

Tips to Improve your Research Experience as a Low-Income Student

If you are comfortable, talk to your research mentor about your personal situation

Many low-income students have long commutes to campus, rely on public transportation, are balancing other jobs along with school, and may have extra family responsibilities. These are things that could occasionally interfere with your research experience, so it can be very beneficial to be open with your research mentor about your situation—even if your research mentor does not ask you directly about your personal situation. If you feel comfortable, sharing this information can improve communication between you and your research mentor, and could help your research mentor better understand how to improve your research experience.



Find a supportive research mentor



One of the most valuable parts of a research experience can be forming a relationship with your research mentor, who could be a professor, graduate student, staff member, or a senior undergraduate. Supportive research mentors can help you strengthen your professional skills and make sure you fully benefit from your research experience. Some strategies to find a supportive research mentor include:

- Ask professors and TAs who you have a good classroom relationship with if they have any research opportunities.
- Talk with potential research mentors about their research expectations, and make sure it is compatible with your schedule. Does your potential research mentor seem enthusiastic, supportive, and willing to work with you?
- Ask other undergraduate researchers about their experiences to see if their research mentors might be a good fit for you.

Give research a try!

Research experiences can be complicated to work into your schedule, but can be very valuable! Even if you don't plan on a career in research, the experience can be very beneficial to your professional development. You never know where the experience will take you!



Ask about opportunities to be paid or receive course credit for research!



It can be challenging to find paid research opportunities, but they do exist! Some schools have programs where students can be paid or receive scholarships for participating in research. Look online and reach out to academic counselors or professors to ask about potential programs or if there are opportunities to be paid for your research. Even if you cannot find paid research opportunities, you may be able to receive course credit for your research.



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