

Student Guide for Finding a Mentor for the RSLs

Every project can benefit from having an advisor or mentor who can coach on research and strategies, and review progress, and encourage the team members through difficulties.

Working with a skilled mentor can become a professionally enriching experience. Here are some ideas about finding a mentor for your project. Your search most likely will begin with a letter to a prospective advisor that introduces yourself and your ambitions. Foothill's faculty and staff often have skills and interests beyond the classes they are teaching this quarter. Reaching out can work well.

As you prepare your letter, consider the following questions:

- What are you investigating and why?
- What are the issues or contexts that are driving your interest in this project?
- What do you hope to gain personally from this?
- What do you see your project contributing? What is its importance?
- If you know the general topic area but not the specifics, what kind of help do you think you might need from a faculty mentor?

Sample Letter to Request a RSLs Mentor

Dear Professor _____,

My name is _____ and I am a student at Foothill. I'm in the early stages of designing a research project on _____ for the 2021 Research & Service Leadership Symposium and am beginning the process of finding faculty members who might be able to mentor and advise me as I continue working on this project further.

[INSERT A DESCRIPTION ABOUT YOUR PROJECT]

- "My project specifically examines _____."
- "some of the research questions I'm interested in investigating are _____"
- "I'm interested in _____ and would like to investigate _____"
- "I'm interested in _____ and would like to develop a project that _____."
- "I'm looking for a faculty member who might be able to help me figure out how to _____"

Based on your expertise in _____, I'm wondering if you would be interested in working with me and serving as a mentor/advisor as I develop this project? I'd be happy to stop by your office hours or set up a meeting to discuss my project ideas and the possibility of working with you in more detail. Or can you suggest the names of others who might be interested?

Sincerely,

Questions to think about before and after you meet with a faculty member:

- What kind of support would you ask from a faculty mentor? (e.g., an interlocutor who talks and thinks through concepts and analysis with you? someone who can help offer reading or research suggestions? a content expert who can discuss/explain concepts to you? someone who will provide feedback on drafts? Someone who can talk through and analyze data with you? Someone who will provide encouragement?)
- How often would you like to meet with your mentor during the project?
- How will you use the meeting time with your mentor? What do you want to accomplish in these meetings?