Research Roundtables: Connecting Research Mentors and Undergraduates
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Abstract
The Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) at FSU allows students to engage in research projects that professors, graduate students, and community leaders facilitate. This poster outlines FSU’s Research Mentor Roundtables, an event where UROP students have the opportunity to meet a variety of research mentors in a casual setting to learn about their research and ask questions. Through this event, student researchers gain the confidence needed to approach research mentors with the intent of creating a new working relationship. This event can be scaled up for a wider audience across campus and help students get into research groups on campus.

Purpose of the Research Roundtable
- Exposing students to available research opportunities in different fields related to their academic programs
- Allowing students to meet high achieving researchers in a casual setting
- Helping students gain confidence to reach out to research mentors
- Allowing research mentors to meet prospective student assistants and start the process of filling their assistantship openings
- Encouraging students to explore their passions through research
  - Helping them to understand all research involvement is beneficial

Event Feedback
“I thought it was very helpful in identifying and discovering the multitude of projects that UROP has to offer. It was also very helpful to be able to ask questions and have more of a one-on-one time with the researcher who was more than willing to reveal info about their project.” - 1st year student
“I found that many of the projects are much more interesting and diverse than I expected them to be.” - 2nd year student
“It gave me an opportunity to speak with researchers I might have overlooked otherwise.” - Transfer student
“It helped expand my view on just how much research is going on at FSU.” - Transfer student
“Connecting with researchers on a new level, which in turn made research seem less scary.” - 2nd year student
“The students were well prepared to interact with researchers and ask interesting questions. The rotating table format was excellent!” - Research mentor
“I think directly explaining my research in the round table format to an audience of students with appropriate majors was very helpful. Once they heard about the work, many were interested.” - Research mentor
“The timed sessions give structure, a finite, focused session with the students.” - Research mentor

Event Set-Up
- Six 1 hour sessions divided into three 15-min. discussion periods
- Students and mentors requested session times according to their schedule availability
- 6-8 students per table
- 1 mentor (or mentor team) per table
- Tables were arranged by subject matter (STEM, Social Sciences, Humanities, etc.)
- Mentors were assigned to 3 tables that they rotated between
  - Remained at each table for 15 minutes—there was a 5 minute break between periods
  - Mentors were assigned to tables based on their availability and their preferences of the majors of prospective student assistants
  - Students at each table were closely matched to their mentor’s major preferences for assistantships

Pros
- Attendees found the event to be valuable & would recommend the event to be re-occurring
- Students were exposed to a wide range of research & found interest in different types of research (not just in their academic major)
- The table format worked efficiently—mentors rotating and students remaining seated
- 15 minutes per session was adequate time for project explanation & student questions

Cons
- Some mentors feel they did not get to talk to students who were in majors of their preferences
- Some students found that they did not get to meet any mentors in their majors
- Matching availability and majors of 375 students to 260 mentors and their research interests
- Students wanted more exposure; they state they wish they had gotten to meet more than 3 professors

Future Directions
- Logistical issues:
  - The availability of the students and mentors created difficulty when trying to arrange the seating chart based on matching student majors to mentor preferences
  - Possibly reformatting this event more as a “Mix and Mingle”
  - Tabling event with subject-specific sessions
  - Students of certain majors to attend sessions with mentors seeking these majors in their assistantships
  - Students would meet more than 3 of the mentors and gather information about their projects

- This event can be modified to fit different audience sizes—departmental or full campus programs— at different universities to help more undergraduate students get involved in research