The Benefits of Undergraduate Research and Finding a Faculty Sponsor

Why do undergraduate research?

Participating in an undergraduate research experience will provide you with many benefits. These include:

- Hands on experience as a complement to your classroom education
- Strengthening your problem-definition, problem-solving and analytical skills
- Providing you with the opportunity to explore a potential career or field of interest
- Access to a mentoring relationship with a faculty member
- Help you develop the skills critical to effective teamwork
- Preparing you for graduate study in your chosen field

Finding a Faculty Sponsor

Establishing a good working relationship with a faculty member is a key element in a successful research project. While finding a faculty mentor can be challenging, here are some suggestions that can help you with this process.

Where to look

- Look on the undergraduate research web: [www.research.umn.edu/undergraduate](http://www.research.umn.edu/undergraduate) (Opportunity Gallery)
- Ask one of your professors or a teaching assistant for suggestions
- Look on a departmental website at faculty members and their research interests. You can look for articles written by potential faculty mentors as well.
- Talk to the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the department where you would like to do your research
- Talk to your faculty advisor or the UROP Coordinator for your college
- Talk to the U of MN UROP Coordinator, Vicky Munro. The UROP Office maintains a database with a list of all the faculty members who have ever sponsored UROP projects.

How to approach a faculty member

Your goal is to find a faculty member whose research is a match with your interests and abilities. This can take time but is well worth the effort. Keep a positive attitude and be persistent.

E-mail is often a good way to contact a faculty member. If you don’t get a response from e-mail, you can phone the faculty member or visit him/her during office hours. Set a time to talk to the faculty member in person.

Be prepared before you approach the faculty member. You should have some idea what kind of research the faculty member does, and some idea of the kind of research that you are interested in yourself. You will need to show the faculty member that you are motivated and capable of working independently.

Introduce yourself. Let the faculty member know your interests, relevant classes you have taken, any prior research experiences you have had, and your plans in terms of your current degree or future goals.

If the faculty member you approach is unable to help you, don’t take it personally. Most faculty members have busy schedules with class, research and sometimes administrative duties. Don’t be discouraged. If you are turned down, be sure to ask the faculty member for ideas on who to approach next. Again, be persistent.