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Teaching and Research at Undergraduate Institutions

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My own career path has been non-traditional and I ended up at a primarily undergraduate institution by pure accident. However, teaching at a small college has been extremely rewarding to me, since I get to know and interact with my students, have an opportunity to work with them one-on-one and promote their intellectual growth and sense of social responsibility. One of the growing trends at undergraduate institutions in the past decade has been the crucial role of undergraduate research as part of the teaching process and the training of future scientists. There are several liberal arts institutions that expect research-active Faculty who can mentor undergraduate research activities. Often faculty members at these institutions consider their roles as teacher-scholars with no boundary between these two primary activities. A researcher who is in touch with the developments in his/her own field and contributes to new knowledge in the field is likely to be a more exciting teacher in the classroom and share the excitement of discovery with the students. At undergraduate institutions, there is generally very good support available for faculty development projects in both teaching and research. Often, there is a generous research leave program as well. For those who like advising and mentoring undergraduates and a teaching and learning centered paradigm, I will recommend a career at an undergraduate institution. In my presentation, I will talk about how one can prepare for such a career.