ICRU’s Guide to Research

You’re interested in getting involved in research or creative work in campus - that’s great! This document will help you start your search and navigate ICRU to make the most of your experience!

Articulate your interests:
- Take time to consider your interests and your reasons for wanting to be involved in research or creative work. Potential mentors will want you to be able to articulate this information.
- Tips and tricks:
  - Identify what you hope to gain from the experience.
  - Narrow your interests. “Health research” is too broad; diabetes is more manageable.
  - Write your thoughts down! This will help you articulate your goals.

Start your search:
- Your goal is to make a short list of five faculty members who you would like to work with.
  - There are two great places to start your search:
    1. Go to the uiowa.edu homepage search engine and search for your interest. Sift through the resulting articles and pages to find faculty and projects you want to connect with.
    2. Go to a departmental website of interest. Click on the “Research” tab to view current research projects OR click on the “People” tab to view faculty profiles and research interests.
  - Other ways to find out what research/creative work is happening on campus:
    - Talk to TAs or friends about their department and ongoing research projects.
    - Look for centers, institutes, or workshops on campus that focus on your area of interest.
    - Keep an eye on ICRU listings and emails, or watch Hire-A-Hawk.
    - Enroll in a course with a research focus through your major.
    - Attend poster fairs and research festivals to see what is being done and how to get started.

Reach out to mentors:
- Draft an email to each potential faculty mentor on your list. (See example email below).
- It is unnecessary to include a résumé, GPA, or other “interview” material unless requested; however, you should bring these for a meeting.
- Send a follow-up email if you do not receive a response within a week. Do not send more than two.
- Before you go to meet a faculty member, review their website, profile, or publications. Be prepared to discuss how your still-evolving interests intersect with their work.
- Remember: Don’t be intimidated or nervous! Faculty are here because they want to pass on knowledge.

Hello, Dr/Professor (if a doctoral degree is obvious) or Ms/Mr (if no doctoral degree is obvious)

I am a [first/second/third year] student majoring in [your major]. I am interested in [some aspect of health, dance, engineering, political science, etc] and saw that you do research on [include something in their work that caught your eye – be specific]. I am hoping to learn more about research in this field. Would you be available for a short meeting to tell me more about the work that you do and discuss any possibility of my involvement?

Thank you for your time,
[Your Name]
Get your work on your transcript:

- Register your transcript for notation or academic credit through MyUI.
  - **URES:3992** This is a 0-credit hour course with for students who are volunteers or paid.
  - **URES:3993** Select 1-4 credit hours of work to be graded pass/fail. Tuition and fees may apply.
  - **URES:3994** Select 1-4 credit hours of work to be graded A-F. Tuition and fees may apply.
- There are options better suited to students pursuing Honors in the Major. Contact your department.
- University Honors Students can enroll through the Honors Program (HONR:3994) or URES courses.

Push yourself further:

- **Develop a broad skillset.** Keep yourself open to learning new procedures, techniques, and protocols.
- **Take on your own project.** Let your mentor know that you are up for the challenge.
- Present your research. Do not underestimate the value of your ability to communicate your research. Your mentor can help you develop these skills. Express interest in conferences, poster presentations, and even presenting at lab meetings and journal clubs. The best way to learn is through experience!
- **Teach skills to newer lab members.** By teaching others, you strengthen your communication skills, discover gaps in your knowledge, and reinforce your understanding of your work.
- **Apply for research opportunities outside of the University of Iowa.** ICRU and your mentor can help you find REU, SROP, Amgen Scholar, and other off-campus programs.

Reap professional benefits:

- Maintain positive, strong working relationships with your research mentors and coworkers to earn glowing letters of recommendation for your hard work and skill.
- Build your CV. Add events, presentations, and publications that you are involved with. These experiences make you a more desirable candidate for graduate programs and employment.

Use ICRU to:

- **Develop Communication skills.** ICRU offers various events that focus on communicating work to a variety of audiences. Join the ICRU listserv or watch ICRU’s webpage and social media for these events.
- **Find Funding resources.** ICRU has funding resources and can help you find other resources.
  - ICRU Fellowships: $2500 for Summer and $2000 for Academic Year Fellowships
  - ICRU Travel Awards: $500 for presentations, performances, and exhibitions.
  - ICRU’s Excellence in Undergraduate Research Awards (Fellowship + $1000 travel award)
  - ICRU can help you find and apply for research scholarships, fellowships, and grants.
- **Apply for graduate school or employment.** ICRU helps students incorporate skills learned through research to compose competitive applications for graduate and employment opportunities.

**Remember:**

You are a valuable asset to the group that you are working with.

The entire University community – all faculty and staff - wants you to succeed! Use them!

If you find that you have further questions, please contact ICRU by email (icru@uiowa.edu), by phone (319-335-8336), or in person (401 BHC). You can also visit our website for more information (uiowa.edu/icru) or to get in touch with an ICRU Student Ambassador.