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Fostering undergraduate research at small institutions: the role of instructional labs

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As we look to provide strong foundations for physics majors, to what extent can we supplement the kinds of intellectual independence that research experiences foster, with the development of a scaffolded, spiral curriculum of physics laboratory instruction extending throughout the four years typical of undergraduate work? This talk discusses an array of tools that are available to support your departments internal dialog on these programmatic issues, as well as ways in which the broader community of instructors works to disseminate useful ideas, training, equipment and funds aimed at supporting the structures that are needed to construct a real curriculum of instructional lab courses and, at the same time, the (cyclical) release of structure that helps students to become independently active.