HOW TO FIND A MENTOR

Places to look for a mentor:

* Look through the list of mentors on the FMP blog:
  http://fmp.ucsd.wordpress.com/
* Look at department websites. The URL for most departments is: department name.ucsd.edu.
* The Undergraduate Research Portal also has a listing of faculty looking for research assistants: urp.ucsd.edu.
* Contact the undergraduate representative for the department in which you would like to conduct research.

Once you’ve found professors you are interested in, first prioritize, and then email them. Follow an email up with a telephone call, follow a telephone call with an office visit.

Be assertive! You are not the only student looking for a mentor -- it’s very competitive.

Don’t expect the professor to find you—YOU must be motivated and find him or her. Academic departments have faculty profiles that include background and research foci. Some departments have over 70 faculty members!

FMP Timeline

Fall Quarter:
• Turn in application (November)
• Biology students need to register for 199 course

Winter Quarter:
• By week 2: Student/Faculty contract are due; 199 forms are due for all students (except biology).
• Make a research plan with your professor.

Spring Quarter:
• You will need to re-register for a 199 for Spring.
• Paper Proposals are due the first week of Spring Quarter.
• The FMP Symposium will be held Week 9.
• Final papers are due by the end of the Quarter.

Also in Winter & Spring Quarters:
We will provide a series of workshops on how to present at a conference, how to network in academia, applying for scholarships, writing research proposals & papers, applying to graduate school, handling stress & time management, as well as other topics.

FMP Requirements:
⇒ You must be a registered student at UCSD for as long as you are in the program.
⇒ You must maintain at least a 2.7 GPA.
⇒ You must conduct at least 10 hours of research a week.
⇒ You must take an independent study course (199) for two Quarters.
⇒ You must meet regularly with your mentor.
⇒ You must turn in a research proposal and research paper.
⇒ You must present at the FMP Research Symposium.

Work one-on-one with UCSD Faculty
Start developing your research skills now
Contribute to the cutting edge research being conducted at UCSD
Positions are available in all majors!

The program runs Winter and Spring Quarters of each academic year. Depending on the needs of individual faculty mentors and what is standard for specific departments, FMP students may develop their own research interests, help a professor with his or her own research, or work in a laboratory on campus.

Transfer students and international students are welcome to apply!

Academic Enrichment Programs
Student Center Bldg. B/2nd Floor
Phone: 858-534-5791
http://aep.ucsd.edu
E-mail: kvanness@ucsd.edu
How to improve your chances of finding a mentor

If you are looking to work in a lab, complete the lab safety training course for your subject. Be sure that your shots are up to date if you want to work in a hospital or school.

If the professor asks that you have a certain skill, GPA, major, etc., don’t apply if you don’t have that skill, GPA, etc.

ALWAYS GO TO OFFICE HOURS. Have something specific to discuss.

Network! Go to talks, seminars, etc. offered by your department or the School of Medicine. Get to know the professors and TA’s who teach your courses. Even if they don’t have room for a new student, they might know someone who does.

Do not be late; do not cancel an appointment.

Familiarize yourself with the professor’s research. Look at a few papers, books, etc. that they have written. When you contact a professor, be sure to explain why you want to work on that specific research.

Learn Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint; also, if you can, familiarize yourself with platforms/programs/protocols frequently used in your research area, such as MATLAB, SPSS, LINUX, etc.

Go to library training, and be familiar with how to use various databases, including governmental databases, as well as subject-specific ones, such as MLA, PubMed, and NUCMC. You need to know more than just JSTOR!

Even more than being able to present yourself well, it is important to explain why you are passionate about this type of research. Think about this, write it down, and be able to talk about it.

Questions to ask yourself before looking for a mentor…

What are your research interests?
Where would you like to develop?
What are your goals?
How do you rate these qualities in a mentor?
  • Interested in developing your career
  • Commitment to mentoring
  • A match with your professional and personal needs
  • Professional competence
  • A successful track record in mentoring
  • Good communication skills
  • Will provide networking opportunities
  • Is well-known in his/her field
  • Is institutionally savvy
  • Expresses interest in you as a person
What can you offer your mentor?
What do you hope to gain through your research experience?
What do you know about research in your field or area of interest?
Is there a faculty member working in your area of interest?
Are there particular skills you need to develop or courses you need to take before embarking on your project?
Will your project require special approvals, such as working with human or animal subjects or hazardous materials?
Will your project require funding?
Will you be able to commit the minimum 10 hours a week to your project?
Will your project be done independently on your own schedule, or will you need to mesh your research with other ongoing research?

Sample e-mail to a professor

Dear Professor X:

My name is Name. I am applying to participate in the Faculty Mentor Program, which includes two Quarters of faculty-mentored research during Winter and Spring Quarters. I would like to conduct research in Subject Area.

I am interested in your project on brief project description. Your work interests me because Briefly state why the professor's work interests you. I would like to get involved in research in this area because it will help me to better prepare for Your Professional Goals.

I am a X year student with a GPA of X. I have taken Relevant Courses and Additional Relevant Experiences (brief). My goal is to Goal-brief. I am aware of the commitment required to complete a two-quarter research project and I am confident that I will fulfill it.

Would it be possible to further discuss your project and my possible involvement in it? I am available at your earliest convenience.

For more information about the structure and requirements of the Faculty Mentor Program, please contact Karen Van Ness, Program Coordinator at (858) 534-5791 or kvanness@ucsd.edu or go to fmp.ucsd.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Student ID
E-mail
Phone