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Challenges and opportunities of undergraduate research

DANIELA M. TOPASNA, GREGORY A. TOPASNA, Virginia Military Institute — Undergraduate research at small schools is becoming the norm rather than the exception that it was years ago. Faculties are now faced with the challenges of incorporating students with varying degrees of academic preparedness and motivation in their research. This coupled with the students' own constraints within the academic schedule can make undergraduate research a challenge for both students and faculty. Like many small undergraduate schools, VMI's faculty and students are faced with these obstacles when engaging in undergraduate research. However, such difficulties can lead to creative solutions that lead to multiple benefits for students and faculty mentors. We present our unique perspective and experiences for this challenging yet rewarding experience as related to thin film research performed at VMI.

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