Getting Started in Undergraduate Research
Why do research?
Why do research (cont.)?

An elated Jenna having caught dinner in Sukamaju Village.

Isabella by Nica Ullman’s Book Burning Memorial.
August-Bebel-Platz, Berlin, Germany.

Nova retrieving her muscle samples from -80°C liquid nitrogen tank.
Two kinds of research

1. Apprenticeship:
   - help a professor carry out his/her research

   - get connected to mentors
   - learn essential research skills
   - understand the research process
Two kinds of research

2. Independent: carry out a project of your own design

- Spread your wings
- Go deeper into a topic you choose
- Be first author on a publication/presentation
Research in Lab v. Non-lab settings

- **Lab settings**
  - all begin as apprentices
  - Independent = take piece of lab’s work as your project

- **Non-lab settings**
  - 1st research experience can be independent (your own idea)
  - Apprenticeship still useful for connections, experience.
How to get units for your research
(to stay sane/healthy, and to *shine*)

- Honors thesis (graded, in your major)

- Independent Study: Ungraded, social science/humanities

- “Research Units”
  (ungraded – sciences, engineering, psychology: 99 or 199)
Finding a mentor

- Via an apprenticeship program
- Through classes: go to office hours, then “mobilize contacts”
- “strategic doorknocking”
“strategic doorknocking” to find a mentor

1) Search out faculty with interests close to yours.

2) Find out: what are they like to work with?

3) Meet with top candidates. Agenda:
   • Apprenticeship: ask about their work
   • Independent: solicit feedback on your idea
   • Both: establish credibility with resume, reference, transcript, professional attire and approach

4) Compare several; choose favorite; pop the question!
   • Clarify “contract”
   • Clarify why s/he is best match

5) Via email: Do research (1+2), establish credibility, explain your interest, request meeting to discuss possibility of ... (state your own avail); formal business email.
Resources for finding and working productively with mentors, asking for recommendations, and more

http://research.berkeley.edu/
“resources” page
Why participate in a formal research program?

- Peer support
- Staff support
- Structure
- $: travel, time, equipment, supplies, debt reduction
- recognition!!
- Extras: GRE prep, Grad admissions help, public speaking training, and publication opportunities
Eligibility: GPA, first generation, income, ethnicity, what year in college, which discipline/s, future plans
Apprentice/Independent
Timeline: summer, one semester, academic year
Commitments
$
size of cohort
Location – at or away from UCB

Bottom line: There IS at least one program for everyone!!
How to apply—application components

**Deadlines:**
mostly **early to mid spring** --prepare in fall

**Components:**
• Transcript
• Some: essay re: future plans, past obstacles
• Recommendation/s
• For independent research: proposal, supporting documents

**When you find a program:**
• Read web site carefully, attend info sessions, meet w/ prog. coordinator, prepare app early, get several rounds of feedback, apply to multiple programs
What are they looking for?

• Focus, motivation, drive, enthusiasm
• Improving trend on transcript
• Solid recommendations
• Dependability
• Biography – program would strengthen your profile for future plans
Where to find them

Research.berkeley.edu

• Programs at UCB for Berkeley students
• Programs away from UCB for Berkeley students
Please ask me lots of questions!