

UBC researchers seek to engage students in STEM careers with science outreach toolkit

August 30 2012



This shows University of British Columbia researcher Joanne Fox with students during a genomics field trip program hosted at the Michael Smith Laboratories. Credit: Michael Smith Laboratories, UBC

Outreach programs that offer a taste of real-world science and pair secondary students with enthusiastic young researchers are key to promoting careers in science and technology, according to University of British Columbia researchers.

In a paper published this week in *PLoS [Computational Biology](#)*, UBC researchers document their work on the Genomics Field Trip Program hosted at the Michael Smith Laboratories (MSL). Joanne Fox, Jennifer McQueen and Jody Wright outline the benefits of research-based field trips, offering a blueprint for designing science outreach programs.

"Genomics is important because [students](#) will deal with challenging

questions and they need to be informed and science-literate," says Fox, a faculty member at the Michael Smith Laboratories.. "For example, they may have their personal [genome sequence](#) and they may have to decide who has access to that information."

The Genomics Field Trip program encourages exploration of the sciences through a full day genomics experience which takes place at the MSL laboratories. Program instructors are typically UBC graduate students who benefit from the experience by developing their ability to communicate scientific ideas to the general public. They also develop skills in lesson design and delivery, allowing them to enhance their instructional skills, something that does not always occur in teaching assistantship positions.

Fox hopes the success of the Genomics Field Trip Program will inspire other institutions to develop similar programs. The recommendations included in her paper can be used as a blueprint for science programs and an online genomics toolkit provides valuable information for lesson plans.

"This type of program helps graduate students remember why science is so exciting, and in turn inspires the next generation of scientists," Fox explains.

More information: [www.ploscompbiol.org/article/i...
journal.pcbi.1002636](http://www.ploscompbiol.org/article/i...journal.pcbi.1002636)

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: UBC researchers seek to engage students in STEM careers with science outreach toolkit (2012, August 30) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-08-ubc-engage->

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