

Guidelines for finding a research group and a research mentor

1. Explore research groups to find something that interests you. Research areas in chemistry at ISU: <https://www.chem.iastate.edu/people/faculty> (click on faculty links).
2. When you've identified research that seems appealing to you, write an email to the professor asking to meet with them.
3. Guidelines for email correspondence with faculty:
 - a. Write an informative subject line
 - b. Be formal
 - i. "Dear Prof. Snape" not "Hi Severus"
 - ii. Close with Sincerely, Sincerely Yours, Respectfully, Respectfully Yours, etc..
 - iii. In closing: Use your first and last name.
 - c. Introduce yourself briefly: your year and major.
 - d. Tell them why you are interested in their research and how you came to be interested in their research. It's important to let them know that you have a general idea of what type of research the group is pursuing. If applicable, let them know what skills or knowledge you can bring to their group (being excited to do research or passionate to do research counts). If you anticipate that this research experience would be beneficial to your career development, let them know how. If you are considering graduate school, let them know that this experience would be helpful to your preparation for graduate school
 - e. General style
 - i. Use complete sentences and good grammar and make sure there's no misspelled words.
 - ii. Be succinct (keep the email brief)
 - iii. Be polite
 - f. Request an appointment (or ask if could visit during their office hours)
 - g. Attach your resume and unofficial transcript from AccessPlus

This website has sample emails and further suggestions that you might find useful: <https://ugr.ue.ucsc.edu/email>

Additionally:

- Reach out to more than one professor – not every faculty member will have room in their labs for a student.
- If you don't immediately get a response from a faculty member, follow up with an email in a week or so (up to three times).
- Start looking for research positions in groups NOW for next semester.
- If you have no ideas on who to approach, consider talking to your current chemistry instructor(s) or academic advisers for guidance – visit during office hours.

Research during the semester:

- If your research mentor has funding, you may be able to perform research as an hourly ISU student employee.
- You may perform research for credit; typically, students are expected to be in the lab working 3 hours for every credit.

Research Credit:

Chem 299: This is more of an observational experience. Students taking Chem 299 typically hang out in the lab and can do routine lab activities but aren't assigned their own project.

Chem 399: For most research groups, undergraduates are assigned to work with a graduate student who helps to train them. The goal is to give undergraduates their own project to work on (under the guidance of a graduate student). Students taking Chem 399 are expected to submit a report at the end of the semester. Chem 399 counts as one of the two required advanced chemistry electives for the B. S. degree.

Chem 399 research experiences are important for the following reasons:

1. They provide opportunity to learn hands-on research skills and problem-solving skills that are applicable universally.
2. The graduate student and research faculty mentor can serve as references.
3. These experiences can help students obtain internships, summer research opportunities, and employment after graduation.
4. They are critical for students wanting to go to graduate school.
5. They give students bound for professional school after graduation (law, pharmacy, medicine, etc.) experiences that strengthen applications.

Watch for emails from the chemistry department regarding scholarships for undergraduate research – these research scholarships are regularly awarded to students in Chem 399, 499, or 490.