

Applying for Summer Research Programs

There are many summer research programs available. If you are thinking about applying for one, ask yourself some questions:

- What are your current goals?
- What are your areas of interest?
- What will you contribute to a program?
- What are some of your limitations?

What are selection committees looking for in an application/candidate?

- Will you be an asset to the team?
- Your knowledge, skills, abilities, qualifications, attitude, behaviors, and maturity.
- Problem solving skills.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Communication skills- both written and verbal.
- Understanding of the program and its requirements.
- Ability to work alone or in a group.
- Attention to detail.
- Learn from failure, persistence.
- Ability to learn from feedback.
- Curiosity, motivation, and enthusiasm.

There are a few common application components for summer research programs:

1. **Resume/CV**- this document is a summary of your educational and professional history.
 - a. Make your resume/CV easy to read. The reader should be able to find important information quickly.
 - b. List relevant research and/or internship experience or any publications or presentations given.
 - c. Include demonstrated attributes, skills, and accomplishments that you gained through classes, labs, training, etc.
 - d. Add service or volunteer experience, especially if relevant to goals/interests.
 - e. Record campus or professional organizational involvement and leadership roles.
 - f. Incorporate honors, awards, scholarships, and other accolades.
 - g. Be consistent in how you report your name. The name on your Social Security card will match the name on your application, and the name on your resume.

Tip: Refrain from including hobbies and/or objectives.

2. **Essay/Personal Statement**- aim to convey a clear and concise picture of yourself. A well written essay or statement may be the deciding factor that wins you a letter of acceptance.
 - a. This is your opportunity to use your own voice and make a case for yourself.
 - Some questions to think about-
 - i. Why are you interested in a particular opportunity or institution to which you are applying?
 - ii. What are your academic or research interests?
 - iii. How did you become interested in this field or research?
 - iv. What kind of activities or experiences have you had that have contributed toward your interest in, preparation for, or understanding of this field or research area?
 - v. What are your aspirations?
 - b. You give information that the selection committee will find compelling about you.
 - c. Here is where you can turn weaknesses into strengths, use mistakes as a learning experience. How did you handle a challenge and come back stronger?

- d. This is a writing sample; it should be well organized, concise, and free of any grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Edit. Proofread and proofread again.

Tip: Answer the question. Address the topic.

3. **Letters of Recommendation**- shed light on who you are as a person from someone who knows you well. These letters can provide insights into your prior successes and comments on your potential future contributions.
 - a. Select your references carefully! Choose references who know you well and can speak specifically about you and your experiences. If you do not know any professors well, plan ahead. Plan on creating a one-on-one academic relationship with a professor. Remember, many students before you have felt intimidated about asking for letters of recommendation.
 - b. Give the recommender plenty of time (several months). Give them enough time to do a good job for you.
 - c. Summarize what you are applying for.
 - d. Provide your professor with a copy of your resume/CV, even highlighting classes you took with them.
 - e. Help define your strengths. Specific examples and narratives are much more powerful than basic praise.
 - f. Waive your right to view the letters of recommendation. It is standard practice to have the recommendation letters be sent directly to the entity evaluating the application.
 - g. Follow up to make sure the letters are sent and received.

Tip: Build relationships early.

4. **Public Profiles on the Internet**- your public profiles on the Internet (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) will be used by potential employers. It is a good idea to Google yourself and change or delete any material that makes you look unprofessional, BEFORE you submit your application.

Just to reiterate:

- Get organized.
- Start early.
- Pay attention to details.
- Tailor your application to the program to which you are applying.
- Show who you are.
- Demonstrate strong writing skills.
- Get strong letters of recommendation.
- Keep trying. If you do not get an award one year, apply again next year!