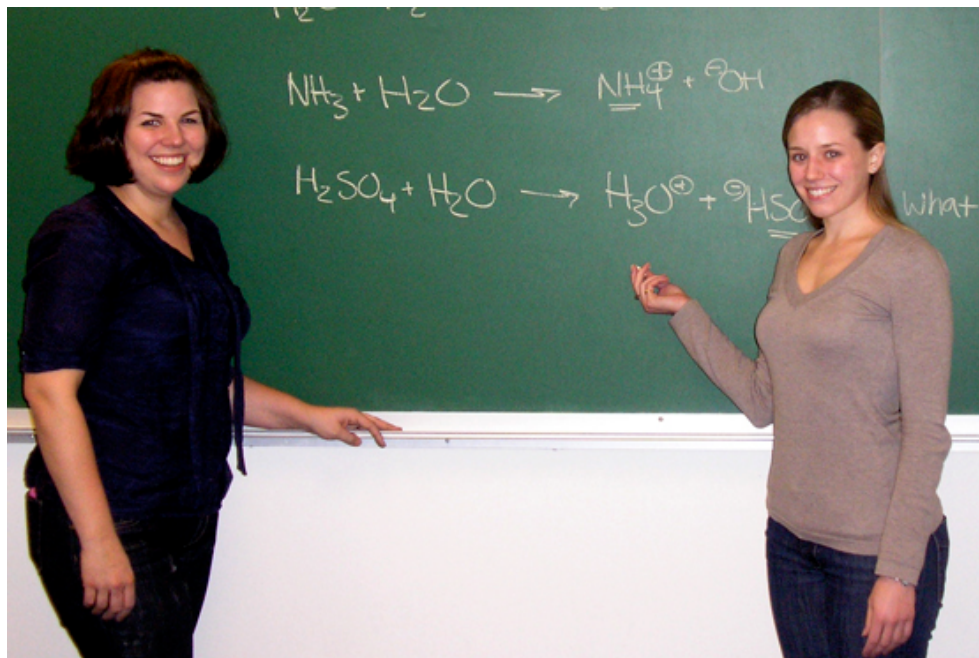


March 11, 2009

BU Scientists Give Local Students a Boost

Women in Chemistry partners with English High to raise test scores

BY LISA CHRISTADORE (GRS'12)



BUWIC outreach coordinators Jennifer Goss (GRS'13) (left) and Lauren Harmonay (GRS'15).

With every chemistry lesson she teaches, Holly Rosa strives to provide her 10th grade students at Boston's English High School in Jamaica Plain with the skills and knowledge they'll be tested on when they take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

exam. Improving cumulative test performance is a common goal among the school's science teachers, all of whom favor innovative chemistry instruction as they try to improve their school's routinely substandard MCAS exam track record. Last year, only a third of English High's 10th graders "progressed toward proficiency," on the MCAS science test, and a large majority failed the chemistry section. Now the teachers at English High are getting help to achieve that goal, thanks to a new collaboration with Boston University Women in Chemistry (Link: [chemistry/buwic/](/chemistry/buwic/)) (BUWIC) and its undergraduate affiliate, Chemia (Link: <http://people.bu.edu/chemia/index.htm>) .

The initiative, launched this semester, combines work with teachers on curriculum development and student mentoring: every two weeks, BUWIC and Chemia mentors go to the school to teach 10th grade chemistry classes, including an introductory lecture and lab work. This semester's lessons explore acid-base chemistry, a fundamental MCAS exam topic.

"The teachers look forward to the practical, hands-on lessons that the university mentors offer," says Rosa. "They explain chemistry concepts in alternative ways, giving the students a better understanding of the material and preparing them for the MCAS tests."

In addition to developing lesson plans, BUWIC and Chemia mentors tutor students at the high school's Learning Center. "I recently taught a ninth grade student algebra problem-solving strategies," says Jennifer Goss (GRS'13), a doctoral student in chemistry and founding officer of BUWIC. "Helping her was extremely rewarding for me and a lot of fun."

The BUWIC-English High collaboration was established through BU's Learning Resource Network (Link: </lernet>) and is part of Boston's Step UP Partnership (Link: </sed/stepup.htm>) , a program that

pairs BU, Boston College, Harvard University, Tufts University, and Northeastern University with local schools to provide more resources for both students and teachers. Next up for English High: a visit to the BU campus in May, where chemistry students will tour the University, speak with BU students, and participate in a science demonstration event.

“Outreach programs work both ways,” says Theresa O’Neill, the program director for science at English High. “For the students, a bridge is built between high school and college, and for the university mentors, a broader understanding of their community’s public school culture is achieved. It’s a win-win situation.”

BUWIC is supported by Novartis, Merck, and Pfizer. [Click here](#) (Link: /chemistry/buwic/about/newsandevents.html) to see a list of upcoming events.

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