Getting into Research

For Life Science, Physical Science, & Engineering Research Disciplines
Undergraduate Research at UCLA

• Research in the sciences is usually done in a lab led by a principal investigator, or PI
  • PI = the faculty that runs a research project
  • Projects usually address a hypothesis, or scientific question

• Entry-level projects are usually smaller parts of a larger, ongoing project

• New students are usually supervised by a post-doctoral scholar or graduate student
Outcomes of undergraduate research

• Contribute to the body of knowledge in your field
• Gain important skills and get hands-on experience outside of the classroom
• Enhance competitiveness for admission to graduate and professional schools, high-level employment
• Build meaningful relationships and receive mentorship from experts in your field
• Complete degree requirements, qualify for competitive scholarships & fellowships
When should I plan to start?

• 1st year admits in the summer or fall after your first year
  • Complete lower division courses and explore potential areas of interest
  • Adjust to the quarter system and build time-management skills
  • Look for research opportunities in the spring or summer

• Transfer students in the winter after your first quarter
  • Adjust to the quarter system
  • Look for research opportunities in the summer or fall
How do I find faculty to work with?

• We recommend two options:
  1. Undergraduate Research Portal
  2. Contact faculty directly

• Note: some programs & internships may place you into a project with a faculty
  • Example: Biomedical Research Minor
Option 1: Undergraduate Research Portal

- MyUCLA ▸ Academics tab
- Browse active research opportunities
- Listings outline information about the project, who to contact, and what to submit
- Follow instructions on how to apply
- Remember: listings are not comprehensive!
Option 2: Contact Faculty Directly

1. Visit Department Websites, start with the:
   • College of Letters and Science
     • Division of Life Sciences
     • Division of Physical Sciences
   • David Geffen School of Medicine

2. Browse faculty directories

3. Record contact information of faculty you want to work with
Option 2: Contact Faculty Directly

- Identify 5-10 faculty you want to work with
  - This process can be similar to applying for a job
  - The more faculty you plan to contact, the better your chances will be
- Record their email addresses
- Prepare a cover letter and CV
- Email them!
- Do not show up to labs or offices unannounced
Need help with your CV and cover letter?

- Resources to assist you with your written materials:
  - Career Center
  - Writing Center
Questions to ask when interviewing with a lab

• Who will be supervising & training me?
• How is the project structured?
• What techniques and equipment will I be using?
• What safety training(s) do I need to complete?
• What time commitment is expected?
• How many people are currently working in your lab?
• Are hours flexible during exam season? (Remember, you are a student first!)
• What literature can I read in preparation?
Finding a Research Opportunity: Recap

1. Undergraduate Research Portal
2. Contact Faculty Directly
   1. Browse department websites
   2. Record faculty contact information
   3. Prepare a cover letter and CV
   4. Email faculty

• Aim for at least 5-10 faculty to contact or opportunities to apply for
What can I do after I begin research?

• Conducting research opens the door for many opportunities
• Earn course credit
• Apply for research programs, fellowships, and scholarships
• Present your work at a conference
• Join a student organization/club
Research with UCLA Health Sciences

• All students working with a UCLA Health Sciences Faculty must receive clearance through the UCLA Health Sciences Volunteer Program prior to beginning research activities

• Clearance process takes 1-2 weeks

• The sponsoring faculty will initiate the process by submitting onboarding items to the Health Sciences Volunteer Office

• Visit the UCLA Health Sciences Volunteer Programs website for more information
Sign up for our mailing list

• Scan the QR code or sign up online at sciences.ugresearch.ucla.edu

• Receive information on upcoming scholarships, programs, events, and resources