

## URCD FAQ:

### **Q: What is undergraduate research?**

A: The definition from the national Council on Undergraduate Research: *“A mentored investigation or creative inquiry conducted by undergraduates that seeks to make a scholarly or artistic contribution to knowledge”*

Here at Mississippi State University, research is part of our history and identity. [We are one of the nation's leading research universities.](#)

### **Q: Why should I do undergraduate research / how important is it for my career path?**

A: Undergraduate research is an opportunity for students to learn more deeply about a field they are interested in. Through research, students develop their problem-solving and communication skills and create meaningful connections with faculty mentors. Graduate and professional schools, as well as many employers, have a favorable opinion towards candidates with undergraduate research experience.

### **Q: When should I start undergraduate research?**

A: Students should begin looking for research opportunities as soon as they are interested and can fit it into their schedule. It is better to complete undergraduate research in the early years of college so that you have time to build on your early progress. Many students stay involved for multiple semesters.

### **Q: What kind of projects can I get involved in? Do I have to do my research in the field in which I am studying, or can I do it in another area?**

A: There are research projects in all sorts of fields and majors: sciences, engineering, social sciences, business, education, humanities, and arts. You are free to explore research in fields of interest. One of the most important things to consider when choosing a topic or area is what you are interested in and why you want to learn more about it. It may be wise to consider the kind of experience and transferable skills you will gain as well as how they relate to your goals.

### **Q: What sorts of activities could I be doing in undergraduate research?**

A: It will depend on your interests and the types of projects faculty are doing. Students can participate in lab work, fieldwork, computing, data collection, literature reviews, archival research, survey analysis, text analysis, and other tasks.

### **Q: How long do research projects take?**

A: Research project timelines vary greatly. Undergraduates work anywhere from 2 hours per week to 15 hours per week (it is up to you!) and may complete projects in as little as one semester. Typically, the best research experiences last two semesters or more.

### **Q: Do I have to be an honors student or have a certain GPA to get involved in undergraduate research?**

A: No, all students are encouraged to seek research opportunities. There is no minimum GPA to take part in research.

**Q: Can I get paid to do research?**

A: Yes, many research projects have funding available to pay undergraduate students. You may ask your faculty mentor about payment prospects. You can also inquire about funding through your college or department. However, if monetary compensation is unavailable, students may be able to receive other benefits (such as course credit) for their research. If interested, students should discuss options with faculty mentors and their departmental advisor.

**Q: What kind of skills/pre-requisites do I need to do research?**

A: Key characteristics are a willingness to learn, curiosity, and diligence. Some faculty mentors may require specific background courses. They will inform you of additional training you may need. Often, a first step involves regulatory compliance training, usually online.

**Q: How should I get started?**

A: There is not one set way to get involved in research, instead there are multiple paths. Some students reach out to professors, some are invited to projects, some answer a call or post. So, keep an open eye and ear. Most importantly, the [URCD website](#) is designed to help you! It has many resources.

1. First, check out the portal on the MSU opportunities page designed to connect students with faculty mentored projects (project listings change, so check back if nothing interests you).
2. Second, review past Undergraduate Research Symposium booklets to see the types of research projects your peers have done and which faculty have mentored them.
3. In addition, the website contains valuable resources on the *Getting Started* page and advice about how to reach out to professors.
4. If you need further help, you can schedule a meeting with Dr. Anastasia Elder, the director of URCD.

**Q: I found an interesting project and mentor! What is next?**

A: Once you have made a research match, you and your mentor can discuss expectations to plan for the future. Guidance for this discussion exists on the website-- check out the [research learning agreement tool](#).