Advancing a Water-Literate Workforce and Citizenry for Utah

Mark Brunson
Professor, Utah State University
Director, iUTAH Education, Outreach & Diversity

Salt Lake County Watershed Symposium
Nov. 15, 2017
Challenges to water literacy in Utah

• Information about water is common but dispersed, not always easy for public to find
• Not enough qualified STEM grads to meet future demand
• Higher ed enrollment doesn’t reflect state’s diversity
Addressing the challenge: A team approach

- Communications Team
- Diversity Enhancement Team
- External Engagement Team
- Workforce Development Team

Ellen Eiriksson
EOD coordinator

Jessica Anderson
Webmaster

Jeannine Huenemann
Communications specialist
Building capacity in Utah colleges: Integrating education and research

- Research support for faculty at undergraduate-serving institutions
- iFellows summer research experience engages undergrads in iUTAH labs
- Traineeships focus on workforce skills
Enhancing diversity in water science and management

- Diversity training for iUTAH participants
- Spanish-language outreach materials
- Native American mentorship host
- iUTAH Water Girls middle school program
Expanding citizens’ access to water science

- Website & news media outreach
- Innovation awards to non-university partners
- Museum exhibits
- Teacher training and curriculum development
• 61% of Utah’s ~210,000 college students are not located at a research campus
• iUTAH programs emphasized exposure to water-focused research opportunities
  – 1-week Summer Institute
  – 11-week iFellows experiences
  – Research Catalyst Grants (RCGs) to PUI faculty who involve undergraduate students in their research
Engaging citizens through museum partnerships: NHMU
Engaging citizens through museum partnerships: The Leonardo
Some of Utah’s most diverse neighborhoods

- Home to foreign-born immigrants since 1860s
- 2/3 of Hispanic population, 56% of all minorities

- Home to Utah’s future workforce
  - Home to 30% of city population but 43% of its youth

- Focal setting for K-12 education and community engagement
EOD Innovation Awards create programs that will outlast iUTAH

SLCC’s iUTAH WaterGirls program

Water sampling by Rose Park Elementary School students
“My research experience with iUTAH helped me discover what I want to become. For the first time in my life I know with certainty what I want to accomplish and where I am going. As a result of this research, I have travelled the world, discovered my passion for research, and gained invaluable experience and academic confidence. I have been redefined.”