1999 Spring Meeting

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TI: Strategies for Successful Undergraduate Student - Faculty Collaborative Research Projects
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AB: The success of an undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research project depends critically on the efforts of the faculty members who devote much of their "spare" time to organizing the project, to instructing and advising student participants. At colleges and universities where faculty members are expected to publish scientific research results, it is difficult for faculty to devote time to collaborative research projects with undergraduates unless the project assists faculty in their research efforts. Based on our experiences with Keck Geology Consortium summer projects, we have identified a number of strategies for research program design that can help meet both faculty and student needs. (1) Have 2-4 faculty members participate in the project who have experience and interest in the topic. This will make possible advanced discussions of the problem, and give students multiple faculty viewpoints and guidance. (2) Design individual student projects in advance to ensure good coverage of the major questions and assist students in selecting a project that matches their preparation and institutional strengths. (3) Give each student their own project, but have all students work on various parts of a common problem. This will give students the opportunity to interact scientifically. (4) Require the students to continue work on the problem during the school year as well as during the summer program period. Students will learn more and the data sets produced will be more significant. (5) Design the project so that all student participants can stay in close communication with at least one project faculty member and provide reasons for the students to share data and ideas with one another. (6) Get the whole project group together at least once during the academic year to foster scientific interaction and to motivate both students and faculty. (7) Make a firm schedule for the year and insist that students stick to it. (8) As soon as possible, faculty members should synthesize, build upon, and publish project results, including student authors as appropriate. (9) Don't undertake a new collaborative project until the results from the previous project are submitted for publication.

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