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Students conduct geological exploration

Summary: Professor Cotter's all-women geological exploration in Brazil provides opportunity to grow as scientists

(July 6, 2006)-How does a relatively sane professor find himself surrounded by a bunch of college women scientists on their first geological exploration of Brazil? Well, if the guy is Jim Cotter, professor of geology, the answer is simple: REU!

In 1989, he was awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to develop a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) project for minority students.

"Only problem was, no minorities applied for the project," Cotter recalls. "So I got approval from the NSF to create a program just for women." His first REU group in 1989 totaled five students and the next year, it jumped to ten. Since then, the nine-week summer program has averaged eight participants each year.

"Bonding with other women in science is a key benefit as they develop their careers," Cotter reports. "REU allows them to ask questions of each other and support each other as they explore those questions."

In addition, Cotter has found that offering an REU program for women in geology has been a boost to his own research. "I've had 77 pairs of eyes checking the lay of the land, and it always helps your own research to have others ask questions about it," he observes.

Read an in-depth article about Cotter's REU program, along with additional stories and information about alumni, faculty, and programs, on the Division of Science and Mathematics [Newsletter](#) Web page.

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