Best Practices for Remote Research Experiences

Undergraduate students can have rich and rewarding research experiences working completely remotely with their faculty mentors. Students may choose this option for a variety of reasons (ex. completing their degrees online). Depending on your research topic and strategies, you may be able to complete an entire research project remotely, or you may be able to contribute to specific parts of a research project. Remote research projects may include literature searches, statistical analysis, manuscript writing, etc. Whatever your focus and your reasons for working on research remotely, you will want to make sure that you are working closely with your faculty research mentor and communicating regularly.

First Meeting with Your Mentor:
- Get to know each other’s current situation, including access to computers, etc. – ex. if you are sharing computer access with roommate or family member, be upfront about what your limitations are
- If this wasn’t expected, discuss plans for a revised research project to accommodate online limitations
- Set up a schedule of regular check-ins
- Set up your regular work schedule

Communicating with your Mentor -- Special Considerations for Remote Research:
- Continue to be professional
- Set up regular (at least weekly) check-ins with your faculty mentor
- Don’t wait for scheduled meetings to ask questions -- especially if the question is preventing you from making progress
- Don’t wait for scheduled meetings to provide updates/status reports if time-sensitive
- Take notes!
- End meetings with a summary/list of what you are going to work on, so you are both on the same page
- Set up a schedule of when you will be working on your research project and stick with it/be available to your mentor during those hours

Virtual Research Experience – Extra Skills to Include on Your Resume:
- Exp. working on research independently (demonstrated integrity/responsibility/professionalism/work ethic)
- Exp. working on virtual research team (demonstrated adaptability)
- Exp. attending, scheduling, etc. virtual meeting software (ex. Google Meet; WebEx; Zoom)
- Exp. with team collaboration software (ex. Evernote; Zotero; Google drive; etc.)

Example Types of Remote Research Projects:
- Online surveys to collect data asking questions of a particular population of inquiry – surveys could ask respondents to report on their experiences, opinions, etc.
- You could collect statistical analysis and/or interpretation of research data and/or results collected previously by your faculty mentor – data, another student, or your faculty mentor
- Statistical analysis and/or interpretation of research data and/or results from a publicly available source – examples include National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, HealthData.gov, or National Center for Education Statistics
- Development of data visualization of previously collected data – for example, using GIS to map out or look at notable trends in data
- Manuscript writing – could be contributing to a manuscript that your faculty mentor is working on or it could be taking the lead on writing a manuscript of a research project that you have completed previously