Getting Good Research Experience

Diversifying Clinical Psychology Weekend
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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Progression of Research Experience

- **Undergraduate**
  - Data entry
  - Participant recruitment
  - Running of participants
  - Data analysis
  - Honors thesis
    - What is this?
    - How important is an honors thesis?

- **Post-baccalaureate**
  - Research assistant
  - Research coordinator
Research Opportunities

How to become aware of research opportunities

- Psychology Department listservs/website

- Ask a guest lecturer whose research interested you

- Inform your advisor that you are looking for a research experience

- Ask professors, graduate students, or TAs if they know of any openings

- Check your Undergraduate Research Board’s openings
  - Fliers may be posted throughout your department around the time of course registration for the next semester
Research Opportunities

- How to write an email of inquiry
  - If appropriate, mention where you heard of the opening for a research assistant
    - Was it from a flier? A TA? Professor?
  - Include a copy of your CV or resume
  - Use professional language throughout your email
    - Avoid “Hey” or other informal language
  - Indicate that you are familiar with the research
  - Ask any clarifying questions
    - How long will they need a research assistant?
    - Is the position for credit? Volunteer?
    - Time commitment

- How do faculty like to be approached?
Ways to Stand Out and Build Relationships as an RA

- **Ways to stand out**
  - How can a RA stand out to faculty?
    - What are the differences between YOU and others?
    - How are YOU seen and remembered by professors?

- **Ways to build relationships**
  - How reliable are YOU?
  - How dependable are YOU?

- **How do faculty build relationships with RAs?**
Making the Most Out of RA Position

- Volunteer for different responsibilities
  - The more responsibility the more opportunity to learn!

- Ask questions of the grad students and professors

- Make contact and build relationships with the senior members of the lab
Participating in Independent Research

- Examples of independent research
  - Honors thesis
  - Independent research project

- Find an advisor

- Identify a research question of interest

- Determine whether you will have the time to commit

- What do faculty think about independent research?
Participating in Independent Research

- But my school doesn’t offer the research I am interested in…
  - What to do?

- Research Resources
  - University programs that will help you gain research experience
    - McNair
    - SROP—summer research opportunities
    - MURF—minority undergraduate research fellowships
  - How do I find these?
    - Check your university website
    - Make phone calls
    - Ask your advisor
Post-Baccalaureate Research Opportunities

**Pros**
- Opportunity to solidify your research interests
- Gain additional research experience
- “Time on” instead of “time off”

**Cons**
- Will be out of the “school experience” for 1+ years

**What do faculty think of post-baccalaureate opportunities?**
Post-Baccalaureate Research Opportunities

- Inform your undergraduate research mentor that you are interested in a post-bac opportunity
  - They might have a post-bac position for you or they might know someone who does.

- “Cold email” professors
  - Check NIH RePORTER to see who has funding and what projects may be of interest to you: [http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm](http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm)

- Check human resources websites and other job finding websites
  - Universities, hospitals, etc.
Other Post-Baccalaureate Options

- Entering a terminal Masters program
- Teaching position
- Bottom line: there is no “right” path to graduate school, but gaining valuable research experience is an important part of all paths.
If you have additional questions…

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