The Freshman Research Initiative (FRI) model incorporates authentic faculty research as a means of teaching large numbers of students in a 3 semester sequence spanning their first two years at UT:

Recruitment - Research Methods - Teaching through Research - Advanced Research

**Recruitment** – More than 500 freshman are recruited each year to participate (including 50% women and 50% underrepresented groups).

**Research Methods** (Course 1) – The first freshman course in our program introduces the students to critical thinking, the research enterprise, data interpretation, hands-on experimentation and helps them select a research area.

**Teaching through Research** (Courses 2 + 3) – The core of this program is a year-long, potentially publishable research project that reflects the core interests of our faculty and fulfills degree requirements for the student. Students are members of a 30-student cohort – a Research Stream – in which they conduct independent, but parallel projects under the guidance of faculty, graduate students and peer mentors.

**Advanced Research** – Experienced students are matched with individual faculty laboratories or placed in research internships in industry to further their research training.

**Faculty involvement** – Our research faculty have a vested interest in the success of their research stream – it is an extension of their active research programs, and they are directly involved in the mentoring of our FRI students.

**Independent projects** – FRI students learn techniques as a team, but have their own independent projects with the potential to publish their work.

**Dedicated lab space** – Each research stream occupies dedicated, newly renovated research space. The freshmen, their sophomore mentors, graduate students, TAs and faculty form a true research group.

**Educating Texas through Research** – UT students from all over Texas and the United States participate in this program.

**Funding** – The University and grant sponsors (including NSF and HHMI) invest close to $2M each year in this program, but per credit hour FRI research courses cost the same as traditional classes.

“*The Freshman Research Initiative is a fantastic opportunity for any student considering a career in science and has absolutely been the best part of my undergraduate experience thus far.*”  **Sawyer Croley; Undeclared pre-med, Bulverde, TX**

Since 2005, this program has already involved over 2000 freshmen in faculty research in Biology, Biochemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Textiles & Apparel, Chemistry, Computer Science and Astronomy.  |  cns.utexas.edu/fri
**Students who do research through our program:**

→ **Do better in school**
- higher overall GPAs, even among students less well prepared for college
- higher GPAs than their peers in advanced science courses in their major

→ **Stay in college and graduate more often**
- 26% higher graduation rate
- 30–35% higher retention among all FRI participants
- 43–51% higher retention among Hispanic FRI students

→ **Go on to graduate degrees**
- 3 fold increase in graduates pursuing PhD, MDPhDs and MPH degrees

FRI students significantly outperform matched comparison groups (SAT, High School GPA). This gap continues through all 4 years and holds true across groups at risk in the sciences (first generation, low socio-economic background, etc.).

This graph shows the 2006 FRI cohort and matched comparison group. Students in blue have either graduated in 4 years or are on track to graduate in 5. The FRI group has 26% better graduation rate.

Three times more FRI students pursue graduate degrees in science (PhD, MDPhD, MPH) than their matched comparison group.

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