

Utilizing field experiences to create student interest in the geosciences.

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Dixie State College of Utah is located in Southern Utah at the border of the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range. We utilize this setting to give geologic field experiences to approximately 600 students a year. Field trips are required in all geology courses and range from local 6-hour trips to 5-day trips to the National Parks. While most students do not major in the geosciences, it is our hope that a field experience will help them appreciate geoscience concepts and entice some students to consider the geosciences for a career. In order to expand upon the importance of these field experiences, we recently developed the Colorado Plateau Field Research Institute.

The Colorado Plateau Field Institute has a mission to facilitate practical field experiences and research opportunities on the Colorado Plateau and in the Basin and Range. The target audience includes: undergraduate science students, K-12 teachers, science education majors at DSC, graduate students from other institutions; and working professionals. Institute programs will also involve an international audience, both to provide broad access to the learning opportunities represented in the extraordinary outcrops and eco-zones of the region and to engage North American faculty and students in research with international peer groups.

The focus on K-12 teachers and Dixie College science education majors is of primary importance. Having teachers well versed and excited about the geosciences is the best recruiting tool for future majors in this field.

Dixie College has a dual mission both as a Community College and a State 4-year college. While we do not offer a degree in geology, we articulate with the Universities in Utah so that our students can have a seamless transfer to geology programs throughout the state. Annual meetings with geology faculty representing all state supported colleges in Utah are held to provide pathways for communication and articulation. These meetings build trust and we find that our students are always welcomed at the other institutions.

I am looking forward to discussion on career opportunities and placement potential to help advise students towards a career in the geosciences. We are also developing an Environmental Science B.S. degree program with an emphasis on geology and chemistry. Practical skills that students need for environmental monitoring and testing will be an important part of the degree proposal.