Better Learning through Research

Dr. Paul DeYoung ’77 doesn’t buy the argument that undergraduate students can’t conduct research. “It angers me when I hear my colleagues around the country say, ‘you can’t do research with undergraduates, because my field is too complicated,’” said Dr. DeYoung, who is the Kenneth G. Herrick Professor of Physics at Hope.

In fact, Dr. DeYoung says the teaching he does in his courses and the research he does in research alongside students go hand-in-hand. He says that’s what distinguishes Hope from other undergraduate institutions around the country. “Every college has a focus from analytical chemistry to nuclear physics to interdisciplinary problems while also measuring the properties of rare nuclei at the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory,” he said. Dr. DeYoung has been involved in research with more than 60 Hope students, many of whom have gone on to earn doctoral degrees and work in high-tech fields.

“By doing research with students, many of whom have gone on to earn doctoral degrees and work in high-tech fields, Dr. DeYoung’s research activity with students is the college’s Pelletron particle accelerator, which was installed in 2003 thanks to a $660,000 National Science Foundation grant, at the time the largest single grant for scientific equipment in the college’s history. The particle accelerator has provided research opportunities not only for those studying nuclear physics, but also chemistry, biology and other scientific disciplines. It’s been used to analyze everything from dinosaur bones to sediment from local waterways. He has also provided research opportunities for Hope students through the college’s participation in a collaboration known as MoNA (Modular Nuclear Array), which consists of Hope and nine other colleges and universities. He says the MoNA collaboration gives undergraduate students an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of research in nuclear physics. “It’s new science,” he said.

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Dr. DeYoung says his own research is a key to his teaching and to his advocacy for students. “You get the catalog of the school you transfer. “You get the catalog of the school you attend and earn an associate’s degree who may not have a traditional path to a four-year degree. Prior to enrolling at Hope in 1973, he attended and earned an associate’s degree from Muskegon Community College, and he says transforming in from a community college doesn’t have to be a barrier to a successful undergraduate experience.

Part of the key, Dr. DeYoung says, is making sure to take courses that will easily transfer. “You get the catalog of the school you want to go to, and take the courses that match up,” he said. “I did miss out on some of the social aspects of those early years, though.”

With the help of the National Science Foundation, Hope is making an effort to provide opportunities for community college students who want to continue their education in the sciences at Hope. The $564,360 grant from the National Science Foundation, Hope is making an effort to provide opportunities for community college students who want to continue their education in the sciences at Hope. The $564,360 grant from the National Science Foundation, Hope is making an effort to provide opportunities for community college students who want to continue their education in the sciences at Hope. The $564,360 grant from the National Science Foundation, Hope is making an effort to provide opportunities for community college students who want to continue their education in the sciences at Hope. The $564,360 grant from the National Science Foundation, Hope is making an effort to provide opportunities for community college students who want to continue their education in the sciences at Hope. 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