**February, 2000 - Patricia Redden, Chemistry**

Teaching in general, and college teaching in particular, is a solitary sport. We normally enter the classroom as the sole lecturer and attempt to impart a particular subset of knowledge to our students, usually in a discipline we have spent many years studying. For most of us, the only time a colleague enters the classroom is as an evaluator for retention, promotion or tenure.

In the early days of the Public Policy Program, this pattern was fortunately fractured for me. I was asked to help develop and teach a unique, team-taught twelve credit course for the program with three colleagues - not from my own department but from three others. The course was an interdisciplinary study of the science and ethics of the environment. It met for four hours, once a week, for two semesters and carried the equivalent of six core credits of science (split between chemistry and biology) and three each of philosophy and theology. The students were generally older and very non-traditional, and they brought extremely eclectic academic backgrounds and an interesting blend of religious beliefs to the course. I was by far the junior member of the faculty team, which included Bob Kelly (Biology), Bill Cole-Kiernan (Philosophy) and Frank Keating, S.J. (Theology); in fact, I was often the youngest person in the classroom! This was truly team-teaching, with all four faculty members planning, attending, and actively participating in each class - and it was very intimidating. Bob, Bill and Frank were recognized by colleagues and students alike as outstanding teachers, and the first time I taught the class I was concerned about my presentation in a way that I had never before felt, but they quickly made me feel at ease. The interaction in the classroom was wonderful, and the consequence was that I was hooked on team-teaching. (Unfortunately, in later years the very success of the Public Policy Program resulted in the course being broken up into more traditional, individual, single-instructor courses, as students entering the program with prior college credit often did not need the entire package of twelve credits.)

Since that time I have taught with many of my colleagues in a variety of courses. In the second year of ESSP I taught a section of Orientation with Bill Cole-Kiernan and Sister Grace (English), again based on the environment. More recently I have shared classrooms for many courses with Rich Uriate (Chemistry), John Benson (Classics), Dick Petriello (Biology), Tom Mansheim (Urban Studies), Gene Cornacchia (Political Science), and Joyce Henson (Management/Marketing), usually under the aegis of the Honors Program. Each has been a rewarding experience and, I like to think, each has contributed to making me a better instructor.

True team-teaching bestows several benefits. First and foremost, to me, is the opportunity to explore my colleagues' views and expertise on a subject of mutual interest. Chemists and political scientists may have a common goal of cleaning up a hazardous waste site, for example, but compromises have to be made on

both sides to reach that goal, and students in a team-taught course will be exposed to a more complete exploration of the necessities for and impact of those compromises than in even the best-prepared single discipline class. The teamed instructors are active participants in the class, improving dialogue between the lecturer and the students and in fact acting as models of an engaged listener. Since they are sitting among the students, they also can frequently see when the students are unclear on a point and ask for a clarification or expression of an idea. From my point of view as an instructor, I constantly pick up valuable teaching ideas from my colleagues and feel free to ask them later for suggestions on improving my own presentations. Discussions between the instructors about assessment explore a variety of techniques and grading criteria. From a pragmatic point of view, colleagues in the classroom also come in handy for taking attendance, recording grades, and showing slides.

One important point to note is that team-teaching, properly done, requires as much or more time for) preparation, teaching, and grading than a traditional single-instructor approach. In the courses I have shared, we have spent a great deal of time beforehand outlining the course, dividing the time and content responsibilities, comparing sources, and working out grading policies. During the semester we each attended all class meetings and each marked all papers, meeting afterwards to compare grades and discuss discrepancies. When I have sole responsibility for a course, I feel free to adapt the syllabus when the occasion warrants; in a team-taught course, that becomes a subject for discussion and compromise among the instructors. We have been fortunate in the past that the Administration and the Honors Program directors have recognized this level of involvement and have credited each member of the team with the full number of contact hours; it is to be hoped that this policy will continue.

A distinction should be made between a truly team-taught course and a course involving a "shared classroom." The American Chemical Society's recommended curriculum for certified departments, coupled with a relatively small number of students majoring in chemistry, caused us to collapse three analytical courses into two, each a semester long. I teach the first semester and share responsibility for the second course with Sam Morneweck, and during that second semester we are each responsible for approximately 50% of the course material. Given the nature of the course, however, we decided that there would not be any added benefit to the students if we shared the day-to-day classroom teaching, and we opted instead for a shared classroom approach, where we each teach (and receive credit for) one-half of the lectures and laboratory experiments. We do not meet to discuss coverage of the material, but essentially each of us teaches the equivalent of a two credit laboratory course; at the end of the semester we combine our individual grades into a single grade for the four-credit course. This is not at all team-teaching, but for this course and content, it works

How can you get involved in a team-taught course? First and foremost, identify one or more colleagues with a common interest and complementary expertise. Consider personal compatibility as an equally important criterion. Put together a proposal that may be offered to your departments as part of the core offerings or as a cross-listed elective or one that may be appropriate for the Honors Program. (In some cases, a team-taught course may be part of a departmental requirement for majors, but this would be relatively uncommon, at least in my experience). Pay particular attention to the way you will assess student performance, as that is most usually the place where differences between instructors and/or disciplines occur. If you need a significant amount of time to develop the course and your time-frame before offering the course allows, consider applying for released-time support through the Faculty Development program. Then, as the commercials say, "Just **do** it!"