

Planning for Summer Research

Conducting research as an undergraduate gives you the chance to apply what you've learned, challenge yourself, work independently, and contribute to new knowledge. Summer research, in which you work full-time on a project, also lets you experience the life of a scholar, especially important if you are considering graduate study. It can also inform your career plans.

Thinking about Research? Consider these questions:

WHY do you want to undertake research? How does summer research relate to your undergraduate academic program? Your post-graduate plans?

WHAT type of research do you want to undertake? Do you want to work with a faculty member or another scholar as their research assistant? Do you want to develop and undertake your own research project? Do you have the research skills and academic preparation for the project? What do you hope to gain?

WHAT'S YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION?

WHERE is the best place to undertake your research? At Bates? At another university? At a different type of research institution such as a think tank or a museum?

WHO is the best person to serve as a research advisor, and how can you line that up?

HOW much will your research cost? What do you need? Do you need to be paid so you will not need to take another job? Do you need money for travel, supplies, texts, data sets, equipment, or subject reimbursement?

HOW can you secure funding for your project? Consider Bates sources: Dean of the Faculty's Office (for research and fellowships); the Harvard Center for Community Partnerships (for community-engaged projects); Purposeful Work/BCDC (for career internships); Off-Campus Study Office (for Barlow Grants).

Your project might also be fundable through a faculty member's external grant.

Or you may consider participating in a research program at another institution (C3 Fellowships, SROPs, NSF-REUs).

Advising & Financial Support for Your Research

OK, you've answered all these questions and you are ready to move forward. Time is essential: Give yourself as much time as possible to develop the best possible proposal.

CONSULT with a faculty member about your project, both its design and avenues for funding. Take advantage of advising through the dean of the faculty's office.

SECURE a research advisor who is willing to work with you. Each research mentoring relationship is different, so student and advisor need to have a clear understanding of the role played by the advisor as well as the advisor's expectations for the student researcher.

DEVELOP a project with specific research questions grounded in sound methodology and your solid understanding of the existing scholarship on the topic.

BE MINDFUL of research ethics and your responsibilities as a researcher. Take a research ethics training course (available online at Bates through CITI). Does your research involve human or animal subjects? Understand your protocol review requirements for working with humans or animals.

FIND funding. Study funding opportunities and make sure the goals of the funder align with your research goals.

PREPARE a proposal for funding that is clear and well written, with a defined scope of research (don't undertake a project in one summer that really requires a Ph.D. dissertation!), a feasible plan, a timetable, and your understanding of the existing scholarship. Have your essay reviewed by your advisor or your writing center.

DO NOT LEAVE your request for a faculty letter of recommendation or a transcript until the last minute.

MAKE SURE you've clearly understood the funding program's application requirements. Submit everything that is required but don't add superfluous materials. Observe page limits and **MAKE THE DEADLINE!**