



Getting In: The Insider's Guide to Finding the Perfect Undergraduate Research Experience

By Dr. David G. Oppenheimer, Paris H. Grey

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Readership: Undergraduates; research advisors and mentors; instructors and professors teaching classes on research in the sciences.

For Students

You're busy.

Research positions are competitive.

Faced with searching databases of outdated advertisements, and sending countless unanswered emails, it's no wonder that searching for a research experience is hard to do.

Getting In will help.

Getting In has the essential information you need with an easy approach that will save time and help you choose the research experience that is perfect for you.

Some of the topics addressed in *Getting In* are:

- **How much time will research take?** We help you estimate the time depending on your interests and goals.
- **How will you find the time?** Participating in research doesn't mean giving up your social life or risking your GPA. We give you a strategy to make room for research, and maintain a healthy academic/life balance.
- **When advertisements fail.** Advertisements are useful when they work and incredibly frustrating when they don't. For alternatives see, "Creative ways to find a research position."
- **Should you read a scientific paper?** We offer tips for you to decide if you should, and give an alternative if you decide to skip it. (And we tell you why you should never claim to have read a paper if you didn't.)
- **Mistakes to avoid.** Even the most persistent student will waste time if they make certain mistakes in the search, application, or interview.
- **Email that gets you noticed.** Professors receive a lot of emails—so how do

you get yours noticed? We tell what you need to do to stand out, and provide email templates for you to customize.

- **The interview questions you should ask.** We give you a list of questions so you'll impress the interviewer, and be able to evaluate the position.
- **Tips to handle the awkward interview moments.** What if you don't know how to answer a question and panic? What if you're offered the position but it's not right for you? We help you prepare so you'll know what to do.
- **To register or not to register?** Should you take research as a volunteer or for GPA credit?

For Research Mentors How *Getting In* can help students already in the lab

Getting In helps address misconceptions about research that were brought up during our interviews with undergraduates and advisors alike.

If you follow us on social media or read our blog, you already know what we're about.

Some topics covered in *Getting In* include the following:

- **Research takes effort.** Throughout *Getting In*, we reinforce that it's important for students to be open to learning, and be determined to do quality work.
- **Upholding the time commitment.** Many students don't make the connection between upholding a time commitment and making progress on a project, being assigned "interesting" tasks to do in the lab, or earning a strong recommendation letter. We include a section, "Ten reasons that honesty is the best policy when it comes to your research time commitment." We also recommend visiting the campus counseling office if to help with time-management or stress as needed.
- **Research symposia and seminar tips.** The section, "Nine tips for attending a poster session at a symposium," includes questions to ask poster presenters as well as a section on etiquette for attending poster sessions and seminars.
- **Realistic expectations.** We cover misconceptions about research, and what is often the more realistic scenario. Two are: "I'm already an expert in the techniques from lab class, so research will be easy," and "I only need research experience to get a recommendation letter, so the project doesn't matter."

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Editorial Review

Review

"The advice to undergraduate students about how to approach a busy laboratory principal investigator and sell themselves is spot-on! Oppenheimer and Grey also give invaluable advice about leveraging their research experience to garner a favorable impression from their advisor while acquiring research skills essential for moving onto graduate or medical school. Getting In is an excellent resource for students seeking a productive research experience." --**Dr. Brandi Ormerod, Associate Professor and Director of Diversity and Professional Development, University of Florida, Department of Biomedical Engineering**

"Oppenheimer and Grey have crafted an eminently useful book to help undergraduates learn the value and possibilities of hands-on research. ...This is an excellent book of value for any faculty member involved in undergraduate research, for undergraduate advisers working with various students, and for virtually any undergraduate." --**Council on Undergraduate Research CUR.org**

Thanks for really great information about trying to find an undergraduate position in an easy to read format and great tips to make the most of the position that you get. There are example emails to professors that you can use, sample scheduling templates and lots of advice about when and how to approach a professor about working in his or her lab. A cool feature to this book is that the authors have a website and really active Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. This is a really useful book for undergraduates! -- **A Reader**

"Written for students by an associate professor with an active research lab, and a practicing research scientist who mentors undergrads in the lab, each mentor brings a different perspective to Getting In--one from the professor's desk, and one from the researcher's bench. ...Getting In could be that resource that your department needs to raise awareness and motivate students to choose a research path. The book could also serve as a useful resource for student's seeking research positions outside academia." --**The Division of Chemistry for the Council on Undergraduate Research**

From the Author

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About the Author

D.G. Oppenheimer, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the University of Florida in the Department of Biology, the UF Genetics Institute, and the Plant Molecular & Cellular Biology Graduate Program. He regularly recruits and mentors undergraduate researchers in his lab, and teaches more than 1000 undergraduate students each year. His current research interests are focused on the proteins that control cytoskeleton dynamics, and how this influences plant cell shape.

P.H Grey, B.A., is a molecular biology research scientist at the University of Florida who started her research career as an undergraduate lab assistant in her first semester of college. Although she was "just an undergraduate," the postdocs took the time to explain not only the reasons behind the steps in the protocols, but also the big picture of how her work fit in with the overall lab goals. She use that same strategy when

advising and mentoring her undergrads. In the 21 years since, she has been a research mentor to numerous undergraduate students, written articles on how to succeed in undergraduate research for Student Doctor Network, ASBMB Today, and other other venues.

Together, the authors have over 46 years experience training, mentoring, and writing recommendation letters for undergraduate researchers. They understand the challenges that students face when searching for a research experience and how to successfully navigate around them. They are co-creators of **undergradinthelab.com, a free resource for undergraduates, mentors, instructors, and professors.**

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Clarence Liller:

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Paul Queen:

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