



HOW TO GET A RESEARCH ASSISTANT JOB WHEN THERE ARE NO JOB POSTINGS

- 1. Search for research assistant positions on your own.** If there are not research positions in your field on [Handshake](#), or you are not work-study eligible for EURēCA! research positions, you can look for other research opportunities at CU Denver.

First, talk to your professors to see if they have opportunities. Then see if your department has a web page describing faculty research interests. If possible, read their publications and watch videos of their lectures. Next, select four or five professors whose work most excites you to contact with your research assistant request.

- 2. Work on your cover-letter and resume.** Have it reviewed by the LyxConnect Peer Advisors to draft research-specific materials. Then set up an in-depth appointment with either the Undergraduate Research Advisor or the Career Counselors through [Handshake](#).

Remember to tailor each cover letter specifically to the research project you're applying to join. The best cover letters are highly specific to the lab and researcher, not generic.

- 3. Email the faculty member your cover letter and resume.** Have your Undergraduate Research Advisor review your inquiry before sending. You should type your research assistant cover letter in the body of your email and attach your resume as a pdf document. See sample emails below.

Use a clear subject line to grab the Faculty's attention. Here are a few examples of email subject lines you might consider:

- *Dr. Carton, can I assist with your neural circuit research?*
- *In need of a research assistant with brain mapping expertise?*
- *Professor Manette recommended I reach out regarding your research (if you indeed can use a professor as a reference)*

- 4. Consider the best time of year to send out your research assistant cover letter.** If you want to secure a research assistant position during the academic year, you should email your cover letter mid-summer, before the fall semester starts.

If it's already the middle of the fall semester, you have two options. First, you can reach out and inquire about becoming a research assistant for the spring semester. Otherwise, you can wait until the spring semester and ask to join the summer research team.

- 5. Follow up if you don't receive a reply.** Wait a week—but no longer—before following up. Make your follow-up email very brief. Send it as a reply to your original email containing your cover letter and your attached resume, so the professor can easily review your initial research assistant request. See sample below.

It's appropriate to send one follow-up email, but do not continue to pester the faculty if you still don't receive a reply. At that point, widen your search and find other faculty to approach with your research assistant application.

SAMPLE EMAILS TO FACULTY TO INQUIRE ABOUT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Example 1:

Dear Name,

I am a sophomore here at CU Denver who recently declared a concentration in Health & Human Biology. I am writing out of interest in your research on global trends in emerging infectious disease. I was very excited to read about your work on the CU Denver News page last week.

I am eager to pursue medical or graduate school after CU Denver and focus my efforts on immunology and global health. As I move toward my junior year I am hoping to line up a research experience, collaborative or independent, focused on similar topics.

I have course work and some voluntary experiences that I believe position me well for more in depth work in the lab. Do you have any opportunities for a student like me in your research group over the summer or following academic year? I have attached my resume and transcript and would be delighted to talk with you if an opportunity for me might exist.

*I hope to hear from you soon,
Name*

Example 2:

Dear Faculty Name,

I am writing to inquire about potential research opportunities in your lab. I am a sophomore intending to pursue a Biology ScB (EEB track). I am specifically interested in your research on New England Cottontail infectious disease dynamics, and Conservation Medicine more broadly. I am available this summer and throughout the fall and spring semesters if you have openings in your lab. My transcript and resume are included. You will see that I have solid grades in relevant courses and experience working in the field.

Please let me know if I can schedule a time to speak with you.

*Very best wishes,
Name*

Example 3:

Dean NAME,

Dr. NAME recommended that I contact you about potential opportunities to pursue research in your lab. I am entering my senior year and very eager to pursue an

independent research project where I can explore the global distribution of infectious diseases using new GIS tools. I have read your work published on disease biogeography and would be very excited to speak with you in person. Could I make an appointment for next week?

Name

Example Follow-up:

Dear Dr. NAME,

I wanted to quickly follow up on the possibility of joining your team as a research assistant. I know you're busy, and I hope that as your research assistant I could take some work off your hands.

Please see my original email to review my qualifications and the passion I have for your work examining how neural circuit function contributes to neurological disorders. I would love the opportunity to meet with you and discuss how I can contribute to your research further.

Sincerely,

Name

Other ways to get involved:

1. Search on Handshake for listed research postings listed under jobs. Narrow down your results with on or off-campus filters:
<https://ucdenver.joinhandshake.com/postings>
2. Take the EURēCA! Quiz to learn more about work-study opportunities:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSrh9yrmga6xDpN0GBslmXWRtJjPu8nwrAqEABkIjvm6nAw/viewform>
3. Make an inquiry appointment with the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) to explore more options:
<https://ucdenver.joinhandshake.com/appointments/new>:
4. Learn more about grant and fellowship opportunities on the URCA website:
<https://www.ucdenver.edu/lynxconnect/undergraduate-research>
5. Present your research at the Research and Creative Activities Symposium:
<https://www.ucdenver.edu/sites/research-day/home>
6. Email undergrad.research@ucdenver.edu with any other questions.

Adapted from the following:

<https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/research-assistant-cover-letter>
https://www.brown.edu/academics/medical/plme/sites/brown.edu/academics/medical/plme/files/uploads/Finding_Research_Opps_Dean_Kate_Smith.pdf