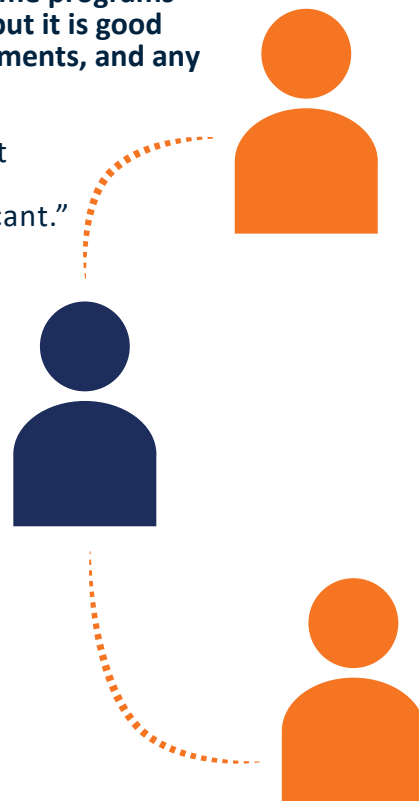


TIPS FOR CONTACTING PROSPECTIVE FACULTY SPONSORS

For many programs, especially in the sciences and Engineering, it is recommended that you make contact with a professor you want to work with. Some programs require that you have a faculty sponsor while other areas do not, but it is good idea to learn more about the program, specific admissions requirements, and any funding opportunities that might be available.

If and when you make initial contact, make your email brief but include key information to get their interest. We recommend a subject heading such as "Inquiry from potential graduate applicant." For the main body of the email, your goals are to:

- (A) Introduce yourself
- (B) Inquire about whether they are taking students
- (C) Make it clear why you are interested in that particular faculty member
- (D) Get any advice they might have to offer



HERE IS AN EXAMPLE:

Hello Dr. _____,

I'm in my final year as a _____ major at _____, where I have been working in the lab of Dr. _____. My research has focused on genetic plasticity in brown anole lizards (see attached CV). I'm planning to apply to PhD programs this Fall, and I'm very interested in the possibility of working in your lab with the Department of Biological Sciences at Auburn University. I read your recent paper on _____, and I found your approach to be very exciting.

I was hoping you might tell me whether you are planning to take new students in your lab in Fall 2022. I'd also be interested in any other information or advice you have.

[Possibly add a few more lines here about your background and interests.]

Sincerely,

It's always a good idea to attach a CV with your email as well. Your CV is the best place to provide additional details about your skills, academic performances and other experience.

Your goal is to stand out from the crowd, so you should include anything relevant that will be impressive (e.g., "3 years of intensive Python programming experience," presentations at conferences, and awards in any area).



TIPS FOR CONTACTING PROSPECTIVE FACULTY SPONSORS

When you meet with your potential advisor, you are trying to figure out three things. Do your interests align with the work in the group? Would you work well with this advisor? Is the culture of the group what you are looking for?

Meeting with your potential advisor (even virtually if not in-person) and the students in the lab can help you get as much specific information as possible. When you leave the interview, you want to be able to imagine what it would be like to work in that group and work with the professor.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ASKING YOUR *POTENTIAL ADVISOR*

1. What are the current projects going on in your group? How do you see a new student fitting into these projects?
2. What is the onboarding process like? Are there materials I will use or will I rely mostly on you and the more senior students?
3. Are you available throughout the week or do you typically meet with students at a regular meeting?
4. How do you measure progress?
5. What is the timeline for most students in your group?
6. What do you expect students to accomplish in their first year? By the time they graduate? (This could be number of publications, leading a project or something else)
7. Are your students involved in any specific organizations?
8. How would you describe the culture of the group?
9. What do you do to support the culture of the group?
10. How many hours/week do students in your group typically work?
11. Are you more hands-on or hands-off?
12. Is there funding available for travel if our work gets accepted?

Would you work well with the advisor?

Do your interests align with the work they do?

Do you like the group culture?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ASKING THE *STUDENTS*

1. Do you like the lab environment?
2. What do you work on?
3. What does that work look like day to day? What tools do you use?
4. What projects did you work on when you first started?
5. How did you learn the tools, skills, concepts and procedures you needed to do your work?
6. What classes have you taken or which ones would you recommend?
7. What does the cycle of your work look like? Are there times of the year that are more busy than others?
8. What are your normal working hours?
9. How much support do you get from the advisor?
10. Do you have other mentors available to you?
11. Do you like the town/city?



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