The Education Research Center (ERC) was recently awarded a contract to conduct an external evaluation of the Discover, Explore, and Enjoy Physics and Engineering (DEEP) program at Texas A&M University. Jackie Stillisano and Hersh Waxman are principal investigators on the project. Additional research support was provided by Kim Wright, research associate for the ERC.

Currently in its second year, DEEP was established in 2012 by the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Texas A&M. The goal of the program is to enhance undergraduate and graduate students’ learning and research experience by incorporating active learning, service learning, and teamwork. A key component of DEEP is to encourage undergraduate student participation in high-profile outreach activities, such as the annual Texas A&M Physics and Engineering Festival, fall and spring DEEP Showcases, and TAMU Physics Shows, under the guidance of DEEP graduate mentors from the Departments of Physics and Astronomy and Aerospace Engineering.

The evaluation will address the following DEEP objectives: (a) increase undergraduate participants’ knowledge of physics and engineering concepts, (b) positively impact undergraduate student participants’ analytic and hands-on skills in conducting research, (c) enhance undergraduate student participants’ communication skills, (d) encourage undergraduate student participants’ teamwork skills, (e) improve graduate student participants’ leadership skills, and (f) increase graduate student participants’ teambuilding skills. Surveys and interviews will be utilized with undergraduate students as well as graduate mentors to examine the impact of program activities on participants’ communication and teamwork skills.

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide program feedback to the DEEP team,” said Stillisano. “The DEEP program exemplifies efforts in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Texas A&M University by providing a venue to engage students in physics and engineering outreach, both to the university and to the greater community.”

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