

Strategies for a Successful Undergraduate Research Experience

Start by defining your research interests

Decide what type of opportunity you're looking for

On-Campus Opportunity?

Off-Campus Opportunity?

- ❑ Identify potential faculty mentors
- ❑ Review the list of On-Campus Opportunities
- ❑ Do your homework before contacting faculty! Read about the topic and the faculty's research interests
- ❑ Request an interview through an impressive and professional e-mail that communicates your interests to the potential faculty mentor
- ❑ Interview with faculty to further discuss research opportunities
- ❑ Accept the opportunity that best suits your research goals

Have questions?
Need help?

- ❑ Submit an online Student Research Interest Form
- ❑ Make an appointment to meet with a UROP Advisor

- ❑ Review the list of Off-Campus Opportunities from national labs, research institutes corporations, and other universities
- ❑ Identify programs that best support your research goals
- ❑ Review program Web sites for important deadlines, eligibility information, and application requirements
- ❑ As required by program:
 - ✓ Complete the application
 - ✓ Write a personal statement
 - ✓ Update your resume
 - ✓ Obtain one or more letters of recommendation
 - ✓ Request your transcript

Apply for a UROP Grant and Fellowship in support of your research or creative activities:

- ❑ Draft your proposal, describing objectives, timeline, budget, and responsibilities
- ❑ Have your mentor review and approve your proposal
- ❑ Ask your mentor to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf
- ❑ Write your personal statement
- ❑ Obtain IRB/IACUC approval, if necessary

Apply for On-Campus Summer Research Programs:

- ❑ Find the summer program that best suits your goals:
 - ◆ SURP
 - ◆ ID-SURE
 - ◆ IM-SURE
 - ◆ Chem-SURF
 - ◆ SURF-IT
- ❑ Review program Web sites for important deadlines, eligibility information, and application requirements

Share the results of your hard work and experience!

- ❑ Present your research at the annual UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium or national conferences
- ❑ Publish in *The UCI Undergraduate Research Journal*
- ❑ Increase your involvement and assist your fellow students:
 - ◆ UROP Ambassadors
 - ◆ UROP Student Editorial Board
 - ◆ UROP Volunteers

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program

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❧ Tips for a Successful Undergraduate Research Experience ❧

Define your interests: Research projects are the ideal way to explore your academic passions. To find a direction, start by considering the topics that inspire you. Inspiration may come from a personal experience, a class, or a topic you've read about. If you're not sure where to begin, start reading about faculty's research interests and topics in any fields that interest you and begin to narrow down the areas you want to explore further. Remember that you're not limited by your school or major—you can conduct research in any discipline.

Decide what kind of opportunity you're looking for: Do you want to work under the guidance of a UCI faculty mentor? If so, consider an on-campus opportunity on the UCI Campus, at the UCI Medical Center, or at local research centers supported by UCI. Or, if you're interested in exploring opportunities outside of UCI, look for an off-campus opportunity with national labs, research institutes, corporations, or other universities.

Finding the perfect On-Campus Opportunity: Now that you've defined your interests, you'll want to find a faculty mentor who is working in your desired field. Use the resources below to help with your search for professors. After identifying potential faculty mentors, you will want to contact them and express your interest in working under their guidance. Before you do this, however, be sure to read the "Getting the Interview" section below for tips on how best to earn an opportunity to work with faculty.

- ❑ UCI Faculty Profile System (<http://www.faculty.uci.edu/>). Use search terms related to your topics of interest to identify faculty working in that field. Read through faculty research abstracts and publications to learn more about their work.
- ❑ UCI Department Web Sites (www.uci.edu/academics_research.shtml). You can also learn more about research in a particular field by exploring the Web sites for UCI's individual schools, departments and research centers. Faculty profiles and their research overviews will help you further identify professors you may want to work with.
- ❑ UROP On-Campus Opportunities List (www.urop.uci.edu/opportunities.html). Announcements of on-campus opportunities are available on the UROP Web site, but this is not a complete list of all opportunities available with faculty. Use this list in conjunction with the sites above to find all faculty you might be interested in contacting.

Finding the perfect Off-Campus Opportunity: Off-campus opportunities are ideal ways to explore programs across the nation. These programs are typically competitive, and often provide unique benefits for participation, including stipends, room and board, travel reimbursement, and/or preparation for graduate school. Use the UROP Off-Campus Opportunities listings (www.urop.uci.edu/opportunities.html) to identify programs that best meet your goals. Many programs are offered in summer when you'll have more flexibility to travel to different locations. Be sure to carefully read deadline information, along with application and eligibility requirements. Off-campus summer programs typically have deadlines from December through February.

Getting the interview: The appropriate way to contact faculty is by e-mail. Remember that you have only one chance to make a good first impression, so do your homework and draft a professional e-mail that discusses your goals, your knowledge of the topic and the professor's work, and your desire to discuss research opportunities under their guidance. To help you, a sample e-mail format is available online at: www.urop.uci.edu/opportunities/sample_email.html. If professors have available opportunities, they will invite you to meet and discuss their research in depth. Treat this like a job interview—be prepared and professional, be able to discuss your weaknesses and strengths, and ask good questions to clarify expectations. You should also be prepared to articulate your own research goals and the level of commitment you can lend to a project. Accept the opportunity that best suits your goals!

Conducting research: Your faculty mentor will essentially be your boss and will guide you by defining your role, providing training, and by helping you develop your abilities. It is extremely important to adhere to University research conduct and safety rules and demonstrate the highest ethical standards. Students often use materials or energy that may be potentially hazardous to their health, safety, or the environment, so you must have your own medical insurance, and will need to discuss the safety rules that govern the specific project with your faculty mentor. In addition, research studies that involve human subjects or animals require institutional approval. Review UCI's regulations (<http://www.research.uci.edu/ora/>) and work closely with your faculty mentor to discuss these requirements.

Apply for grants and fellowships: UROP provides multiple opportunities throughout the year for students to request support for their research, time and efforts. During the academic year, you can apply in response to UROP's Fall or Spring Call for Proposals to earn a fellowship in recognition of your work, as well as a potential grant of up to \$1,000 to help fund research-related materials and expenses. You can also apply for a variety of full-time on-campus summer research programs, including SURP, ID-SURE, IM-SURE, Chem-SURF and SURF-IT, as a way of earning competitive fellowships and stipends in support of your time and efforts. Information on all of these programs is available on the UROP Web site (<http://www.urop.uci.edu/>).

Share the results of your hard work and experience: It's important for you to be able to present your knowledge and research results effectively in both oral and written formats. UCI offers an opportunity for undergraduates to present their research at the UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium. You may also submit a paper to be considered for publication in *The UCI Undergraduate Research Journal*, published annually by UROP. Students are also invited to apply for various volunteer and leadership opportunities, including the UROP Ambassadors and UROP Student Editorial Board, as a way of gaining more experience, increasing involvement on campus and assisting fellow student researchers.

Need help? If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the UROP Office to schedule an advising appointment. Or, complete the Student Research Interest Form on the UROP Web site (in the "Student Corner") and a member of the UROP team will follow up with you. Advisors are always available to help you with any phase of the research process, whether it's finding opportunities, seeking grants and fellowships, or presenting the results of your work. UROP also sponsors workshops throughout the year, so look for e-mail notifications, and check the UROP Web site frequently for upcoming events.