

How to Obtain Research Experience

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Obtaining Research Experience:

- ✓ Identify your favorite research areas: aim to be specific, but it's also OK to be broad.
- ✓ Search faculty lists at Wayne State (in your department of interest) or at nearby institutions (if you have transportation). Identify individuals who share your interests.
- ✓ Get to know your favorite professors and ask them about research opportunities. They are likely to recommend you and that will greatly increase your success.
- ✓ Read up on these individuals. Have they published anything recently? Do they seem to have an active lab (undergraduate and graduate students in their lab)?
- ✓ Write an informative letter that expresses your interest in his/her lab.

Things to include in a letter to faculty:

- ✓ A descriptive subject line such as “potential research opportunity in your lab”
- ✓ “Dear Dr. Michelle Tomaszycski”: call him or her by her proper academic name. Formal is always better in the first communication.
- ✓ Your name and contact information
- ✓ A brief statement of you and your research interests. What year are you? What is your major?
- ✓ A brief statement of how your research interests connect with the professor's interests (be specific and honest). If you are just looking generally for experience, you may want to say so, but be sure to indicate why you chose this person's lab. The more you can convey that you did your research about the lab, the better your chances are.
- ✓ Mention any previous research experience, or relevant coursework.
- ✓ A brief statement of your availability: 6-10 hours per week is typical for undergraduate research assistants. If you have time available during the day, that will give you an advantage. A list of days and times is helpful.
- ✓ Be clear if you want to be paid, to receive course credit, or if you wish to volunteer (if you would be interested in any of the three, that is best). Typically, it is easier for professors to hire you if you work for credit or volunteer, and you might even have a better research experience!
- ✓ Finally, thank them for their time, and ask when and if it is possible to schedule a time to meet.
- ✓ NOTE: make sure your email inbox has enough space—you don't want to professor to reply and have his or her message returned!

What NOT to do:

- Send an email with no subject line and not addressed to anyone specifically.
- Send an email to everyone in the department. They will know.
- Say anything that could be interpreted, as “I'll take anything I can get.”

Research opportunities for undergraduates:

- Psychology 4990: Directed study. You can take up to 4 credits per semester.
- Wayne State offers \$200-\$400 for travel to a scientific conference.
- Wayne State Psychology offers up to \$500 in research funds for undergraduates.
- Wayne State Office of Undergraduate Research:
<http://www.undergradresearch.wayne.edu/other.php>
- The McNair program for first generation students and individuals from low income families. <http://www.federaltrio.wayne.edu/mcnair/index.php>
- Psi Chi awards and grants:
http://www.psichi.org/awards/completelist_awards.asp
- Howard Hughes Medical Institute Summer Research Programs: across the nation, but Hope College, Kalamazoo College, and the University of Michigan Ann-Arbor currently have programs.
- SURE program at Emory University:
<http://www.cse.emory.edu/sciencenet/undergrad/SURE/SURE.html>
- Summer Research Opportunity Program at University of Michigan:
https://umich-rackham.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/umich_rackham.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=1579
- NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU):
www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/reu/, programs across the nation. Check the website for participating institutions.