

## Finding a Research Mentor

*Use the attached pages to keep track of your progress in finding a mentor. Advice about how to identify and contact potential mentors is provided below.*

### Identifying Potential Research Mentors

1. Determine what most interests you in your discipline. In other words, define a research area (e.g. molecular biology, materials science, nanotechnology, plasma physics, analytical chemistry, computer architecture, etc.).
2. Do a search of campus websites (see below) to identify faculty working in your area of interest. Search through academic program listings, department web sites, student job sites, and undergraduate research databases if they are available. Talk to friends who are already doing research to get their advice about potential mentors. If you're not sure what research area interests you, then start by doing a general review of faculty research in the academic department in which you are majoring. But, don't be afraid to think broadly and explore research outside of your academic department, too!
3. Read the faculty research descriptions and generate a ranked list of potential mentors. Identify at least one thing about each person's research that is interesting to you and that you would like to know more about.

<http://ur.arizona.edu/> The UA's College of Science Undergraduate Research website. Once you have identified topics of research that may interest you, the search tools on this website could be useful to find faculty and programs that have indicated a willingness to work with undergraduate researchers.

<http://www.arizona.edu/undergraduate-research-opportunities> Links to UA resources related to research and graduate school preparation

<http://www.webguru.neu.edu/undergraduate-research/getting-started/selecting-advisor> A Web Guide to Finding An Undergraduate Research Mentor

### Contacting Potential Mentors:

Email is a good way to make initial contact with potential mentors. By sending an email you give the mentor a chance to review your materials before responding. It is like the first step in an interview, so be sure it reflects your best effort (no spelling or grammatical errors!). If you are comfortable, it is also OK to phone or stop by a potential mentor's office to ask about a research experience.

Some things to consider when composing emails:

- Research mentors are very busy people, so keep it short and to the point (approximately 1 paragraph).
- Address the email using the mentor's official title (e.g. Professor, Dr.)
- Specifically refer to the mentor's research, and what you find interesting about it. Be sure to use your own words and not to copy text from the research description on their web site.
- Be clear that you are looking for a research experience (vs. a dishwashing job) and what your main goal will be (e.g. shadowing someone in the lab to get exposed to research vs. doing an honors thesis research project).

- Highlight what you have to offer; what distinguishes you from other students (e.g. hard worker, experience, eager to learn, willing to stay more than one semester, persistent, specific courses you've completed that are relevant to the research).
- Show enthusiasm for learning how to do research!
- Finally, request that if the mentor is not able to take an undergraduate researcher, that she recommend a colleague who might be able to.

Additional information you could include in an attached letter:

- Share that you would like to take the *Entering Research* workshop series, and attach a copy of the syllabus.
- Give an estimate of the number of hours/credits you can be available to do research, and when you would like to begin, but leave room for negotiation.
- Give a *brief* overview of your academic credentials (e.g. GPA and relevant courses taken), or attach an electronic transcript.
- Provide your complete contact information (email, phone, mail).

### **Interviewing with Potential Mentors:**

- Be on time.
- Be yourself. But it will help if you come across as enthusiastic and motivated. Smile!
- Be ready to discuss why you want to do research in general (What are your academic and career goals?), and why you want to do research with this mentor specifically (What is it about his/her research that is interesting to you? Is there a particular project on which you would like to work?).
- Read about the research **BEFORE** you go to the interview. There is usually a research overview on the web with references/links to the group's published papers. Try to read one or two of these papers, and prepare some questions about them. Generally, mentors won't expect you to fully understand the research, but making the effort to learn about it on your own shows independence and motivation.
- Ask about the expectations of undergraduate researchers in the group (time commitment, credits, type of work). In general, three to five hours of research per week is worth one academic credit. However, this varies and you should ask how many hours the mentor expects per week per credit.
- Ask about who would be your direct mentor in the group (professor, post-doc, graduate student).
- Bring a copy of your transcript if you haven't already submitted one.

### **IMPORTANT:**

- It can be challenging to connect with faculty research mentors, so ***be persistent, yet polite***. Ideally, give potential mentors a week to respond to your email before you follow up.
- Research groups have limited space, so it may be difficult to find a group that is looking for, or willing to take, another student. Do not take it personally if they decline your request. You may go through all 10 (or more) potential mentors before you find a match. Stick with it! You *will* find someone.

**1. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**2. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**3. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**4. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**5. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**6. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**7. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**8. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**9. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time:

**10. Potential Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Department:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:

What I find interesting about the research:

Initial Contact Date:

Follow-Up Contact Date:

Response:

Interview Day & Time: