

Getting Started on Undergraduate Research

Undergraduate students can get involved in faculty-mentored research in any academic area: the humanities, natural and social sciences, engineering, arts, education, and more! We want to help you from the very beginning of your research career, because defining your goals up-front goes a long way toward helping you achieve them.

1. Define your interests and discover your passion

Your first step is to narrow down your interests and find a topic to research. Think about topics in your courses or on the news, or topics that you've read about and that sound interesting and exciting to you.

For more ideas:

- Check [department websites](#) for information about faculty research. Be proactive and reach out directly to faculty about your interests and possible research opportunities.
- Browse the [Office of Research Newsletters](#) to learn about the research areas of CSU faculty.
- Browse the list of [Undergraduate Student Journals](#) and the [Undergraduate Student Research Links](#).

2. Find a Faculty Mentor

You will want to work directly with a faculty member on a research project. To find a mentor, ask your professors, TAs, or academic advisor for the names of faculty who work on research in your area of interest.

You can also:

- Look at the [Faculty Profiles Website](#).
- Search the [Faculty Expertise Database](#).
- Check the [Student Employment Website](#).

3. Connect with a Faculty Mentor

After you narrow down your list of possible faculty mentors, familiarize yourself with their work and look at their papers. Talk with their current graduate students. Send them an email to introduce yourself and ask about participating in their research.

When emailing faculty:

- Describe yourself (full name, CSU ID, major, year in school, relevant coursework, experience, and skills).
- Keep your email as professional and as brief as possible.
- Describe how you became interested in their research, and suggest the research area you'd like to explore.
- Ask whether they have an opening for an undergraduate in their research group in the current or upcoming semester.
- Request a meeting to discuss research possibilities.
- Finally, thank them for their consideration.

Don't give up until you find a position! If your first email goes unanswered, you may have to visit the faculty during office hours, or email them again after a couple of weeks. If your first choice for a faculty mentor does not have any open research positions, you may have to find a second or third choice. But if you are qualified and persistent, you will eventually find a research position.

4. Plan Your Project

Once you've found your faculty mentor, discuss potential projects. Decide with your mentor what type of research experience is best for you.

You can either:

- Do volunteer research.
- Do independent study research or Honors College research to earn course credit.
- Work with your faculty mentor to apply for [internal CSU funding](#).
- Apply for [external funding](#).

Most undergraduate research students participate in a combination of these types of research during their career at CSU.