TWENTY POINTS FAVORING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

by

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1. Lets undergraduates experience joy and challenge of doing science -- lets them work on something that is not fully understood.

2. Reveals student attributes (independence, perseverance, creativity, ingenuity) that courses often fail to reveal -- attributes that are often more important than those that courses reinforce.

3. Lets student test depth of personal interest in field vis a vis a career; mentor also observes this depth of interest.

4. Lets student develop practical skills.

5. Gives student opportunity to develop and take pride in personal, specific expertise -- expertise that may sustain him or her during adjustment to graduate school.

6. Encourages elevation of personal standards and greater degree of commitment to field -- motivates more mature view of coursework as means to end rather than ends in themselves.

7. Lets student stand taller among peers and members of scientific community; student ceases to be pure student but instead becomes junior member of scientific community.

8. Gives student something of his or her own to write and talk about.

9. Improves prospects for gaining admission and support in graduate school; many graduate schools want student to describe undergraduate research experience.

10. Exposes student to original literature; breaks textbook syndrome.

11. Develops strong, lasting relationship between student and mentor -- one that continues and possibly later reverses, whereby mentor becomes primary receiver.

12. Puts faculty on spot. Stimulates faculty research activity, even leads to redirection of faculty research. Fosters writing of proposals, etc.

13. Strong student/mentor bond produces stronger allegiance and support among graduates. Latter want to repay debt.


15. Prepares and favorably predisposes next generation of collegiate faculty, who will know from firsthand experience that research is possible and important in colleges.

16. Demonstrates that courses are only part of the educational delivery system.

17. Students produce valuable results! Students often bring superior pre-existing skills to project.

18. Collaborative venture broadens student/faculty relationship.

19. Fill in from your experience.