Finding Mentors and Cold-Emailing

tjPh.

Finding a Mentor

What is a Mentor

“A good mentor will help you define your research goals, and then support you in your quest to achieve them”

Mentors will share knowledge, provide encouragement, and hopefully inspire you.

Mentors are usually well known and well respected individuals in their respective fields.

Be sure to *try* to pick a mentor that aligns with your research interests.

What do Mentors do

Mentors will help you pursue feasible research projects by placing resources before you and guiding you along the way.

They will give you feedback on your scientific work and encourage you to be independent.

What mentors do to support you varies with the circumstances of the mentorship.

Where to find Mentors

Ever since virtual mentorships came to be, the scope of mentors has immensely increased. Although there are a lot of mentors out there, it can be sometimes hard to know where to start.

Remember, mentors can be almost anyone that is a well respected researcher in their field. Below are some common places to start searching.

https://irp.nih.gov/ - NIH PIs
https://science.gmu.edu/assip/prospective-2022-assip-mentors - GMU ASSIP Professors

Cold-Emailing

What is a Cold-Email

“A cold email is an initial email that is sent to a receiver in order to gain a benefit in terms of favor, sales, opportunity, or any other dual-sided gain”

You are taking the initiative to contact someone for an opportunity over email.

Cold-Emails are difficult because:

1. You have no relationship to the receiver
2. You don’t get verbal feedback

There are a few principles you can follow into increase your success with cold-emailing.

1. Tailor the Message

Do the research on the receiver. Make sure you understand what that person does, why you are contacting them specifically, and how you two have a shared interest.

Make it clear why you are emailing them, as opposed to anyone else. In the case of many students seeking mentorship, make sure to mention a brief understanding of the mentors research, and why you're interested.

2. Validate Yourself

You have to make yourself credible if you want to gain a relationship from this email! Try to mention things which may make yourself enticing or adds a personal touch.

If you want, attach a resume, transcript, LinkedIn, or anything really. For students who may have a research portfolio, or some link to their personal projects, add them! All of these things help make you stand out, and show that you have the skills, and the interest, to work with them

3. Explain what you Want

Make sure that the receiver knows what you want, and how they can benefit. This is the easiest step but the most crucial! Do not forget it!

For students applying for mentorship, make sure to say that you want to work with them over the summer (or whatever time frame). If you're asking them to sponsor your project, ask them if they are willing to help guide and support you through your research.

4. Conciseness with calls to Action

No one will read an email that is incredibly long.

Keep your emails short. You don’t have to include everything, just your selling points. Try to stay under 200-300 words.

Include a call to action. This makes it easier for the receiver to take the next steps. For example, something like: “I would be happy to sit down in an interview to talk more with you” will automatically lead the receiver to two options, they either decline or accept.

5. Be Appreciative

Thank them for their time.

Be courteous, be kind.

DO NOT FORGET THIS.

6. Personalize

Small things added to your email will make you seem more sincere. A different closing phrase, adding a portfolio, making the email flow, all adds to the effectiveness of a cold email.

Some Examples

“Greetings Professor So and So,

I’m contacting you because I came across your research article/lit review/work [insert title here]. I was wondering if you could find some time to set up a short appointment with me to discuss your research in more detail. [Insert questions/comments]

I’m very interested in [whatever the field is] and would like to know if you have any recommendations on which classes I should consider taking, or how I should get started working in the field, etc. [something along those lines]. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Thank you!

-Signature

Dear Professor [Name},

My name is {name} and I am interested in doing laboratory research this academic year. I am currently a first year in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

Going through the list of faculty in Biology, your research description of developing techniques for brain imaging greatly interested me. I hope to one day study how violent behavior and motivation to commit a crime arise to try to prevent criminal activity. Your lab seems like a good place to learn techniques to study such a thing, especially in regards to what areas of the brain are responsible for specific kinds of information processing to give rise to behavior.

Although this is only my first year at Michigan Tech, I have taken some classes and done laboratory work in the past that might benefit me were I to work in your lab. I have taken Chemistry ####, and am currently enrolled in Biology #### and Psychology ####. During high school, I worked for two summers in a Biochemistry laboratory that used yeast as a model organism. Also, I participated in a URAP at The Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. I have attached my resumé for more details. If possible, I would like to meet with you in person to talk more about your research.

Even if you cannot accept me, I would still love to hear about your work tracking neural activity.

Best,

{Name}

Jason Chen (Princeton) [redacted]

9XB0P x 9XB0P/Categories/Personal x 9XB0P/Inbox x 9XB0P/Sent x

Jason Chen <jc33@princeton.edu> 9/26/[redacted]

[redacted]

Hi [redacted]

My name is Jason. I am a rising senior at Princeton. I worked with [redacted] this summer at Converge Venture Partners. He told me he had recently met you with [redacted]

I saw that [redacted] Ventures is hiring an analyst for its Boston's office on our career website. I was hoping to set up a time to talk to you over the phone to ask you about your experience as an analyst at [redacted] Ventures.

Last Friday, I was able to meet [redacted] in person. It was great hearing his thoughts about his work and some of the beliefs he had that makes him a good investor. I know he has a liking to vertical Saas.

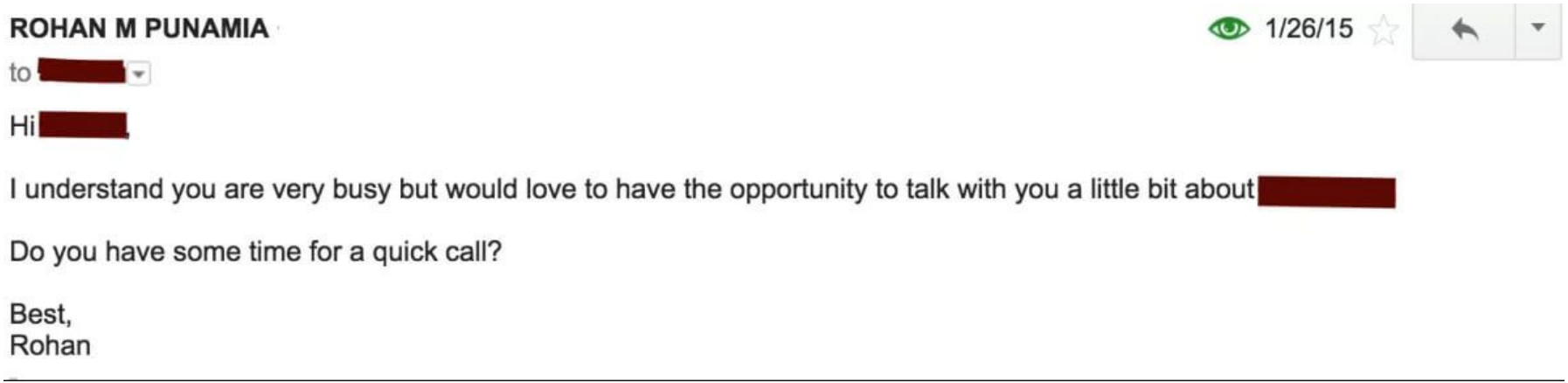
To give you a little more background about myself, I play on the golf team at Princeton and [redacted] interned at three different VC firms, Converge Venture Partners, Anthos Capital, and NewMargin Ventures. Both Converge Venture Partners and NewMargin Ventures focus on emerging tech (early stage). Anthos Capital does growth/later stage investments.

My first job was working at Panda Express, cleaning the restaurant and doing drive-thru.

Please let me know a time that works best for you.

Best,
Jason

Check In Email Example:



ROHAN M PUNAMIA 1/26/15

to [redacted]

Hi [redacted]

I understand you are very busy but would love to have the opportunity to talk with you a little bit about [redacted]

Do you have some time for a quick call?

Best,
Rohan

Now you try!

Name: Dr. Louis Dunn Shah
Institution: Harvard
Department: Genomics
Projects:

- Modeling the human genome with large datasets
- Characterizing gene sequences to traits

This is a fake scenario

Name: Dr. Mary Luis Caspi
Institution: NIA/NIH
Department: Magnetic Resonance Physics of Aging
Projects:

- Using patient data to discern possible Alzheimer's Disease biomarkers
- Using magnetic resonance neuroimaging to detect demyelination and mild cognitive impairment in the brain

This is a fake scenario