

## Getting Started in Research

### 1. Clarify your interests. Do your homework. Do this in a few ways:

A. investigate areas of interest – read field related books or magazines in field and recent journals to understand field and the areas of research efforts. What ways is the field organized? For example, in psychology, major research can be categorized according to these general areas: clinical, cognitive, educational, development, social, organizational. Be sure to understand the major organizing features of your field in attempt to understand your area of interest.

B. Visit the website of department and research activity of faculty members. This can inform you about the general area (as mentioned in A), but also give you a more specific sense of the type of research that is occurring here at Mississippi State University and who may be doing work of interest to you.

C. Be sure to visit past undergraduate research symposium booklets to see what other undergraduate students have accomplished and to see what interests you and maybe consider potential mentors. <https://www.honors.msstate.edu/research/undergraduate-research-symposium/past-symposia/>

D. Don't worry if you are not sure – being open to options is good. Have a list of multiple, potential interesting projects or mentors. The experience may help you clarify what you like or not. Engaging in research is a learning experience for you in numerous areas: working with others; the content area; research process; new skills; how scholarly findings are established, etc.

E. If you want a bit more guidance on research, this paperback is helpful as an overall guide: Booth, Colomb, Williams, Bizup, & Fitzgerald (2016). The Craft of Research, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Overall, preparation and some reading on your part will help you define your interests as you further understand a field and its offerings. Doing some reading and becoming informed allows you to engage in meaningful discussions with a potential mentor.

### 2. Clarify your goals and expectations for research

It is a major commitment on the part of a faculty member in terms of time, effort, and sometimes expenses to agree to mentor a student researcher. In addition, it takes time and attention and diligence for you to learn skills, understand the field, and contribute to activities. So, engaging in faculty guided research is a commitment from both parties. Be up front and honest about the time you have available and that you can devote in a given term and for future terms.

Also, note some research experiences are voluntary – some are paid. Consider a DIS (Directed Individual Study) or EXL class in the department as a way to take a class that will allow you to devote regular time to research activities. Be sure to check with the faculty mentor about this and with your department degree advisor about how this may fit into your curriculum.

### **3. Get your resume updated**

This should include information about yourself; prior work experience; prior research if applicable; relevant coursework; skills, credentials, hobbies, etc. Don't oversell but don't undersell either, be precise and accurate. Aim for one side of a single page.

### **4. Contact someone:**

This can be done in multiple ways. There is no single method for this. Students find opportunities in various ways.

A. talk to professor yourself – especially if have good relationship with someone from class or advising.

B. Investigate opportunities posted at Mississippi State University at <https://www.urcd.msstate.edu>

C. Keep your eyes and ears open. You may hear or see something in your department or in the library or from a peer.

D. Meet with Dr. Anastasia Elder at Office of Undergraduate Research (in Shackouls Honors College) who can help find someone

When you are ready for a meeting for sending an email, be prepared with the following material:

Name, netid, major & minor, year (e.g., sophomore, etc.)

Interest and goals for research

Resume

Time /schedule you can devote to research. Consider summer too!

### **5. Once you have started, aim to share your research activities and results.**

Present at the annual Spring or Summer Undergraduate Research Symposium; discuss with your mentor about professional organizations in your field or presenting at conferences. These can include Honors specific ones or ones in the field. These are typically offered at state, regional, and national level.