

# Guide to UG Summer Research Programs

Interested in conducting summer research? Look out for Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Programs! REU's and many other summer research programs are opportunities for undergraduates to get paid to work on a research project with a faculty mentor or graduate student during the summer. Students should visit the website of their program of interest to find specific information on eligibility, application requirements, and deadlines.

## 6 STEPS TO APPLYING TO REU PROGRAMS



- 1. PERSONAL STATEMENT.** This 500 -1000 word essay is extremely important. Space is limited, so make every word count and tailored to each program. Explain the desire to spend the summer in the REU and why you are an ideal candidate for this position.
- 2. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.** Most sites require two to three letters. Find people who know you well in an academic setting and can speak about your research potential and why you would be a good fit for the REU program in question. Set a goal to provide letter-writers at least a month in advance. The more time you give letter writers, the better the recommendation.
- 3. TRANSCRIPTS.** Some sites require official transcripts, while others will accept an unofficial transcript. Request official transcripts at least two weeks before your application is due. Every REU will have specific instructions on how they should be submitted.
- 4. CV/ RESUME.** Start with the Career Center to find samples in your discipline. Get feedback on your CV/ Resume from faculty and friends.
- 5. DEADLINE.** Stay organized and aim to finish at least one week early in case you need more time to obtain transcripts or letters of recommendation.
- 6. WAITING PERIOD.** Most sites respond after about one month, or around early March. Sites typically keep a short waitlist of students. Contact the program to express continued interest and fit for the program.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Q: When do I apply?

**A:** Start looking at REU programs as early as the summer before you plan to participate in one. However, most applications are not available until late November or early December.

### Q: How do I find REU's and other programs?

**A:** Ask faculty for suggestions. Visit the UROC page for recommendations. Do a search online for REU's and summer research programs related to your interests.

### Q: To how many sites should I apply?

**A:** Applications are free, but this doesn't mean apply to every possible program. Apply to the programs that spark legitimate interest. If you have questions about the program before applying, email the head of the program and get your answers from the source.

### Q: What If I Don't Get Into Any Programs?

**A:** Talk to faculty in your department and ask if they have any summer projects in which you could get involved. See our "Getting Started in Research" information sheet. Otherwise, look at large research institutions, find faculty leading projects you find interesting, and send emails asking if they have opportunities to work with them.

## Tips for Submitting a Competitive REU Application

**Read and follow the directions.** Make sure to provide exactly what is requested. If you have questions about any part of the application, contact the program director and ask for clarification.

**Demonstrate specific knowledge and interest in the program to which you are applying.** Don't use the same application essay for every program. Tell the reader exactly why you are interested in that specific REU. Browse the program's website, and use this knowledge to highlight specific aspects of the program that are particularly appealing to you.

**Carefully proofread your application.** An application with spelling or grammatical errors leaves a bad first impression. Read your application carefully before you submit it, and ask someone else to give you some feedback as well.

**Choose good references.** What your references write about you can make a big difference in distinguishing your application from others. Choose references who know you well and who will take the time to write a thorough and detailed letter of recommendation. It's okay to ask a reference, "Do you think that you will be able to write a strong and detailed letter for me?" Also give your references a copy of your application essay and any other information that would help them write a strong letter.

**Be genuine.** Don't oversell yourself. Provide an honest account of your background and experiences.

**Apply to multiple programs.** It's important to remember that REUs are extremely competitive, and even the very best students do not get accepted by every program to which they apply.