



Illustrating the invisible

College of Education and Department of Biology students team up on book project

BY ERIC GORTON ('86, '09M)

A group of upper-level biology majors is using their artistic talent to help future teachers get a better grasp of difficult science topics they will one day have to teach.

The biology students, who are taking a biological illustrations course, are assisting the learning process by illustrating books being written by the pre-service teachers who are taking a course called Journey Through the Cell. "These topics are really hard for these students," says Kerry Cresawn, professor of biology, who began the book-writing assignment two years ago. "They're the invisible things in science — cells, DNA, processes you can't see — and so students have a hard time grasping it and then find

it hard to teach and so they quickly resort to textbooks and worksheets. They have an easier time explaining why leaves change color, more macroscopic, tangible things."

This year, Cresawn's students teamed up with professor Alex Bannigan's art-biology students to get more science into the art and to improve the learning process for the pre-service teachers. Because the artists are upper-level biology majors, they understand what the pictures should show, Cresawn explains. However, she made it clear that her students had to explain the science to be illustrated. "Sometimes my students get intimidated talking to the biology majors, but I think this helps their self confidence because they're having these conversations about really complicated stuff and it's an equal exchange." **M**



Elizabeth Garfola ('14), a biology major from Winchester, Va., created the drawings above which will appear in a book written by College of Education students and illustrated by biology students.