Undergraduate Lab Research

Undergraduates interested in neural science research are encouraged to actively pursue working/volunteering in a lab.

Research Matching Program

CNS has recently announced a new effort to facilitate the matching of students interested in getting research experience with labs that are looking for undergraduate volunteers.

The program is open to declared Neural Science majors and those who seriously intend to pursue Neural Science as their major.

To apply, students must:

1) Research the work going on in the major research labs in or affiliated with the Center for Neural Science to get some idea of what you might want to do or who you might want to work with.
   The Neural Science website is a good place to start: http://www.neuroscience.nyu.edu/
   Many labs also have their own webpages with more information.

2) Create an application packet that includes:
   a. a cover letter that explains
      i. the specific area of neural science you are interested in learning about
      ii. which labs you might want to work in
      iii. whether or not you are currently in the Neural Science honors program or thinking about applying for honors
   b. a resume
   c. a recent transcript (an unofficial one from Albert is fine)

3) Send the application packet to the lab to which you are applying and also to research_matching@cns.nyu.edu

IMPORTANT: There will be an application deadline each semester. If you miss the deadline or do not get matched, you still have the option of approaching the labs you are most interested in directly to see if they might have openings, or re-applying to the program in a following semester.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM: Contact Dr. Suzuki, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, at dus@cns.nyu.edu, or your academic advisor.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CREATING A SCIENCE RESUME: Make use of the Wasserman Center for Career Development. They have online resources and provide one-on-one career counseling. See more here: http://www.nyu.edu/life/resources-and-services/career-development/prepare-for-the-job-search.html

Frequently Asked Questions

- I would like to explore working in a lab in or affiliated with the Center for Neural Science. What are the first steps towards doing so?
  See above for information about the new CNS Research Matching Program.
If you aren’t selected for a position through this program, you can approach faculty directly to see if they are willing to have an undergraduate work in their lab.

- **I am not an Honors student, should I still pursue working in a lab?**
  Yes! Volunteering in a lab is a great way to sharpen analytical skills and to be directly involved in the scientific process. Undergraduates gain valuable hands-on experience and can receive scientific guidance by directly assisting graduate students or post-doctoral researchers with their experiments. Depending on the laboratory, students may also have the opportunity to develop their own research project. Students learn to become independent thinkers by working in a lab. Exposure to basic science research can foster your love for science and builds a foundation for entry into graduate/professional school.

- **When should I seek out research opportunities during my undergraduate career?**
  It is best to seek out lab opportunities early in your undergraduate career, typically during the summer of your sophomore year. Learning challenging techniques early on may permit you to have an independent research project during your senior year.

- **I am an upperclassman and have not pursued working in a lab. Is it too late?**
  Although it may prove to be difficult to seek out lab experience during your senior year, it is not impossible. Faculty may be reluctant to have a senior work in their lab, doubting what you may accomplish during this short time span. Be prepared to convince faculty that you are serious and dedicated to lab work. To gain research experience, alternatively, you may want to take a year after graduating and work as a research assistant/technician.

- **I am premed and have a heavy course load. How do I incorporate working in a lab with all my classes?**
  Working in a lab involves a serious time commitment. If you feel that you may not be able to manage classes and lab work, it may be best to postpone seeking lab experience until the next semester. Budget your time wisely and communicate openly with your mentor/advisor when there are specific time constraints in your schedule (exams, papers, other deadlines, etc).

**FAQs for Students Pursuing Research Opportunities Independently**

- **The faculty member I want to work with has not responded to my e-mails, what should I do?**
  Take initiative and ask a graduate student or a post-doc in the lab if they are interested in working with an undergraduate. Alternatively, perhaps the faculty member is teaching a course and has office hours where you could go and speak with him or her in person.

- **I have contacted the faculty whose lab interests me the most but they are not willing to have an undergraduate work in their lab. What should I do?**
  Faculty might have time or funding constraints that limit them from mentoring an undergraduate. Ask politely if they will have opportunities for undergraduates in the near future or next semester. Contact other faculty members whose research might also interest you. Seek out summer undergraduate research opportunities that may be offered at other institutions or companies. Reapply to the CNS Research Matching Program in future semesters.