CURE Courses Foster Research Project Ownership, Autonomy, and Confidence in Research Abilities Regardless of High or Low Research Project Constraints

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Course-based undergraduate research experiences benefit students in a multitude of ways, however, the design and implementation challenges of creating a CURE can be a major obstacle to their implementation. As levels of student autonomy and input in their research projects increase, the design of the CURE becomes increasingly complex. For faculty, there is a trade-off between ensuring students feel a sense of ownership and freedom to design their own research projects and creating enough structure and boundaries for student research to be possible. This study attempted to test if a more uncertain, student input-focused design in which students choose the focus of their course projects would lead to significantly more student engagement and ownership over their projects than a “safer” pre-planned course design. The results of our investigation suggest that, regardless of the amount of input in the course project, students will feel a personal connection to the research they do in class simply by participating in a CURE course.