

Pearson Voices of Impact Author Series
Eric Simon - *Essential Biology* Author
VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Voices of Impact

Stories, insights, and teaching perspectives from Pearson Authors.

Meet Eric Simon

Harvard-trained biologist, passionate educator, and Pearson Author

Co-Author of Campbell Essential Biology, 8e

What inspired you to become an educator?

Eric Simon

Biology Author & Professor, New England College

When I was an undergraduate, I really enjoyed both computer science and biology, so I actually became a double major and earning a master's degree in, kind of, computational biology. So, then I went on to graduate school at Harvard, to get my PhD in kind of, you know, molecular biology and again, with kind of a computational emphasis.

But while I was at Harvard, I worked as a teaching fellow and found that I really enjoyed teaching. So, I actually became a teaching consultant in their teaching and learning center, and knew by the time I graduated, I wanted a job that had a pretty strong teaching emphasis. So, I've been specializing in teaching non-majors introductory biology courses for the last 23 years at New England College.

How do you spark curiosity in non-science students?

Biology, you know, is all around us. Everybody knows the importance of biology in their lives. You know, everybody knows someone who has had cancer or is interested in nutrition. Or half of my students are athletes, so they all want to understand how the body works in exercise physiology. You know, there are some subjects that I think might be difficult to convince somebody of the relevance to their everyday life, but not biology.

I always tell my students, "You don't have a choice about whether or not this topic will affect your life, because it will. Your only choice is whether you approach it from an educated standpoint or not."

*What does authoring *Essential Biology* mean to you?*

This is the book I've worked on the longest, the one for which I've been lead author, you know, the longest and, you know, and therefore one that I'm deeply invested in.

And I love using *Essential Biology* because of the relevant stories that are woven throughout the text that will introduce, you know, a relevant topic in the Biology and Society section. We'll revisit it in the Process of Science section, and then we end the chapter discussing it with regard to evolution in the Evolution Connection section.

What makes Campell Essential Biology unique?

One of the things that distinguishes *Essential Biology* from, you know, most of the other books on the market is that it's written entirely by active instructors. So myself and Kelly Hogan, we are both teaching, you know, non-majors biology right now. Me at a small private college, her at a large public university. And every supplement, every video, you know, is written by one of us. And I think that's really important, you know, to make sure that the book comes across in the right spirit, in a way that reflects what I'm seeing in the classroom, in the way that I'm hearing from all my colleagues about what they're seeing in the classroom.

What's your favorite digital feature in the eTextbook?

My favorite digital feature, I think, that I've ever worked on is, a new one to *Essential Biology*, and it's called, Teach Me, Show Me, Quiz Me. And what I realized is that, you know, any figure in the book that's a complicated figure that's showing some process, the version of the figure that the student gets in the book is the single most difficult version to understand. It's the complete version where we have, you know, circles and numbers and arrows. And I could imagine a student learning this process for the first time, kind of going, "Oh my God, what do we do?" So, I realized that once we switched to the eBook format, rather than showing the student the finished figure, it would be much better to construct the figure for the student like I would do in the classroom.

So, Teach Me is a video of me explaining the figure and building it up piece by piece. Short video, usually 90 seconds, you know, two minutes. Okay, so the student can see how that figure is made and how it's conceptualized. Once they've done that, they get the Show Me tab, which is just the final version of the figure. So now you're in a good place to understand it. And then finally they get the Quiz Me tab, which is where the students themselves have to build the figure. They get parts of the figure, and they have to put the labels in the right places. So, I think this is a much better way to communicate these complicated topics than a static book image could ever be.

If you could teach students one skill for success, what would it be?

Probably the single most important skill that I'm trying to teach my students in the classroom is the skill of how to recognize reliable scientific information.

You know, students are just, you know, have a tremendous capacity for information that we didn't have when we were growing up. Okay, they have the world at their fingertips. And so, they have to develop skills that we didn't have to. So we have, you know, various features throughout the book, such as some of the new Skills

Checkpoint questions and Mastering access to the Bias Test that help students to, you know, develop their own sense of how you judge the reliability of scientific information.

And so, if I had to pick one thing that I want them to learn, it's not some piece of content, but rather it's the skill of how to distinguish reliable scientific information from bogus scientific information.

Love Your Journey