BACKGROUND
The Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) served as an REU Site from 1997-2007, 2010-2012, and 2015-2016, providing research experiences for 112 undergraduates. Students carried out research projects focused on coastal habitats and species of the northern Gulf of Mexico on topics ranging from biochemistry and toxicology to ecology, conservation, and applied fisheries. The DISL REU program has been successful at increasing applications through time, especially from female students. Prior to 2015, DISL did not specifically recruit minority students or students from institutions underserved in STEM programs. To increase diversity and recruit students from schools with limited research opportunities, while maintaining the quality and rigor of the program, in 2015 we adopted a new recruitment plan to target these underserved students.

To assess recruitment success we polled students on their ethnicity and evaluated the research status of home institutions based on Carnegie classifications (graduate programs, intensity of research) and student reported evaluations of the research status of home institutions based on Carnegie classification (graduate programs, intensity of research). To increase diversity and recruit students from schools with limited research opportunities, we identified as minority and underserved students.

DISL REU program: Results of targeted recruitment for minority & underserved students

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ALABAMA’s MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CONSORTIUM
DISL was founded in 1971 by the Alabama State Legislature and is the marine science education and research outlet for Alabama’s 22 private and public universities, known collectively as the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC). MESC schools provide options for regional outreach to minority and underserved students.

CONCLUSIONS
Prior to 2015, the DISL REU program did not document ethnicity, research status of home institutions, or other research opportunities available to applicants. This demographic tracking effort was initiated under our most recent program renewal (2015-2016).

While application numbers initially decreased following targeted recruitment, demographic analyses indicate program quality remained the same while program diversity and recruitment of underserved students increased.

Although we did not directly collect data on minority status prior to 2015, follow up analyses found 11% minority participation from 1997-2002, suggesting 2 years of targeted recruitment doubled program diversity compared to previous years.

As our recruitment plan matures, we look forward to further improvement in participant diversity and participation by underserved students.

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