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I began conducting research here at the University of Kentucky five years ago, when I was a junior in high school. I am confident in saying that a major contributing factor to my enrollment at UK was the fact that I had established a great research home and, research being a career goal of mine, I felt toleration in remaining in close proximity of my parents for another four years. To me, research was not just a hook in my cheek to keep me local. Research has developed into a passion that has provided me with opportunities, learning and otherwise, by taking advantage of a slice of what UK has to offer outside the lecture halls. Throughout my research journey, I have met numerous unique individuals that through even the simplest phrase, have educated and mentored me through the chaotic jungle of college. I am not alone in saying that research has changed my life dramatically. Now I want to share the riches with others as they were shared with me. It is my dream to create an accessible resource so that all students, undergraduate and high school, can find a research home just as I did.

Currently, the mentor list available through the Office of Undergraduate Research is six years old. It includes faculty that are no longer UK employees and excludes faculty that have since been hired. For a student to apply for a research position, they would fill out an application online and submit it to this office. Next, the student would go speak with an employee in the Office of Undergraduate Research where they would discuss labs the student could enter. Finally, the student emails the head of the lab to ask if they can enter the lab, sometimes discovering the mentor is no longer at the institution.

This process is mildly effective however there is much possibility, and need, for improvement. I imagine an online database of mentors where faculty input information necessary for students to become aware of, and hopefully excited about, their work. Faculty would upload their name, department, email, focus of research and how the student could contribute. Faculty would also have a choice of when they accepted students (fall, spring, summer), what classification of student they accept (high school, fr., so., jr., sr.), and select from a list of categories the one that best describes their research (botany, art history, civil engineering, etc.). The other component would be about the student. Students could search for a mentor by research interest (choosing from the same categories that the faculty selected), when they want to start, and for labs that accept their classification. Searching by eligibility is a crucial component of my proposal. I want the student to feel as welcome as possible, since a freshman perpetually hearing “I only take upper classmen” is bound to lose interest in research in general.

Also for the student, there will be answers to frequently asked questions like: “Why do research?”, “What to expect?”, “How to begin?” and others. For motivation, there will be a “Success Stories” on the page where graduated students in Graduate or Professional school talk about the benefits that research gave to them. For support, there will be a “Student Research Contacts” page, where undergraduate and high school students currently doing research post their major, name, email address, and research interest. This way, weary students could contact students to ask for advice or support. To show presentation opportunities, there would be links to upcoming research conferences and to undergraduate research journals. For the student, this would be an all-inclusive resource for research and support.

The entire site will be called DREAM: Developing Research Experience for All Majors. It will allow a student to develop research experience no matter their current experience. The fact that DREAM is for high school students as well, 'undergraduate' could not be in the name, as it immediately excludes them. I realize that the use of 'Majors' may imply college, but the meaning is 'all interests'. This is another key component of the site: that it includes the humanities as well as the sciences. Hopefully the creation of DREAM will not only develop an up to date mentor database, but will also recruit more mentors, particularly in the humanities, to accept undergraduate and high school students. There is no reason why an undergraduate, no matter the major, should be excluded from research if they have the desire. The goal of DREAM is to get bright high school students on UK's campus and get undergraduates involved, as well to aid in recruitment and retention.

I looked up the 2007 ranking of the top 25 public research institutions and had a look at the research databases that they used. Not one had a site that is as inclusive as DREAM will be, not one. The University of California-Berkeley, which is #1, has an icon to "Search for research programs by eligibility criteria", probably similar to DREAM, but below it reads "Coming Soon". The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, which is #9, allows students to search by research interest, but leaves the student to find out the hard way whether or not the lab that they have gotten excited about takes someone of their classification. DREAM would be a database beyond what any of the "best" research institutions are currently using; UK would be ahead of the game.

To create and implement DREAM, I will begin by creating it for the Biology department solely to start out. This is because the Biology department has the largest

number of students currently doing undergraduate research. This way, I can get feedback from a fairly large pool of students who try it out for the first time. Also, the mentor list for the Biology department is up to date so I will know exactly who to contact first. Finally, as a Biology major, it is the department I know best. I have the greatest number of contacts in this department and will be able to get a link in place on the Biology department web page, according to Dr. Beattie, my first potential mentor. By starting with one department, I will be able to work the kinks out the site before it goes campus wide. The last thing I want is 500 faculty profiles sent in that have no where to go because there is a problem with the site. Biology will be a trial run.

By creating and testing DREAM first, I will have a product to market to other departments. I will start by going to the Directors of Undergraduate Studies in the Chemistry, Physics, Psychology, Engineering and the college of Agriculture. This will cover the sciences. Then I will go to the humanities in a similar fashion.

As far as upkeep, I will do it for as long as I am around. The Eureka office has already stated they do not have the funds to keep it running, however the office has been extremely supportive and have contributed helpful insight. For better or worse, all roads are leading to SPUR, Society for the Promotion of Undergraduate Research, to take it on. I am apprehensive of this, as it is hit or miss with the officers. This element needs to be further investigated.

There are potential funding resources from the Kentucky Academy of Sciences that I am planning to apply for to pay for Roger's services of website creation.