“I now have a fresh perspective towards my courses that I am currently taking”, states Jemcy Joy, one of the first students to have the opportunity to take part in Science Engagement. During the Summer 2007 session, Jemcy was enrolled in the “In-reach” stream, where she worked with first-year chemistry instructor, Dr. Ann Verner. “My responsibilities were to schedule and offer office hours for chemistry students. As well, I worked on enhancing Dr. Ann Verner’s PowerPoint lecture slides by incorporating the student perspective”.

Science Engagement In-reach is a service-learning course in which students who have successfully completed a particular course use their experience to enrich the learning of students currently in that course. Says Jemcy, “It’s totally different from the other courses that you take at UTSC in that you are given the opportunity to work alongside with a professor, which is a rare treat at a university where large class sizes minimize the interaction between faculty and students”. Jemcy was attracted by the idea of acting as a mentor for students and contributing to the overall university community.

“I liked her] enthusiasm, love of chemistry, and willingness to share her love of chemistry. [She was] always willing to try something different”, states Ann Verner, who was instructing CHMA11H3 during the summer and thought it would be a great opportunity for her students to get a better understanding of the course. “I always find that undergraduates relate better to other undergraduates. The [Science Engagement] students get an experience to be on the other side of the fence...appreciating what we as instructors put in developing the course...and I think that that’s important for students to know”.

In-reach students are required to carry out critical self-reflection through which they continually monitor and assess how their service enhances their own academic learning. “Each placement is unique and you are mostly working ... with your professor. It also teaches you to work efficiently independently under your professor’s supervision,” states Jemcy, who is now using the skills she learned from Science Engagement In-reach to work as a teaching assistant for Dr. Verner.

Story by Tarif Rahman