FINDING AN ADVISOR IS SIMILAR TO FINDING A JOB.

JOB SEARCH
IDENTIFY INDUSTRIES
IDENTIFY COMPANIES

THESIS SEARCH
IDENTIFY AREAS
IDENTIFY ADVISORS

Fields of Interests to Consider
Research Areas for EECS:
1. Systems, Communications, Control and Signal Processing
2. Computer Science
3. Electronics, Computers, and Systems
4. Energy, and Electromagnetic Systems
5. Materials and Devices
6. Bioelectrical Engineering
   www.eecs.mit.edu/research.html

Research Areas outside of EECS:
• Other Academic Areas (HST, BE, Media Lab, Sloan, Biology, Other Engineering)
• Companies (Analog Devices, HP, Bose)
• Research Labs Affiliated with MIT (Draper & Lincoln Labs)
Ways to explore what interests you most:

- What books do you browse through in bookstores?
- Which are your favorite courses?
- What do you love to do?
- What programs look interesting on the flyers on the Infinite Corridor?
- If you were a reporter, what kind of stories would you like to write?
- What classroom topics do you talk about with friends after class?
- What sorts of information do you find most fascinating?
- What 50K topics would you fund?
- What first attracted you to the field of EECS?

Identifying Advisors and Researching their Area of Interest

- The project approach – finding an advisor based on the area you want to work on.
- The Advisor approach – finding an advisor you want to work with (a prof from class, an academic advisor, etc.)
- Reflect on class presentations to inform research direction.
- Peruse departmental information.
- Complete industry research.
- Conduct informational Interviews w/ current graduate students in advisor’s laboratory.
- Go to campus talks to learn about industry trends.

Preparing Your Introduction Sales Pitch Exercise – Part One

Develop a script to introduce yourself.

**MENTION**

- Your name, class, and program at MIT.
- Currently enrolled in the 6.ThT/6.UAT.
- How you identified them & their area of interest.
- Ask for their advice for your topic and possibility of serving as a sponsor/advisor.

Next Steps

- Talk to other students who have UROPs in that area, who’ve taken relevant courses. Talk with people in the different areas that interest you (current instructors after class, ICAN, company presentations, career fairs, joining professional organizations, attending talks).
- Read about the different areas (web, company websites, Dewey Library).
- Reality-Test the Environment: Get experience in the research area (internships, externships/shadowing/mentoring, UROPs).

**STEPS FOR PREPARATION**

1. Know yourself (your interests, skills, etc).
2. Develop an outline of what you want to say (Create a short script, including your goals, on a card).
3. Know the person with whom you are meeting (do your research).
4. Prepare an “objection” card (what to say if they respond negatively).
5. Practice your introduction before you meet with potential advisors.

**Different “Pitches”**

Your script may vary depending on whether you are exploring or focusing:

- **EXPLORING**
- **FOCUSED**
Dear Dr. Schindall,

My name is Susan Smith and I am currently an EECS Senior enrolled in 6.754, UIAT. I'm particularly interested in medical devices and I've learned from lectures in your lab that your current research is focused in this area. Professor Eng suggested that I contact you regarding the possibility of setting up a brief meeting. Dr. Eng told me that you are an excellent advisor who has mentored many EECS students in the past. Would it be possible set up a brief meeting to discuss how my research interests might intersect with those of your lab?

Please let me know if this would be possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Smith

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to see if I can set up a meeting with you to discuss my research interests and your availability to serve as my advisor. Please email me your available times to meet.

Thanks,

Tom Thumb

Hello, my name is Tim Beaver and I'm currently a senior in the EECS department. This semester I'm participating in the 6.754 class and I'm interested in pursuing my Master's research project in the area of systems communications. I know you are working in noise dampening acoustic technology and I am really interested in working in this area. Here are some projects that I have thought of...

Part Two

Pitch 1 Email

Dear Dr. Schindall,

My name is Susan Smith and I am currently an EECS Senior enrolled in 6.754, UIAT. I'm particularly interested in medical devices and I've learned from lectures in your lab that your current research is focused in this area. Professor Eng suggested that I contact you regarding the possibility of setting up a brief meeting. Dr. Eng told me that you are an excellent advisor who has mentored many EECS students in the past. Would it be possible set up a brief meeting to discuss how my research interests might intersect with those of your lab?

Please let me know if this would be possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Smith

Pitch 2 Email

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to see if I can set up a meeting with you to discuss my research interests and your availability to serve as my advisor. Please email me your available times to meet.

Thanks,

Tom Thumb

Pitch 3 Face to Face

Hello, my name is Tim Beaver and I'm currently a senior in the EECS department. This semester I'm participating in the 6.754 class and I'm interested in pursuing my Master's research project in the area of systems communications. I know you are working in noise dampening acoustic technology and I am really interested in working in this area. Here are some projects that I have thought of...

Sales Pitch Exercise - Part Two

(4 Min. Each)

When you are finished, pair up with a partner.

1. Person A present self-introduction.
2. Partner give feedback to person A. What did s/he do or say well? How might s/he improve his or her self-introduction (note rate of speech, focus). [Since this is a live exercise, also note body language, eye contact, handshake, etc.]
3. Switch roles and repeat.

The Good Pitch

- Shows a genuine interest in the research area and the faculty member’s work.
- Reflects preparation and thoughtful approach to possible projects.
- Imbued with motivation and enthusiasm.
- Is realistic and doable in the projected timeframe.

Communication Tips

**Body Language often can speak louder than spoken words:**

- Do not fidget, play with your hair, rock from side to side, or chew gum.
- Shake your contact's hand firmly.
- Make comfortable and appropriate eye contact. Smile occasionally.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers and etc.

*Be enthusiastic and positive.*
Thoughts for the Less Gregarious

If you are nervous, keep in mind that:
- They were once where you are, they empathize with your position.
- People enjoy helping others especially people who are interested in their field.
- People enjoy talking about themselves, their ideas and opinions.
- Very few people are actually so busy that they can’t find time for you, if only briefly.

Reflecting On Your Meeting

- What positive impressions do you have about your meeting?
- How well does the professor’s research interests match your own goals?
- What negative impressions, if any, do you have?
- How did this meeting help clarify your research topic?
- What are your “next steps”? Who else do you plan to talk with?
- What other steps do you plan to take based upon the advice of the professor/advisor?

Show Me the Money

How do you present/identify the most “fundable” project idea?
- Participate in Research Opportunities
- Be Flexible & Persistent
- Present Multiple Project Ideas
- Talk to More Than One Professor
- Have a Back Up Plan (what will you do next?)

You must be persistent to be successful.

MIT Careers Office
John Nonnamaker, nonnama@mit.edu
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You must be persistent to be successful.