How Do I Find a Faculty Mentor?

Identifying a faculty mentor to guide you through your first research experience is the most important aspect of this program and also one of the most challenging tasks for incoming freshmen. Choosing a mentor is an important decision, so take the time necessary to find someone who feels like a good match for your research interests, learning style and personality. Below you will find some tips that could help.

- Narrow your interests down before you begin looking for a mentor. Your mentor can help you narrow your focus further and set you on a research path if they know what most interests you.
- Visit your college department/program webpage and investigate faculty research interests.
- Explore some of the major university research initiatives to find out if you can join an existing project.
- Talk to the department head, advisor or college coordinator in the field in which you want to work.
- Talk to Tim O’Neil (334 Student Union, 744-7313, tim.oneil@okstate.edu).

Once you have identified a faculty member you may want to work with, drop by during his/her office hours or ask to make an appointment. You can find contact information on the faculty member’s website or in the OSU Directory.

It’s best to call or email to set up the initial appointment.

You and your mentor should work together to establish a research plan and timeline that will accommodate both of your schedules. Your participation can be tailored to your specific project and needs. And you may do either of the following:

- Work on a project of your own design
- Work on an aspect of an existing research project/program
If you’re at a loss for words as you prepare to make “first contact” with a prospective mentor, you may use a simple online form to send a message to them:

Go to okstate.edu/scholars

> “Undergraduate Research”
  > “Freshman Research Scholars”
    > “Current Freshman Researchers”

The form will ask for your name, email, and major(s) as well as the name and email of your prospective mentor. (Pay attention to spelling!) You will also need to write about your research interests and qualifications, which will look like this when complete:

Dr. {Your Prospective Mentor’s Last Name},

My name is {Your First Name} {Your Last Name}, {Your Major}. As one of Oklahoma State University's Freshman Research Scholars, I have been tasked with finding a faculty member on campus to guide my development as a researcher. I am interested in your research and would like to schedule a meeting with you at the earliest possible convenience.

Information about my research interests and qualifications is included in the postscript to this message, and you can click here for information about the Freshman Research Scholars program.

I am anxious to hear from you and excited about getting started in research!

Sincerely,

{Your First Name} {Your Last Name}
{Your Email Address}

Research Interests:
{Using complete, properly punctuated sentences, describe your research interests as specifically as possible.}

Qualifications:
{Using complete, properly punctuated sentences, explain your qualifications to participate in the type of research you describe above. You may note completed coursework, familiarity/facility with laboratory equipment and procedures, relevant experiences, etc.}