



Get Experience: Internships, Research, and more

It's important to get career related experiences while in college, in fact 91% of employers factor in work experience when hiring a new employee and 65% of employers prefer related experience (National Association of Colleges and Employers 2017 Job Outlook). Below is information about some of the ways to get experience while pursuing your college degree.

INTERNSHIPS:

Internships are a great way to gain experience in a specific field, learn more about a company, apply knowledge gained in the classroom, learn new skills, and network with professionals. The majority of CSE internships are done in the summer and are often paid full-time positions. For more information about how to receive credit for an internship, contact your department or academic advisor. For information about how to find an internship, see the Internship & Job Search Guide. One way to start finding and applying for internships is through [Handshake](#) (a database of internships and jobs for UMN students).

CO-OPS (available for some CSE majors):

A co-op provides the opportunity to work full-time (and get paid) while alternating semesters of coursework. The benefit of doing a co-op is that when you graduate you will be leaving with 2 semesters of meaningful engineering work experience. Participating in a co-op may delay your graduation date, so be sure to make an education plan with your academic advisor. The [CSE Co-op Program](#) offers students in various majors to obtain academic credit for a co-op experience.

WORK EXPERIENCE:

Any job can help you develop skills that are valuable for your career such as teamwork, leadership, and communication skills. Part-time and summer jobs give you the opportunity to take on professional responsibilities, tasks, and projects and can be a stepping stone to help you get an internship or research experience in the future. Search for [on-campus opportunities](#).

VOLUNTEERING:

Volunteering is a way to gain experience and lend your skills to make a difference. It may help you get your foot in the door at an organization or help you develop skills that you can demonstrate to future employers. Here are some resources you can use to find volunteering opportunities:

- [Handshake](#)
- [Center for Community Engaged Learning](#)
- [Hands on Twin Cities](#)
- [Minnesota Council of Nonprofits](#)

LEADERSHIP & STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS:

Employers rank leadership and extracurricular involvement as influential attributes when deciding between two equally qualified candidates (National Association of Colleges and Employers 2017 Job Outlook). Getting involved with a student organization and/or taking on a leadership position will help you develop your leadership skills. Some student organizations also offer the opportunity to get hands-on experience, such as the Solar Vehicle Project and Engineers Without Borders. Here are some resources to help you find student organizations and leadership opportunities:

- [CSE Student Organizations](#)
- [U of M Student Organizations](#)
- [Engagement Opportunities](#)
- [Leadership Minor and Leadership Opportunities](#)

STUDYING/WORKING ABROAD:

Studying or working abroad may help you develop your language abilities, cultural competency, and skills such as adaptability and problem-solving. To learn more about study abroad opportunities, visit [CSE Learn Abroad](#), schedule an appointment or attend drop-ins to meet with one of our study abroad staff, or email cseabroad@umn.edu. You can find additional information at the [Learning Abroad Center](#). Once you return from your international experience, meet with a Career Counselor to learn how to market your experience to employers and help you stand out as an applicant.

RESEARCH:

Conducting research is an excellent way to deepen your knowledge of a certain subject, gain field experience, learn valuable investigative skills, and collaborate with a professor. You can get involved with research in many different ways, such as through internships, national research institutes, volunteering to help a faculty member, or laboratory [jobs on campus](#). You may want to **review [CSE's Research webpage](#)**, which outlines different opportunities, how to find topics of interest and connecting with a faculty member. Described below are some additional ways you can get involved with research.

The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP)

A UROP gives you the opportunity to work with a faculty mentor on a creative activity or research project with financial support from the University of Minnesota. UROP students receive scholarships of up to \$1500 and up to \$300 in expenses. In order to complete a UROP, you need to identify a faculty mentor and create a research proposal. Visit the [Office of Undergraduate Research](#) for more information. Proposal deadlines are usually in October and February for the following semester.

International Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (I-UROP)

The [I-UROP program](#) is managed by the Learning Abroad Center and students may receive a stipend of up to \$2000. Application deadlines are in October and May.

Directed Research

You may earn credit by working in a lab or field setting under a faculty member. Before starting your research be sure to find out how the credits fit into your program of study and complete and turn in a directed research contract. For more information about how to do directed research ask your academic advisor or contact your academic department.

Summer Research Experiences for Undergrads (REU)

The National Science Foundation funds [research programs](#) at institutions throughout the nation.

- Learn more about [CSE Research opportunities](#).
- A [Friend in STEM](#) is a mentorship program that connects undergraduate students interested in STEM with scientists at the University of Minnesota.
- For more information about research opportunities related to your major, visit your department's website.

Steps To Get Started Doing Research:

- 1.) The first step is to figure out what you are interested in. Think about what classes you've enjoyed and what topics you like to discuss and learn about.
- 2.) Identify faculty who are doing research related to your interests. Look at the opportunity gallery on the [UROP's website](#), go to your department's webpage to find out what faculty are researching, and consider what faculty members you've had classes with are researching.
- 3.) Contact faculty members to inquire about opportunities to get involved with research. Be sure to learn a little bit about the professor before contacting them. Most departments have biography pages as well as detailed information about each faculty members' research interests. Visit faculty members during office hours or email them. When you communicate with them, express a genuine interest in what they are researching, ask questions, and inquire about ways to get involved (see example below of communication with faculty members).

Example Email to Faculty Member

Subject: Meeting to discuss undergraduate research opportunities in **topic**

Dear Dr./Professor **Last Name**,

I am a **year** student majoring in **major**. **List how you found out about the professor's research. Express your interest in specific paper or topic.** I would appreciate the chance to talk with you about your research in topic of interest and about possible undergraduate opportunities in your lab.

My experience in **research experience or class** confirms my intention to develop my research skills and goal. I know you are very busy, however I would like to schedule an appointment or drop by your office hours. I'm available on **days at times**.

I have attached my resume and unofficial transcript. Please let me know if there is any other information I can provide. I look forward to talking to you soon.

Best,

Name