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The COVID pandemic cancelled undergraduate research programs across the nation in 2020. One study estimated 80%¹ program loss. REU programs provide an experience that can propel students into degrees/careers in science and scientific research. PARADIM made the bold decision to commit to our undergraduate population by offering a remote experience program in which each research project was modified to include design components that allowed for independent, off-site participation.

PARADIM surveys our REU alumni annually and asks the question, "Where are you now?" Our program has seen many of our interns move on into STEM fields and graduate research programs (https://www.paradim.org/reu_participants). The 2020 cohort was unique in the high number that continued in a career pathway in material science, engineering, and physics. Of the 14 undergraduates that participated in the 2020 REU program, 12 are in jobs/programs in related fields and 9 of the 12 are in PhD research programs.

PARADIM did not hit the pause button. Instead, we offered the best possible opportunity during a time when life was dramatically disrupted. While the reason for the high success rate of this cohort during the height of the pandemic is left to conjecture, we know these undergraduates were given an uncommon opportunity and an uninterrupted career pathway that included working (remotely) at a national user facility.

¹Hess RA, Erickson OA, Cole RB, et al, *Virtually the Same? Evaluating the Effectiveness of Remote Undergraduate Research Experiences*. CBE Life Sci Educ. 2023 Jun;22(2):ar25. doi: [10.1187/cbe.22-01-0001](https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.22-01-0001). PMID: 37058442; PMCID: PMC10228262.

2020 PARADIM REU cohort (COVID remote program)

