



RECRUITING STUDENTS FOR YOUR REU

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One of the REU program's goals is to provide opportunities for students with potential who might not otherwise get them, as well as to engage a broad range of students into science career and educational pathways. If your NSF REU award has a stated goal of recruiting and including students from a particular background or region, it will be important to build connections with faculty at Minority Serving Institutions, community colleges, and other universities who serve those students. See the [chapter on Creating Inclusive REU Applications](#) for more on creating inclusive web and application materials. This chapter will provide an overview of ways to recruit broadly for your REU program.

➔ Introduction

After developing an inviting and inclusive website and application, the next step is to recruit student applicants. Build personal connections with faculty as much as possible by connecting at conferences, at meetings, or simply by calling them on the phone. As they get to know and trust you, they will be more likely to recommend students to you, and this becomes something that they will do every year. These relationships become a key element in one's long-term recruitment process, and an initial investment pays off in the following years.

➔ Having a Recruitment Strategy

In writing a proposal for an REU site or supplement, it's important to have an active recruitment strategy, including a clear implementation plan. Passive recruitment approaches tend to be ineffective. Create a strategic plan for recruiting and diversity before you write your proposal and include these points:

- » Know your intended audience—whom do you intend to recruit?
- » What are your targets for underrepresented students? Are you aiming to increase overall representation, or do you focus on specific groups because you have a reason to (i.e., if you are making an REU specifically to address accessibility, or if you are working on research in Hispanic communities).
- » Clarify in advance what your goals are for the pool of students you hope to have in your program, and why these are the students you want in the program. There should be some logical connection to your goals.
- » Identify which institutions you will partner with for recruitment. It's important to include students from smaller colleges, community colleges, and from Minority Serving Institutions in your recruitment plan.
- » Map out a plan to reach your intended audience and encourage their applications.

➔ Creating Inclusive and Engaging Recruitment Materials

Have a description of your REU program to share with faculty and students in emails, flyers, or on websites. In your description:

- » List your institution and location, the discipline of research, and the dates of the program.
- » Give a brief description of the program and what the student will get out of the experience (e.g., students will participate in doing oceanographic research, and learn how to

- communicate their research results to a scientific audience).
- » Include the application deadline. Many REUs use a deadline of Feb. 1 or 15, for example
 - » List the characteristics of the students being sought, including:
 - Academic background (e.g., majors or science background). Many MSI's have different or limited numbers of majors. For example, many have no earth science courses, or they may have Sustainability Science rather than geology. Consider broadening your pool to include core subject majors like math, physics, chemistry, biology, computing, engineering.
 - Academic level (e.g., 2nd year undergraduate)
 - Type of institution student is at (e.g., community college or 4-year college)
 - Eligibility with respect to citizenship or permanent residency
 - » Specify the support that students will receive, including the pay or stipend, travel, housing, and mentoring.
 - » Be inviting and inclusive in the language used in your description. Look at other REU websites to see how inclusive they seem to you.
 - » Think about what message your recruiting materials might be sending about the kind of participant you want in the program. Is that causing students from your target recruiting audience to decide they are not that person?
 - » In emails or flyers, include a link to your webpage, a photo, and logo for your institution and for NSF. The images in your recruiting materials should give a realistic picture of how much time indoors/outdoors/physically challenging the program really is. If you can make adaptations for students who don't enjoy working outdoors or can't meet the physical challenges, do you say so?
 - » If your program includes flexibility for nontraditional students (i.e, parents encouraged, or remote participation a possibility), be sure to make it clear in your recruiting materials.
 - » Get feedback on your recruiting materials, especially from faculty at MSIs and CCs or underrepresented students. Is your message making it out the door?



➔ Partnerships for Recruiting

Many students in internships learn about the opportunity from a professor or peer. In addition, they may find the opportunity through a web search. Students from underrepresented groups are more likely to learn about REUs from a professor. To successfully recruit students into your program, it is important to make connections with faculty, and if possible, students.

- » Contact faculty and chairs at other universities and community colleges by calling, meeting up, or via individual emails. Ask faculty to recommend students in addition to sharing your flyer. Visit their institutions when possible.
- » Include departments such as environmental studies, math, chemistry, physics, computer science and engineering, as these students have skills that are essential in the geosciences.
- » Give a short 5-10 minute presentation about your opportunity in a few STEM classes. See example presentations for ideas on how to discuss REU programs.
- » Ask faculty to tell you about students with great potential, and introduce you to them.
- » Share your opportunity via email with faculty and students.
- » Collaborate with other programs to recruit students. Hold workshops at MSIs, or at conferences and tell students about the advantages of applying for research programs.
- » Contact former REU interns via social media and ask them to tell friends about the opportunity. Students can be excellent recruiters.
- » Keep in touch with former graduate students from your lab, as they will often be good at recruiting students for you.
- » Each year, follow up on letters of recommendation from faculty for the students you take into your REU. Write to those faculty and thank them for recommending the student. Share with them how the student did in the program and invite them to recommend more students in the future.
- » Consider having your cohort train at an MSI for part of your internship.



As you develop these relationships, faculty will be more comfortable recommending students to your program, and you will be able to support students in a more customized way, knowing more about them.



➔ Post Your REU Opportunity on Key Websites

You can [post opportunities to minority-serving science societies](#) including AISES, NABG, and SACNAS, as well as other science organizations.

- » [AISES](#) (American Indian Science & Engineering Society): Send in a description (200 words). This goes out to 11,000 members including faculty and students at Tribal Colleges.
- » [NABG](#) (National Association of Black Geoscientists): Go to their Facebook page, like it, and post your opportunity there
- » [SACNAS](#) (Society for the Advancement of Chicano and Native Americans in Science):
 - First create an account (or login) on their website.
 - Next go to "submit opportunities online." It does not cost to post student opportunities. They will then approve the request to post.
- » [GA](#) (Geoscience Alliance) This is a national alliance of individuals committed to broadening participation of Native Americans in the geosciences
- » [IBP](#) (Institute for Broadening Participation) [Pathways to Science](#) database: This reaches many students from underrepresented populations.
- » Post on **Facebook pages** and **job websites** of science organizations such as [AMS](#), [GSA](#), [ASLO](#), and [AGU](#).
- » **Earth Science Women's Network** (ESWN). You can post opportunities on their website discussion board (<https://eswnonline.org/>) and/or their [Facebook page](#).
- » The [Equity and Inclusion in the Geosciences Facebook Page](#) accepts job, fellowship, or REU opportunity postings.



Check whether your REU is listed on the NSF [REU website](#). Does it link to your REU website properly? Check it each year, and each time you make a change to your REU web address or PI. To request a correction, contact your NSF Program Officer.

➔ Recruitment at Conferences

Join and participate in minority science societies like SACNAS, NABG, and AISES and develop connections with faculty and students from underrepresented populations. Note that practices for remote conferences will look different; however, look for and host events like those mentioned below.

- » Attend networking events, like the talking circles at AISES that allow you to meet mentors and instructors. Consider them listening opportunities where, rather than just telling people about your program, you go in with the intention of learning as much as possible about other institutions and programs.
- » Offer career development and professional development workshops for students at these conferences and share research opportunities with the students.
- » Learn about the majors and research programs in place at MSIs and the potential opportunities and barriers towards participation they have for students at their institution. Attend cultural sessions and events. Sessions on traditional knowledge, traditional food sources, etc., will help you build cultural knowledge.
- » Check into field trip opportunities offered by the conferences



- » At conferences, visit all the posters in your target disciplines and talk to the students.
 - If they are not there, leave a flyer for your REU tacked on their poster bulletin board with a note saying their research is interesting and to connect by email.
 - Make a note of their department, advisor, and institution. Later on, contact that professor to ask them to nominate a student to your REU.
- » Share a booth with colleagues from related programs and disciplines to form a block and enhance your presence at the conference. Create a recruiting network of like disciplines and cooperate in drawing students to the booths and encouraging them to apply. Sharing a booth will allow you time away from the booth that can allow you to attend sessions.

➔ Develop Connections with Community College Faculty Members

There is a national effort to bring community college students into the science workforce. There is greater diversity in community colleges than in many universities. Many of these students have not had the opportunity to attend four-year colleges for financial or other reasons, but have strong potential.



- » Community Colleges: These are listed by state at the [American Association of Community Colleges](#) website.
- » Minority Serving Institutions: Check whether any of these are located near your institution. They are listed by state as follows:
 - [HBCUs](#) or Historically Black Colleges & Universities (see [map of HBCUs](#))
 - [HSIs](#) or Hispanic-Serving Institutions
 - [Tribal Colleges](#) (see [map of Tribal Colleges](#))

Final Tips



Developing relationships with faculty who are at [Minority Serving Institutions](#) (MSIs) and can nominate a student to (and share news about) your program can lead to all kinds of partnerships. These can include joint research projects or linked student programs, sending majority REU students from majority institutions to Minority Serving Institutions for a period of training, and joint proposal writing.

Keep in mind that faculty at MSIs are approached weekly by people wanting to

include them in grants at the last minute. Working collaboratively means designing programs together and can be meaningful and invigorating.