

# Undergraduate institutions should play larger research role

May 4 2011

---

A group of 12 biology educators at US colleges and universities that teach mostly undergraduates argues in the May issue of *BioScience* for coordinating networks to expand the study and teaching of ecology conducted at these institutions. The group, which has launched a network dedicated to continental-scale observations, argues that better coordination of current research efforts will allow "transformative contributions" cost-effectively, while also providing valuable educational experiences for undergraduates.

Most [ecological research](#) in the United States is conducted at dedicated institutions or at research universities, where postgraduate students studying for advanced degrees and postdoctoral researchers do much of the work. Yet institutions dedicated to undergraduate education commonly employ ecologists as professors, and many of them now pursue local research projects. Though some of these have produced important results, the projects are typically poorly coordinated with other studies.

Most of the [BioScience](#) authors, led by David R. Bowne of Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, have published research reports while responsible for teaching. They point out that undergraduate institutions have some clear advantages as research bases. The research leaders will often have detailed knowledge of local sites of interest. And projects may find some financial support from [local governments](#) and other institutions. Undergraduates usually work more closely with their professors than do postgraduates, the authors observe, and the close

supervision means undergraduates can conduct high-quality research. Better collaboration on research protocols could expand the scope of studies conducted at undergraduate institutions, as well as increase their relevance to key ecological questions, resource management, and [policy decisions](#).

Provided by American Institute of Biological Sciences

Citation: Undergraduate institutions should play larger research role (2011, May 4) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-05-undergraduate-larger-role.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.