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Envy on campus

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BODY:

What is it about the advertising business that attracts so many would-be teachers? You should have seen my mail when people learned that I'd become the James L. Knight Chair Professor of Advertising at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Nine letters used the word "envy." Others expanded on the theme:

"That's my idea of going to heaven," wrote Owens-Corning's Joe Doherty from Toledo.

"It's always been my fantasy," confessed Gordon Peterson at Bozell, Jacobs, Kenyon & Eckhardt in New York.

"Teaching at a university is a secret ambition of mine as well," echoed Bob Skinner, of Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos in Boston.

"Education is my avocation, and I anticipate the time when I might become more involved as you have," said David Goodman from Clorox in San Francisco.

You would've thought Dick Isabel of the Center for Concept Development in New York had been steaming open the envelopes when he said, "You're making a career change which many advertising executives dream about."

In fact, many high-level advertising professionals have already crossed over: Dick Durrell, founding publisher of *People* magazine, is an adjunct professor at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut; Dick Christian, former ceo of Marsteller, just moved from associate dean at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism to the Kellogg Graduate School of Management in the same role, and ex-Du Pont international ad manager Red Ballentine is setting up a Master's in Marketing Communication program at the University of South Carolina.

(For others who have recently taken the plunge: How about sharing your experiences and observations for the crowd edging toward the brink?)

Why do so many of us find the idea of professoring, according to my mail, at least "interesting," more often "exciting," "fascinating" and even "wonderful"?

Of course, teaching -- or at least training -- is half the art of being a good manager in any business.

But perhaps adpeople are particularly natural helpers. We eagerly seek business problems, and are never so happy as when we're in the middle of a crisis. We passionately want to convince our clients or senior managers in our companies to invest in the campaigns we develop. We compulsively train everyone around us, particularly (but not exclusively!) newcomers. And the whole purpose of our advertising is to help someone live better, perform

better, feel better, *be* better because he or she bought the product or service we're so messianic about selling.

Then, too, the performance aspect of teaching plays to the ham in so many of us. We love to make speeches and presentations. We thrive on applause. So perhaps it's not surprising that so many of us fantasize about teaching.

But fair warning, if you share the dream. I was introduced to the reality early, by Tom Bowers, associate dean of the School of Journalism here at UNC. After I'd put on a lecture last January that wowed the class, he quietly asked, "Can you do that 26 times a semester?"

A humbling thought. Can I indeed? We'll see. Stay tuned. And wish me luck.