The Research Guide

Part 1: Getting Started

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS WHO WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RESEARCH AND HOW THEY CAN GET INVOLVED AT UCSD.
Hello there! My name is Anahi Ibarra and I am a UCSD Alumna from South Central, Los Angeles. I decided to create this research flip book guide, specifically for first generation college students, to help with learning about research and how to get involved on campus. First gen or not, I hope this guide can be a helpful resource to you if you find yourself feeling a little stuck on maybe what research is, what research looks like and what steps you can take to get yourself started. Throughout this booklet, you'll find resources, tips & tricks, and a lot of valuable information about programs you should consider applying to. I'll also talk a bit on my experience to help give you an idea about the different things you can do in research. This guide is for students just getting started however, if you have already been accepted into a research program and are wondering what happens next, stay tuned for part 2 of The Research Guide. In part 2, I'll go more into detail about research terms you might find helpful, methodologies, survey software, data programs, deliverables (research papers, presentations, projects, etc.), and the overall research process. Now, let's go ahead and get started!!
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So what is research and how do I know it's for me?

Institutional logistics aside, research is simply the gathering or investigation of factual information used to arrive at some form of conclusion or finding. When most people think of research and who a researcher is, they often think of people in lab coats working on sciency things such as the pictures on the right (seriously, there is research on this topic too - and all I did was google "researcher.")

Although that is certainly an example of what research can look like, there are also many other forms of research. & if at this point, you are struggling to picture yourself as a researcher because maybe you don't quite know what a researcher does, I am here to tell you that,

**YOU are a researcher**

In fact, what you are doing now is... research. You're taking the time to search for information, which I'm sure you'll use to inform your decisions on whether or not you'll want to apply to a research program. You also conducted research when you decided to apply to this school and gather information on different things like major depts, financial aid, campus location, rankings, etc.
So, in thinking about whether or not research is the "right" thing for you, make sure your reason isn't simply because you "don't know" how to do research. You are a researcher in every sense of the word!

Moving away from the dominant perspective of research, here are a couple of other examples of what research can look like.

(Pictured above): reading articles on your topic & enjoying some iced coffee right down the street from the beach.

(Pictured on the right): Meeting up with your faculty mentor to ask questions, gain insight, review information, and overall build a meaningful relationship.

(Pictured above): And of course, research can involve working in a lab setting. This is a reminder to my POC students, and Black students in particular, that you deserve to take up space too!

(Pictured on the left): research can also be collaborative. It can look like meeting up with other students in class, friends, grad students, staff or any other person you think has some valuable information and insight to offer about your research topic or interest.

(Pictured on the left): research can be qualitative and that may involve conducting interviews with people about their experiences, thoughts and feelings.
What are the benefits of doing research?

There are so many benefits of doing research. Here, I have outlined a couple just to give you an idea of what you can gain & how it can aid in your personal and professional development.

Transferable skills

The process of doing research allows you to develop and enhance many skills that can be applied to other aspects of your life such as classes, work spaces, projects, etc. Some of these skills include, learning how to interview people, how to analyze data and work with softwares/programs like Excel and Qualtrics, how to read more closely, how to make graphics, how to write a research paper and so much more!

Grad School Prep

The great thing about these transferable skills is that it is very similar to what you'll be expected to do in Grad School (If you decide to go that route, of course). Additionally, many research programs, such as McNair, offer a variety of Grad Prep workshops that include studying for the GRE, how to write a personal statement, and hosting grad school panels with grad students. They also provide grad prep materials & fee waivers for grad school applications and exams (though this may differ by program).
Financial Compensation

For those of you who may be wondering about how you'll be able to spend so much time doing research without worrying about paying for housing and other expenses, I am here to tell you that fortunately, many research programs offer stipends that can range anywhere from $1,000-$5,000 (this varies by program). Some also offer free housing, although typically housing opportunities are only for Summer. You can find more information on the amount of money each program offers in the "Programs" section of this guide.

Social/Networking

Aside from all the valuable skills and preparation you'll gain, doing research also provides excellent opportunities to meet other undergraduate students, grad students and staff members. Research programs typically incorporate social events where you'll be able to talk with other folks and learn about their research too! Sometimes it may even connect you with opportunities you weren't aware of before!

Career Development

One of the most crucial things I believe people gain from doing research is career development. For many, research gives students a better idea of the career path they want to take in the future. Whether it is helping them figure out what they want to do or what they don't want to do- the experience is valuable nonetheless. Research also gives you the opportunity to present at conferences in different locations and publish your findings in a journal!
So... where do I begin?

Although there is no official time and place to start, it is helpful to keep some things in mind as you begin to look into research programs. Here are some things to consider:

Faculty mentors & Letters of Recommendation

Most research programs will require either a letter of rec as part of your application or contact info for who you choose as a faculty mentor. It is helpful to begin fostering connections with your professors so that you have an idea about who you want your mentor to be. Transfer students can get letters of rec from their community colleges.

Research topic/ Interest

The cool thing about research is that you can choose to create your own research project or join an existing project under a faculty mentor. Either way, when applying, you'll want to make sure you have some idea about what it is you want to research. It's okay if your research topic or question changes along the way!

Timeline

Different research programs have different timelines. Some are only a quarter long, some are a year long, and some only occur during summer. Be sure to look into which timeline fits best with your schedule.

GPA

Finally, research programs also differ on the minimum GPA requirement. Whatever your GPA, I encourage you to apply anyways- your GPA does not define you.
Programs you should consider applying to

Click on each circle to learn more information!

McNair Scholars Program
$2,800 stipend + free housing, grad school prep, & fee waivers

TRELS Program
$1,000 for quarter awards and $5,000 for summer awards

UC Scholars Program
$2,800 stipend + free housing, & grad school prep

URS Program
$5,000 stipend, grad school workshops and prep

CAMP Fellowship
$3,500 stipend + free housing during summer

Faculty Mentor Program
8 units of independent study, grad school prep
Part 2: Stay Tuned!

I hope that after reading this guide you were able to learn a little more about what research is and what it can look like. Remember, the possibilities are endless! Research can be art, music, dance-- in fact, creating this little guide was a part of my research project. With that being said, I wish the absolute best for those of you who decide to apply to research programs. When you get accepted, feel free to read part 2 of The Research Guide to help you with the research process. Personally, I know I had to learn a lot of things on my own and as a 1st generation college student it was challenging to navigate that. You can stay tuned and find the second part of this research guide at this link below:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cMMj3rMTj6_6CzZkT5rH2mbSIuLQnTgMB?usp=sharing