Getting Started in Research

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Overview

- Why do research?
- Overview of research opportunities
  - with a focus on-campus or very local, academic year opportunities
- How to find faculty advisors
  - identifying them, tips for reaching out to them

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What is research?

- Asking a question nobody's asked before
- Putting in the work to answer it
- Communicating what you found

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Is research right for me?

- What do you hope to gain?
- Are you excited about diving into the unknown?
- Can you work during the academic year and/or summer?
- Do you want academic credit for your research?
- Can you commit 10-15 hours a week?
- Are you hoping a research opportunity will help you decide on whether you want to pursue graduate school?

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Paths to Research Involvement

1. Undergraduate Research for Academic Credit
   - Biology credit: BILD 99, BISP 193, BISP 196, BISP 197, BISP 199
   - Your PI need not be in biology, but the project must be biology-focused
   - Application deadlines for each term listed on the Biology website
   - You must find a PI in order to apply

Non-Biology credit through other departments/divisions

- AIP 197, MED 199, SIO 199, etc.

Note: Students can expect to put in 12+ hours/week for 4-unit special studies courses

- Ask faculty about time expectations!
- Available if your projects does not meet BISP eligibility requirements

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Paths to Research Involvement

2. Paid positions on Handshake
3. Volunteer
4. Undergraduate research scholarships (URS)
    - Check UCSD Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP) for the most up-to-date information
    - Many of the scholarships are for summer research
    - Most applications due during Winter Quarter

Note: Many students pursue a combination of these paths

- Ask faculty about time expectations!
- Available if your projects does not meet BISP eligibility requirements

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How do I find a faculty mentor?

1. REAL Portal
2. Academic Internship Program (AIP) application site
3. Search faculty profiles on divisional/departmental websites
   - Example:
     Division > Faculty & Research > Faculty > Names > look for **lab website**
   - **Biology faculty directory, Salk faculty, J. Craig Venter Institute (JCVI – 199 academic credit not available for off-campus labs)**
4. Faculty who you have taken a class with or are interested in learning from
5. Contact faculty directly via email

Note: Not all faculty post opportunities on the REAL Portal, so it is best to always ask about openings **after** researching their lab website, publications, etc.

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Email Tips: What do I say?

- Tell them why you are writing
  - To ask about research opportunities
- Customize your message
  - Why is this person's research interesting to you?
  - Faculty care more about genuine interest/passion than experience
- Briefly point out any relevant experience
  - Bio lab classes, prior lab work, etc.
- Proofread your emails
- Keep it brief! Include the most important stuff first
- Follow-up with an email 1-2 weeks after your initial email
- Keep trying!
  - It can take several weeks, even months, to find an opportunity

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I got an interview! Now what?

- Go in with knowledge of their research from website, or better yet, a **recent** research paper or two
- Bring a list of questions
  - About the science based on your readings
  - About the types of projects available
- Explain how this experience is important to your careers
- Show interest by taking notes, asking if they can suggest readings to learn more about their topic
- Send a thank you message afterwards that conveys your enthusiasm
- Follow-up with an email 1-2 weeks after your initial email

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I got an offer! Now what?

- Make sure you understand the expectations
  - Overall hours per week
  - Specific times you should be there
  - If you're unsure before you accept the offer, ask!
- Meet those expectations
- After you start, ask more questions! It's much better to admit that you don't know something and ask for clarification than to keep going and make a mistake as a result

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What is research?
Why is research valuable for me?
Is research right for me?

More information:
biology.ucsd.edu/education/undergrad/research

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