MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY HAS EVOLVED FROM MY UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCES

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My teaching philosophy has evolved in part as a result of my own experiences as an undergraduate. During my second year as an undergraduate, I read an announcement, recruiting students for summer employment. This announcement was posted by a professor of biology, Dr. Paul Widden. He was looking for students to help his graduate students with field and laboratory work. At the time of the announcement, I was enrolled in his Ecology class and was really enjoying it. Not only was the course content interesting, but Dr. Widden effortlessly made the content come alive. I wanted that job. So, I applied and, to my amazement, was fortunate to get it. I worked for Dr. Widden for two summer terms and completed my fourth year Honors' project under his supervision.

Dr. Paul Widden was an excellent mentor. He was engaging, enthusiastic, and obviously enjoyed teaching. His passion for biology was infectious and I could not resist being drawn in. I learned a great deal from him and from my experiences in the lab. I found out that doing biology could be tedious, repetitive, physically and mentally challenging, but, at the end of the day, it was extremely exciting and rewarding. Dr. Widden provided hands-on and inquiry-based learning that was critical for facilitating my own understanding of biology and the difficult concepts that are the foundations for this discipline. Upon graduation, I left Concordia University with confidence and a level of comfort that allowed me to make the move to graduate school. I consider this one of my most valuable experiences, one that has had a very strong impact on my life.

I want to give Rivier students the same experience. Biology is a content heavy discipline. To introduce students to the information, I use primarily lecture in class. I rely on my colleagues in biology, chemistry, physics, and math to help introduce the concepts that are the foundation of biology. These are difficult concepts to grasp and can take a long time for one to gain a thorough understanding of them. This is one reason why biology courses are accompanied by a lab. The laboratory component of a biology course is extremely important. It provides a forum for demonstrating concepts introduced in lecture and allows students to develop skills that will be transferable to any career in biology. As students build on the fundamentals, they are in a better position to engage in more independent study. I encourage (okay, nag maybe) students to conduct long-term research projects on a topic that interests them. This opportunity allows students to apply what they have learned in lecture, build upon the skills they have learned in lab, and get a real sense of what it is to be a biologist.

To my pleasure, students are increasingly more interested in doing science. It is a great feeling to

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see the students busy in the lab, engaging in research, and discussing biology among themselves. I am most comfortable in the lab and where I am best able to teach my students biology.

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* **SUSAN E. BARBARO**, Ph.D., obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree from Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, and Master of Science and Doctorate from the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Her desire to understand and protect the environment has always played an important role in determining Susan's research interests. In particular, she is interested in the microbial ecology of fresh water and soil ecosystems. Susan has studied and conducted research related to microbial physiology, biological control, and bioremediation. Her first full-time teaching position was at Delaware State University, a Historical Black College. She joined the faculty at Rivier College in 2003.