

How to Find a Research Position and Apply

Conducting collaborative research, whether at Macalester or elsewhere, provides a chance to apply what you have learned in class and lab and is a great way to explore career pathways. Explore opportunities on campus, around the country, and around the world. We suggest that students apply to many different opportunities, both on- and off-campus, and also consider other types of opportunities, e.g., internships, shadowing, volunteering, virtual positions. The process is outlined below.

1) Ask Yourself Some Important Questions (Summer/Fall)

- Do you have geographical restrictions? For example, do you need to stay in the Twin Cities? Are you hoping to specifically get out of the Twin Cities? Are you wide open to where you might spend a summer?
- Do you have financial requirements, e.g., do you need to earn a certain amount of money this summer? Are you able to volunteer? Do you have housing restrictions? Do you have a car?
- How much time will you have available to commit to research this summer? Realistically, you should envision 10-12 weeks of full-time work. If you are taking classes or have other job commitments, then you will not be able to commit to most research opportunities.
- How strong is your application? Your preparation? If you are lacking relevant experience you will need to address it and possibly make some trade-offs in other areas (e.g., stipend, geography, field, position).
- Make sure you are eligible for the positions to which you are applying (e.g., coursework, age, citizenship, identities).

2) Talk It Up! (Summer/Fall)

- Talk with faculty and staff both about their research and about programs at other universities. These conversations can help connect you to great opportunities that fit your skills and interests.
- Talk with other students about their research experiences. This can teach you about programs and opportunities that are out there and help you to refine your interest areas.
- Talk with visiting faculty members, seminar speakers visiting Macalester, or people you meet when attending seminars or conferences at other institutions. This is not a time to remain in your shell! Some students find opportunities by reaching out to faculty at other institutions whose research focus areas are right in the sweet spot of their interests.

3) Explore and investigate programs & opportunities (Summer/Fall)

- **Collaborative research with Macalester faculty.** These paid positions are posted early in the spring semester, but it is essential to talk to faculty to express your interest in their work in the fall before you apply. Be sure to do your homework first by reading about their research on their departmental homepage so you can speak specifically about your interest.
- **“Special for Mac” positions.** These are paid research positions (most are off-campus) that are created specifically for Macalester students. Some are in the Twin Cities (e.g., MN Dept of Health, University of Minnesota) and others are elsewhere (e.g., University of Arizona, University of Wisconsin).
- **Additional opportunities that are not connected to Macalester.** There are research experiences for undergraduate (REUs) at most large universities and other summer research programs. See a list of ideas [here](#). Be sure to confirm your eligibility.

- **Reach out (via LinkedIn or email) to principal investigators (PIs) doing work of interest to you.** This may not result in an immediate paid position, but is a different way to explore types of research, and could eventually lead to ideas in the future. *How to do this?*
 - 1) **Check [MacDirect](#) and LinkedIn** (Macalester page) to see if there are alumni in your field of interest
 - 2) **Look at research of interest of faculty at other colleges & universities.** Read about the projects and who is doing the work.
 - 3) **Send an email** to the person/ people you identified:
 - a) Introduce yourself as a Macalester undergraduate interested in this work. Express your strong interest in what they are doing (speak briefly and **specifically** about the research to demonstrate your understanding) and express your desire to learn more about it. Directly connect to their purpose and mission!
 - b) Ask if they have time to talk with you in the next few weeks or allow you to visit the lab/site if feasible. (Have a resume ready to go in case they respond with an opportunity to work there!)
 - c) Didn't hear back? Follow up in 2 weeks to again express your interest and enthusiasm and ask if they had time to consider your request.

4) **Apply to Positions! (Fall/Winter)**

All positions are competitive, so putting together a strong application is essential to be selected. Make sure you allow sufficient time to create a competitive application. You will likely need the following components:

- a) [Resume/CV](#)
- b) [Cover Letter](#) or Letter of Interest (LOI) - succinctly describe your background, specific interest in the research.
- c) [Personal Statement](#) and/or Essays: If requested, this is a chance to demonstrate your interest in the research by briefly discussing it to show your understanding. You can also talk about your long-term goals, but know that many programs are looking for future PhD students (not MD students).
- d) Transcript (official or unofficial)
 - Official transcripts include the College's seal and need to be [requested directly from the Macalester Registrar](#) with a payment of \$5 each. Most of the time you can get by with an unofficial copy. Some off-campus opportunities may require an official transcript, but unless they say official, then unofficial transcripts can typically suffice.
 - You can download an unofficial version of your transcript from 1600 Grand. Unofficial transcripts are usually fine for on-campus applications.
 - Log in to 1600grand
 - Go to the Academics Tab
 - Select **Academic Transcript** under **Academic Records** section.
 - For Transcript level, select **Undergraduate**
 - For Transcript type, select **Web Transcript**
 - **Print and Save as PDF.** Download as a pdf, and save as Transcript_yourlastname.pdf.
- e) Letters of recommendation
 - Ask your recommenders (in person, if possible!) 4-8 weeks prior to the application deadline. Let them know what you are applying for and a little bit about each of the opportunities. Follow up with a resume/CV and program information via email. Some opportunities and programs require letters of rec, others ask only for names of recommenders, and others require neither. Remember that deadlines are firm!!
 - It is your responsibility to be clear on the requirements and communicate this to your recommenders. Will recommenders submit a letter to an application portal, email it to a person, physically mail it to a site? Let them know what to expect!
 - Send your recommenders a nice thank you note, whether you are offered the position or not! Share an update on your summer plans when you know what you are doing. Your recommenders will really appreciate this final step.