Finding A Faculty Mentor

Decide on Your Research Interest

To begin your search for a research mentor decide what most interest you in your discipline.

When determining your interest:

* Think about your major or minor as a place to start thinking about the type of research that sparks your curiosity.
* Consider topics discussed in your classes as a place to gather ideas.
* Learn more about the research already being conducted in your field.
* Do a search of campus websites to identify faculty working in your area of interest.
* If you’re not sure what research area interests you, then start by doing a general review of faculty research in the academic department and school in which you are majoring. This may help you narrow your search as you move into the next stage.

You may be interested in conducting research on a very specific topic, however, and especially if you are seeking a research opportunity for the first time, you need to remain open and flexible to options. Across the IUPUI campus world-class research is being conducted in all disciplines.

Identifying a Potential Faculty Mentor

Browse through descriptions of each faculty member’s research to identify several potential mentors who are doing research that matches your own intellectual interest and career goals. 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.

* Create a list of faculty whose research interests match your own, and rank them according to your interest.
* You may also want to talk to friends who are already doing research to get their advice about potential mentors.
* Consider faculty members new to your department or school. Since they are lesser known fewer students will seek them out for research opportunities.
* If potential mentors inform you that they are not able to accommodate you due to lack of time or other commitments, ask whether if it is ok to contact them again the following semester and whether they know of a colleague who may have an opening for a student researcher.

Contacting a Potential Faculty Mentor

* Contact potential faculty mentors via email first. A positive introduction from someone you have in common can definitely be favorable.
* Keep emails succinct and professional.
* Introduce yourself and explain your interest in the research they are conducting, how undergraduate research would be beneficial to you, list skills you have already developed that could be helpful to the faculty member’s research, and include any information that would make you desirable to the faculty member. If you are or have taken a course with said faculty member remind them that you are/were in their class.
* If you would like to be paid while engaged in research indicate that you will apply for funding by the Center for Research and Learning. Most faculty members won’t have the resources to provide you with a salary.
* End your email by listing dates and times you are available to meet and add a research resume if you have one.
* Follow up if you do not hear back within two to three weeks, but do not hound him or her. If after your follow-up you do not hear back, you need to assume that he or she does not have the time to meet.