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[UD in the News, Aug. 11, 2006](#)

NSF workshops target science education, teaching methods

3:06 p.m., Aug. 17, 2006--Nine UD science graduate fellows and eight science teachers from Howard and Delcastle high schools exchanged ideas, discussed classroom dynamics and brainstormed strategies for enhancing science education in New Castle County vocational technical high schools during five daylong workshops held Aug. 8-10 and Aug. 15-16 at UD's Newark campus.



Deborah Allen (standing right), UD associate professor of biological sciences and co-principal investigator of the NSF project, leads a workshop for teachers aimed at enhancing science education in New Castle County vo-tech high schools.

Part of the three-year, \$1.7 million National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to UD and the New Castle County Vocational Technical School District, the workshops are designed to bring the two groups together in an ongoing partnership to benefit science curriculum and pedagogy in northern Delaware.

"A primary goal of these workshops is to give UD graduate students a better understanding of the challenges of secondary-level science teachers," Kathryn Scantlebury, UD associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, co-principal investigator of the NSF project and project manager, said.

"The ultimate goal of the grant is to strengthen science education in vocational technical high schools in New Castle County through collaborative learning and coteaching," she said.

To this end, the nine UD fellows will visit science classes at Howard and Delcastle high schools during the academic year to observe science teaching in action and to share their own expertise in their chosen fields of science scholarship and research.

Deborah Allen, UD associate professor of biological sciences and co-principal investigator of the NSF project, said the workshops kicked off the partnership.

"The workshops have opened up discussions about teaching so that UD fellows can begin to make plans for sharing their knowledge in the classroom," she said. Allen added that the vo-tech science teachers in turn will serve as pedagogical mentors.

Marguerite McDonald, a fourth-year doctoral candidate in biochemistry at UD and a fellow under the NSF grant, said that she applied because the goal to improve science education appealed to her.

"This is a fellowship that I approached because I wanted to represent chemists and chemistry," she said. "I am not yet sure if I will decide to teach at the college or the high school level, but this program is designed to improve science education at any level. The state [of Delaware] wants to get away from rote memorization of facts and give more weight to in-depth reasoning, and the NSF project addresses this."

Ralph May, who is the sole chemistry instructor at Howard, will collaborate with McDonald throughout the upcoming academic year. Besides seeing the project as practical and necessary, he said he also sees it as far-reaching.

"The partnership is really symbiotic," he said. "The UD fellows who will work with the vo-tech tech science teachers within their classrooms all year will learn about

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teaching techniques and classroom dynamics, and the vo-tech teachers and students who will host them will learn about scientific research and opportunities. The goal ultimately is to initiate new teaching techniques that focus on problem-based learning, and everyone will benefit."

Funding is provided through the NSF Graduate Teaching Fellows in K-12 Education, or GK-12, program.

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