



Brandeis

Biochemistry Department Laboratory Profiles

Brandeis is committed to giving undergraduate students in the sciences opportunities to engage in graduate-level research at the edge of discovery. The Biochemistry major with honors requires students to work on a research project in a lab of a faculty member in any of the life sciences. Performing research in biochemistry is an exciting experience, and all those who are interested should try their hardest to find a lab in which to carry out research. Do not confine your search to Biochemistry faculty, since many faculty in the departments of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics work in life-science areas. And also remember: professors don't bite—they will be glad to talk with you about your hopes for conducting lab research.

The first step in finding a research lab is to read through the websites of life-science faculty to see what type of research might interest you: [faculty](#).

Come up with a list of five or six faculty as possibilities to explore. Not every faculty member will have openings for undergraduates in any given year, so don't put all your eggs in one basket. Before contacting faculty members, make sure that you have a rough idea of the kind of research they do. **The best time to look for a lab is in the early spring of your sophomore year.**

You should contact faculty members about possibilities for joining a research project by sending a well thought-out email. What should this email include?

First of all, address the recipient as “Dr.” or “Professor” and be sure to get to your point in the first two sentences. Faculty members are busy and don't want to read a novel. Your entire email should be no more than a paragraph in length. Once you state who you are, your year, and your interest in the lab, it's time to start to grease the wheels. Why do you want to work in the lab? Are you particularly interested in the proteins or mechanisms in question? Why? Are you particularly interested in the method of research (x-ray crystallography, bioinformatics, computer modeling, NMR, etc.)? Why?

Next, talk yourself up! Why would you make a good member of the lab? What would you bring to the table? What is your past experience? Your drive? Your creativity? What sets you apart from the others? This is a beauty contest—make them want you! Finally, thank them for their time, and end the letter with a short sign-off. **Never say “Have a nice day.”** Professors don't want to be told what to do, and that phrase sounds so cheesy to the older generation. Then attach a resumé, proofread your work, and hit the send button.

“But I don't have a resumé, nor do I know how to write one!”

Well, luckily, we have the Hiatt Career Center here on campus with experts and professionals whose only job is to get you a job. Make an appointment and get help! We all need it, and most Brandeis scholarships and jobs you'll want to apply for will require you to get your resume "Hiatt Approved" anyways.

Your Letter

- Who are you?
- Why are you emailing?
- What is your interest in this particular lab?
- Why are you a good fit for the lab?
- Thank the faculty member for their consideration and make sure to note that you have attached your resumé
- Proofread your letter!
- Press the send button

Make sure to customize each letter to each faculty member. Professors talk to each other, so copying and pasting will not do. Your resumé, though, does not need to be customized; a Hiatt-approved resumé should fit for any lab. You should expect an answer within two weeks of sending the email.

However, faculty members are always busy and often distracted. If you do not get a response, don't take it personally, but if you are really interested in the position, try visiting them in person. As we said: they don't bite!

Good luck! Remember that the faculty here at Brandeis are not monsters. They enjoy talking to students, and not just about working in their lab, but about life in general; it's very easy to start a dialogue. Your parents are paying a lot of money for you to have that kind of attention! Also, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact any of your UDRs:

General Advising

biochemistry.udr@gmail.com