

Steps for Obtaining an Undergraduate Science Research Opportunity at Brandeis

The information below was written by the [Brandeis Science Communication Lab](#).
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1. **Identify a lab/program/opportunity that will help you build theoretical, analytical, and/or bench-research skill sets.**
 1. Adopt the mindset that finding a lab will take more than 10 hours of work. This is a highly competitive environment where professors want the smartest, most diligent students who signal that they will be good lab citizens and quick learners. No one is placed in a lab by staff.
 2. Explore the [Division of Science website](#) to learn about science research being done at Brandeis.
 3. Cultivate a list of which labs you are interested in. Notice where current undergraduates work because not all labs host undergraduate researchers. Prioritize quality mentorship over field of research. Undergraduate research is about learning skills, which will happen more effectively in a friendly and supportive environment.
 4. Consider exploring lesser-known labs or labs in disciplines outside of your major. Joining those labs will make your skill set a valuable commodity and diversifies your resume/CV. Many professors might accept a non-major if the student has expertise that complements the research.
2. **Do your homework about the professors and the labs you are interested in.**
 1. Narrow your list of professors to contact to under six names by reading their lab web pages and recent journal articles on [PubMed](#). If possible, reach out to the current undergraduates or graduate students who work in the lab. Ask them for advice about getting a research position and express interest in the work. Do **not** ever ask these students directly for a position because they cannot hire you.
 2. Determine if you are eligible for Work Study. Some professors like to know that information, and it will be helpful if you already know your status. If not eligible for Work Study, consider working in a research lab under voluntary basis.
3. **Draft and send an email to the professor of the lab you are interested in.**
 1. Draft a personalized email to a professor (not a form letter) and then [make an appointment with the Science Communication Lab](#) and have your email reviewed by a CommLab fellow for content and tone:
 2. Your email should express:
 - i. Commitment and work ethic matter - faculty will want undergrads who are smart, but also who are willing to work hard, learn, and finish what they start. Convince faculty that it will be worth their time to train you, especially for first/second-year students that might work in the lab for the next two-three years.
 - ii. A willingness to do grunt work: "I want to be helpful" – these jobs are vital for science to be done. Do not convey that these are "below you." Be patient-- the grunt work won't last forever.
 - iii. An appreciation for the opportunity: "I'd be lucky to get this job"
 - iv. Curiosity for the science: "I want to learn more about X" or "I wonder how Y happens"
 - v. Energy and enthusiasm for the work
 3. Do NOT convey in any way this sentiment: "this will be great for me" or "my career" or "I need this (or think I do) for medical/dental school." Avoid typos and double check the spelling of the professor's name and Brandeis (not "Brandies").
 4. Attach your most current resume/ CV. Again, have a CommLab fellow work with you to emphasize most valuable and transferable skills.
4. **Be patient.** Most PIs receive dozens of requests every semester. If they don't immediately answer within the week, follow-up with a reminder email.
5. **Be resilient.** While everyone fails, a smaller number keep getting up and trying again. If a professor doesn't email you back, make a CommLab appointment to help figure out why.