Research Experience for Undergraduates

Claire Duggan
Executive Director
The Center for STEM Education
c.duggan@northeastern.edu

REU Programs – What do they offer?

An REU Site typically involves a group of around 10 students who work on related research projects at a host institution based in the United States or sometimes at an international location. At each REU Site, students work closely with faculty and other senior researchers to:

- ***Conduct authentic research.***

- ***Receive mentoring.***

- ***Build their knowledge and research skills.***

- ***Learn about educational and career pathways in STEM***

https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/reu/students

REU Programs – What do they offer?

What kind of support is offered?

REU participants receive **competitive stipends and in many cases assistance with housing, meals and travel.**

Who is eligible to apply?

Undergraduates (college and university students) pursuing an associate or bachelor's degree and who are **U.S. citizens, permanent residents or U.S. nationals** are eligible to apply. Individual REU opportunities may establish additional criteria that further restrict eligibility.

How do I find an opportunity?

To find existing REU Sites, visit the [Directory of REU Sites](#). You can search by research area, location and keyword. Consult STEM faculty at your home college or university about the availability of REU Supplement opportunities.

You can also find many REU opportunities on the [NSF Education and Training Application (ETAP) website](#). However, not all REU opportunities are advertised there, so you should also consult the Directory of REU Sites. For opportunities that are available on the ETAP website, you can prepare and submit your application there.

2026 Summer REU Programs (several current programs)

2026 Summer BACE REU Experience, https://etap.nsf.gov/award/7328/opportunity/11456 https://sites.google.com/sdsmt.edu/bace/home?authuser=0, apply by 2/21/26, program is May-July 2026

Princeton Center for Complex Materials, https://etap.nsf.gov/award/8274/opportunity/11355 https://pccm.princeton.edu/reu, apply by 1/16/2026, program is June-July 2026

Brandeis Bioinspired MRSEC, https://etap.nsf.gov/award/7273/opportunity/11379, apply by 02/02/26, program is June-August 2026

Univ of Chicago Research Experience for Undergraduates in Molecular Engineering, https://etap.nsf.gov/award/8321/opportunity/11439 https://pme.uchicago.edu/educational-outreach/research-experiences-undergraduates, apply by 2/12/2026, program is june-august 2026

Summer Undergraduate Research or Internship Experience in Acoustics https://www.pathwaystoscience.org/programhub.aspx?sort=SUM-AcoustSocAmerica-SURIEA, apply by 1/30/2026, program is 5/15-8/7/26

Univ of Buffalo : Interdisciplinary Research Experience for Undergraduates in Atmospheric and Geological Hazards, https://arts-sciences.buffalo.edu/geological-and-climate-hazards/projects/Interdisciplinary-REU-in-..., apply by 1/31/26 by 5pm, program is 5/28-7/30/26https://www.buffalo.edu/reu/apply.html

UMich Research Experience for Undergraduates in Digital Accessibility, https://www.umflint.edu/cit/nsf-reu-in-digital-accessibility/, apply by March 9, program is May-July 2026

What might be asked in your application to an REU Program

- Background/identifying information

- Academic information

- Resume

- Transcript (we will accept unofficial transcripts)

- Responses to the two essay prompts below. Please note that your responses need to be copied into the online application submission form and that each essay should be ~2-4 paragraphs in length.

- Please describe your previous research experience and correlate this previous research work to the theme of this REU site. Be sure to include the institution name(s), lab/PI name(s) and dates for each former experience. State how participation in the this REU program will benefit your future academic and professional careers.

  - Recommendation letters from two faculty members that are in a PDF format

REU Applications: Best Practices

Letters of Recommendation
- Knows you well
- Can speak to your skills/ability to work with the program

Transcripts
- Check if official/unofficial
- – pdf is okay – as long as it's generated by institution
- All transcripts after high school

Application Forms
- Select that your form can be used by other universities

Resumes
- Everything up-to-date
- Only 1-page – leave off unrelated/old items

Other
- Don't send google docs, other 'downloads' – attach all as pdf unless otherwise specified.

REU Applications: Statement of Interest

Front

Up Front Rules

- Look for formatting requirements and length
- If none: 12pts, Times/Ariel fonts, 1" margins, pdf or word doc., 1-2 pages

Content

Content: Things To Do

- Answer the questions that are asked.
- Be specific.
- Tell what you know.
- Write well and correctly.
- Tell a story! How does the REU (or ANYTHING) fit into your story (past/goals, etc.)?

Content

Content: Things Not to Do

- Don't be impersonal or fake.
- Don't repeat info from form/website, or project descriptions.
- Don't emphasize negatives – that's not the point of this statement.
- Don't try to be funny.

Link

Link to Writing a Statement of Interest Video Tutorials MassBay

NSF
S-POWER
#1564653

Best Practices for Writing Your
Statement of Interest/Personal Statement – Things To Do

1) *Answer the questions that are asked*. If you are applying to several programs, you may find questions in each application that are somewhat similar. **Don't be tempted to use the same statement for all applications**. It is important to speak to what is being asked, and if slightly different answers are needed, you should write separate statements.

2) *Be specific*. **Your application should emerge as the logical conclusion to your 'story' or your experience(s)**. Your desire to participate in a program and eventually become an engineer, computer scientist, etc., should be the logical result of a specific experience that is described in your statement.

3) *Tell what you know*. **Detail your interest and experience, as well as some of your knowledge of the field.** Be as specific as possible in relating what you know about the topic/field. Refer to experiences (work, research, volunteering), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the opportunity you want and why you're suited to it.

4) *Write well and correctly*. **Type and proofread your essay carefully.** Have friends and/or teachers proofread it too. Many admissions officers say that command of the correct use of language is important to them as they read these statements. Express yourself clearly and concisely. Adhere to stated word limits.

Best Practices for Writing Your
Statement of Interest/Personal Statement – Things NOT To Do

1) Don't just write what you think the admissions committee wants to hear, especially if it isn't necessarily true. Statements like these are usually numerous, so they don't stand out, and many times they seem disingenuous.

2) Don't repeat information directly from the application form or project list itself unless you use it to illustrate a point or want to develop it further.

3) Don't use a lot of space describing the research project(s) itself and/or why it is important. The admissions committee knows what the project is and why it is important already – use your space to talk about yourself (someone they *don't* yet know).

4) Don't emphasize the negative or make excuses. Explain what you feel you need to,and emphasize the positive.

5) Don't try to be funny. You don't want to take the risk that your readers won't get the joke..

Additional resources – Summer research programs

https://www.pathwaystoscience.org/webinars.aspx#SummerResearch3

- *Applying to Summer Research Experiences*

- *Creating a Winning Application*

- *Discussing Summer Research with your Family*

- *Getting Strong Letters of Recommendation*

- *Searching for a Program*

- *The Benefits of an Undergrad Summer Research*

- *Writing Strong Essays and Personal Statements*