

The Translator between Two Extremes

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While teaching at Lake Forest College for 14 years, Professor Ann Maine has certainly made a name for herself. Offering courses for both science intensive and non-science students, she has taken the position of an intermediary, teaching the two extremes of an audience. Being able to feel the passion she has for teaching makes any biology course interesting. Her expertise in a constantly changing environment allows her the freedom to teach what she loves.

Professor Maine always liked a broad curriculum. For her undergraduate work, she majored in plant genetics and English. From there, she moved on to cancer research before ending up at the University of Rochester in New York to do her postdoctoral research in molecular genetics. During this time, she knew that she wanted to teach at a small, liberal arts school. In 1991, she accepted a part-time position in the biology department at Lake Forest College, and has kept that position since.

At the completion of the 2006-2007 academic year, Professor Maine will have taught a total of 15 different courses. She teaches both biology majors in the Independent Research Colloquium course as well as non-science students in numerous other courses. "I end up with each end of the spectrum," she explains. She gets to work with current research projects, for which she expressed great enthusiasm. Nevertheless, she still enjoys working with non-science major students. "I understand where they come from," referring to their confusion towards the scientific language. To help these students understand the major biological processes, she teaches the specifics about some things, like bacteria and viruses, but with more of a broad concept, using analogies that people are familiar with. For example, when explaining the methods for cell signaling, she likes to use the board game Mouse Trap®. This way, students can relate how one event can set off a whole set of chain reactions.

No matter whom she teaches, Professor Maine always demands high standards. With her background in English, she is able to help students with their writing skills. "She wanted us to write a lot of papers, but it was in preparation for more advanced biology courses," said junior Cory Querubin.

Outside of academia, Ann Maine is an active member of the Lake County Board. She is on the committees for Public Works and Transportation, Health and Human Services, and Forest Preserves. In this position, she again takes the role of an intermediary between the sciences and the local community. Using her knowledge of the sciences, she is able to change the scientific language into terms that an average person would understand, while voicing the concerns of the public to the scientists.

Over her years at Lake Forest College, she has seen many changes. Faculty members have come and gone and schedules change constantly. One of the greatest improvements in the biology department is that, "Students are better prepared than they were in the past." She accredits this to the fact that courses are more rigorous and have higher standards set by an excellent faculty. She did express some concern, however, with the methods of scheduling courses. When few people sign up for a course, the course gets dropped, so her schedule is constantly changing. Nonetheless, Professor Maine understands that this is part of her job, so she prepares for it.

Year after year, Professor Ann Maine returns to Lake Forest College in anticipation for the academic year. "I get excited in August." So while many students may be saying their good bye's to their families and dreading going back to school, Professor Maine can be found sitting in her office planning courses and practicing lectures.

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