are the carriers of energy and information.

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Two-Year College Faculty's Burden

Sallie Watkins's Opinion column (February 1991, page 87) raises many important points regarding physics in the two-year colleges.

Watkins points out that the teaching load of 15 hours plus college duties presents a real time burden. What she neglected to mention is that the one-on-one contact with our students many of these tasks involve frequently characterizes the community college experience as radically different from the university experience. This difference is probably what gives us an opportunity to reach student groups that may be the future pools of engineers and physicists.

Unfortunately for faculty, these time constraints make participation in research during the school year far more difficult than it is for a university physics teacher. Most two-year colleges only pay lip service to scholarly research activities. I have found it necessary twice in my career to take a leave of absence to pursue research interests, but I have had to pay a price in salary. Although I have seen proposals to bring high school teachers into the research environment, I haven't seen any proposals to help a group of teachers who already have well-developed research skills and strong physics backgrounds.

In my experience two-year college physics faculty have more often than not arrived at our institutions because of conditions that existed in the job market when we finished our graduate work. Most two-year college physics people involved with research have had the good fortune of maintaining an ongoing relationship with the institutions where they did their graduate work. That was a situation I enjoyed until the death of my mentor, but it only worked because I was at a two-year college close to where I had studied.

An NSF- or industry-sponsored program supporting summer and interim employment in research for two-year college physics teachers would be extremely valuable to all parties. It could be made versatile enough to stand alone or to work as an "add on" to existing research grants.

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