
Getting Good Research Experience

Diversifying Clinical Psychology Weekend
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THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

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>
- 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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