

## How to Find a Faculty Sponsor for Thesis Research

If you want to pursue a Master's of Science degree you must complete a thesis research project that will require a faculty sponsor. Most faculty members in the Department of Biology want to have graduate students participate in their research programs and are willing to sponsor thesis research projects. However, time and resources are finite and faculty will limit the number of students they sponsor in accordance with the resources available. Hence, a request to a faculty member to sponsor your thesis research may or may not be granted, depending on how many students that faculty member has already accepted. You can increase your chances of obtaining a faculty sponsor for your thesis research if you do the following:

1. **Start the process early** (At least 6 months before you would begin your Master's degree program, preferably sooner). When a faculty member commits to sponsoring an applicant, they are bound to honor that commitment. Once a faculty member has accepted as many graduate students as they can support, they will not sponsor later applicants.
2. **Do your homework.** Faculty members want graduate students that are capable and highly motivated. They assess a student's capability using information from their undergraduate transcript, letters of recommendation, and a well-organized student resume (C.V.) One way to demonstrate your motivation to work in the faculty member's research program is to demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about their research.
  - a. Go to the web page for the Department of Biology directory of Faculty and Staff, <https://www.bsu.edu/academics/collegesanddepartments/biology/about/faculty-staff>. Read the brief descriptions of faculty research interests to narrow your search to those who study topics in your area of interest.
  - b. For those faculty whose research you find interesting, do an internet search for their most recent publications and read them carefully. These papers likely reflect their current research program, which you would be asking to join. Use what you learn from this to narrow your list of potential faculty sponsors to those whose interests are most similar to yours.
3. **Make contact with the faculty member.** Send the faculty member an email stating your interest in joining their research program and asking if they are accepting new graduate students. You should indicate the specific semester and year when you would begin. You should attach to the email your undergraduate transcript (unofficial is acceptable) and a brief resume/CV that focuses on your accomplishments and skills that are directly relevant to the faculty research program. You should craft a well-written, concise statement that explains why you want to join their research program, including specific information that you learned by reading their recent publications. You might describe how you think doing research in their program would help you to advance your career goals. Be as specific as you can. Remember, you are trying to convince the faculty member that you would be a valuable contributor to their research program. All of your writing should be grammatically correct, concise, and well-organized. **PROOF-READ EVERYTHING.** Have someone else (a trusted undergraduate professor) read your writing and give you feedback.