

September 19, 2008

## **SENCER Alumnus Coordinates Symposium at ACS Meeting**

Richard Sheardy, professor and chair of chemistry and physics at Texas Woman's University, coordinated a symposium on "Science Education and Civic Engagement: The SENCER Approach" at the American Chemical Society National Meeting and Exposition in Philadelphia on August 21<sup>st</sup>. Speakers discussed the importance and relevance of SENCER, strategies for initiating and implementing SENCER courses and programs of study, existing model SENCER courses, and using the SALG (Student Assessment of Learning Gains) as an assessment tool. The symposium featured six presenters in addition to Professor Sheardy who explored different facets of the SENCER approach and provided examples of implementing innovations in curricula.

Eliza Reilly, senior scholar for SENCER and editor of the SENCER Model Series, familiarized symposium participants with the theory behind the project and discussed how the model courses incorporate the approach in a variety of ways. DonnaJean Fredeen, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Southern Connecticut State University and a co-director of the SENCER Center for Innovation-New England, focused on how to initiate SENCER courses and programs from an administrative point of view. DonnaJean also discussed how faculty members might best approach the administration to encourage the development of SENCER courses in their departments or at an institution at large.

The symposium also featured examples of applications of SENCER to specific courses and programs. Mark Masthay, associate professor and chair of the department of chemistry at the University of Dayton, shared his experience of incorporating SENCER strategies in a chemistry course for non-science majors and how they helped him better address course learning goals. Kristen Leckrone, associate professor in the department of biology, chemistry, and physical sciences at Roosevelt University, spoke about incorporating civic engagement strategies into an analytical chemistry course for majors. Students collected and analyzed water samples in their local area of Chicago and were able to relate the course concepts to their daily lives as a result. Jack Eichler, an assistant professor in the department of chemistry at Oxford College of Emory University, discussed civic engagement activities in an introductory chemistry course for chemistry/science majors that called for students to collect and analyze ozone levels in and around Atlanta.

Deborah Illman, a National Science Foundation senior fellow from the University of Washington closed the symposium with her talk on the importance of insuring science majors have the skills to communicate science to the general public. Dr. Illman specifically referred to her experiences in working with undergraduate chemistry majors.