April 21, 2005 1 – 5 PM

Plymouth Congregational Church, 925 Vermont Street, Lawrence, Kansas 66049

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The State of Kansas is preparing to spend one-half billion dollars to build up its bioscience industry. Concurrently, the Kansas Board of Education is again entrenched in a controversial debate on whether evolutionary biology--the field which made bioscience possible--should be taught as valid science in Kansas public schools.

What's at stake for Kansans? What are the *real* needs of Kansas' science students as the state starts building a bioscience-based economy? Are the primary and secondary schools part of Kansas' bioscience team? Will political wrangling in and around the Board of Education undermine state efforts to entice economic development by bioscience firms?

For an open discussion of these and related questions, the general public is invited to *The Plymouth Public Meeting on Evolution and Kansas Bioscience*. The Meeting will provide an opportunity for attendees to learn more about Board of Education developments, the background of those developments, the underlying issues, the plans and positions of relevant public organizations and the expected workforce requirements of Kansas' emerging bioscience industry. There will also be a press conference with speakers immediately after the Meeting, which will serve as an opportunity for reporters to ask questions.

The main purpose of the Meeting is to reframe the evolution controversy in practical terms, particularly focusing on education, training, and job requirements for bioscience employment, in a way that allows traditional adversaries to discover common interests and engage in productive dialogue that will lead to a stronger science education for all Kansans. What will it take to turn the Kansas public school system into a *powerhouse producer* of biology-literate students, which will be needed if Kansas is to create the more than 20,000 bioscience jobs aimed for in the Bioscience Initiative?

Many people assume that universities will do all the necessary educating and training of bioscience workers, and that secondary schools are not a factor. In fact, the role of K-12 science education, biology in particular, is likely to prove critical to providing a motivated and well-trained labor pool. Like it or not, the bioscience industry exists because of the success of evolutionary science and bioscience jobs involve practical techniques built upon evolutionary facts. If we turn out high school graduates who see the whole of evolutionary biology as something they can choose to "believe in" or not, will our students be prepared to meet the demands of the Kansas Bioscience Initiative?

Invited keynote speaker Steven B. Case, Ph.D., Pathfinder Science L.L.C., Center for Science Education, Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas:

*Not a day passes in a bioscience lab that evolutionary realities do not affect and guide the work of scientists and technicians alike -- both at the discovery science [research] end of the pipeline and in medical testing, where the targets of drugs -- whether resistant pathogens or protein molecules -- change and evolve according to the basic Darwinian model. To think that even entry level bioscience technicians do not need to understand the mechanisms of evolution -- past and present -- just does not reflect the practical experience of working in a lab. The Plymouth Public Meeting on Evolution and Kansas Bioscience will provide a forum for us to discuss the profound implications of the current debate, and help us reach common ground to benefit future generations.*

Event organizers intend to encourage social networking and political constituency building that will empower people to look beyond the current crisis and plan for the long-term future. Another more immediate and direct objective is to provide a forum for organizations with a stake in Kansas science education to make their positions known to the public.

There is much work ahead if Kansas is to become a genuinely friendly environment for bioscience entrepreneurs. Event organizers hope that work will begin at the *Plymouth Public Meeting on Evolution and Kansas Bioscience*. For more information contact Plymouth Congregational Church, 785-843-3220.

Cost: Free and open to the public. Donations will be accepted to help defray costs.

## Preliminary Program

Science Education in Kansas: The *Real* Issues. Keynote Speech by KU Prof. Steven B. Case, Chairman of the State of Kansas Science Standards Curriculum Revision Committee. Steve has been in the middle of the evolution controversy at the Board of Education since 1999. After reviewing the background of the current situation at the Board of Education, his speech will focus on what it would take to turn the Kansas public school system into a powerhouse producer of qualified biology-literate students in support of the Kansas Bioscience Initiative.

Respondents Panel. Invited panelists will respond to Prof. Case's ideas from multiple perspectives. Brad Williamson, High School biology teacher, co-author of a biology textbook, and past president, National Assn. of Biology Teachers; Leonard Krishtalka, Director of the KU Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center; Rachel Robson, Ph.D. candidate, KU Medical Center, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine; Andrew Stangl, KU student; Lee Allison, Special Advisor to the Governor for Science and Energy; and representatives from Kansas bioscience companies.

A Short Review of *Intelligent Design* Creationism. This is what the Board of Education is talking about. Presenters: Jack Krebs, High School math & science teacher and member of the Kansas Science Standards Curriculum Revision Committee; Evan Kreider, Ph.D. Candidate, Philosophy of Science, KU.

Organizations Panel. Presentations by representatives of public organizations, including The Kansas Board of Education; Kansas Citizens for Science, the Kansas Assn. of Biology Teachers; The Center for Practical Bioethics, The Kansas Academy of Science; and others.

Venue Description: Plymouth Church is a popular, mainline (UCC) church with a large, socio-economically diverse membership of about 1,200, including many university people, local and state politicians, judges, and professional and business persons from Lawrence and outlying areas. Plymouth is known for good relations with other churches, including evangelical and fundamentalist churches, in Lawrence and for encouraging public discussion of important public and civic issues. Plymouth is glad to show by hosting this unique Public Meeting, the strong support of the religious community for good science and for the bioscience-based future of Kansas. Other than that, there is no religious agenda to Plymouth's involvement. The Meeting will take place in the church's large Sanctuary room, seating capacity for 500 on ground floor level; 300 in balcony. Speakers' podium, tables for panel discussions, projector and screen for power point presentations will be available. Facilities for copying will be available at Kinkos across the street.