EVALUATION OF JAMES NEITZEL

Burt Guttman

The best argument for making Jim Neitzel a regular member of the faculty is that it will immediately solve a whole series of staffing problems. The scientists are seriously under-represented in the faculty, and we always have trouble assigning our faculty to the programs that are in high demand. A program like Molecule to Organism, for instance, has been drawing at least 60-70 students each year, demanding three faculty members, a mixture of chemists and biologists. But in teaching with Jim this year, I've learned that he could do it all! Give him some good support in the way of student aides and Science Instructional Technicians, and he could do the whole program beautifully. I'm sure that Jim knows essentially everything I know about genetics, molecular and cellular biology, and microbiology, and he could give all of my lectures and workshops; I can't speak for all of the physiology that Jan has been teaching, but from his comments during her lectures I suspect he knows the physiology perfectly well. He obviously knows all of organic and biochemistry. And nutrition, too. So there you have him: the one-man, team-taught program.

To be a bit more serious, Jim Neitzel is truly one of the most knowledgeable faculty members I've met at Evergreen, and that is saying a lot. He is bright as hell and has a fine memory, he appears to read The Literature regularly (don't ask me where he finds the time), and I think he has picked up a pretty full medical curriculum over the years from his wife and her activities. His scientific interests have moved over into food and cooking; I'm reminded that someone once made a comment about Leo Szilard's "non-scientific interests," and someone else said, "Leo has no non-scientific interests. The essence of his endeavor is to bring everything into the realm of science." I may be doing Jim a disservice by suggesting that he works in the same way, but I think he has the same kind of intellect.

In addition to being smart and knowledgeable, Jim is a fine teacher. He gives fine, well-organized lectures. (But write larger on the board, Jim, write larger!) He obviously has made good notes beforehand and is prepared with the required array of transparencies and slides, but his style somewhat belies all that preparation. A typical lecture is just Jim standing there and speaking in a casual way about interesting ideas. Jim tells us something interesting, and the students respond with some good questions; Jim replies with some answers out of his great store of information, and then he goes on to the next topic. Sometimes he gives them well-designed workshops, and sometimes he gives the obligatory exam. It all gives the impression of being done quite easily, without raising a sweat and certainly with no anxiety. He remains calm, unruffled, in good humor, no matter how much work he's doing. Periodically, he writes evaluations; those that I've read are very specific, well-directed, and useful. He tells students quite precisely what they're doing well and what they need to improve. Students know just where they stand in his part of the program and where they should put their effort.

Jim has been working with our T4 phage group for the past year or two. His excellent background in molecular biology makes him a welcome addition to the group. I'm afraid he hasn't had enough time to do all the work he would like to do, but he is valued for his research experience, knowledge, good sense, and, of course, good humor.

Faculty members are supposed to do governance work, and Jim joined our Governance Study Group. He does his share of the work, listens a lot, and makes typically intelligent contributions to our discussions. He was the only other member of our group to attend meetings with both the Agenda Committee and Academic Deans, and he presented our interim report to the faculty meeting. So he takes his responsibilities seriously (more seriously than other faculty members who should know better) and contributes his good sense to our work.

And on top of all that, he's a birder! What more could we want?

I can't imagine that the College would be collectively crazy enough to *not* keep Jim with us.

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