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Editor's Corner - A Letter to the Editor: National Science Foundation Opportunities for Teachers

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A Letter to the Editor: National Science Foundation Opportunities for Teachers

Hey, Iowa science and math teachers! Are you aware of the many possibilities for study available with National Science Foundation (NSF) funding? Each spring, I browse through the Foundation's catalog of summer programs and apply to the ones that look interesting.

Last year, I was involved in a Technical Education Research Center (TERC) Lab Net project in Portland, Oregon, at Lewis and Clark College (a small liberal arts college in a very picturesque setting). It was great! It has an excellent science department, and we were able to tour the facilities at our leisure and communicate with the summer staff and students. Our workshop group is now on a computer network, and I communicate with the other participants year round. Lab Net is held simultaneously at sites in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Oregon. Approximately 25 teachers are selected for each site. This two-week program is up to date in every respect and utilizes the latest equipment available. Lowell Herr (a physics teacher at Cattlin Gable School in Portland) and David Vernier of Vernier Software (also of Portland) were our instructors. We were able to tour the small Vernier plant and meet the people who develop and produce these computer materials.

Speaking of computers, I believe a word of warning is in order. If you attend national meetings or use telecommunications with your computer, be prepared for computer viruses. I had heard of the problem, but had never experienced it until this summer. We checked everything with a program called "Disinfectant," yet somehow, things still got through. One of our best "computer people" could do nothing but watch helplessly as a virus simply wiped out all of the files on his hard disk. I'm not a computer expert, but I know that there are probably lots of other ways to protect yourself, so BE ALERT! Viruses can really ruin your material.

I have certainly enjoyed this and all the other programs in which I have participated. During the last five years, I have been on the east coast nine times and the west coast twice taking part in meetings and projects, all with the help of NSF. Take a little time this spring and look over what is available. I am confident you will have a good experience!

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