

How to Talk to a Professor (About a Research Position)

3 December 2024

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Territory Acknowledgement

As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the traditional Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

The Undergraduate Research Initiative is committed to reconciliation in our research, scholarly, and artistic work. This means always learning and relearning, supporting work that is led by Indigenous peoples and communities, and committing to work that is beneficial and accessible to Indigenous communities.

Session Outline

Common Questions

1. What is Research?
2. What are Research Jobs?
3. What do Student Assistants do?
4. How do I find a job as a Student Assistant?

Finding a Supervisor

1. Research
2. Prepare
3. Email
4. Meeting / Next Steps

What is your experience with research?



- A. I've held a summer research position before.**
- B. I've done research in a class, but not over the summer.**
- C. I've reached out to professors before, but haven't heard back, or haven't been offered a position.**
- D. This is all new to me!**

Defining Research

*Research is defined as the **creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.***

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/researchers/preparing_a_grant_application/dest_definition_of_research

Why do research?



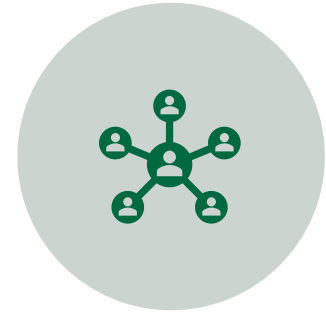
**GAIN WORK EXPERIENCE
& EXPLORE CAREER
POSSIBILITIES**



**GROW & APPLY YOUR
SKILLS**

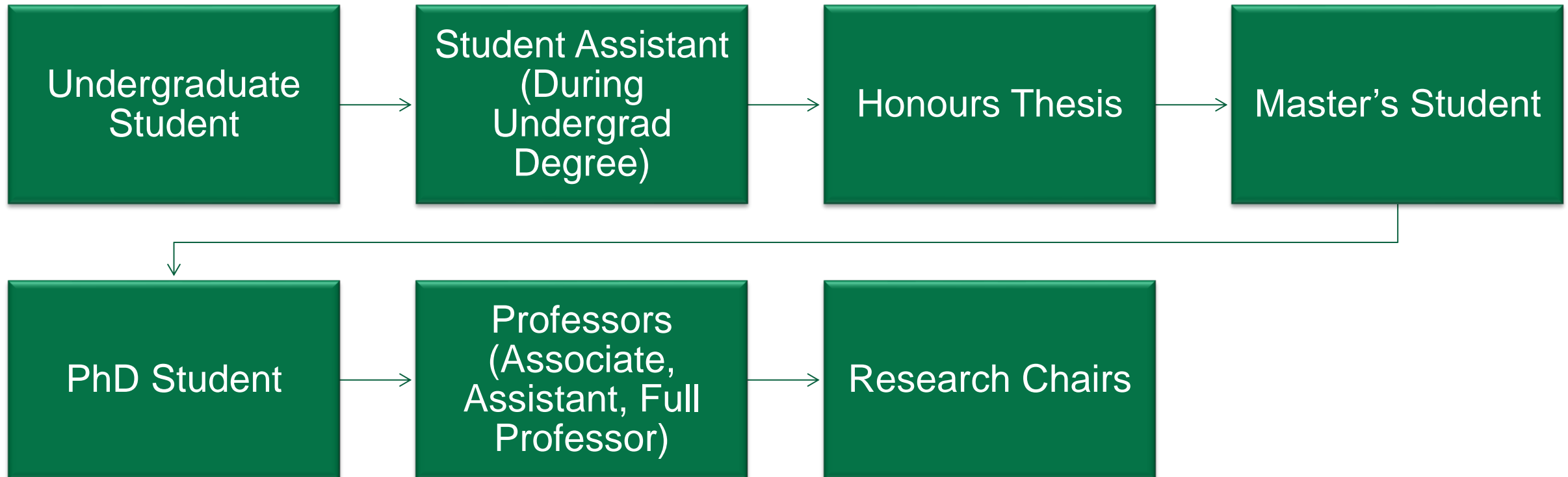


**DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY**



NETWORK

Research Opportunities at the University



Working as a Student Assistant

Variety of entry-level jobs for students on campus

Research positions – working under the supervision of a professor on one of their projects or a project related to their expertise (depending on funding).

Positions can be casual, part time, or full-time work.

Positions are for non-union employees. Payment ranges from \$15 – 20.41 /hour plus benefits.

Where to Find a Research Position

Sometimes they are advertised!



USask Student Employment and Career Centre?

<https://careerlink.usask.ca/home.htm>



USask Careers website (click Staff and Faculty link)?

<https://careers.usask.ca/>



Your department/college announcements/website?

Sometimes they are not....



Often students get research positions because of networking!



The funding opportunities are advertised, but it is up to the student to find a faculty member to apply with.

Finding a Supervisor

Finding a Supervisor / Position

1.
**Do your
Research**

2.
Prepare

3.
Email

4.
**Meeting &
Follow-ups**

What are your goals / interests?

Reflect!

Do your Research



What are your interests / what kind of position are you looking for?



Are there funding opportunities that you know of that you qualify for?



Are there department events or presentations you can attend?



Who do you already know? Are there professors that you think you would like to work with and / or that you think would be a good mentor for you? Are there professors that you can go to for advice?



Look-up different professors in your department or in the research area that you are interested in. Pay attention to their research interests and if they include any information about supervising students. Some professors will have their own webpage for their lab.



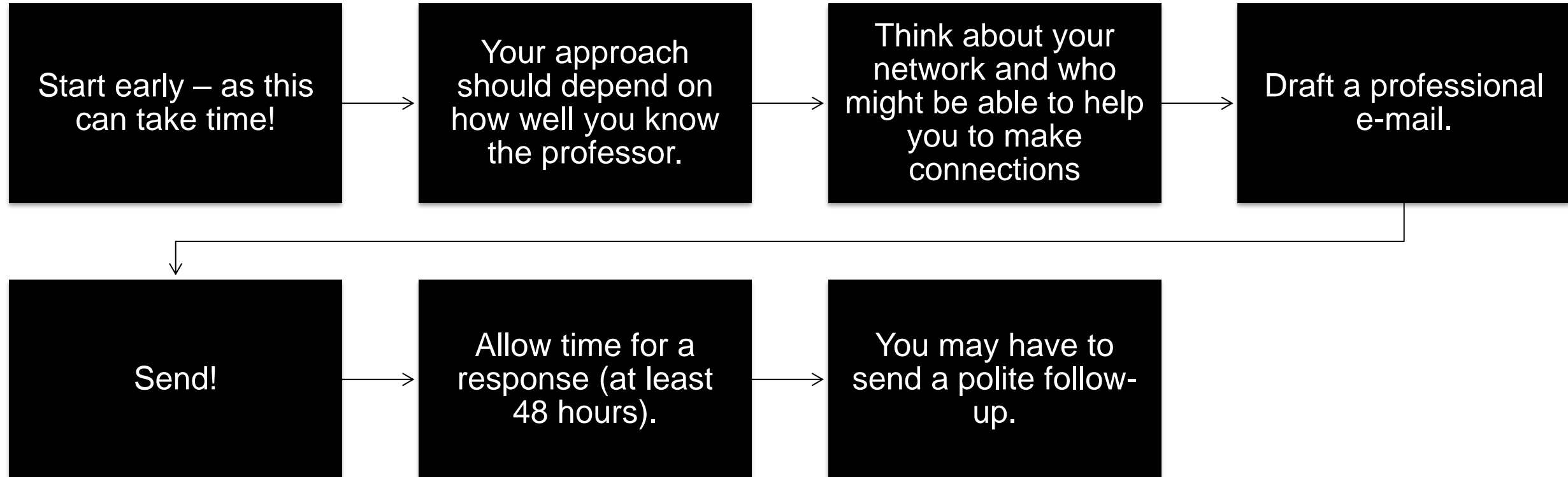
If you have a chance, talk to other students that have worked as a student assistant about their experiences.

Let's see if we can find a supervisor!

Prepare!

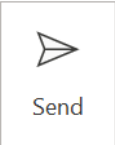
1. Update your resume / c.v.
2. Reflect on why you want to work with a particular professor or in their lab.
 - How does their specific research relate to your specific interests?
 - Are there skills that you want to build or practice?
3. Reflect on what type of position you are looking for.
 - Is it a supervisor to apply for an NSERC USRA with?
 - Full time work as a student assistant
 - Part time or casual work as a student assistant
 - Volunteer experience?
 - Graduate Studies (such as an MA or PhD)

Email



Practice!

What do you think of this email? What would you change?

| | | |
|---|---------|--|
|  | From ▾ | anitacareer@hotmail.com |
| | To | <input type="radio"/> biology@usask.ca |
| | Cc | |
| | Bcc | |
| | Subject | Summer Research Position |

Hello!

I'm a 3rd year Biology student looking for a summer research position. I'm wondering if you know of any research positions within the Department. I am wanting to apply for NSERC .

Sincerely,
Anita
|

What do you think of this email? What would you change?

| | | |
|---------|--------|--|
| Send | From ▾ | anita.career@usask.ca |
| | To | biology.professor@usask.ca |
| | Cc | |
| | Bcc | |
| Subject | | Supervisor for NSERC Application |

Dear Professor,

How are you? I am a student in your BIO 210 class. I love science and have a passion for research. I am preparing to apply for NSERC USRA funding, and I am wondering if you would be interested in being my supervisor.

I have attached a copy of my resume. Let me know if you need anything else.

Thanks in advance!

Anita Career
3rd Biology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306.123.4567

What do you think of this email? What would you change?

| | | |
|---|---------|---|
|  | From ▾ | anita.career@usask.ca |
| | To | <input type="radio"/> professor.gray@usask.ca |
| | Cc | |
| | Bcc | |
| | Subject | Student Interested in NSERC USRA |

Dear Professor Gray,

How are you? I am a student in your BIO 317 Fundamentals of Animal Physiology class and was very interested to learn about the research you do at Gray Lab, your research on pesticides and the impact on insect behavior.

I am interested in applying for NSERC USRA for summer 2024 and continuing to build my research skills in this area of study. I was wondering if you are accepting new student assistants in your lab and if you might be interested in meeting with to discuss potentially being my research supervisor.

Would you have time in the next few weeks to meet before the NSERC deadline at the end of January?

Attached is a copy of my updated resume for you to review.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Anita Career
3rd Biology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306.123.4567

Email Template

Subject Line:

Dear/Hello [Insert Professors Name],

Intro/Context: Who are you? Be specific.

The why: Why are you emailing this specific professor?
Why are you interested in working with this professor?
What skills/experiences would you bring and / or want to develop?

The ask: Always ask for the opportunity to discuss over the phone or meet in person first. **Do not just out right ask for a job.** Be specific about what you are interested in (for example, a supervisor for an NSERC USRA).

Thanks in advance/Thank you for your time.

Salutation/Signature: Sincerely/All the best,
[Your Name]

Email Example

Subject Line:

Hello Dr. Nye,

I am a 3rd year student in your Science 301.3 course...

I find your TV show captivating, and I am interested in developing my skills as a researcher...

Would you be available to meet to briefly discuss my potential candidacy as a research assistant or provide advice for a student interested in this area of study?

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

[Your Name/Signature]

2nd year Biology Student

University of Saskatchewan

306.123.4567

Use your USask Email!

- ✓ Always use your NSID@usask.ca
 - ✓ This shows you are legit! And not a scammer!!
- ✓ You can set up an alias or forwarding email (see next slide)
- ✓ Consider adding an email signature:

Anita Career

3rd year Sociology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306-123-4567

Rothlisson

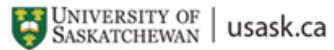
[REDACTED]

2nd-Year Mechanical Engineering Student

College of Engineering

Cell : () [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]@usask.ca | [LinkedIn](#)



I acknowledge that the University of Saskatchewan is situated on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. I affirm my commitment and responsibility as a settler to amplify Indigenous ways of knowing and access to engineering in my work.

[Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

Confidentiality Notice: This message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message



USask Email

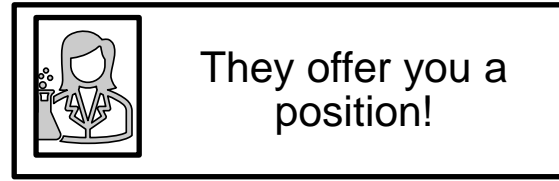
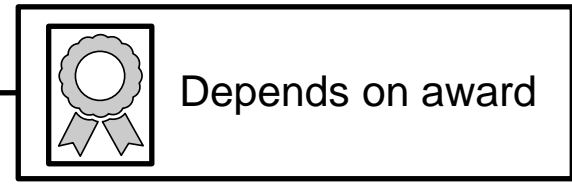
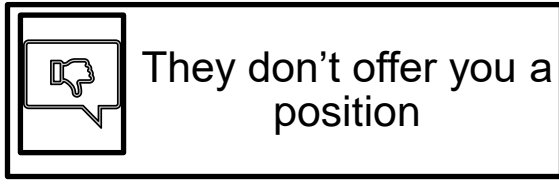
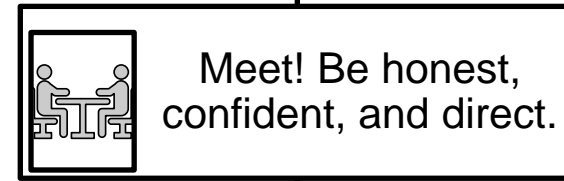
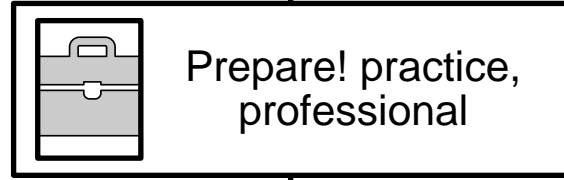
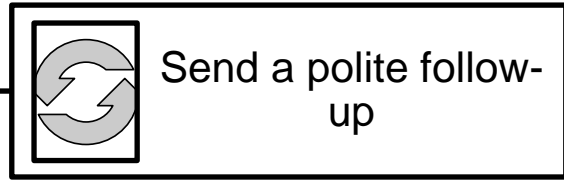
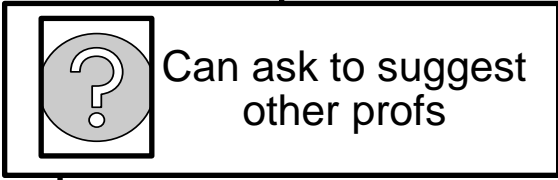
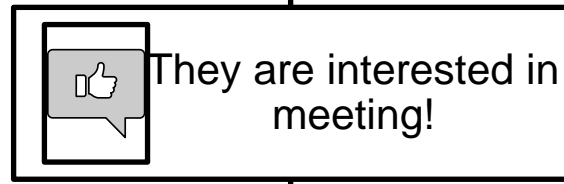
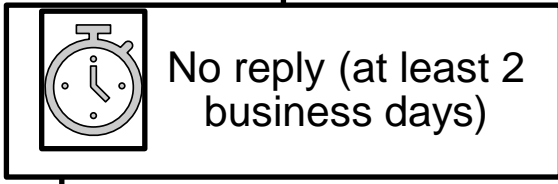
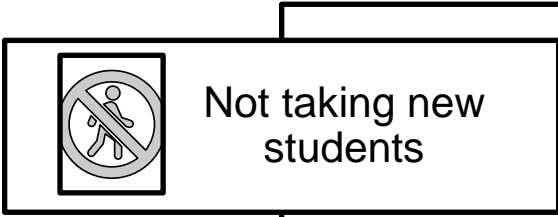
Edit

Address **bdk628@mail.usask.ca**
Forwarding **Not Set**
Auto Reply **Off**
Primary Alias **brette.kristoff@usask.ca**
+ 3 more aliases

Update your email preferences in PAWS!

Search 'Marketing and Communications' for access to templates/logos.

Next Steps



Making a Decision



Reflect: Is this an opportunity for me to grow my skills & experience?



Balance: personal boundaries with challenging yourself to grow

Next Steps

- ✓ Reflect on your academic/career goals
- ✓ Keep applying for jobs!
- ✓ If you aren't successful, this year – try again next year.
- ✓ Ask for feedback.
- ✓ Respectful persistence is important. Networking is about the long game.

Are your goals
S.M.A.R.T?

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-bound

Additional Links and Resources

How to Talk to a Professor

We will email the slides from today – and add them to our webpage!

SURE Resources

[Undergraduate Research Initiative - USask - YouTube](#)

Introduction to USask's NSERC USRA Program

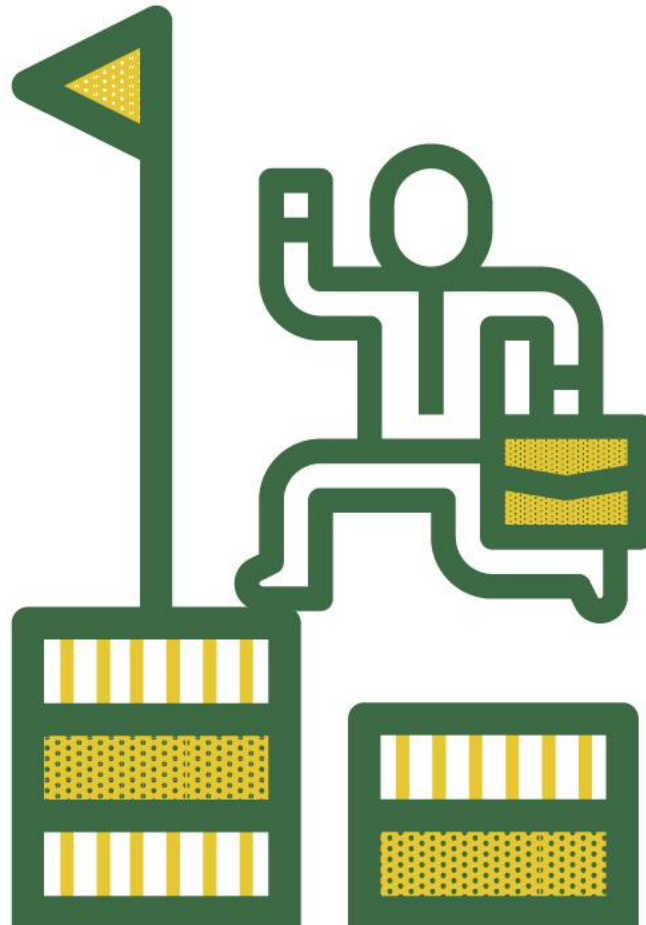
Online session tomorrow (December 4th, 11:30 – 12:30)

[Register – Introduction to USask's NSERC USRA Program \(Virtual\) – Zoom](#)

CAREER SERVICES

As a student or alumni, Career Services is here to help with every step in your career journey!

YOUR
CAREER
PATH
STARTS
HERE



[USASK.CA/
CAREERSERVICES](https://usask.ca/careerservices)



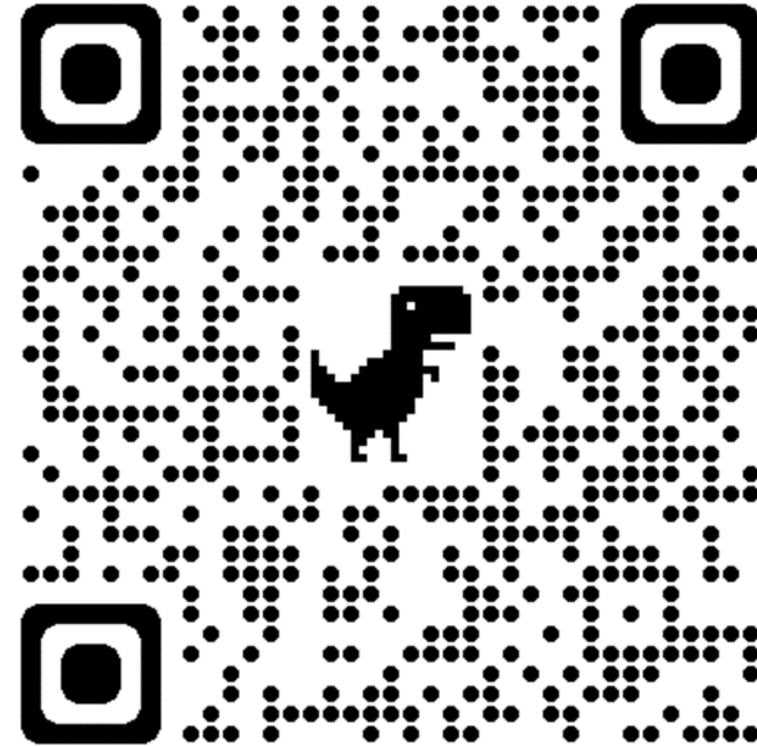
Undergraduate Research Initiative

Questions? Send an email!

Mandy Fehr

Coordinator, Undergraduate
Research, Scholarly, and Artistic
Work

Undergraduate.research@usask.ca



See the Undergraduate Research Initiative
webpage for more resources