

So How Do You Get Involved

There are quite a few official undergraduate research programs across campus. You can also consider working with faculty member as a volunteer, enroll in a research experience/independent study/studio-type course and receive credit for participating!

A variety of programs exist to support undergraduate research on campus. See the links on the opportunities pages or check out the webpages of the UTSA Colleges, Departments, and faculty members that may best match your interests. Please feel free to contact the OUR for help navigating the various programs.

Identify your interests.

- Do you have a specific career in mind? If not, no problem! But if you could have your dream job, what field would it be in?
- What topics interest you?
- What relevant coursework have you taken or do you plan to take?
- Is there something you are passionate about and would like to explore?
 1. What volunteer or work experience do you have?
 2. What organizations, sports, or activities do you participate in?
 3. What are your favorite courses?
 4. What do you like to talk about with your classmates, roommates, family and friends?

Preparing to introduce yourself to faculty members and discussing your interest in the UG research and creative scholarship experience.

- Prepare a resume or a portfolio demonstrating your experiences related to your preparation in the field to date and the experience you hope to engage in.
- Do some basic homework on the faculty member, their research, their expectations of students, their location, awards, etc. Even if you have taken or are taking the faculty members course(s), be prepared just like you are going to a job interview.
- Speaking of job interviews... Present yourself as a young professional including appropriate attire, mannerisms, and body language.
- While most of your faculty members have Ph.D.s, this is not always the case. It is best to check on the appropriate title before you contact them.
- Make sure you can clearly articulate your interests. The OUR can help! Feel free to contact us for advice.

Consider your time commitment for UG research.

- How many courses are you taking? Please consider the following excerpt from UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures (<http://www.utsa.edu/hop/chapter2/2-51.html>): *“For lecture classes, a semester credit hour consists of the equivalent of at least one contact hour per week and two hours per week of out-of-class student work. Hence, a standard three-semester credit hour*

lecture class meets for a total of at least 48 contact hours for a semester. The student is also expected to expend at least an average of six hours of outside of the classroom effort per week for each three credit hour class.”

- How many hours are you working?
- How many hours can you commit to participation in UG research or scholarly creation?
- Are you available on the days and during the hours that most faculty are performing their creative work? Some faculty have very specific times to conduct their work. They may also conduct some or all of their research off-campus.
- The expectations for students are something you will need to discuss with the faculty member you approach (see below).
- Be reliable. Faculty members are looking for students who are not just interested in their work, but who are reliable and can be counted on.

Once you are ready to contact a faculty member.

- Be professional. Write an email in a formal, respectful tone. Address the faculty member as appropriately (e.g., professor or Dr. or Ms./Mr., etc.).
- It is best not to call or show up at their office, lab, or studio “out-of-the-blue”.
- If you are taking a class with a potential faculty mentor or find yourself in an opportunity to introduce yourself prior to the email, it is usually fine to introduce yourself and engage in a conversation about your interests. Follow up with a formal email as well!
- Request a meeting and be prepared to be flexible on the meeting time.
- Include a sentence or two stating your interests and topics you would like to explore (primarily those that the faculty member shares with you).
- Show your enthusiasm and commitment.

Prepare for your initial meeting with a faculty member.

You should not be nervous going to talk to a faculty member. They are educators and understand how research and creative scholarship is part of the preparation of future professionals in the field. Yes, they are busy and have days where they are more approachable than others. They certainly respect your efforts to enhance your education! They also appreciate your being well-prepared for your meeting. Don't forget that they were once very likely in your position as undergrads themselves! Having a list of the items below can help you articulate your interests and experiences during the meeting.

- Be yourself. The faculty member will want to get to know your interests and ideas.
- Review the faculty member's curriculum vitae, research interests, and/or publications.
- Why are you here (or variations of this)? Review what made you interested in this topic.
- This is your OPPORTUNITY to wow them with your career objective and how this potential position will help prepare you. Demonstrate that this experience will complement your education and professional development. Ask them how they think that the potential position will help you achieve these goals.
- Tell them about your relevant courses, research exposure, creative efforts, and other experience. A resume or curriculum vitae or a portfolio of your work should be presented and discussed.
- Think about skills and qualities you can bring to the project.

- Demonstrate or highlight responsibility, ability to learn new tasks and follow through with difficult projects, etc. Then ask them what kind of general or specific training you can expect to receive to not only prepare you for specific job-related tasks but also to fill in any holes in your past training or experience as well as training that will contribute to your professional development with respect to your career objectives.
- Relate how you see the potential position as a tool to get you to where you want to be as a professional. Express that you welcome the opportunity to do the best job you can, even if you are starting with small tasks or projects.
- Do they offer the opportunity for advancement? Learning new tasks or cross-training in multiple areas?
- Express willingness to work independently or as well as part of a team as necessary.
- A good interview goes 2-ways!!! Surely you can think of good questions for them! The more “good” questions, the better!
- Be on time! One minute late to your appointment is too late. Remember, there are NO EXCUSES in the real world. No excuses for being late, doing poorly on an exam, turning in sloppy work, forgetting to do something completely, not following directions, etc. There are only REASONS for being late, or doing poorly on an exam, or turning in sloppy work, or forgetting to do something completely, or not following directions, etc. And trust me; YOU are ALWAYS the one that needs to be responsible for these “reasons”!

Don't get discouraged. If this faculty member does not have an undergraduate position available, she or he might be able to recommend another project or faculty member for you. Again, the OUR can help you in your quest!