

Hluchy obtains EPA grant to provide teacher education in environmental topics

9/25/08

When Joe Dosch of Alfred, president of the now-defunct Foster Lake Club, wanted to close out the club's accounts, he gave the remaining \$4,000 to Dr. Michele Hluchy, professor of geology and chair of the Division of Environmental Studies and Geology. He asked her if the funds could be used for educational programs at Foster Lake, a 25-acre lake atop Jericho Hill, which the University acquired in 2002. Dosch found the right person: Hluchy used the club's funds as seed money to obtain an Environmental Education grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency that will provide in-service education to 10 area teachers, a number of education students at the University, with the ultimate beneficiaries being hundreds of middle school and high school students whose "environmental literacy" will improve. Hluchy, working with the Division of Education and Chair Ann Monroe-Baillargeon, will offer the program in three phases. "We want to provide the teachers with environmental education curricula, materials and equipment they can use in their classes to help their students understand ecosystems and human impacts on those ecosystems," explained Hluchy, who has offered similar teacher education workshops over the past two years under a National Science Foundation grant she received with co-investigators from Colgate University. Phase one will be a workshop at Alfred University during which the teachers will have an opportunity to use the materials. Phase two will involve bringing the teachers and their students to campus for an environmental field day at Foster Lake, allowing them to see how the lessons and equipment work in the field. The final step will be bringing the teachers back together for conference so that they can evaluate their progress and share their experiences. "Through this approach, we will be able to get environmental education materials that have proven to be effective into the hands of the teachers, teach them how to use the materials during phase one, allow them to practice using the materials in a controlled setting during phase two, and then help them evaluate their effectiveness and make adjustments so that they can have the maximum impact on their students," said Hluchy. "Our ultimate goal is to increase the environmental literacy of the students and instill in them a sense of environmental stewardship, which we believe will come with an increased understanding of the environment." Drawing on her own research, which involves evaluating the effectiveness of the U.S. Clean Air Act of 1970 and the Clean Air Amendments of 1990 in reducing the impacts of acid precipitation in the Adirondacks, Hluchy said the overarching theme that will tie the workshop exercises and activities together will be the effects of acid rain on ecosystems, "but the same activities and exercises could be applied to other themes, such as the effects of agricultural practices on the environment." The funds from the Foster Lake Club and the EPA grant will be used to provide stipends for the participating teachers, equipment kits, travel funds to bring the students to Alfred for the field day, supplies for the workshop and field day and wages for University student assistants.