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This directory was launched, curated, and designed by Dara Zwemer with support from the Undergraduate Research Center.
General Information
Each lab page includes the lab title, the mentors who lead that lab, contact information, and a description of the lab's focus and goals. See whether the lab description aligns with your description and goals. If it does, reach out to the professor with the listed contact information. Check out the email template on page 37 for help reaching out to these laboratories!

Checking Lab Availability
Each laboratory page includes a section that states when the mentors are looking for students. These dates are for the 2022 academic year. Check and make sure that the lab is accepting students in the current or coming semester! If the lab is not currently accepting students, it is still a good idea to reach out if you'd like to work with them in a future semester.

Key Skills
Most of these mentors have outlined key skills or experiences that will help you succeed in the lab. If you feel that you've met these qualifications, highlight that in your emails to the mentor! If not, either take a semester to work on these skills or reach out to the mentor about potentially being trained as part of your research experience.

Publications
Many of these labs have highlighted key publications, which will appear on the "Representative Publications" page after the main lab introduction. Take a look at these publications! Read them (or read the abstracts), and see if you would like to contribute to similar research! If you talk to the mentor about their past research when you reach out to them, that mentor will know that you are interested and willing to engage with the laboratory.

URC Fast Facts
Facts about starting research, different research funding opportunities from the Undergraduate Research Center, and other fun facts are included throughout this directory. Take note of all of the ways the URC can support your research journey!
BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES

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- Social Perceptions of Science Lab...................................................... 20
- Professors Accepting Individual Student Researchers....................... 21
ANALYTICAL RESEARCH LAB

Studying and analyzing biomedical, environmental, forensic, and materials samples.

**DR. Ngee Sing Chong**  
**DR. John Divincenzo**  
**DR. Charles Chusuei**

nchong@mtsu.edu  
615-898-5487

Application of modern techniques of optical spectroscopy, mass spectrometry, chromatography, and electron microscopy for solving problems encountered in academic research and industrial R&D.

More information is available at https://www.mtsu.edu/faculty/ngee-sing-chong

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:  
Spring X  
Summer ✓  
Fall ✓

**KEY SKILLS**  
A basic understanding of General Chemistry is required. Completion of organic chemistry courses is highly recommended.


URC FAST FACTS

To support our vision of nurturing a culture of research and creative activity at MTSU, the URC offers Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity (URECA) grants to students three times a year. Awards range from $500 for beginners to $3,500 for experienced researchers.

Team applications are now being offered during the fall, spring, and summer semester. To learn more about URECA grants and how to submit proposals, check out our website.
BIOLOGY EDUCATION RESEARCH LAB

Studying biology education research, graduate student and faculty professional development, and small-group learning.

DR. GRANT GARDNER

grant.gardner@mtsu.edu

We focus data collection on many different aspects of the teaching and learning of biology. We are primarily interested in how science graduate students develop as instructors and how those skill-sets carry over to faculty instruction. We collect both quantitative and qualitative data utilizing survey, interview, and classroom observational methods. We are also interested in how students learn best in small group settings.

See gardnerresearchteam.com for more information including publications.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Rolling Acceptance
Spring ✓
Summer ✓
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
We are always looking for students excited about learning more about the process of research. Some skills with reading and interpreting data are beneficial but not required. Ability to work on tasks independently a must.
BIOPHYSICS LAB

Studying biophysics, cancer cells, red blood cells, hemoglobin disorder, and laser trapping.

DR. DANIEL ERENSO

daniel.erenso@mtsu.edu

We have been researching the efficacy of various curative and non-curative therapies used to treat hemoglobin disorders, specifically sickle cell disorders (SCD) and multiple types of cancer, using the laser trapping (LT) technique in our biophysics lab. Employing this technique, we have been studying living cells, particularly human red blood cells (RBCs) and various types of cancer cells, to identify new biophysical and biochemical properties of a living cell at the cellular, molecular, and atomic levels. The main goal of such work is to develop better therapy predictors, diagnoses, and treatments in hemoglobin disorders and various types of cancers. While working towards this goal, recently, we have discovered some exciting and puzzling new physical processes that may be applicable in diagnostic medicine and electromagnetic energy generation and harvesting. We have transformed living matter into energy using laser traps and magnetic beads. In this new finding, employing tens of microliters of blood or cancer cells, it is possible to generate intense electromagnetic radiation. We hypothesize that a spectroscopic analysis of this emitted electromagnetic radiation can uncover the biochemical and biophysical properties of cells in a whole new different way.

Over the years, I have established a solid and productive biomedical optics research program that has enabled me to mentor and collaborate beyond physics undergraduates and faculty members. The resulting research has created excitement at MTSU and opened additional opportunities for many undergraduate researchers from diverse disciplines. Moreover, I have established meaningful collaborations with faculty members from the biology department at MTSU (Dr. Mary Farone, Dr. Anthony Farone, and Dr. Ying Gao) and Meharry Medical College (MMC) (Dr. Maria Aguinaga and Dr. Robert Mushi). I have also recently created international research collaborations with graduate students at two universities in Ethiopia (Departments of physics at Addis Ababa University and Adama Science and Technology University).

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring ✗
Summer ✓
Fall ✗


HANDY LAB

Studying organic synthesis, aurone synthesis and photophysical and biological application, and organic chemistry in unusual solvents.

DR. SCOTT HANDY

shandy@mtsu.edu

In the Handy lab, we work on trying to develop and make new compounds that enable us and others (I do a lot of collaborative work) to answer broader questions in the area of organic, biochemistry, and biological research.

We also do some work on developing new reaction conditions that open access to new compounds of unknown properties (methodology development).

Generally, students have their own project (though it may be part of a larger effort), so that they can feel ownership of what is accomplished. My goal is to help guide students towards being independent researchers, but always be available to assist and guide.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer ✓
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS

To me the key skill is a genuine interest in doing research. It can be hard and even frustrating at times, so really wanting to do research is what can see us through those times. Just wanting to add a line to a resume is not enough - you need to want to learn about research (even if what you learn is that you do not want to do research in the future).

Specific skills - those I can teach. Motivation and dedication, that is what I cannot teach and need prospective researchers to bring to the lab.


URC FAST FACTS

We offer undergraduate research distinction for graduating students! This distinction is offered at two levels:

- Distinction in Undergraduate Research
- Scholar Distinction in undergraduate research.

The requirements for each level can be found on our website. Additionally, distinction requires one year of participation in the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR). More information about this organization can be found on page 40 of the Lab Directory!
MEDICINAL PLANT RESEARCH LAB

Studying medicinal plants, including plant pathology, biocontrol agents, plant nutrients, tissue cultures, and phytochemical analysis.

DR. IRIS GAO

ying.gao@mtsu.edu

Our mission is conservation, organic cultivation, and sustainable utilization of medicinal plants, especially endangered species such as American ginseng, by discovering and applying novel scientific approaches.

We have been a productive lab and will offer you exceptional learning experience in plant science research. You will participate the USDA-funded research project and you might be qualified for a paid student worker position. You will have the opportunity to choose your desired research topic, learn how to conduct an independent study, and communicate your findings with scientific community. We will provide sufficient mentoring and training to you and you will also enjoy working with our six lab group members.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring ✓
Summer ✓
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS

Students meeting the following requirements are encouraged to apply:

• Biology, Agriculture, or Chemistry majors; interest in biological or plant sciences.

• Willingness to work in lab, greenhouse, and field spaces.

• Responsible and self-motivated.

• Commitment of 1-2 days per week for a least a semester.


NELSON LAB

Studying innate immunity, cell signaling, inflammation, mitochondria, mitochondrial quality control, and mitophagy.

DR. DAVID E. NELSON
david.e.nelson@mtsu.edu

Our mission is to better understand the signaling processes that regulate macrophage antimicrobial activity and how this can be subverted by intracellular pathogens. We are also interested in mitochondrial quality control mechanisms.

We value and encourage undergraduate participation in research. We're particularly interested in training students who intend to go to graduate school for biology MS or PhD programs. Many of the papers that we've published include student coauthors (~10 undergraduates in the last 8 years).

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer X
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
We look for students that have an interest in cell signaling and a desire to study biology (e.g., cell biology or immunology) at graduate school. We prefer that students either have taken or plan to take BIOL4210 in the near future. It can be useful to have basic lab skills (e.g., pipetting, cell culture) but this is not required.


**URC FAST FACTS**

Publications that result from your research will be featured on the Undergraduate Research Center’s website! View our students’ prior publications by clicking [here](#).

We have featured publications across several different disciplines! These include chemistry, psychology, herpetology, music, and more!
NEWSOME LAB

Studying antimicrobial and other physical properties of certain compounds.

DR. ANTHONY L. NEWSOME

anthony.newsome@mtsu.edu

Located in SCI 2070 and 2070A.

Investigating compounds effective against certain protozoa (pathogenic free-living amoebae) and anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties of certain compounds

Publications available on request.

KEY SKILLS

Minimum of one general course in microbiology.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:

Spring X
Summer ✓
Fall ✓
OPTICAL SENSOR AND ACOUSTICS RESEARCH LAB

Studying optics and acoustics.

DR. WILLIAM ROBERTSON

william.robertson@mtsu.edu

Exploration of optical and acoustic wave phenomena via experiment and numerical computation.

Dr. Robertson's lab has published over 20 papers with undergraduate co-authors on experimental and computational studies in optics and acoustics.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:

Spring X
Summer ✓
Fall X


The URC has created a virtual workshop for students seeking URECA funding!

This YouTube video features several of our undergraduate researchers and provides an overview of the services we provide in the URC. It also walks students through the necessary steps to apply for a URECA grant.

Not only will students who view this workshop get a basic overview of the process, but they will also be presented with specific information about finding a research mentor, choosing a grant level, creating a budget, and utilizing our Award Force turn-in system.

While the dates in this video are specific to 2020, the information provided will still help students in 2022 and beyond!

To access the video, visit our YouTube channel, MTSU ORSP, or

Alternatively, use this link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls196LRPKc0
PHILLIPS LAB

Studying machine learning, deep learning, computational cognitive neuroscience, computational biology, and computational biophysics.

DR. JOSHUA L. PHILLIPS

joshua.phillips@mtsu.edu

The lab’s basic research interests are in computational biophysics and cognitive science. We focus primarily on the development of novel computational methods for addressing existing scientific or engineering problems related to molecular or structural biology. Dr. Phillips’ background is in machine learning and neural networks, so our work often employs or is inspired by algorithmic approaches from these fields.

We develop deep learning and machine learning technologies to answer scientific questions. Our deep learning approaches are inspired by ideas from cognitive neuroscience and our machine learning approaches are customized to perform well at specific scientific problems. We enjoy learning about the most cutting-edge techniques and then pushing the boundaries of what those techniques are capable.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer X
Fall ✓

Continued on Next Page


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**URC FAST FACTS**

The URC Promotes several signature events at which students can present their research or a creative performance. These events include:

- Scholars Week
- Summer Research Celebration
- Fall Open House

Not only do these events look great on a curriculum vitae or resume, but they also allow participants to gain experience presenting their projects and feedback from others in the field!
SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS OF SCIENCE LAB

Studying social perceptions of science and how religion and politics influence science perceptions in science classes.

DR. ELIZABETH BARNES

liz.barnes@mtsu.edu

We work to improve science teaching and learning for the betterment of society.

We are an award-winning lab that publishes research regularly in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Our current projects include studying how to reduce people’s perceived conflict with science, religion, and politics with a focus on science communication about climate change, evolution, and vaccines.

KEY SKILLS

We are looking for passionate students who want to make a difference in advancing science in society by researching how to create inclusive and effective science education for people from different religious, political, and racial/ethnic groups.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:

Spring ✓
Summer X
Fall ✓
Dr. Dong Ye
dong.ye@mtsu.edu
Studying discrete mathematics. Focusing on pure mathematics problems and inspiring students' interest in mathematics.

Link to All Publications


LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer X
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
I am looking for well-motivated students who are interested in Mathematics.
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- Identity, Belief, Experience, and Personality (IBEP) Lab........ 25
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- Professors Accepting Individual Student Researchers........... 34
CENTER FOR DYSLEXIA

Studying cognitive development in memory and language, cognitive neuroscience in reading development, reading disabilities, and reading instruction.

DR. TIMOTHY ODEGARD
DR. EMILY FARRIS
emily.farris@mtsu.edu

The Center for Dyslexia research team actively conducts research and supports the translation of research into practice. It is a model for interdisciplinary research dedicated to unraveling the puzzle of dyslexia and reading struggles that impact far too many individuals across Tennessee and our nation.

The Center for Dyslexia Research Laboratory seeks to expand the understanding of typical and atypical forms of reading development across the lifespan, and support the translation of this knowledge through the outreach and training efforts of the Tennessee Center for the Study and Treatment of Dyslexia at MTSU. Projects conducted through the laboratory combine interdisciplinary research methods in order to generate empirical evidence to inform and bolster the work of the Center, improve the learning outcomes of the individuals who are learning to read, and aid those striving to assist others in learning to read.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer ✓
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
Attention to detail, willingness to learn, responsiveness to constructive feedback, and a flexible mindset.


IDENTITY, BELIEF, EXPERIENCE, AND PERSONALITY (IBEP) LAB

WORLD HEADQUARTERS

Studying the psychology of belief.

DR. WILLIAM LANGSTON
(he/him/his)
william.langston@mtsu.edu

To understand how beliefs form, how they are maintained and updated, and how they influence behavior.

We are interested in the development and maintenance of belief. The basic model is that beliefs form in one stage and that updating and maintenance of beliefs is a separate stage. Everyday interactions and feedback can lead to perfectly reasonable (albeit anomalous and contrary to reality) beliefs. If the sensory system delivers an experience, and some form of paranormal belief provides a reasonable explanation for that otherwise inexplicable experience, then belief is a perfectly reasonable response. What factors (environmental or endogenous) affect the formation of beliefs? What variables influence the updating of beliefs when new information is provided? Recent projects have been exploring the belief change stage, and my lab is working to evaluate people who have left a belief system to see how experience may play a role in that decision.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer X
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
Creative, detail oriented.
IDENTITY, BELIEF, EXPERIENCE, AND PERSONALITY (IBEP) LAB

REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATIONS


URC FAST FACTS

The Undergraduate Research Center strives to support students in dissemination of their research.

Undergraduates who are accepted to present their research at a regional, state, national, or international conference are eligible to receive financial assistance for registration fees!

In addition, students can apply for travel funds. Awarded travel funds are payable on a reimbursable basis only. Students are offered $400 for domestic travel and $500 dollars for international travel each year.

More information about travel support is available on the URC website.
LETHAL USE OF FORCE LAB

Studying "hallmark features" of recent U.S. cases where police officers have used lethal force toward unarmed individuals.

DR. JOHN PENNINGTON

john.pennington@mtsu.edu

Promoting the well-being of citizens and police officers through practical, data-inspired interventions designed to reduce the use of lethal force in cases involving unarmed citizens.

Each year our lab has approximately 3-4 undergraduate researchers, each exploring a different facet of lethal force. Much of this research is archival in nature – we rely on internet accessible information provided by news media, law enforcement officials, and private citizens (e.g., cell phone videos). To date, these efforts have resulted in student URECA awards, conference presentations, and a recent publication.

KEY SKILLS

One or more courses in statistics is desirable, as is experience using Word, Excel, and/or JASP.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:

- Spring X
- Summer X
- Fall √
LETHAL USE OF FORCE LAB

REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATIONS


*URECA Recipient

URC FAST FACTS

The URC offers several resources to improve and inform your conference experience!

For example, the URC has multiple poster templates and MTSU graphics for students to utilize on their posters. They also have examples of posters that won awards during our signature event, Scholars Week! Additionally, the URC offers free printer posters for students presenting at conferences! This includes local, national, or international conferences! Find poster information at the URC’s website. Additionally, the URC hosts several workshops for both poster design and abstract writing! Keep up to date with URC events on our website.

The events page also gives students information about upcoming conferences. The URC prepares students for both signature events and outside conferences, including the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), Posters at the Captiol, and domain-specific conferences.

More specific information regarding an array of undergraduate research opportunities is located on the Research Opportunities webpage.
MTSU COGNITIVE AGING LAB

Studying aging, cognitive neuroscience, cognitive science, neurophysiology, and neuroimaging

DR. JAMES HOUSTON

james.houston@mtsu.edu

Please see our website at https://jamesrhouston.com/aboutcoglab

In our lab, we explore the way that we process information during the normal aging process. We have many avenues of research in our laboratory, with research projects commonly conducted in the areas of attention, perception, visual word recognition, and working memory. As an experimental psychology laboratory, the majority of our work comprises the assessment of performance in manual and computerized tasks. Along with behavioral measures of performance, we also commonly incorporate measures of neurophysiological activity through our electroencephalogram (EEG) suite. EEG allows for precise measures of underlying functional activity of the brain during engagement in cognitive tasks.

KEY SKILLS

Familiarity or comfort with programming.

Coursework encouraged (not required): 3020, 3070, 4040, 4240, 4610.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:

Spring ✓
Summer ✓
Fall ✓


**URC FAST FACTS**

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) serves both undergraduates through the URC and faculty members!

Faculty and students alike can find information about funding opportunities and resources on the ORSP website.

For students, the Grant Forward database of funding opportunities presents many opportunities for funding. Students can make a researcher profile to be notified about funding opportunities in their specific domain of research. All of this can be done with just your MTSU email address! Information about this program can be found on their webpage.

The support doesn't stop with just undergraduate students! Graduate students can also find opportunities for assistantships, student travel funding, fellowships, and scholarships through the ORSP. Specific information can be found on their Funding Opportunities for Students webpage.
OLFACTION AND TASTE (OAT) LAB

Studying human olfaction and taste perception, human body odor, and psychophysics.

DR. JESSICA GABY
jessica.gaby@mtsu.edu

The OAT Lab focuses mainly on how olfactory information (smell) influences our daily lives. We are located in ACB 317. Our current projects include: the impact of olfactory information and body odor in the workplace; the impact of diet on human body odor; olfactory perception of household and social communication odors in cis and trans individuals; the impact of COVID and COVID safety protocols on our relationship to odors in our daily lives. The lab is strongly focused on undergraduate research (though we are always open to taking on grad students!), and Dr. Gaby mentors students in creating and executing their own research projects once they are fully trained.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer ✓
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
Good communication skills, strong organization and time management, previous coursework in statistics and research methods, and interest in sensory perception.


**URC FAST FACTS**

The URC has several resources to help students find mentors.

Featured URECA mentors are listed on the URC’s [webpage](#). These mentor profiles include each mentor’s specific interests and past URECA projects. The quick summaries found on this page can help guide you to finding a mentor with a great fit.

Additionally, information about finding a faculty mentor, including identifying a proper student-mentor fit, is found on the URC’s [webpage](#). Further, more information about reaching out to mentors, including an email template, can be found on page 37 of this guide.

Finally, the URC's latest guide for upcoming student researchers, Research Guide: How to Start your Student Research Journey, is now accessible to students! This guide is meant to offer stories and advice from current SOAR members to students looking for undergraduate research projects at MTSU and elsewhere.

This guide covers when to start research, how to find a project, student experiences, helpful advice, URC resources, and SOAR resources at MTSU.

[Click Here to View the Student Research Guide](#)
SOCIAL AND AFFECTIVE NEUROSCIENCE (SAN) LAB

Studying neural circuitry underlying social behaviors in mouse models.

DR. TIFFANY ROGERS

tiffany.rogers@mtsu.edu

The SAN lab routinely trains undergraduate students to carry out experiments in mouse models to better understand the neural circuitry underlying social behaviors. We investigate topics such as social motivation and social reward and apply pharmacology and optogenetics to identify neurotransmitter systems involved in typical and aberrant social behavior.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring X
Summer ✓
Fall ✓

KEY SKILLS
Students must be able to work independently, commit 10 hours per week to working in the lab, and be willing to work with animal models.
Dr. Thomas M. Brinthaupt
tom.brinthaupt@mtsu.edu
Studying personality and individual differences; self talk and inner speech; and how and why people talk to themselves.


**KEY SKILLS**

Familiarity with Qualtrics (online survey program), have had previous research experience (in any field), and/or have taken a Research Methods course

**LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:**

- Spring X
- Summer X
- Fall ✓
IN THIS SECTION:

- Integrated Data Lab

36
INTEGRATED DATA LAB

Studying data, statistics, and modeling education.

DR. RYAN SETH JONES
ryan.jones@mtsu.edu

Our research team designs and conducts research on learning environments that support students to develop ideas and practices related to data, statistics, modeling, and inference. These ideas and practices are increasingly necessary in personal, professional, and community life. So, we aim to equip students with the resources and agency to make inferences with data in ways that are both personally and epistemically meaningful. As we do this, we conduct research to better understand how teachers and students are making use of our resources, and develop models for how student thinking changes as they develop new ideas and practices.

KEY SKILLS
We are looking for students that are curious, hard working, and have an interest in research on teaching and learning.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring ✓
Summer ✓
Fall ✓
INTEGRATED DATA LAB

REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATIONS


URC FAST FACTS

Want to keep up with the Undergraduate Research Center? Follow us on Facebook!

The URC's Facebook page highlights research opportunities, laboratory research, fun events, new publications, and research achievements across disciplines!

Get access to these resources and join in on the fun by scanning the QR code below or by following the Undergraduate Research at MTSU page.
HUMAN SCIENCES

IN THIS SECTION:

- Oldham Lab................................................................. 39
OLDHAM LAB

Studying romantic relationship development, sexual behaviors, and gender-based violence prevention programming, as well as gender and masculinity.

DR. C. REBECCA OLDHAM

rebecca.oldham@mtsu.edu

Submit an application at the following link:
https://mtsu.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3lL0Mm3Rx76pnW5

Dr. Oldham has a great deal of existing cross-sectional and longitudinal survey data on sexual and romantic development from which students may develop their own research posters/papers under mentorship. She is continuing her work with the Power of One office to conduct online focus groups with MTSU men on topics of masculinity, gender, experiences with, and recommendations for gender-based violence prevention programming.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS IN:
Spring ✓
Summer ✓
Fall ✓
Dissertation: A Longitudinal Study of the Immediate Effects of First Sex in Romantic Relationships

Below are papers and presentations led by Undergraduate Researchers* under my mentorship

*Young, Merry, & Oldham, C. R. (accepted). The sacred bed phenomenon: Which sexual attitudes mediate the association between fundamentalism and sex guilt? Poster to be presented at the 2022 National Council on Undergraduate Research Annual Conference, Virtual.

*Howard, Shelby, & Oldham, C. R. (2021, November). Does religion moderate the influence of sex on emotional intimacy? Poster presented at the URECA Fall Open House, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.


Below are papers and presentations led by Undergraduate Researchers* under my mentorship


EMAIL TIPS AND TEMPLATE

A guide to reaching out to professors in this directory.

Good [Morning/Afternoon], Dr. [Name]!

My name is [name]. [If you have taken prior classes with this professor, list those here]. After seeing your lab, [lab name], in the URC Lab Directory, I wanted to reach out about a potential lab placement!

Based on my skillset and interest in [lab topic], I think I would be a good fit for your laboratory. I have experience with [insert the key skills they've listed that you have. Be honest!]. Further, I think that this line of research is important because [list why you think their research is relevant to your field or what compelled you to reach out to the lab].

I would love to schedule a meeting to talk about your laboratory. [Add your availability to meet].

Thank you so much for your consideration!

Regards,

[Your name]

GENERAL TIPS

- Don't be bashful - list your skills for this mentor to see! Make sure they are relevant to the key skills they are looking for.
- Write formally and watch your spelling! This shows that you genuinely care about the potential lab placement.
- The worst a professor can do is say no. Reaching out is worth a shot!
**Dr. Jamie Burriss**  
Program Manager, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  

Dr. Burriss oversees the URC, the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR), our newly created SOAR Ambassador program, the URECA grant program, communications, Scholars Week, Posters at the Capitol, and all other activities related to the URC.

Prior to returning to MTSU, Dr. Burriss served as the Curriculum Administrator for the SELECT MD Program at the University of South Florida while pursuing her doctorate. After USF, she accepted a position at Vanderbilt University as the Assessment Analyst for the College of Medicine. But, her heart has always been TRUE BLUE and she is happy to once again serve her undergraduate alma mater.

**Casey Penston**  
Program Assistant, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  

Casey assists in overseeing the URC, the Student Organization for the Advancement of Research (SOAR), our newly created SOAR Ambassador program, the URECA grant program, communications, Scholars Week, Posters at the Capitol, and all other activities related to the URC.

Casey has a decade of experience in the fields of environmental compliance and permitting, administration, and ecological restoration. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and has completed graduate coursework in coral reef research.
Jared Frazier
SOAR President and Peer Mentor Scholar, 2021-2022

Mentors students interested in getting involved with undergraduate research. Provides guidance related to URECA grants (proposal, budget, timeline) and the dissemination process.

jf5s@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Dara Zwemer
SOAR Secretary, URC Social Media Ambassador, 2021-2022
Author

Assists with the URC monthly newsletter, social media takeovers, Facebook posts, and marketing for events and happenings. Main author for this publication and the URC Starting Research Guide.

A member of the Lethal Use of Force Lab and the Center for Dyslexia.

duz2a@mtmail.mtsu.edu
SOAR will enhance a student’s research capacity through increased awareness, collaboration and skill building by offering workshops and trainings to fulfill the needs of undergraduate researchers.

SOAR will assist students in the preparation of poster presentations and development of abstracts to increase conference presence on a national level, encourage students to attend the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, and facilitate travel preparations.

SOAR will provide peer mentoring to students new to undergraduate research.

A new student organization comprised of undergraduate students who are committed to developing and sustaining an active and successful undergraduate research environment at MTSU.

**SOAR's Mission**
To enhance student’s research capacity through increased awareness, collaboration and skill building.

**Why Join?**
- SOAR will enhance a student's research capacity through increased awareness, collaboration and skill building by offering workshops and trainings to fulfill the needs of undergraduate researchers.
- SOAR will assist students in the preparation of poster presentations and development of abstracts to increase conference presence on a national level, encourage students to attend the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, and facilitate travel preparations.
- SOAR will provide peer mentoring to students new to undergraduate research.

Join a community of student researchers!