

## Locating a Summer Research Program

Depending on your institution, there may be many or a few research opportunities for you to consider. Searching for opportunities requires locating a research mentor who you can work with on projects in their field. You can consider research programs off campus at other institutions, governmental agencies, and industry if your institution does not have enough opportunities in your area of interest. In addition, off-campus research opportunities can be an incredible way to learn about different ways that people approach the topic and reasons for pursuing the work. Finally, off-campus research is a great way to meet people from across the country and see a different university, research station, or center.

### Search for Programs

- Search for “Summer research [insert research interest area]”
  - Update research area keywords with synonyms and other areas that interest you
    - You can locate synonyms or other field-specific vocabulary on Wikipedia, for example.
    - Start out narrow and then search more broadly to capture as many programs that you could qualify for
  - This search helps to find a variety of programs that are specific to your area(s) of interests.
  - Remove “summer” and add your location to find research opportunities near you that are potentially during the academic year. You may also find these on job search sites like Indeed.com - just be sure to search for “intern” in the job title to ensure you are not applying for a full-time position.
- Maintain a spreadsheet of programs you are interested in and have applied to.
  - Include in your spreadsheet the following columns:
    - Program name, website, deadline (past or upcoming), institution, reason why you are interested, and if you applied
  - Update the spreadsheet throughout the year
    - If the deadline has passed, you can consider it for the next time or you can use this list as a potential graduate school list
- Speak with your professors about your interest in research and your interest in potentially summer or off-campus research. They may have connections from graduate school or individuals they have met at conferences.
- Some common websites to search for research opportunities:
  - [National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates](#)
  - [Pathways to Science](#)
  - [Council on Undergraduate Research Arts & Humanities](#)

### Applying to Programs

Different programs and research mentors have different requirements. Below are some of the common examples of items you may be asked to submit for a research program. Overall, you should have a targeted application where you are connecting your experiences, skills, and passion with the program - use their vocabulary and be specific, when possible. If you are seeking summer research experiences, most application deadlines are late fall to early spring.

## Resumé/ Curriculum vitae (CV)

Every college student should have an updated resumé/CV. This document is important because it summarizes the skills and experiences you possess for hiring committees to consider many candidates for a limited number of positions.

Resumés for a research program should include the following, if applicable:

- Relevant coursework you have taken/are taking
- Laboratory, technical, and/or computer skills you have
- Projects that required independent or critical thinking
- Work, volunteer, and leadership positions you have had with relevant [bullet points](#)

Contact your campus career center for support in getting your document started or for reviewing the document when you are about to submit it. If possible, include the program description so they can review it to ensure you are targeting your document to the position.

Resumé or CV? If a program asks for a CV but you do not have any research experience already, they are asking for a more professional resumé that includes all of your relevant courses, projects you may have completed, and other professional/academic experiences. See Curriculum vitae resources for additional information.

## Personal Statement

A personal statement is typically the only written document you will submit that will demonstrate your writing abilities to the hiring committee. Therefore, it is especially important to dedicate enough time to getting this 1-2-page document polished. Personal statements are often the best way for a reviewer to understand your motivation and commitment to the project.

You should address the following questions:

1. Who are you?
  - a. Describe who you are and the reasons for the reader to be interested in you
  - b. Include your academic preparation
  - c. What makes you stand out?
  - d. Consider past opportunities from your resume to include here – similar to a cover letter
2. Why are you interested in the subject area?
  - a. Describe why the subject area is interested to you
  - b. Provide specifics from your personal, professional, or educational experiences that contributed to this interest
  - c. Include specific projects you are interested in if there are multiple
3. What are your future goals?
  - a. Discuss what your immediate and long-term goals are
  - b. Graduate school? Industry?
  - c. Connect how the research project/experience will benefit your future goals
4. What are the specific requirements for the program/project?
  - a. Programs or project leaders may have their own prompts on what they want to know
  - b. Include qualities they seek in new researchers
  - c. Typically found on websites

Personal statements are professional documents that provide the first insight into your character and abilities. Make sure to follow guidelines:

- Be clear,
- Be concise, and
- Provide evidence or examples to back up your claims.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

Past success is the best indicator for future success. Therefore, it is common for programs to ask for letters of recommendation from other professionals. To get a meaningful letter, it is important to establish a rapport with faculty and staff early in your college career through office hours and making good first impressions. They must know you in an academic or professional setting in order to write about you in a letter of recommendation.

When choosing who you should ask to write the letter of recommendation, consider if there are any professors within the area you are applying to who you could ask. Then, consider professors outside of the discipline area. Finally, consider professional staff. When asking for a letter, be sure to give enough time for the recommender to write a thoughtful letter. Provide as much information about the program as possible including your resumé/CV and personal statement. This will help provide background for what you are saying and what the program is seeking.

You may want to meet with your recommenders before the letter is written. This can give you the opportunity to discuss your strengths as well as examples that the faculty observed, which could illustrate these points. Make sure to come prepared for this conversation.

If the individual denies writing you a letter it could be because they know they cannot write you a strong enough letter from their interactions with you. This could be due to limited professional interactions or because they do not want to write a less-than-stellar letter. If this happens, move to the next individual and build up your professional interactions with this individual if you plan to ask them for a letter later on.

It is okay to follow-up with your recommender prior to the deadline to remind them if they accidentally forgot. Unless you are asked to do so, do not write a sample letter of recommendation for them.

### **Sample of Work**

Some programs that are highly technical or selective may require a work sample, such as an assignment that demonstrates your writing in the discipline. This is another way of trying to see how you write, how you form arguments, and how you present ideas. It is common to submit an assignment that you received feedback on and polished it. They are not asking for the version you got a “B” on; you should make sure it is the best possible sample of work you can send. In addition, make sure to submit a writing sample that is consistent with the research that you want to pursue. For example, submit a lab report if you are pursuing a STEM program but a literature review if you are applying to an opportunity in the humanities.