SURF:
WHAT CAN YOU DO THIS FALL TO PREPARE FOR NEXT SUMMER?

Student-Faculty Programs Office
www.sfp.caltech.edu
You can do four things:

1. Go to class and do well
2. Begin creating academic relationships
3. Explore research areas of interest
4. After Thanksgiving, start looking for a mentor
Go to class and do well

- Attend class
- Go to office hours
- Ask questions
- Join study groups
- Ask for help
Go to class and do well

SURF Eligibility

✓ Be a continuing undergraduate student

✓ Have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 (at the end of spring term)

✓ Complete the third term at Caltech

✓ Be eligible for fall term registration before beginning your SURF project and no later than July 1

✓ Not be under any disciplinary sanction
Begin creating academic relationships

- Get to know your professors and Tas
- Make yourself and your academic interests known
- Use your advisor
- Go to option seminars
Begin creating academic relationships

For your SURF application you will need 2 letters of recommendation

- At least one from a faculty member, who is not your prospective mentor
- The other could be from someone else in the Caltech community who knows you well (TA, coach, RA, glee club director, etc.)
Explore research areas of interest

- Pizza courses
- Attend SURF Seminar Day on October 21st
- Talk to upper-class students
- Get advice from SFP Student Ambassadors
- Go to option seminars
- Browse the option websites
- Review 2017 SURF Abstracts (sfp.caltech.edu)
- Attend Explore JPL Series
  - JPL—not just engineering and astrophysics!
Explore research areas of interest

Where can you SURF?

- At Caltech
- At JPL
- At another school in the US or internationally
Start looking for a mentor

- Contact a graduate student or postdoc in the group and ask for a tour/meeting to learn more about the group.
- Look outside your option.
- Use who you know. Find an undergrad who did research in the lab you want and ask for an introduction.
- Talk to an SFP Student Ambassador
- If you are having difficulty, come to the SFP office--early.
- Be assertive and professional!
Start looking for a mentor

- Contact multiple possible mentors at once; but don’t spread mass emails. Pursue only research groups you are truly interested in.

- DON’T RELY ON EMAIL!
  - Visit their office.
  - Call as a follow-up to an email.
  - CC the administrative assistant on all emails.
    - Contact the faculty’s administrative assistant for help in setting up a meeting.
Start looking for a mentor

The first contact is critical!

- Be professional
- Have confidence that you have something to offer, but don’t act entitled
- Provide adequate information about yourself—but not too much
- Learn something about the research topic in advance and state your interest in it
- Request additional literature references
- Request a meeting or telephone interview
- Review interview guidelines on the SFP website

http://www.sfp.caltech.edu/students/getting_started/meeting_tips
Timeline

Now
Focus on classes
Start exploring research interests
Start developing academic relationships
Attend Explore JPL seminars

Nov.
Begin looking for a mentor

January
Attend the SURF Info Sessions
Attend proposal writing workshop

Feb. 22
SURF application due

April 2
SURF awards are announced

June 19
SURF begins
How to Reach Us

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