

How to contact a Faculty member: Finding a potential mentor

It is a good idea to review the department websites to find faculty research you are interested in possibly pursuing. It is important to contact several different faculty members as they may not all be accepting students at this time or may turn out to not be a good fit.

1. Find a mentor: Where do I look?
 - a. Take a look at the departmental websites
 - b. Review FAU faculty and their research interests and publications
2. When you initially reach out via email to faculty keep it short and simple. Keep these things in mind:
 - a. Send from your FAU email address
 - b. This may be the first time you contact your new faculty mentor, remember to be respectful and use appropriate titles (e.g. Dr., Professor, etc.)
 - c. Include a few sentences such as
 - An introduction of yourself
 - Year in school
 - Career/graduate School aspirations
 - Include your contact information in your signature
 - Briefly mention relevant courses, grades/GPA, previous lab experience
 - Optional: attach a CV/résumé, unofficial transcript, as pdf files
 - Do your homework! Review the faculty's research, and determine what and why it interests you
 - Discuss why participating in this research relates to your academic and career goals
3. Faculty members are very busy and may not respond right away, it is okay to be persistent but polite. Give them a week or two to respond, then send a follow up email or visit during their office hours.

In the case they say, "No":

- If this is a temporary "No" (e.g. no current funding, already at capacity with undergraduates, etc.), let them know if you will still be interested in the future if an opportunity became available.
- Remember to be polite and thank them. You may work with them or a colleague of theirs in the future. Never burn bridges.
- You can also ask if they know of any colleagues seeking undergraduates to mentor

In the case they say, "yes"!

- Be polite, thank them, and ask for an opportunity to meet before finalizing your decision

Adapted from Undergraduate Research Support Office at Duke University:
<http://undergraduateresearch.duke.edu/started/tips-contacting-mentors>

Tips on how to prepare for your first meeting with a potential faculty mentor.

- Be on time and prepared
 - Bring copies of your resume/CV, unofficial transcripts etc.
- Wear professional attire while avoiding dressing too formally or too informally (e.g. no gym or beach clothes, pajamas, tuxedos, etc.)
- Listen attentively
- Be ready to discuss your goals and interests regarding your research interests, graduate school and career aspirations
- Ask to meet other members of the research team. If there is a physical lab, ask for a tour.
- Be ready to discuss the projects – read the web site, recent publications, research interests
- Ask about expectations:
 - What is the time commitment? Make clear your availability. (e.g. start date, length of commitment, how many hours per week, flexibility)
 - Is this independent/group work?
 - Will he/she be your 'direct' mentor? Will a graduate student be your direct mentor?
- Make clear your intentions for the relationship, e.g., independent study leading to an honors thesis, or work-study position leading to a research opportunity, Directed Independent Study (DIS) etc.

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