RESEARCH EXPERIENCE FOR TEACHERS (RET) PROGRAM
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According to the most current NSF statistics, women and racial/ethnic minorities continue to be underrepresented in the fields of science and engineering (43% females, 5.5% black, 5% Hispanic, 0.43% American Indian/Alaska Native).[1] To help address this problem, the NU-NSEC developed a Research Experience for Teachers (RET) program with a particular emphasis on recruiting teachers who represent underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities and/or teach at schools that serve large racial/ethnic minority populations.

The program has been particularly successful. For example, over 60% of the participants to date were underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities and/or taught at schools that serve high racial/ethnic minority populations, and 50% of the participants have been women.

The RET program introduces teachers to the field of nanotechnology and nanoscience through hands-on research, and provides them with opportunities and funding to develop inquiry-based activities for their classrooms. Completed curriculum projects are showcased on-line at www.nsec.northwestern.edu and www.discovernano.northwestern.edu.

Mohi Chander, a teacher at Sullivan High School, is shown sterilizing a loop used to spread bacteria on growth plates as a part of his research project in the 2006 RET program.

[1] National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics, Scientists and Engineers Statistical Data System (SESTAT), December 2006.