

1. Have you established clear expectations of how you will work with your research supervisor?

I have communicated with my supervisor since the summer of 2022 and even began some light research on the work over the following semester. We also have clear expectations of meeting times (once a week), and I come away from each meeting knowing what I have to focus on for the next week. Because of these things, my research expectations and how I will work with Dr. Aycock are established, and I feel confident about my future work.

2. What aspects of writing a project proposal did you find most challenging?

I am also completing my Political Science bachelor's final semester, so writing was not a mystery to me before starting this process. Surprisingly enough, having a supervisor who needed to review my writing before submission drove me to finish my writing early. It also meant the project proposal went through several different drafts.

As I said, I write a lot, but always on Microsoft Word. Most of my writing experience has been done through a social science templating and formatting style. The part I found most challenging was using the ACM format and LaTeX to type-set. This was a huge learning curve. I am also self-proclaimed “bad at LaTeX,” and learning how to use BibTeX and other more programmatic functions within the type-setting language was difficult and took almost more time than just the writing. I hope that in the coming writing experience, handling the template and the language will become more manageable as I become more familiar.

3. What do you hope to get out of your research experience?

My biggest drive to join Dr. Aycock on this research project was that the problem is an interesting technical challenge. It also uses skills I have developed through my interest and work in cybersecurity, particularly reverse engineering. In addition, to reverse engineering, the data set is very low-level, which aligns with the systems I am interested in—working with the data and becoming familiar with how older computing systems like Telidon and PDP-11 work will strengthen my skills and confidence around low-level systems. Ultimately, what I hope to get out of my research experience is new and more vital technical skills.

Despite this, I am also excited to have such a large academic project paired with writing on my resume. The project will show future employers that I can take on large, technical tasks with little direction and (hopefully) come out the other side with a working product.