



Louis Educational Consulting

# Information For Undergraduates Looking for Short-Term (Summer or Academic Year)

## RESEARCH POSITIONS.

In addition to being a hard worker and intellectually curious, you'll need perseverance to secure a research position.

### Types of Research Positions

- ▶ **Fellowships:** These are usually short-term educational projects or opportunities. Funding may be available through a fellowship program. If your school has a fellowship office check their database.
- ▶ **For Credit:** You may be able to do a research project for credit. You need to know the rules applicable to your specific major. Some may require a proposal and a final paper. Know how many credits you will receive. At many schools, you will need to secure your position the semester prior to starting.
- ▶ **Funded Programs:** These are usually summer program and require full-time work. These programs are highly competitive and usually ask for letters of recommendation. You should apply in the late fall. Check out The National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU's). [www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu\\_search.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu_search.jsp)
- ▶ **Paid Research Assistantships:** Faculty often have undergraduate students work as paid research assistants. These opportunities are competitive and often require some prior knowledge, acquired through coursework or experience.
- ▶ **Volunteer:** There are many places to volunteer, including medical centers, hospitals and research institutes. These positions offer the greatest flexibility in commitment and experience level.

**Directly** contact the heads of the research labs or projects at your school whose work interests you. Few, if any, professors will respond to an email sent to a group. For summer positions, you might want to expand your search to other research labs or projects, outside of your school as well.

### How to find a lab or position that interests you?

- Ask your professors and graduate students (TA's) in the areas that interest you for recommendations.
- Check to see if your school offers an undergraduate research website. Use it!
- Utilize your school's alumni network.
- Use the Internet – look at the faculty research pages of schools and departments at universities where you want to work. The sites may not be current, but they will give you an idea about the focus of the research being done.
- Google your area of interest. Use online databases like **LionSHARE** and the **Student Research Involvement Program** portal through SEAS.
- Go to PubMed, the Social Science Research Network and the Social Work Reference Center to look at their publications.
- Apply to **Research Opportunities for Undergraduates** through the National Science Foundation, which hosts undergrads in labs at universities throughout the country.
- Attend departmental events such as research seminars and invited speaker series to hear about current research and meet faculty, postdocs and graduate students working in fields of research that might interest you.
- Pay attention to anything that sparks your interest even if you're not sure exactly why.
- Subscribe to services like the pre-health, science, pre-law and Hnet (Humanities and Social Science Online) email listservs to receive daily alerts of opportunities.



When you find something that interests you, email the principal investigator or the lab director.

## What should you include?

- Identify yourself as an XXX College/University undergraduate.
- Mention what you are majoring in or might be majoring in. Adding a sentence about why their work specifically interests you.
- State your goal in gaining research experience in this lab or from this project.
- Ask if they might have a position for a student or if they know others who might.
- Include your availability. Identify and include how many hours a week you can commit to. Five hours a week is a reasonable commitment for during school semesters; include which day(s) of the week work best for you. Full-time is best for summer work.
- You should attach a **one-page** resume that highlights research experience, publications, presentations and honors.
- Thank them for taking the time to read your email.

*If you send out 10-15 inquiries you are likely to receive two or three responses. Expect that some investigators may not respond at all - that's just reality.*

*After receiving a response, set up an in-person meeting. Make sure you wear "decent" clothes (a suit is not necessary).*

**Do your homework.** Know everything you possibly can about the research project you want to join. If you're planning on discussing your own project, make sure to talk about how it will fit into what the professor is doing and how it might be of value to them.

## Information you want to leave the interview with:

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- What specific duties would you have?
- Would these duties change over time?
- How many hours a week would you be working?
- Are the days of the week flexible? Can you work weekends?
- Would you be working with other research assistants?
- Would you be working directly with the professor or under someone else?
- Would your project likely result in co-authorship of a publication?
- Is it a potential long-term position?