



*R. Lee Penn, 2014–15 Distinguished Teacher  
Morse-Alumni Undergraduate Teaching Award*

R. Lee Penn is admired by colleagues, community members, and especially students for her innovative and inspirational teaching style.

“Often her energy and enthusiasm take students out of the classroom, and not always under conventional circumstances,” says a colleague. “Lee’s freshman seminar, titled ‘My Other Car is a Bicycle,’ had a number of lectures that took place while the class was literally in motion.”

Indeed, Penn has taught numerous freshman and honors seminars, has served as faculty adviser to multiple student groups, serves as an adviser and mentor for one of the highest numbers of undergraduate students pursuing independent study projects, and gives students frequent opportunities to co-author scientific papers.

Through her work with undergraduates to serve the greater community of K-12 teachers and students, Penn has been able to extend her effectiveness far beyond the traditional boundaries of the chemistry lab, say colleagues.

For example, Penn’s outreach program, Microscopy Camp, has for years served middle school students, plus middle and high school teachers.

A former student participant in the camp, now an undergraduate at the U of M, credits Penn with where she is today: “She taught us about what it meant to study chemistry ... all at a time when we were just starting to think about what our secondary education would entail. I left each of the outreach events in awe of science in general and enthusiastic about pursuing a degree in chemistry.”

Associate Professor  
Department of Chemistry  
College of Science and  
Engineering  
University of Minnesota  
Twin Cities

*“Written and spoken communication is fundamental to the progress of scientific research and education, and I incorporate presentations and scientific writing into all of my courses.”*

