



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Susan Patrick
NACOL President & CEO
703-752-6216, spatrick@nacol.org

NACOL Releases Goals, Guidelines, and Standards for Student Scientific Investigations

WASHINGTON, DC, June 4, 2008 – The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) is pleased to announce the release of a new white paper, *Goals, Guidelines, and Standards for Student Scientific Investigations*. Responding to the needs of the online learning community, this publication provides a set of quality guidelines for designing, developing, and evaluating student scientific investigations and the science courses of which they are part. Reinforcing the conviction that quality learning is paramount regardless of the delivery medium, these new guidelines promote excellence in science instruction whether delivered online at a distance from the instructor, in a traditional science classroom, or in a blended format.

According to Susan Patrick, President and CEO of NACOL, “Online learning is linking highly qualified physics, chemistry and biology teachers to students in areas of the country where they would otherwise not have access to the science courses and labs. Science in schools must keep up with 21st century innovations and this paper is a needed guide to help explain the criteria and standards to understand what high-quality scientific investigations look like in the 21st century, both in online courses and in general.”

These guidelines were developed based on key ideas from the National Research Council’s *America’s Lab Report* and *National Science Education Standards* and The American Association for the Advancement of Science Project 2061’s *Benchmarks for Scientific Literacy*, updated with additional findings from the research literature. These and other publications describe as best practice an inquiry approach to science instruction, with active student investigations at the heart of an integrated instructional progression.

“Computational tools are changing the way that science is being done today, yet science education is not keeping up with these changes and is not preparing our students with the skills they will need to succeed in the modern workplace or in advanced scientific study,” said Dr. Kemi Jona, Research Associate Professor at Northwestern University and one of the lead authors of the publication. “This publication provides educators and curriculum developers a framework for student scientific investigations and courses that incorporate important new tools for conducting inquiry. These tools, including simulations, models, databases, and data analysis and visualization programs, not only help support student conceptual understandings; they also make science more relevant and engaging for students.”

###

About NACOL

The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) is an international K-12 non-profit association advocating online learning to increase access to high quality education and represents the interests of educational stakeholders, providers and students worldwide (www.nacol.org). NACOL is the host of the Virtual School Symposium, October 26-28, 2008 in Phoenix, AZ (www.virtualschoolsymposium.org).