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One of the greatest challenges facing faculty at primarily undergraduate institutions (PUI) is how to maintain a productive research program. Undergraduate students cannot make the same time commitment to research projects as do graduate students, and PUI faculty often have fewer resources available to them than do faculty at larger research-intensive universities. Our approach to solving some of these problems has been to form an interdisciplinary research program (the River Basins Research Initiative) involving faculty and students from the Biology, Chemistry, and Earth and Environmental Sciences Departments at Furman University. By combining resources from multiple departments and by conducting collaborative interdisciplinary research, we have been able to fund a successful research program that has resulted in 12 peer-reviewed publications and over 120 presentations since 2001, mostly with undergraduate co-authors. The RBRI has involved more than 170 student participants since 1997, and the program has been funded by grants from NSF, EPA, NASA, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Associated Colleges of the South, the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, the Mellon Foundation, and Furman University. We feel that interdisciplinary research is an ideal solution to many of the problems faced by PUI faculty, so a discussion of the history and development of the RBRI will be presented as a model for developing interdisciplinary research programs at other institutions.