De Meo carries on tradition of teaching chemistry

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Recommended Citation
Romero, Aldemaro Jr., "De Meo carries on tradition of teaching chemistry" (2012). CUNY Academic Works.
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bb_pubs/715

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Chemistry is one of those areas of science that some people find difficult, some even to the point of fearing it. Yet, there are those chemistry professors who instill such enthusiasm into the subject that it makes not only easy to understand, but actually enjoyable. One such professor is Cristina De Meo, an associate professor of chemistry at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

De Meo was born in Catania, Sicily, Italy. She obtained her master’s degree in bioorganic chemistry at the University of Catania and her doctorate in organic chemistry at the University of St. Louis. She held postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Texas A & M University and colleagues and her students for conducting collaborative American-style teaching methods with those she learned in her native Italy. She, in fact, comes from a long line of teachers. Her father and two of her grandmother's were teachers as well.

When asked what makes a good teacher, she answered without hesitation. “What I think is the main point is to let students know that you care for them and I think this is what I try to show them from the first lecture,” she said. “I like, for example, to be available to introduce interactive, one on one in the first lecture and by the end of the semester I know each name of my students. Probably I won’t remember all of them in one year but I really try to show them that they are not numbers but they are human beings and I treat them with respect.”

She teaches up to 150 students per semester, mostly on a subject considered to be the “tough one” in the area of organic chemistry. “It is not that difficult, it is because students haven’t been exposed to chemistry,” De Meo explained.

When the semester is finished you take your time to learn the material and then you stand up next to her desk and say, “now I understand.”

Dr. Cristina De Meo in her lab at SIUE.

“When I was deciding to do a Ph.D. the choice of the career was obvious because it can be applied to everything. Organic and bioorganic chemistry, and carbohydrates which is my expertise is a cool topic of science in this field today. In her work at SIUE, De Meo can often be found in her office surrounded by the sounds produced by vacuum pumps. When asked what makes a good teacher, she answered without hesitation. “What I think is the main point is to let students know that you care for them and I think this is what I try to show them from the first lecture,” she said. “I like, for example, to be available to introduce interactive, one on one in the first lecture and by the end of the semester I know each name of my students. Probably I won’t remember all of them in one year but I really try to show them that they are not numbers but they are human beings and I treat them with respect.”

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The Children’s Museum in Edwardsville will celebrate its 10th anniversary and its annual economic impact is estimated at $500 million. The annual economic impact of the district in 2008 was placed at $208 million, said Costello, the Belleville Democrat who is retiring from Congress this year. The Port District is directly responsible for 1,347 Madison County jobs, parts of which are also in a Foreign Trade Zone and within Edwardsville’s Commerce Center, which is a logistics center.

In 2002, 750 acres that had been the U.S. Army’s Charles Melvin Price Army Ordnance Depot were transferred to the Port District, and in 2008, the first representatives of one of the largest European biofuel producers opened a plant. Last year’s forum was held in Shenzhen, China. The meetings are important in establishing personal relationships with Chinese leaders, a prerequisite for trade relations, Wilmsmeyer said. In 2002, 750 acres that had been the U.S. Army’s Charles Melvin Price Army Ordnance Depot were transferred to the Port District, and in 2008, the first representatives of one of the largest European biofuel producers opened a plant. Last year’s forum was held in Shenzhen, China. The meetings are important in establishing personal relationships with Chinese leaders, a prerequisite for trade relations, Wilmsmeyer said.

Shan Lu/SIU Photo

The Children’s Museum in Edwardsville

Children’s Museum plans birthday bash

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