



George O. Zimmerman



William J. Alston

‘Science is a contact sport.’ You have to participate in it in order to learn it. With that purpose as the goal, the RIP program, now RISE, had its beginnings in 1977, when William J. Alston III, then a physics teacher at the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School in Hamilton, MA sent two of his physics students to the Bates Accelerator in Middletown, MA to work along with its researchers. The researchers at that facility took the students in, and the staff and the students learned from each other. Alston also participated in research at that facility.

George O. Zimmerman, Chairman of the Boston University Physics Department at that time, and a colleague of Alston, since they both received their degrees from Yale University, was aware of the Bates-student collaboration, and also knew that the National Science Foundation (NSF) was sponsoring Research Internship Programs (RIP) for High School students. Alston and Zimmerman applied to the NSF and received a grant for a Research Internship Program to enable 30 High School students to come to Boston University and participate in research in Science in various active laboratories in the Boston area. One of the initial requirements for students was that they had to have taken a course in physics in their High School. The program started in the Summer of 1978 with 30 students from across the country, working in laboratories at the Boston University Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Astronomy departments and the College of Engineering. Also, there were student placements at the Harvard Medical School and the MIT Magnet Laboratory.

The program continued with NSF support until the late 1990s. The grants funded the administrative costs and provided scholarships for half the students. To get a taste of College life, the students lived in Boston University dormitories and participated in the social life of the University. There were also activities special for the High School students such as lectures and excursions. During that time period, about 20 years, several of the students also participated in the Intel and Siemens Science Competitions and some wound up as finalist candidates. Many of the participants went on to scientific careers.

When the NSF-RIP program ended, the Summer Term at Boston University took it over. For a time, some sponsorship was provided by the Siemens Foundation. There was also a connection with the Johns Hopkins Gifted and Talented program which conducted its Award Ceremony for Eastern Massachusetts at Boston University.

Now, nearing its 40th anniversary, the program has grown to about 150 high school students a year with many of them having the opportunity to experience science at first hand, to interact with professional scientists engaged in active research and to experience college life.