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Student Programs in Retrospect

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Science may often be considered a discipline of absolutes and systematized knowledge, but science education in Iowa need not be so. To the young and enthusiastic Iowa student scientist there are a number of educational opportunities available that are exciting and relevant, as well as several which take place outside of the classroom. These extracurricular opportunities are designed to allow the secondary science student to realize a few of his educational aspirations while interacting directly with other professionals and student scientists from the state. Since I have been involved personally with some of the unique Iowa science educational opportunities as a high school student and now as a college student at The University of Iowa, it is obvious that they have been of great importance in helping me develop my scientific interests.

I began with a relatively stable science curriculum in elementary school, which was followed by four years of somewhat more diversified study in secondary science education; it was during the latter period that I decided to become a scientist and so began to interest myself in various opportunities outside of the classroom. The ensuing scientific experiences that I have had with independent research projects, the Iowa Junior Academy of Science, Secondary Student Training Programs, various science symposia, and the Iowa Academy of Science have greatly reinforced my motivation and significantly aided my formal studies.

Having a growing interest in scientific research, especially centered around the biological sciences, I applied for and received a position in the Research Participation Program of SSTP during the summer of 1973. Learning side by side with some of the leading scientific researchers in the state was a very exciting and important supplement to my previous experiences. Carrying out research in the College of Medicine at The University of Iowa was indeed a great educational opportunity, as my studies were carefully guided by knowledgeable professors.

The summer’s work in SSTP culminated in a research symposium at which papers were presented and later published in the program’s an-
nual research book. The summer program not only offered an inside view of the modern research laboratories, but also a chance to explore science at my own pace, to ask many questions, and to have the facilities to try to find the answers. I learned that it is during such independent activities that real education takes place.

This program opened the door to other areas of scientific endeavor available to Iowa students. During spring of the 1973-74 school year, I spoke at the 1974 Iowa Science and Humanities Symposium. This was a result of the research of the previous summer. The Iowa Symposium is a three-day event highlighted by the presentation of student research papers and various scientific speakers. This spring Symposium led to my participation at the U.S. Army National Junior Science and Humanities Symposium at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in May, and it received recognition from the Iowa Academy of Science.

In addition to my coursework during this past semester, I have found it beneficial and enjoyable to continue an independent research project at the Cell Culture Laboratory in the College of Medicine. This research work has increased my skills in proper laboratory techniques, in reading scientific literature, and in the collection of data for the preparation of a paper. I found all of these activities enhanced my undergraduate coursework. In addition, these experiences provided a transition from high school to college.

Recognition and an audience to appreciate and digest the work done by a student scientist can be inspiring. My participation as a secondary and university student in the affairs of the Iowa Academy of Science, Iowa Junior Academy of Science, and other scientific institutions of the state has not only been educational, but also highly motivating. Such institutions offer a chance for the student to break away from the classroom and explore science independently, often a welcome relief. As I continue my studies as a general science major at The University of Iowa, I know that my somewhat diverse education in science will be of valuable assistance. The programs offer that "extra something" to supplement the science student's growing mental appetite.

Editor's note: Brian was a participant in various Iowa Junior Academy of Science programs, the Secondary Science Training Program, the Iowa Science and Humanities Symposium, and the National Science and Humanities Symposium. He received a cancer scholarship of $300 to participate in the SSTP. Currently he is a student at The University of Iowa and is involved in a research project at the Cell Culture Laboratory under Dr. James Lewis, a former member of the Jonas Salk polio vaccine team.