



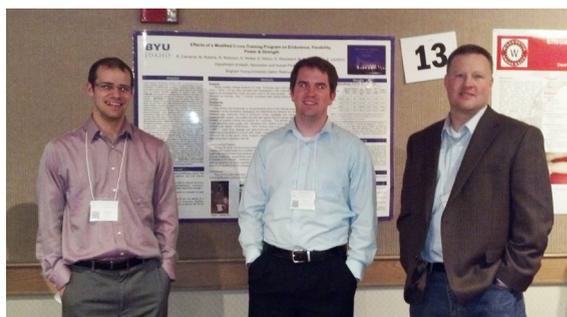
## My Experiences With Mentored Research at BYU-Idaho

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In recent years the idea of student-mentored research has been presented to BYU-Idaho faculty as a means to enrich student learning. I am currently completing my ninth year at BYU-Idaho and during my tenure have been fortunate to experience the evolving mentored research process first hand. At times mentoring students through research projects has been frustrating, overwhelming, and sometimes extremely time consuming. However, the lessons and concepts students learn are invaluable and can become paramount in the lives of both the faculty mentor and the students.

During my undergraduate and graduate work I dedicated my time and abilities to being the best in my game. I was always in the lab, presented at numerous conferences, did the proper networking, and even received an award for outstanding graduate research making a name for myself in the science world as an up and coming researcher. During my master's program at the University

of Montana, I was assigned to direct the undergraduate research. Immediately, I gained an overwhelming love for helping students put practical application to concepts learned in the classroom and basic lab classes. Following a short hiatus as lab director researching site direct mutagenesis, real-time PCR, and other than novel lab techniques, I started a doctoral program focused heavily on research. Yet, I deeply enjoyed teaching and using research experiences to portray my thoughts in the classroom discussion in an interesting manner. I was also asked to advise undergraduate students regarding class and career choices. I was later invited to apply at BYU-Idaho, not knowing or understanding the environment at the newly converted Ricks College to BYU-Idaho. During my



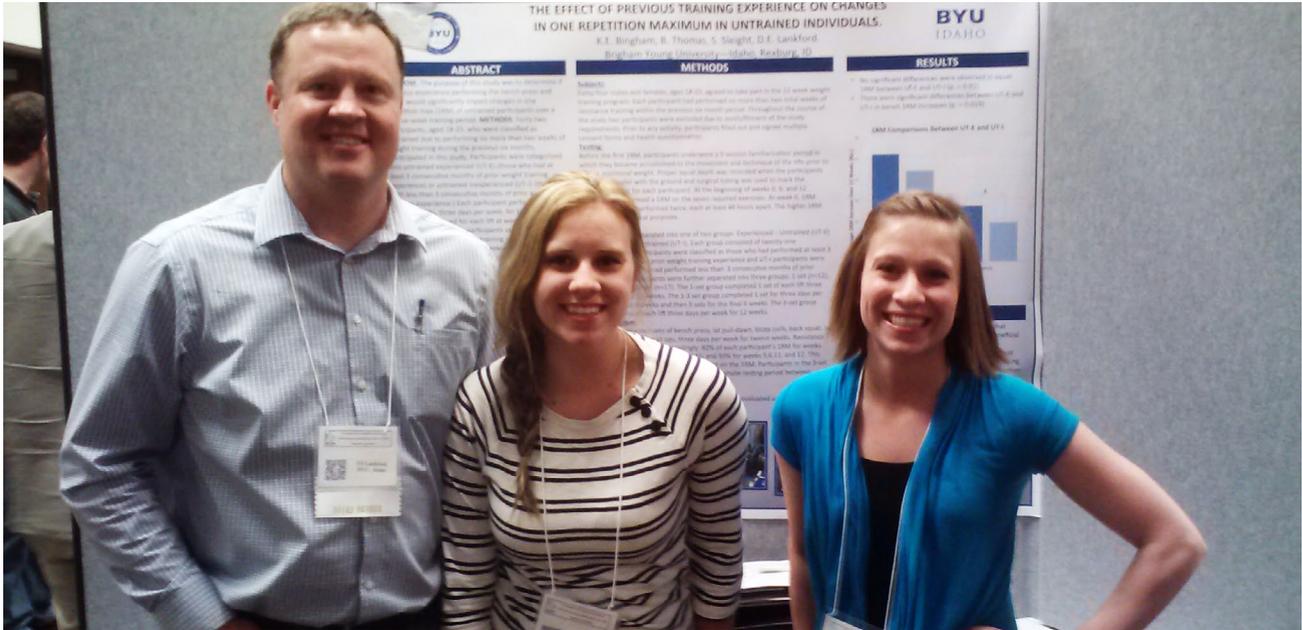
interview process, several topics discussed were surprising to me. One question in particular posed by Max Checketts was, “What is your idea of research and could it be implemented at an institution like BYU-Idaho?” This was inspiring to me since my primary research interest was working with undergraduate or master's level students in a mentoring-type capacity. I was also asked during my interview process the feasibility of creating a new program based on a science background to compliment an already existing physical education program. Despite my overwhelming spiritual confirmation regarding the acceptance of a position at BYU-Idaho, I assumed that I would be the odd duck by coming to BYU-Idaho because of its emphasis on teaching over research. Very quickly I learned that I was wrong. I soon met individuals from other departments, particularly the sciences, with similar backgrounds as myself who were successful and motivating instructors in the classroom with a wealth of experience in the laboratory.

Mentored research at BYU-Idaho has been a learning experience for me. I originally struggled to understand what the University wanted. My idea of research and BYU-Idaho's idea of research were definitely not identical. I came fresh from a doctoral program at a research institution where projects were based off of novel concepts with the idea of a solid peer reviewed publication and secured funding in mind. Research was meticulous and lackadaisical error was not acceptable. My research largely involved human subjects with a deadline which, unlike a petri dish, cannot be thrown

away upon a mistake. I soon learned to accept that a quality research experience is sometimes more about the lessons learned than the study results and outcomes. I have recognized that smaller projects focused on student learning are less frustrating for myself and give students the opportunity to grow in understanding as the project progresses. I have also found that working with other universities to supply pilot data for larger studies is an excellent means to provide mentored research with a lower level of pressure on the students and myself.

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Mentored research creates a spark in the mind of the students. It gives them experience that is often not gained elsewhere, including the classroom. For me, research is a major form of my faculty development. It keeps me current in my field, and I take pride in being able to give first hand experiences regarding topics in the student's textbook, therefore making the subject matter intimate and thought provoking. The mentored research I have been involved with at BYU-Idaho has ranged from acute blood glucose regulation, to neuromuscular vs hypertrophic responses, to resistance training, to dance physiology, to factors influencing fat oxidation rates. Students from our department have had the opportunity to present research both at the Research and Creative Works conference here at BYU-Idaho and at regional conferences. This resulted in abstract publications in the *International Journal of Exercise Science, Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, and *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*.

I have witnessed the blessing of mentored research in the lives of BYU-Idaho students. One student recently told me of his interview process for a physician's assistant program. During the interview process he was repeatedly asked about his research project and asked to go into

more detail. The interviewers were astounded at his level of understanding of the topic. They noted that most undergraduates often get second-hand projects with the lion's share reserved for graduate students. He was asked if he had an interest in continuing research, received an early admission, and was invited to work in a research lab. Seeing the joy in this student's face as he expressed appreciation for both his education at BYU-Idaho and the opportunity to become involved with that particular research project assured me of the positive blessings of mentored research.

Over the years I have come to recognize that research comes in all shapes and forms. Different disciplines approach research in various fashions. With the new formation of the Office of Faculty Development and Mentored Research, there has never been a stronger support for mentored research and improved learning on this campus. I can express with sincerity that mentored research has been a positive resource for my classroom lectures. I am excited to see what the future has in store for mentored research at BYU-Idaho as we continue to bless the lives of students and increase opportunities for valuable student learning. ❁