



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DO I GET STARTED DOING RESEARCH?

Undergraduate research is defined as research under the mentorship of a faculty member or other researcher, such as a graduate student or postdoctoral scholar. Therefore, you first need to identify a mentor. In most cases, undergraduate students support and carry out parts of a larger project that your mentor is conducting, so you can get started learning about that project by participating in hands-on tasks. However, sometimes a student has an idea for a research project in mind. In this case, mentors are still important, as they are knowledgeable about the discipline and methods required to conduct scholarly work.

HOW DO I FIND A MENTOR?

Departments within each school or college at ECU will have a listing of faculty with research interests and expertise on their websites. In addition, some departments at ECU have a structure in place to help undergraduates find research mentors. For some students who already have developed a research idea, talking with the chair of the department or the director of undergraduate studies may aid in identifying a mentor. In addition, the Office of Undergraduate Research can help steer students in the right direction if they cannot find a mentor. You can find more information about individual programs – including Biology, Psychology, Chemistry, Health Education & Promotion, and Engineering – at department faculty pages.

CAN FRESHMEN DO UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH?

It depends on the department and discipline. In most programs, students need to have certain core courses completed before they undertake undergraduate research. However, for those students who have completed the core subjects, for example, at a community college or through high school AP courses, it is possible that they can start undergraduate research during their first year.

CAN I GET PAY OR COURSE CREDIT FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH?

Each program or major handles these questions differently, but your mentor or director of undergraduate studies will help you sign up for course credit and let you know if there is an option to be paid. Some students are paid from funds from their mentor. The Office of Undergraduate Research offers several options to support undergraduate research, including the Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Award and the Undergraduate Research Mini Awards, which launched in Spring of 2018.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH?

- Enhances student learning through mentoring relationships with faculty
- Increases retention in college
- Increases enrollment in graduate education
- Provides effective career preparation
- Develops critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and intellectual independence
- Develops an understanding of discipline-specific research methodology
- Promotes an innovation-oriented culture

*adapted from the Council on Undergraduate Research