Getting Started in Research
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
What is research?

- Asking a question nobody’s asked before
- Putting in the work to answer it
- Communicating what you found
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?
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
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
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.
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
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
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
What is research?
Why is research valuable for me?
Is research right for me?

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