

# How To Find A Faculty Sponsor

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 [hsp.berkeley.edu/how-find-faculty-sponsor](http://hsp.berkeley.edu/how-find-faculty-sponsor)

## STEP #1: Identify Potential Candidates

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Here are some strategies you can use to identify faculty members who might be a good fit for you and your project...

- Make a list of faculty members with whom you have taken courses and whose work has inspired or influenced your intellectual interests.
- Attend lectures on campus to familiarize yourself with other faculty members outside your courses. Check the Daily Cal and the Berkeleyan , visit the UC Calendar of Events website at <http://www.berkeley.edu/calendar/>, and check departmental postings for information on scheduled lectures and presentations.
- Consider the interdisciplinary implications of your interests and identify all relevant departments--including professional schools--that may house potential mentors. Don't limit yourself to your major department!
- Check departmental websites for up-to-date information on faculty research interests and publications.
- Visit departmental offices and request information from staff on faculty research interests and availability. The departmental graduate assistant can often be an especially good source of information.
- Look at recent course listings -- for both undergrad and grad -- in relevant departments to find out what faculty members are teaching. Many departments publish their own course listings.
- Ask other faculty members which of their colleagues share your research interests.
- Talk to fellow students, especially seniors involved in research and/or those active in the majors association -- to find out which faculty members specialize in areas relevant to your proposed research project. GSIs or other graduate students are an especially good source of information about faculty research interests.

...you don't need to do all of these--just choose a few. Your goal is to make a list of 5-10 professors who might be good mentor candidates.

## STEP #2: Approaching Potential Candidates

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Find out when potential mentors hold office hours by consulting postings in the departments, on the web, or on faculty office doors. Avoid calling on the phone; let the faculty members manage their own time as they choose.

Do your homework before you go to office hours; inform yourself about the faculty member's research interests, areas of specialization and/or publications. Be able to state why you are seeking out this particular person's advice.

Consider attending the professional communication workshop offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research for in-depth information on how to make a great first impression.

Before speaking with a faculty member, know what you wish to get out of the meeting: feedback on a research or creative project idea? Help defining the purpose or scope of a project? Suggestions for further background reading? Advice about designing a research instrument or plan? Information about laboratory facilities or equipment? You are running this meeting, so it is important to have an agenda, both to use time efficiently and to show that you are serious about your purpose.

Don't go in empty handed: have with you a paragraph summarizing your research project/interests, your transcript, your resume, and a list of specific questions/requests for guidance.

Before leaving the meeting, think about what kind of follow-up you would like to have with the faculty member. If you have established a good rapport and would like to develop an ongoing working relationship, ask if she would be willing to meet with you again to look at a draft of your research proposal, to answer additional questions about a topic you have discussed, or for some other specific purpose.

If there isn't a good match between your interests and those of the faculty member, ask him to suggest other colleagues you might approach. Even if this particular individual has been very helpful, it may be useful to ask for additional suggestions of people to speak with, since the more input you get in developing your proposal, the better.

Be confident and assertive about asking for help, but keep the length of your meeting within the established time limit (e.g. 15 minute or 10 minute slots). It is important to be considerate both of the faculty member, who faces many demands on her time, as well as your fellow students waiting outside the door.

### STEP #3: Asking for Sponsorship

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Once you have identified a faculty member you'd like to work with as a mentor, you will need to ask that person to make a commitment to serve as your faculty sponsor or advisor. Clearly communicate what kind of time commitment you are asking for and what the mentor's commitments will be.

Give your sponsor a copy of your research proposal, if appropriate, as well as any forms she/he will need to fill out to establish a formal advising relationship. If letters of recommendation need to be submitted under separate cover (i.e. via snail-mail), include a stamped, addressed envelope directed to the appropriate party as a courtesy to the faculty member. Be sure to allow plenty of lead time before deadlines and make sure your sponsor knows when forms are due. Arrange a date to check back with the faculty member to verify that forms have been submitted.

### STEP #4: Be Persistent!

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If a faculty member declines to serve as your sponsor, don't be discouraged! A negative response likely says more about the professor's prior commitments than it does about the merits of your project.

If you've followed the advice in step 1, just go on to the next potential mentor on your list. You may need to approach many professors before receiving a "yes" response, but be persistent. It may take time, but you will eventually succeed in finding a sponsor. If you're planning ahead now to do interesting research later, you are by definition the kind of highly motivated student that makes the work of being a university professor worthwhile.

Finally, feel free to come by the Office of Undergraduate Research for individual advice on finding a mentor--we are always happy to help.