2019-2020 FACULTY MENTOR PROGRAM
GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED

The FMP takes place during Winter and Spring Quarters of each academic year. Depending on the needs of individual faculty mentors and what is standard for specific departments, FMP students may develop their own research interests or assist a professor with his or her own research. Transfer students, visiting students, and international students are welcome to apply!

TIMELINE

Winter Quarter

- January 17, 2020 (Week 2) 199 forms are due for all students (except biology)
- January 31, 2020 FMP Applications due (Students should already have found a mentor)
  FMP Student/Faculty contracts due
- Make a research plan with your professor.
- March 13, 2020 BISP 199 forms for Spring Quarter are due

Spring Quarter

- April 10, 2020 (Week 2) 199 forms are due for all students (except biology)
- April 18, 2020 Undergraduate Research Conference
- April 24, 2020 (Week 4) Paper proposals are due
- May 20, 2020 FMP Symposium
- Final papers are due at the end of the quarter

During Winter & Spring Quarters, FMP provides a series of workshops on topics such as: how to present at a conference, how to network in academia, applying for scholarships, writing research proposals & papers, applying to graduate school, and time management.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE LOOKING FOR A MENTOR

- What are your research interests?
- What areas of your skillset would you like to develop?
- What are your academic and career goals?
- How do you rate these qualities in a mentor?
  - Interest in developing your career
  - Commitment to mentoring
  - A match with your professional and personal needs
  - Professional competence
  - A successful track record in mentoring
  - Good communication skills
- Willingness to provide networking opportunities
- Interest in you as a person

- What can you offer your mentor?
- What do you know about research in your field or area of interest?
- Are there skills you need to develop or courses you need to take before starting your project?
- Will your project require special approvals, such as working with human or animal subjects or hazardous materials?
- Will your project require funding?
- Will you be able to commit the minimum 10 hours a week to your project?
- Will your project be done independently on your own schedule, or will you need to mesh your research with other ongoing research?

**IMPROVING YOUR CHANCES OF FINDING A MENTOR**

- If you are looking to work in a lab, complete the lab safety training course for your subject.
- Be sure that your shots are up to date if you want to work in a hospital or school.
- If the professor requires a certain skill, GPA, major, etc., do not apply if you do not have that skill, GPA, etc.!
- ALWAYS GO TO OFFICE HOURS. Have something specific to discuss.
- Network! Go to talks, seminars, etc. offered by your department or the School of Medicine. Get to know the professors and TAs who teach your courses. Even if they don’t have room for a new student, they might know someone who does.
- Do not be late; do not cancel an appointment.
- Familiarize yourself with the professor’s research. Look at literature they have written. When you contact a professor, be sure to explain why you want to work on that specific research.
- Learn Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint; If you can, familiarize yourself with platforms/programs/protocols frequently used in your research area, such as MATLAB, SPSS, LINUX, etc.
- Go to library training, and be familiar with how to use various databases, including governmental databases, as well as subject-specific ones, such as MLA, PubMed, and NUCMC. You need to know more than just JSTOR!
- It is important to explain why you are passionate about this type of research. Think about this, write it down, be able to talk about it.

**HOW TO FIND A MENTOR**

- Look at department websites. Academic departments have faculty profiles that include background and research foci.
- The REAL portal has a listing of faculty looking for research assistants: real.ucsd.edu
• Contact the undergraduate advisor for the department.
• Once you’ve found professors you’re interested in, prioritize based on your preference, then email them one by one.
• Follow an email up with a telephone call, follow a telephone call with an office visit.
• Be assertive! You are not the only student looking for a mentor—it’s very competitive.
• Don’t expect the professor to find you, YOU must be motivated and find him or her.

TIPS ON HOW TO CONTACT A POTENTIAL FACULTY MENTOR

When you write a cover letter to your preferred mentor, the professor will be most interested in why you want to work with him/her. It is true that some will just look at your GPA (do not lie about your GPA — they will check), but most people want someone passionate about their research. So read a few papers, look through the faculty member’s information on their department page, read their web page, etc.

Other things to keep in mind when reaching out to a potential mentor:
• Make sure to provide up-to-date contact information.
• Always be courteous and formal. Double-check your spelling and grammar; always use correct, standard English in your emails.
• Look up the professor’s title and refer to him/her by that title. It will typically be as “Dr.” or “Professor” + their last name.
• Keep it short and direct, but include all necessary information.
• If you don’t hear back right away, wait a week before sending a follow up. Don’t wait much longer, or you won’t seem committed.

Apply to one position at a time. Then wait a week before sending a follow-up. If you still hear nothing, you can apply to work with someone else. If you really want to work with a particular professor, you may write an email explaining that you’re following up on your previous email and wanted to know if you should start applying to other positions.

About half of the FMP students usually find their mentors on their own. Any UC San Diego professor, including those in the School of Medicine, Skaggs School of Pharmacy, and the Rady School can supervise a 199. A few affiliates, such as the Preuss School, VA hospital, and Sanford Burnham Research Institute have some researchers who have teaching privileges at UCSD, but not everyone at these institutions will, so be sure to check. The professor does not need to be tenured or tenure-track. Lecturers who are under contract (who have what is called “security of employment” (SOE) or senior lecturers) might also be able to be your mentor, but you will need to check with their respective departments. Graduate students and industry partners cannot serve as a mentor.

The faculty member will most likely want to interview you before deciding on the mentorship. In the interview, be sure to clarify your hours, duties, and the professor’s expectations. Ask how much independence you will have and what you will be expected to produce (a paper,
If you get multiple offers, remember that you must choose one. Make sure to respond to both professors.

SAMPLE E-MAIL TO A PROFESSOR

Dear Professor OR Dr. X:

My name is Name, and I have recently decided to participate in the Faculty Mentor Program. An important component of the program is a two-quarter faculty mentorship during winter and spring quarters 2020. I am very interested in becoming involved in research in Subject Area. I am a X year student with a GPA of X. I have taken Relevant Courses and Additional Relevant Experiences (brief). My goal is to Goal-brief. I am aware of the commitment required to complete a two-quarter research project and I am confident that I will fulfill it.

I am interested in your project on brief project description. Your work interests me because Briefly state why the professor's work interests you. I would like to get involved in research in this area because it will help me to better prepare for Your Professional Goals.

Would it be possible to meet with you to further discuss your project and my possible involvement in it? I am available at your earliest convenience. For more information about the structure and requirements of the Faculty Mentor Program, please contact Claire Kim, Program Coordinator at (858) 534-5791 or clairekim@ucsd.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your email address
Your phone number