

# *Interested in Undergraduate Research?*

## *Some Basics and Tips*

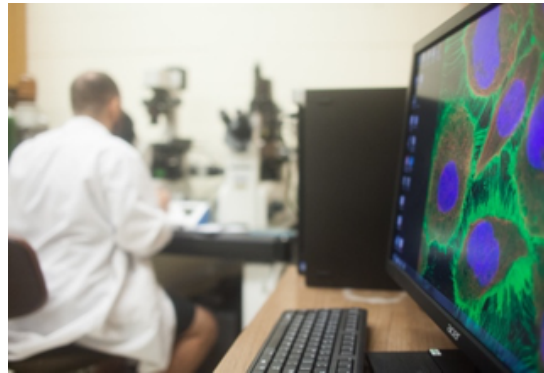
### **About our Center:**

*The mission of the Center for Paralysis Research (CPR) is to improve quality of life by developing clinical therapies for injury and diseases of the human nervous system.*

Since its inception in 1987, the CPR has been involved in three human clinical trials (including multiple canine trials) as well as having one therapy being sold and marketed for patients with multiple sclerosis. This history of translational research is unique at Purdue and underscores our commitment to improving quality of life for both animals and humans.

Website: <https://vet.purdue.edu/cpr/>

We often post open positions on our website so check it out if you're interested in the CPR.



### **What do Mentors/Professors look for in students?**

- Enthusiasm and interest! We receive many unsolicited emails a month of students wanting to volunteer/work in our Center. Therefore, you must be able to differentiate yourself from everyone else. A good academic record helps, but having a keen interest in the research is also very important. Familiarize yourself with the lab's/professor's work, etc (maybe even read a paper or two). The more you know about the research, the better. It is even ok to propose ideas going into an interview- we like to see the passion and curiosity.
- Being dependable, reliable: as part of a research team, people are counting on you for specific tasks. Therefore, being punctual and committed is critical. Obviously, circumstances arise and some weeks the course load/exams may be significant, but communicating this ahead of time will be helpful to everyone.

- Independence. We really like to see students who can think critically, ask questions and can be autonomous (after some training). We prefer not to recruit students who are simply “yes people” or robots. A goal of research is to help train independent investigators so being self-motivated and independent are good attributes to have.

**Tips and Realities:**

- Seek opportunities early: Do not wait until the last semester of your senior year to seek lab experience. Often times, it takes a semester or more to train someone (lab dependent of course). Therefore, if you leave after one semester, you’re not likely to get accepted in the first place. Try to plan for at least two or more semesters. The best undergraduate researchers we’ve had stayed for multiple semesters. Also consider summer time involvement as well when possible.
- Ask yourself why you want to conduct research in the first place: for the experience? For a recommendation letter? Interested in graduate school but not sure if research is right for you? It’s good to be upfront and honest in the beginning.
- Look around: there are many options, some paid, some on volunteer basis. You can also receive academic credit (usually 1-3 credit hrs/semester), but check with your department.
- Research positions are highly competitive to keep trying if you don’t get a response or get rejected.
- Ask the professor for opportunities to present your research, such as conferences, papers, poster presentations, etc. Our Center generally pays for travel and associated costs to disseminate research. Not all labs operate this way, but it doesn’t hurt to inquire.
- Treat the interview with the professor like a job interview; be professional (do not address the professor as “hey” or by their first name in your emails - yes it happens!) and be on time.

Please contact me (Jianming Li at [jianming@purdue.edu](mailto:jianming@purdue.edu) if you have more questions). Good luck!